Pregnancy: Clinical Placements

Charles Darwin University (CDU) recognises that pregnancy whilst enrolled in a nursing or midwifery course can be daunting but exciting. There are inherent risks to both the pregnant student and fetus during pregnancy and the University will be unable to provide individualised support unless informed of a pregnancy. The highest risk of harm to a fetus is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy, and mothers are at increasing risk in very early and later in their pregnancy, so it is advisable that pregnant students notify the University as soon as possible so that identifiable risks to the student and fetus in clinical placements may be avoided.

Pregnancy does not preclude students from attending simulation blocks and clinical placements; but some clinical placements may be potentially harmful to the developing fetus and to the pregnant student. If a student becomes pregnant whilst enrolled in a nursing and/or midwifery course, the student will not be able to commence a simulation block or continue in a clinical placement from 32/40 weeks and cannot recommence a course until 8 weeks postpartum. Where a student has pregnancy and/or post birth complications, clinical placement / simulation block may not be appropriate before and/or after these dates.

There may be circumstances where by a student can attend a placement up until 36/40 weeks. If this is the case the following requirements must be adhered to and submitted to the Course Coordinator and Team Leader of Placements:

- A doctor’s certificate outlining that the student is fit and able to attend a clinical placement from 32 to 36/40 weeks
- A renewed Fitness to Practice (preclinical form) assessed by a doctor one week before the student’s placement and submitted to the Preclinical Office and Team Leader of Placements
- Approval and endorsement by the Course Coordinator.

Pregnant students must notify the Undergraduate Clinical Coordinator and the Placement Office of their pregnancy and due date. The student will need to provide the Placement Office with a letter from a General Practitioner (GP) with confirmation of pregnancy, estimated due date and advice on the student’s fitness to attend simulation block and go out on placement.
Pregnant students will not be allocated to a placement in an area where there may be health and safety issues, for example, radiation, working with infectious disease, cytotoxic drugs and anaesthetic gases.

**Pregnancy and Immunisations**

All students are required to be fully immunised before commencing placements. If a student is planning a pregnancy, the student will need to have all the required immunisations before becoming pregnant. If the student has not been immunised or does not have immunity and is already pregnant, the student may not be able to have some of these or may have to wait until further into the pregnancy. Where a student declines vaccination for pregnancy and/or breastfeeding reasons, placements will not be arranged until the student is fully vaccinated.

CDU reserve the right to not permit a student to attend a placement if the student is in the third trimester of pregnancy or within the first 8 weeks post birth. The student’s health and wellbeing is important and CDU has a duty of care to both student and fetus/newborn. CDU wants to assist students in meeting the clinical needs of their courses.

Please get in touch with the Placement Office to discuss any questions or concerns. You can consult with the Placements Office at NurPlac@cdu.edu.au or on 08 8946 6243.

**Breastfeeding / Expressing breast milk**

Whilst attending simulation block and/or clinical placement, please discuss with CDU and the health facility if you require breaks and an area for expressing breast milk. Expressing breaks should be negotiated with your lecturer/preceptor[NUM prior to the commencement of a placement and again reiterated at the commencement of each shift. You may negotiate to express at a time other than you allocated meal breaks and these expressing opportunities should be of reasonable time and frequency. The consideration being that whilst it is important to prioritise expressing whilst away from a breastfeed baby/toddler this should not affect the learning opportunities that simulation block and a clinical placement provides. With clear communication, you will likely be able to express in an allocated space and know in advance of any expressing equipment that will be provided by the facility and storage of expressed breastmilk.