Clinical Placement Guidelines

Clinical placement requirements

A Placement is an essential part of the preparation to become a Registered Nurse or Midwife and provides opportunities for expanding knowledge and skill base. The principal goal of any placement is to provide students with relevant ‘real-life’ professional experience to help further develop clinical skills and transfer theory into practice.

The Asia Pacific College of Nursing and Midwifery aims to provide students with the best placement opportunities available. Whilst, the College would like to accommodate every student’s individual needs (for example: work commitments, childcare, holidays, and preferences for some placement locations and venues) this is not possible.

Placements are guided by the following principles:

Compulsory Pre-Placement requirements:

A placement will not be allocated until all compulsory pre-placement requirements relevant to your course have been completed.

Location:

Placements will be in a variety of locations including metropolitan, regionals, rural or remote. Undergraduate nursing and midwifery students can expect to attend at least one regional, rural or remote placement during their course.

Placements may not be available close to the student’s home or may not be accessible by public transport. The student will be required to organise their own, travel arrangements to the placement location and, where required, accommodation during placement.

Placements

May occur at any time of the year including mid-or end-of-semester and end-of-year breaks. The student is required to attend clinical placements across a range of shifts - early, late, night or day shifts, as rostered, and may be on any day of the week, including public holidays.

Students will be advised by the Placement team minimum 4 weeks in advance of when and where the placement will be. If the student requires more time to be notified due to employment etc, they must contact the Placement team prior to the semester commencement.

Rosters and shifts
As part of the student’s professional responsibility, it is required that the student ensures:

- They have completed or attended a placement venue orientation
- Know where to arrive and meet on day 1
- Know the shift times
- Attend all rostered shifts
- Attend for the entire allocated shift
- Are well rested before each shift. Failure to be rested places the student or others at risk and is considered unprofessional practice, as the student is unable to meet their professional obligations and thus standards of practice. For example, it is not acceptable to:
  - go from a paid shift to a placement shift or vice versa
  - work all night on an assignment and then go to an early shift

Under no circumstances are students to reschedule, negotiate their rosters or make up shifts. Students must contact the Placement team in the first instance and the relevant officer will action this on behalf of the student.

**Arriving at shifts**

It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the clinical placement at least ten minutes before the shift begins. This will ensure the student arrives at the ward/office/unit, in a timely manner and be prepared to engage in a full handover of patients/women, ask required questions and assist the previous shift to complete activities before leaving.

**Missed placement hours or shifts**

Any hours missed during the clinical placement must be ‘made up’ as the student needs to attend for the allocated duration. Missed placement hours may mean that the student:

- Cannot complete the topic requirements for placement
- May not meet the course graduation requirements
- May not meet the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) minimum requirements for registration.

Contact the Placement Team as soon as possible to discuss options. With limited placement opportunities available, it is not always possible to negotiate make-up shifts or an extension to your placement.

Students cannot organise their own placement or change their rosters with the Clinical Manager on the ward. In doing so, students may be at risk of failing the unit. Students must contact the Placement team of any Extenuating Circumstances whilst on placement.

**Paid employment**

Undergraduate nursing and midwifery students may not:

- Count paid employment hours in a health care venue towards placements hours
- Undertake a placement in a current place of employment (due to conflicting expectations around roles)
Illness or injury

If the student is unfit to attend a clinical placement, they must inform the Placement Team, the Unit Coordinator and the placement venue of any absences as soon as possible.

If the illness or injury is:

- Two consecutive days or more, then the student must provide the Placement Team with a medical certificate (original)
- Three consecutive days or more, then the student may require a fitness for practice certificate

It is the student’s professional responsibility and considered expected professional communication, to keep the Placement Team, Unit Coordinator and placement venue informed of any attendance issues. Unprofessional communication/ behaviour may lead to unsuccessful achievement of the student’s learning outcomes.

Exceptional circumstances while on placement

Exceptional or Unforeseen circumstances are those which are beyond the control of the student and/or for which there was no opportunity to prepare in advance and may include, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:

- illness of the student or a close relative
- unanticipated personal circumstances of a compelling nature
- unanticipated and significant work-related circumstances of a compelling nature

Discretionary activities or circumstances within the student’s control, for example attendance at children’s birthdays / school events / childcare problems; holidays, family celebrations and other discretionary travel, and/or other foreseeable events will not constitute grounds for exceptional circumstances.

Supporting evidence for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances must be verifiable.

If the student will be absent for two or more days due to exceptional circumstances:

- They must inform Placement Team, Unit Coordinator and the clinical placement venue of their absence as soon as possible
- Submit an Extenuating Circumstances form to the Placement Team
- Contact the Unit Coordinator as soon as practicable to discuss completion options. In some circumstances the student may be required to withdraw from the placement

Provide with written evidence (for example, from a medical practitioner) in support of the Extenuating Circumstances form.

Withdrawing from placement

If the student decides to withdraw from the clinical placement either before or soon after it commences, they need to:

- email the Unit Coordinator and the Placement Team advising that the intention to withdraw from the Unit - in some instances the clinical placement can then be reallocated to another student

Please note:
Students should not make holiday or personal arrangements until their placement is confirmed by the Placement Team. Placements are confirmed via an email sent to the student’s Charles Darwin University email address. However, arrangements are dependent on external organisations and are occasionally, cancelled at short notice, so it is important to check emails daily.

**Placement Requests**

The College of Nursing and Midwifery is committed to providing students with support for their period of study. The student’s clinical placement is allocated based on enrolment, completion of all pre-clinical requirements and takes into consideration the student’s home address and placement history.

Once a placement has been allocated it is not possible to move into another simulation block unless there are unforeseen or exceptional circumstances that have been considered and supported by the College. Students are not able to swap placements.

Variations to clinical placement allocation will only be considered in the following circumstances:

- If the student has a Disability Access Plan
- If the student is the registered carer for a sick or disabled dependent child or relative, accompanied by documented evidence
- If the student has a major health problem requiring frequent and specialised treatment which is only available at certain locations, accompanied by documented evidence
- For other highly extenuating medical, compassionate or special circumstances outside of the control of the student, and where there was no opportunity to plan ahead.

Requests for variation to clinical placement will not be considered in the following circumstances:

- Travel, transportation and accommodation requirements, except where issues are relevant to the circumstances listed above
- Student work or other business commitments
- Being a parent, except in the circumstances outlined above
- Weddings and other celebratory events
- Extra-curricular activities such as clubs
- Requests to be re-allocated to placement sites previously allocated but not attended or where the student withdrew from the placement

If a student’s request for changes to a clinical placement is accepted and an alternative placement is available, it will be offered to them. If there is no alternative immediately available the student will be offered a placement at the next available opportunity and be directed to seek assistance from the Undergraduate Coordinator, regarding necessary changes you required to make to the study progression.