

CORE COMPETENCIES AND HEALTH MATTERS
SCHOOL OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

UCC Fitness to Practise Policy

Core Competencies, Health Matters, Health Disclosure and Assessment Procedures

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the core competencies required for students to participate on programmes in the School of Nursing and Midwifery which are subject to the University Fitness to Practise Policy. This document also outlines the procedures in relation to the disclosure and assessment of health matters under the Fitness to Practise policy.

University College Cork (UCC) is an equal opportunities institution which is committed to providing assistance, where possible, to students with disabilities or other illnesses which may affect their ability to achieve the core competency requirements of the course of their choice. Where a student has a disability, UCC will make all reasonable efforts to facilitate the student by providing necessary supports to enable them to participate in the programme and be fit to practise in that area.

“Disability” is defined for the purpose of the Equal Status Acts, 2000–2011 and the Employment Equality Acts, 1998–2011 as

- a) the total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person’s body,
- b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
- c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body,
- d) the condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
- e) a condition, illness or disease which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

Prospective students who have serious concerns that a medical condition may have implications for future fitness to train as a nurse or midwife should consider at an early stage, and even before making a formal application, contacting the School of Nursing and Midwifery to seek advice as to the course requirements and core competencies.

Any matters disclosed will be dealt with the utmost sensitivity and confidence.

Any medical information disclosed constitutes 'sensitive personal data' and will be treated as highly confidential. The student will be asked to give their explicit consent before any sensitive personal data is disclosed and the student will be informed of all parties to whom disclosure will be made. The student will be aware of the entities that have access to and hold such sensitive personal data relating to the student and UCC will need to obtain the student's explicit consent to hold and process the information.

Medical and personal information disclosed during the assessment processes should be held "in confidence" by the Occupational Health Specialist and the Student Health Department. Medical details should only be given to Heads of School in so far as it is necessary for them to discharge their responsibilities under the UCC Fitness to Practise Policy and in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988-2003. Explicit informed consent should be obtained from the student if it is necessary for medical information to be shared more widely. Other personnel in the School of Medicine may be informed of the nature of any relevant impairment, its effect on function, and accommodations necessary to allow the student to fulfil the required competencies for graduation and professional practice. Specific information about underlying causes should not be disclosed, except where this serves a specific purpose to protect patients or benefit the student, and only with explicit, informed consent.

Core Competencies and Fitness to Practise

The core competencies for programmes in the School of Nursing and Midwifery are:
Students must be capable of achieving the following generic competencies and outcomes by graduation: (Essential nursing and midwifery skills)

- a. Maintaining patient/client dignity, privacy and confidentiality.
- b. Effective communication, observing, assessing, reporting and recording skills, including listening and taking physiological measurements.
- c. Safe moving and handling of patients/clients.
- d. Infection prevention and control.
- e. Performing technical skills and using complex equipment.
- f. Essential first aid and emergency procedures and incident management.
- g. Safe administration of medicines.
- h. Emotional, physical, personal, spiritual, bio-psychosocial and compassionate care of patients/clients.
- i. Meeting patients/clients' needs, including those for comfort, nutrition and personal hygiene.

- j. Consult and follow advice of a suitably qualified professional relating to any risk posed to service users by own health.

Infectious Disease policy for Students in the School of Nursing and Midwifery

Testing for immunity and infection. This should be in accordance with current Department of Health and Health Service Executive guidance or an equivalent evidence based standard. This will change over time and details of same are available on the School of Nursing and Midwifery website and on request from the Occupational Health Department, Cork University Hospital. Students should protect patients, colleagues and themselves by being immunised against serious communicable diseases when vaccines are available. The current HSE guidance recommends the following:

- a) All health care workers with patient contact are required to provide information relating to their immunity to TB, Mumps, Measles, Rubella, Varicella and Hepatitis B (anti-HBs).
- b) In addition to the above, students who may be involved in exposure prone procedures (Exposure prone procedures are those invasive procedures where there is a risk that injury to the student may result in the exposure of the patient's open tissues to the blood of the student) are required to submit evidence of non-infectivity to hepatitis B and C, HIV.
- c) Students should seek specialist medical advice and diagnostic testing if exposed to serious communicable disease, and should follow the advice of a suitably qualified professional and protect patients from any risk posed by their own health.

Students must have a full awareness of their own health, when to seek help and from whom. If a student is aware that they have a condition which could be transmitted to a patient, they must take and follow advice from a suitably qualified doctor. If a student is aware that their judgement or performance could be significantly affected by a condition, they must take and follow advice from a suitably qualified doctor.

Health Disclosure and Health Assessment Procedures

All students with disabilities or health conditions are encouraged to disclose their disability or health issue of concern in the first instance to the Student Health Department. It is not possible for UCC to provide accommodations without disclosure supported by medical evidence.

A needs assessment will be carried out which will determine the supports or accommodation required so that a student with a disability or other health issue or specific learning difficulty will be able to participate as fully as possible in their chosen course.

Step 1: Completion of Health Disclosure Form which will be reviewed by Student Health Dept.

Step 2: The Student Health Department will either decide that the concern can

(a) be addressed without involving a review with the UCC Occupational Health Physician
or

(b) the student will need to be reviewed by the UCC Occupational Health Physician

Step 3: If the student is referred to the Occupational Health Physician for review, the Occupational Health Physician will conduct a needs assessment, with advice from the Disability Support Service UCC as necessary, and prepare a fitness to train certificate which will be furnished to the Head of School including details of any recommended supports and reasonable accommodations required. The Head of School may disclose this information to other relevant members of the School of Nursing and Midwifery to ensure the student is given access to appropriate supports and accommodations. Where some accommodations or supports will relate to clinical education, clinical educators may also need to be consulted in relation to such matters.

Disclosure Requirements

The student is advised to keep UCC informed of matters affecting their Fitness to Practise throughout the period of the course. All students subject to this policy must complete a health declaration on first registration and, at a minimum, annually thereafter. The purpose of this is to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for the student and to deal with any changing competencies and requirements. The student may be required to submit for further periodic reviews on a more frequent basis depending on their individual circumstances.

Students may also be identified to UCC under the Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedures as needing assessment under the Policy.

Students are required to inform the Head of School as soon as possible if their health status changes during any academic year to an extent as to be likely to impair their participation in their Programme, complete their studies or to affect their fitness to practise in the future.

Depending on the nature of the condition being assessed, the Occupational Health Physician may need to contact the student's relevant medical advisors with the student's consent.

Reasonable Accommodation

A reasonable accommodation may be any intervention or support that helps alleviate a substantial disadvantage. The purpose of such accommodation is to enable a student with a disability to access the same opportunities as their peers and participate in all aspects of the course.

Examples of supports/reasonable accommodations include but are not limited to:

- Extra time in examination situations or extra time to be given for completing assignments.
- Assistive technology e.g. MMP player, spellchecking devices or grammar checking devices
- Communication supports such as scribes, readers, sign language interpreters
- Information to be dispensed in alternative formats
- Dyslexia support e.g. additional time for reading/writing tasks, increased lighting for fine work
- Adjustments to working day e.g. while on placement reduced hours, rest break or part-time work
- Orientation to placement site e.g for student with visual impairments
- Access to rest areas or specifically required areas and/or timetabling of course elements to take account of accessible locations.

The nature of the reasonable accommodations will be depend on a needs assessment being carried out which will identify the student's individual need and the requirements to support those needs.

There may be circumstances where it is not possible to put in place reasonable accommodations, in which case, students may be rendered unable to take up or continue the course of their choice. Such a decision will only be determined by the Fitness to Practise Committee on foot of a complete assessment of possible accommodations.

UCC at all times reserves the right to ensure that it is fully satisfied that the student is fit to participate in the course and that there is sufficient evidence to support such an assessment.

FLOW CHART RE SELF-DECLARED OR REPORTED HEALTH CONCERNS FOR FITNESS TO PRACTISE

Health Concern Declared by Student or Reported to Head of School as possibly impairing

Fitness to Practise

Health Disclosure Form Completed by Student or by Head of School

Details of Health Disclosure Form reviewed by Student Health Department

Consultant Occupational Health Physician Review Required?

No

YES

Matter addressed
through local measures

Fitness to Train Certificate Issued

(with Recommended accommodations where deemed appropriate)

No

YES

Matter considered by School
Fitness to Practise Committee

Reasonable accommodations
Implemented where appropriate