Catherine McAuley School of Nursing and Midwifery
University College Cork
and
Participating Health Service Providers

Signature Recording Guidelines

Within the parameters of:
Grievance Policy
Disciplinary Policy
Practice Placement Guidelines

For:
Assessment of Clinical Booklets and Timesheets

2017-2018

BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery Students

Effective date: 14th August 2017
Review date: October 2019

Amendments History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amendment</th>
<th>Lead Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>23rd February 2010</td>
<td>Agreed at Undergraduate Committee</td>
<td>Prof. Josephine Hegarty</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd March 2010</td>
<td>Agreed at Clinical Practice Committee</td>
<td>Prof. Josephine Hegarty</td>
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<tr>
<td>12th March 2010</td>
<td>Agreed at Steering Group</td>
<td>Prof. Josephine Hegarty</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th March 2015</td>
<td>Reviewed by Clinical Practice Committee, no changes made</td>
<td>Dr Bridie McCarthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>15th August 2017</td>
<td>Reviewed, agreed no changes to current policy</td>
<td>Dr Bridie McCarthy</td>
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Background

BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery undergraduate programmes prepare students for entry onto a professional Register with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI). The Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (NMBI, 2014, page 8), states that “Every nurse and midwife has a responsibility to uphold the values of the professions to ensure their practice reflects high standards of professional practice and protects the public.”


Personal and Professional Responsibility

Students are expected to adhere to guidelines set out in their Practice Placement Agreement, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland’s Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (December 2014), and the BSc Nursing/BSc Midwifery Grievance and Disciplinary Policies and Procedures.

Thus, any suspected forgery of a signature or other tampering with Clinical Booklet and/or Timesheet entries is deemed to be a very serious issue and will necessitate the invoking of the “Joint Health Service Provider and School of Nursing and Midwifery Disciplinary Procedures for BSc Nursing and BSc Midwifery students”.

Procedure

1. Recording of Entries in Clinical Booklet and Timesheet

1.1 Students are required to submit their Clinical Booklets and Timesheets at the agreed submission date(s) (as per assessment grid on the School of Nursing and Midwifery website, under respective intakes/years) for pass and progression requirements of the BSc Nursing & Midwifery Programme, and as indicated on the timesheet.

1.2 Students are required to declare in their Clinical Booklets that they have achieved all the signed indicators, domains, skills and outcomes/competencies through their own efforts, and that all signatures are the authentic signatures of the relevant named personnel.

1.3 The assessment of clinical practice is organised around a number of domains, as outlined by An Bord Altranais (2005). Each domain has a number of outcomes/competencies, all of which must be achieved and signed by the clinical assessor and student, in order to pass the clinical practice module for each year of the programme.

1.4 Reflective learning forms an integral part of learning. Students are expected to write reflective notes, in conjunction with clinical placements (see Clinical Booklets for guidelines). All reflective notes must be completed and signed by preceptor/associate preceptor prior to/or at the final interview, or within three weeks of leaving the clinical area.
1.5 The student is responsible and accountable for the accurate completion and signing of the timesheet and to request his/her Preceptor/Associate Preceptor to sign the timesheet daily. If a situation exists where a student finds it difficult to access a preceptor to sign their booklet or timesheet (while on a placement area or within the three-week time frame of leaving a placement area), the student is advised to discuss this in the first instance with their Clinical Placement Co-ordinator or Clinical Nurse/Midwife Manager or Associate Preceptor or Link Lecturer. If a difficulty continues to arise, the student must make contact with the Practice Module Leader or the Programme Leader to discuss the matter. **It is far better to leave a section unsigned and to explain the reasons for same to a Clinical Placement Co-ordinator or Practice Module Leader, rather than to falsify a signature.**

2. Management of Forgery of Signatures

2.1 Any abuse of the documentation for the assessment of Clinical Booklets and/or Timesheets will be deemed to be a serious disciplinary matter and will be managed in line with the current Signature Recording Guidelines, Disciplinary Policy and Practice Placement Guidelines. **Please note that any abuse of signatures on documentation at any stage is considered a serious matter.**

2.2 It is recognised that the majority of students will approach their clinical learning maturely, honestly and professionally. However, if an incident involving suspicion of a forged signature occurs the following process will be initiated.

3. Investigation Process

3.1 The Practice Module Leader, Programme Leader, Director of Practice Education, Practice Development Coordinator or representative from the relevant Health Service Provider is informed of an alleged forged signature, and processes should be commenced in a timely manner.

3.2 Confirmation is sought regarding the authenticity of the alleged signature. The individual, whose signature has been allegedly forged, is asked to verify *(confidentially)* in writing that the recorded signature is either authentic or a forgery. Any discussions with other individuals pertaining to an allegation of a forged signature must:

- Be in the strictest confidence;
- Reiterate the fact that any discrepancies or potential forgeries have to be investigated to uphold the credibility of the assessment process. However, such an investigation must allow for the fullest explanation of all issues surrounding the matter under review.

3.3 If the signature is deemed to be authentic, all documentation relating to the issue will be removed from student’s file.

3.4 If the signature is deemed to be a forgery, a hearing (under the formal School of Nursing and Midwifery Disciplinary Policy) is arranged (see procedure guidelines).
4. Disciplinary Hearing

4.1 The student should be notified in writing of the arrangements, as per current Disciplinary Policy (Appendix 1).

All parties will be informed of the precise nature of the issue (ie alleged forgery of signature(s)). The Practice Module Leader, Programme Leader, Practice Development Coordinator or representative from the relevant Health Service Provider will also be in attendance at the meeting. The Director of Practice Education, or his/her nominee, will chair the meeting. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

5. Final Outcome

5.1 A minimum penalty as follows will apply:

A fail judgement for the clinical practice module will automatically be recorded for anybody who is found to have forged another person’s signature either while on placement in clinical practice or within their clinical learning assessment documentation or timesheet. In the event of a forgery being proven while a student is on placement, the student will discontinue with the placement with no opportunity to repeat the placement for that academic year. The student will be required to take the entire module (ie repeating all elements of Clinical Learning Outcomes/Performance Criteria/Skills/Competencies) in a repeat year.

4.2 The student must repeat and complete ALL the required number of clinical hours for that year and also achieve the required number of Clinical Learning Outcomes/Performance Criteria/Competencies outlined for that year.

Note: Recognition will be given to learning already achieved, i.e. Clinical Learning Outcomes/Performance Criteria/Competencies achieved prior to the year of allegation.

Two Year Rule: Please see Marks & Standards for BSc Programme, at the link below.

Web Links
Book of Modules:  http://www.ucc.ie/modules/

Marks and Standards:  https://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/marksandstandards/

School of Nursing and Midwifery Student Policies:  https://www.ucc.ie/en/nursingmidwifery/students/bcnursemid/

University College Cork Student Policies:  http://www.ucc.ie/en/students/policies//