

Guidance In Relation To Hours Worked In Practice Placements for Healthcare Students

General principles

- The health and safety of students and the people they are caring for is paramount when considering hours of work
- The European Working time Directive does not allow employees to average more than 48 hours work per week and states that there should be an 11 hour break between the end of one shift and the beginning of the next. Although not bound by the directive, it is good practice that students normally work no more than 48 hours and time at university should be counted as part of those hours. Students should have an 11 hour break between shifts.
- Students should comply with the requirements of the professional body that approves their programme in relation to the hours worked in placement. For example, the Nursing and Midwifery Council requires students to undertake 24 hour, seven day a week care. This means that students must undertake some night duty and weekend working.
- Students should not finish a shift between twelve midnight and 6am to ensure that they are not required to be walking to cars etc during the middle of the night
- Where students have missed mandatory parts of practice placements (whether that be hours or specific experiences) they should liaise with their programme manager as to how they should gain that practice and should not try and work over and above their normal hours of working 'to catch up' or liaise themselves with a practice area (the exception to this is where a placement is able to facilitate the student undertaking an alternate day to one missed within the same week)
- Sickness within placement should be notified to the university according to the local policy for the programme the student is on.

Specific guidance for nursing and midwifery students

a) Long days

Students should not be compelled to work long days. If long days are worked that should only be where the student's mentor works long days and the appropriate break between shifts, outlined above, is maintained.

b) Weekends

Weekend working is a required part of nursing and midwifery programme. Students should undertake some weekends in all placements where there is weekend working. The number of weekends should reflect the length of the placement and should normally be no more than one weekend in three.

c) Night duty

Students are required to undertake night duty as part of their programme. Students cannot be compelled to work a night shift within the first year but may do so where working with their mentor. In years 2 and 3 it is expected that students will work night duty but this should normally be no more than 4 nights in any four week period. *An exception to this is midwifery students on delivery suite who may work additional nights if their mentor is on night duty.*

d) Completing hours

There is a requirement for nursing and midwifery students to undertake a defined number of practice hours. Where hours have been missed through, for example, sickness, the student will be required to achieve them. This will normally be done at the end of any progression point in discussion with the programme leader. Students should not 'cram' hours of practice to achieve their total practice hours but any outstanding hours should be planned to ensure the safety of service users and the student.

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