Nursing and Midwifery Student Working Hours in Practice Guidance

The following guide has been produced for Students, Academics, Learning Environment Managers, and Mentors to enable all parties to work closely together to ensure that the same information is given to students and placement partners.


Please note: There are some slight differences between student nurses and student midwives. The guidance should be presumed to be the same, unless otherwise stated.

Student Working Hours in Practice

• Students will undertake a range of shifts from the outset of their programme.

• Students will work weekends from commencement of the programme as appropriate to the practice setting.

• The shifts that students work will be identified by the practice area and will be influenced by: the normal shift patterns worked on the area they are allocated to, the working pattern of their mentor and the numbers of students requiring supervision.

• There may be an opportunity for a student to negotiate to work long shifts (maximum 14 hours). Students should not expect to always work this type of shift, as it may not be appropriate and long shifts can only be worked with the agreement of the mentor and the Learning Environment Manager.

• Students would not normally be expected to work more than 2 consecutive long shifts together.

• Students should normally work a minimum of 37.5 hours per week in practice.

• If nursing students need to make up hours they have missed during the placement, no more than 80 hours can be made up in one year during clinical learning time and the total number of hours worked must not exceed 48 hours per week [see making up hours section]. Midwifery students missing over 37.5 hours in a practice module need to consult the Course Lead directly to explore this can be made up and still meet the performance and skills outcomes.
• Working 48 hours per week, should only be in exceptional circumstances rather than the norm.
• The hours worked [excluding breaks] must be recorded in the student's attendance record and signed by the mentor or Registered Nurse supervising the student.

Students' shift hours and breaks

In order to provide clarity on breaks the University is proposing the following:
• **During a long day an adequate rest period of at least 60 minutes** (may be split into two 30 minute breaks) should normally be taken. These breaks should not be claimed for in the hours documented in their attendance record. So, if a student works 13.5 hours, with a one hour rest period, they will record 12.5 hours worked in their attendance record. In addition a concessionary 15 minutes break during the shift may be taken which can be included in the hours worked. **NB in exceptional cases, shorter breaks may be taken based on client need. However this should not become routine practice, nor should students routinely use this to shorten their working shift.**

• **During an 8 hour shift, a rest period of at least 30 minutes should be taken.** Again, the time allocated for this break should not be claimed for in the hours worked. So, if a student works 8 hours, with a 30 minute break, they will record 7.5 hours worked in their attendance record. In addition, a concessionary 15 minutes break during the shift may be taken which can be included in the hours worked.

• Flexibility about when breaks are taken must be negotiated within the placement area. In certain circumstances (e.g. attending a woman in labour) timing of breaks may be delayed. However, it is important that students recognise the effects of fatigue on performance and concentration. If a student expresses personal problems the mentor should encourage the student to contact their Student Support Officer.

Night Shifts

Students are expected to experience delivery of care over the 24 hour period (this is an NMC Requirement).

• **Important note: Students are not permitted to attend full days at University prior to or immediately after a night shift.**

• All ADNS, BANS and BSc nursing students should complete a minimum of 60 hours of night duty before the end of the 3 Year Programme.

• Students may experience night duty from the first placement onwards if appropriate/available.

• PgDip nursing students should complete 40 hours of night duty during their programme.
• Please note that not all placements can offer night duty and therefore students must be
certain that they have gained appropriate experience, in the delivery of care over the 24
hour period, prior to the completion of the course.

• Student nurses would not normally be expected to work more than 2 consecutive nights
shifts together.

• Midwifery students will follow the rostered hours of their sign-off mentor and undertake
night duty in all years of the programme. There is no specified cap on the number of
hours in each year but students would be expected to experience 24 hour care in each
hospital midwifery placement.

Bank Holidays

• Midwifery students have no extra time off placement for Bank holidays. They are
expected to work 37.5 hours during weeks that include bank holidays and may negotiate
to take the bank holiday as one of their days off in that week or negotiate to take some
of their planned study time during that week.

• Whilst on placement, student nurses are not expected to work Bank Holidays and
should take these in addition to their days off in the week in which the Bank Holiday
occurs.

• If a student nurse negotiates to work the Bank Holiday with their mentor, then they will
be entitled to another day off. For example; some students may have other religious
beliefs and may negotiate to use the BH for dates significant to their religious calendar.
This is possible but must be negotiated in advance.

• These specific days off are recorded in the Attendance record as a Bank Holiday [BH] by
practice staff and/or student and these hours are NOT included in the weekly total.

• It is important to note that 7.5 hours are allowed for each Bank Holiday [even when the
student has been working long shifts]. So, if there is one BH during a week, the student
will be required to work 30 hours during that week and if there are two BHs during a
week, then the student will be required to work 22.5 hours that week.

Student nurses on Placement are eligible for the statutory bank holidays listed below:
• New Year’s Day
• Good Friday
• Easter Monday
• 2 Bank Holiday Mondays in May
• August Bank Holiday
• Christmas Day
• Boxing Day

• Students may be concerned that due to the Bank Holidays, the total number of hours worked on placement will be less, but this is accounted for in the training plan and they are not required to make up these hours.

**Sickness and Absence**

• As part of the criteria for registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), all Nursing students on a three year programme must complete a minimum of 2300 hours of practice.

• Pg Dip nursing students must complete 1800 hours practice.

• The Pre-Registration Midwifery Standards are calculated in programmed weeks but the same principles apply. The Standards are clear that 100% attendance is required.

• All sickness, special leave, compassionate leave and absences must be recorded on the student's attendance record in order to comply with the recommendations of the Clothier Report (1994) and all absence is subject to 'make up time'.

• If a student does not complete the required number of hours identified above, then this time must be made up [see making up practice hours below].

**Attendance Monitoring**

• The ideal is that students completing the programme attend for 100% of both the Theory and Practice requirements of the programme.

• However, it is recognised that students may face a number of challenges during the programme which require a period of sickness or special/compassionate leave.

• It is important for the student to recognise they should keep sickness and absence to a minimum as future employers are often interested in the number of days and the number occasions when sickness and/or absences have occurred.

• The University will monitor closely sickness and absence to ensure students are eligible for registration as qualified practitioners.

**Reporting Sickness and Special/Compassionate Leave whilst on Placement**

• It is the responsibility of the student to notify their Placement if they are not able to attend.

• Students must ensure that they formally notify the placement area, using the correct local procedures, if they unable to attend placement for any reason.
• Good practice is to call before the shift is due to start and students should ensure that a clear message is left and that a record is kept of the name of the person spoken with and the date/time of the phone call.

• Students must call on each day they are not attending placement, unless they have a medical certificate which indicates they will be off sick for a period of time.

**Reporting Sickness and Special/Compassionate Leave whilst on Placement**

• In addition, students should report sickness on the first day, by contacting the Faculty's Placement Team on hwnursingplacements@shu.ac.uk

• Alternatively, if students do not have access to the internet, then the sickness telephone line can be used: 0114 225 5446.

• The student should include the following details: their full name and student number, the course and cohort as well as the placement area and reason they cannot attend.

• If the student has been sick and this has been reported correctly, according to local and SHU policies, then this should be recorded as 'sick' [S] in the attendance record and verified by the mentor.

• If the student does not follow the correct procedures for reporting sickness to the placement, then this must be documented as 'Absent' [A] in their attendance record and verified by the mentor.

• When returning from sickness/leave, it is important that students notify the University and the Placement Area.

• If sickness exceeds 5 days, the student is required to submit a medical certificate to the Student Support Officer.

• **Any unauthorised absence** should be documented as a cause for concern by the mentor in the Student's Assessment documents and the link lecturer notified.

• If a student is **off sick for longer than a week** or more than once in a placement, this must also be documented as a cause for concern and link lecturer must be notified.

• Link lecturers should follow SHU **Process for dealing with Absence from the Course**, completing the required proforma [see section about consistent poor attendance].

• **Special Leave/Compassionate Leave** can only be agreed by the Student Support Officer/Course Leader or appropriate Level Manager. Students should report their absence to the placement area as described above and on the first day of absence, contact the Student Support Officer/Level manager to discuss their needs.
• If a student is referred to the Occupational Health Department or A&E whilst on duty, please inform the Student Support Officer (0114 225 5442 - R Wigglesworth, 0114 225 2561 - P Newman, or 0114 225 4446 - S Laycock).

Consistently poor attendance

• Students need to meet the NMC requirements for number of clinical hours and consistently poor attendance may mean they fail to do this.

• In addition, poor attendance may impact upon achievement of competence.

• Students with poor attendance on placement will go through the stages identified in the SHU Process for dealing with Absence from the Course, which is as follows:

  Stage 1: Conducted by the link lecturer: Proforma 1 completed and AA informed
  Stage 2: Conducted by a member of the Course Management Team
  Stage 3: Conducted by the Deputy Head of Department for undergraduate programme

• The aim of this process is to ensure that the students receives the support they require as well as to ensure that they understand the long term implications of consistently poor attendance.

• It is important to note that if attendance continues to be poor, the student may need to temporarily withdraw from the programme and join a later cohort.

• Or, the student can be asked to leave the course.

Making up Practice Hours lost on Placement

• For nursing students there may be an opportunity to make up hours missed [up to a maximum of 80 hours per year], whilst still on placement. Midwifery students missing over 37.5 hours in a practice module need to consult the Course Lead directly to explore this can be made up and still meet the performance and skills outcomes.

• It may be useful to consult with the link lecturer about whether this is appropriate.

• Make up hours must be negotiated between the student and mentor and due consideration needs to be given to patient/client safety as well as the student's own wellbeing. If this causes any concerns about patients or the student, then the link lecturer should be notified and the student must stop making up time in this way.

• This cannot be used as a mechanism for disguising sickness and absence and so all absences and make up time should be clearly indicated in the student’s attendance record and verified by the mentor or Registered Practitioner supervising the student.
• At the end of the placement, all students present their attendance record, signed by their Mentor to their Academic Advisor for verification.

• This attendance record is then submitted to the RWB helpdesk at same time as, but separate to the Assessment of Practice documentation. It is important that it is separate otherwise it may be filed and it needs to go to the placement team.

• Students are expected to keep a check of the clinical hours they accumulate and the placement team will periodically produce a report highlighting those students who have not attended for the required number of practice hours.

• If necessary students will need to make up lost clinical hours in flexi time however these opportunities are limited and will be reserved for students who cannot make up outstanding hours while on a block of placement learning. This will be supported by the appropriate university mechanisms as follows:

Making up Clinical Hours during flexi weeks

• Whilst there may be opportunities during placement allocations to make up clinical hours missed, for a variety of reasons there may be occasions when this is not feasible

• Students may therefore be afforded the opportunity to make up clinical hours during flexi weeks

• Students cannot organise this with any placement area directly

• The placements team must organise this as all other students have to be allocated a placement first.

• Students at the end of their programme must be given priority

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students CANNOT make up clinical hours during campus learning weeks. These are designated study hours and constitute part of the theoretical hours required by the NMC

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What happens if I am ill or need to be absent from my placement?
A: It is the responsibility of the student to report your first day of sickness, special/compassionate leave by contacting the Placement Area and the University's Placement Team hwbnursingplacements@shu.ac.uk or telephone 0114 225 5446

Q: What happens if I don't hand in my on-line attendance form to the Placement Team?
A: Hours cannot be credited without this information. Therefore the online form must be completed and handed to your Academic Advisor to be signed. This is then submitted to the Undergraduate Office via RWB helpdesk.
Q: When filling in the attendance record and electronic time sheet for when I am on placement, should I include my breaks on shift?
A: No, please do NOT include your breaks.

Q: Am I entitled to Bank holidays while on Placement?
A: Nursing students YES. When on placement, nursing students are not expected to work Statutory Bank Holidays (see list above) and should take these in addition to their days off for the week in which the Bank Holiday occurs. NB: 7.5 hours allowed for each BH
A: Midwifery students NO. You can only take statutory Bank Holidays as part of your normal days off. You need to work 37.5 hours each week.

Q: Why do I need to make up hours that I have missed?
A: As part of the criteria for registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), students must work a specified number of hours to be eligible for registration as qualified practitioners.

Q: Does making up practice hours 'wipe out' the sickness, special/compassionate leave and absence?
A: No. This will always be maintained in the student's personal record. However, there will be on the record a note of any practice make up time which has been completed.

Q: Can I schedule personal holidays whilst on placement?
A: No

Q: Can I negotiate to change holidays or request additional days with practice staff?
A: No. Attempting to do this is likely to result in disciplinary action.

Q: Can I arrange extensions or changes of my placement block directly with my mentor?
A: No.

Q: Do I have to work early shifts, long shifts, weekends, etc on placement?
A: Yes. Early shifts, late shifts, long shifts, weekends and night duty are all a part of the normal nursing and midwifery experience and your requirement to attend these shifts will depend on the rota your mentor has put together for you. Please discuss any issues you have relating to shifts with your Mentor but be aware that they do not have an obligation to accommodate your needs. It is expected that a student should work a range of shift patterns to access maximum experience.

Q: Can I make up time I have missed during my placement?
A: Yes, but only with the agreement of your mentor and Learning Environment Manager. If you have missed placement time due to illness, it may not be in your best interests, or safe for patient care, for you to then work additional hours

Q: How much time can I make up during my placement?
A: You can make up a maximum of 80 hours per year during clinical learning time, working no more than 48 hrs per week. If you need to make up more than 80 hours, this MUST be organised by the placement team.

Q: Can I arrange to return to my Placement area to make up clinical hours missed?
A: Nursing students - No. If you are not able to make up hours missed during the placement, then make up time MUST be arranged by the placement team.
A: Midwifery students - Midwifery students missing over 37.5 hours in a practice module need to consult with the Course Lead directly to explore this can be made up and still meet the performance and skills outcomes.

Q: Can I make up clinical hours missed during campus learning weeks?
A: No. These are designated study hours and constitute part of the theoretical hours required by the NMC.