

Student Support guidance during COVID-19 Outbreak

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Purpose of this guidance

The COVID-19 pandemic means we are in unprecedented times with significant pressures being placed upon our health and care services.

This guidance document is aimed at providing information to nursing and midwifery students on what this means for them during this time. The guidance is focused on how students can support the health and care system during this time of emergency. We have included indicative agenda for change banding within the document and confirmation of bandings will follow based on advice from the NHS Staff Council.

This is a fast-changing and emerging situation and advice may be subject to further development. Therefore, these principles should be used in conjunction with advice and guidance from both students' higher education institutions, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and royal colleges and trade unions.

Overview

We have heard from many of you asking how you can support services during this time and in response we have worked collaboratively with NMC, Royal Colleges, Council of Deans of Health (CoDH), Government departments of the four nations, NHS Employers and staff side representatives to consider how best to support you to use the skills and expertise you have in the safest possible way.

It is important that we recognise the different experience and skills of students depending on the point of their journey through their studies. This guide therefore provides:

- A summary of the position and options for students in:
 - the first year of their undergraduate programme;
 - the second year or early stages of their third year of undergraduate programme and postgraduate students;
 - the last 6 months of their third-year undergraduate programme.
- A set of more general frequently asked questions providing further information to support students during this time.

Students in their first year of undergraduate programme

Overview

Students in year one will continue with their studies and remain on their programme. However, the nature of the programme will be adapted so that students will see their academic studies continue but their clinical placement time will be paused.

As now, you may volunteer or undertake paid work within a healthcare setting while maintaining your academic study if you wish to do so. In line with current guidelines, volunteering or paid work will not be counted towards practice hours and experience.

What this means for your education programme?

As set out above, you will continue to undertake your academic studies in line with the current programme via the distance/online learning approaches agreed with your university.

However, due to the pause on clinical placements you may not be able to complete the usual level of practice hours in your first year, but you should not be concerned about this. The NMC will work closely with your university (or other approved education institution) to assess what this means for you and how you can be supported to reach the required number of practice hours across the remaining period of your course. Your university will support you with any questions you have on this.

Will this have a financial impact on students?

The Student Loans Company have issued the following guidance which will continue to be updated at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/slc-coronavirus-covid-19-update>

SLC is continuing to support students, universities and colleges and will be providing further relevant updates as necessary.

Will I still get my next student finance payment?

SLC have confirmed that students will receive their scheduled or next instalment of their maintenance loan at the planned start of their summer term, regardless of whether their university or provider has made alternative arrangements for teaching.

Can I still apply for student finance?

If you're studying at the moment or you'll be starting a full-time, undergraduate course after 1 August 2020, you can apply online for student finance as normal.

Postgraduate pre-registration and part-time, undergraduate student finance applications for academic year 2020 to 2021 are scheduled to launch in June. If this changes, this will be communicated through social media channels and via your university

What does this mean for the recently announced maintenance grants?

Government remains committed to implementing maintenance grants to the timescales previously announced. Eligible students will be notified of the application process in due course.

Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Care has confirmed that all Learning Support Fund (CDA/ESF/TDA), NHS bursary and SW Bursary payments will continue to be paid during the period. Eligible students should continue to apply for payments through the NHS Business Services Authority in the same way as they do now.

What action do students need to take?

You do not need to take any direct action at this stage. Your university will be in contact to explain how your academic studies will be delivered during this time and will be available to answer any questions or concerns through existing pastoral support routes.

If you do wish to volunteer or undertake work, and you have not already arranged this, your university will be able to provide your details, with your consent, to the NHS who will contact you directly.

Students in the second year or the first six months of their final year of their undergraduate programme and postgraduate pre-registration students not in the last 6 months of their programme

Overview

Given the significant pressures on the system and the need to ensure that front line services are fully supported it is not possible to continue to provide the current programme for students in these years of study.

You will be given the option to opt in to a revised programme structure as set out below. This is voluntary and if you do not feel able to opt in to this you will be supported by your university to consider the options available to you including continuing with the academic elements of your study through distance learning/online approaches or an authorised break in your studies.

Revised programme delivery

You will be asked to opt into an arrangement, whereby you spend no more than 80% of your time in clinical practice and 20% in academic study. The latter offers a continuing opportunity for learning and a support mechanism and link to your university.

It will not be possible for students to be supernumerary whilst in clinical practice during this emergency situation, but you will be supervised and work within an appropriate delegation framework.

The exact nature of the role to be undertaken and the level of supervision will be agreed between you, your university and the organisation in which you will be working.

What does this mean for your education programme?

Your university will continue to provide support to you and will offer ways of maintaining contact when you are in clinical practice. Your time in clinical practice can be used to support achievement of required practice hours.

However, given the significant change in time spent in clinical practice consideration will need to be given to how students can be supported to meet the academic course requirements. The NMC will work closely with Council of Deans of Health and universities to assess what this means for students and how they can be supported to achieve the course requirements across the remaining period of their studies.

Will this have a financial impact on students?

While in clinical practice you will be paid in line with the terms and conditions of the organisation in which you are working and any national guidelines (e.g. Agenda for Change). As set out above, specific roles will be agreed with individuals, but it is expected that in the majority of cases this will be at Band 3 level but confirmation will follow based on advice from the NHS Staff Council

The Student Loans Company have issued the following guidance which will continue to be updated at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/slc-coronavirus-covid-19-update>

SLC is continuing to support students, universities and colleges and we will be providing further relevant updates as necessary

Will I still get my next student finance payment?

SLC have confirmed that students will receive their scheduled or next instalment of their maintenance loan at the planned start of their summer term, regardless of whether their university or provider has made alternative arrangements for teaching.

Can I still apply for student finance?

If you're studying at the moment you can apply online for student finance as normal.

Postgraduate pre-registration and part-time, undergraduate student finance applications for academic year 2020 to 2021 are scheduled to launch in June. If this changes, we'll let you know through our social media channels.

What does this mean for the recently announced maintenance grants?

Government remains committed to implementing maintenance grants to the timescales previously announced. Eligible students will be notified of the application process in due course.

Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Care has confirmed that all Learning Support Fund, NHS bursary and SW Bursary payments will continue to be paid during the period. Eligible students should continue to apply for payments through the NHS Business Services Authority in the same way as they do now.

What action do students need to take?

Your university will be in touch with you to discuss the revised programme delivery model and what it means for you:

- If you decide to opt in to work in clinical practice, your university will work with you to identify your preferences. Universities and NHS organisations will then work together to best match your learning needs with workforce requirements. Once agreed this organisation will then be in touch with you to discuss your deployment in more detail and answer your questions. Examples of how this will work are provided in the case studies below.

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- If you decide you do not want to work in clinical practice, your university will discuss your alternative options with you, including continuation of the academic elements of your programme.

Students in their final six months of their undergraduate or postgraduate pre-registration programme

Overview

Given the significant pressures on the system and the need to ensure that front line services are fully supported, it is not possible to continue to provide the current programme for students in these years of study.

Students will be given the option to opt in to a revised programme structure as set out below.

This is voluntary and if you do not feel able to opt in to this you will be supported by your university to consider the options available to you including continuing with the academic elements of your study through distance learning/online approaches or an authorised break in your studies.

In exceptional circumstances – where students are very close to meeting the requirements for full registration - it may be more appropriate for students to complete their studies and apply to the full register route than to join the temporary register. Your university will advise and support you through this process if applicable.

Revised programme delivery

You will be asked to opt in to an arrangement whereby you move in to clinical practice during this emergency period. During this emergency period, it will not be possible for students to be supernumerary. However, students will receive appropriate support and supervision within an agreed delegation framework.

The exact nature of the role to be undertaken and the level of supervision will be agreed between each student and the organisation in which they will be working. In the majority of cases, we will seek to place students in an organisation where they have worked previously. The hours you work will contribute to your overall programme to reflect the experience you will gain during these challenging times.

It is recognised that you will need to be supported and supervised clinically during such deployment to develop your confidence. It is envisaged that support could be offered as an extension to the pastoral care and clinical support currently offered by your university. This will build on the already close partnership working established between universities and local employers.

What does this mean for your education programme?

Universities will continue to provide support to students and the students' time in clinical practice can be used to support achievement of required practice hours.

However, given the significant change in time spent in clinical practice consideration will need to be given to how students can be supported to meet the academic course requirements. The NMC will work closely with CoDH and universities to assess what this means for students and how they can be supported to achieve the course requirements across the remaining period of their studies.

Decisions for opening a temporary register for student nurses in the final six months of their NMC approved programme

Under new legislation passing through Parliament, the NMC will have emergency powers to establish a Covid-19 temporary register. The second stage of this temporary register would be to establish a specific temporary register for nursing students in the final six months of their programme, which would have specific conditions on practice to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

In line with the earlier joint statement the NMC will only consider asking student nurses whether they would like to join this emergency register if we believe that this is necessary to further benefit our health services and the people who use them. Further details about this will be made available to students on the NMC website. Universities will support you in understanding the choices and options available to you at this time.

If and when the temporary student register opens, you have had discussions with your university and opt to join the temporary register your NHS employer will support you to complete a transitional period of approximately 4-8 weeks. It is suggested that this will be as a band 4 and then move to band 5 in line with the changing duties of the role but confirmation of banding will follow based on advice from the NHS Staff Council

Student midwives will continue to work in clinical practice, supervised, but will not have the option of entering onto the emergency register because of the autonomous role of the midwife.

To support student nurses who opt to join the temporary register you will be offered a bespoke package of support enabling you to practice. This will include:

- An induction including all key mandatory training requirements to ensure you are supported to practice safely
- Support to develop skills ordinarily reserved for preceptorship
- More specific guidance, for example, on the management of coronavirus and how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Will this have a financial impact on students?

While in clinical practice students will be paid in line with the terms and conditions of the organisation in which they are working and national guidelines (e.g. Agenda for Change). As set out above, specific roles will be agreed with individuals with the first 6-8 weeks likely to be at Band 4 moving to Band 5 on joining the temporary register. but confirmation of bandings will follow based on advice from the NHS Staff Council.

The Student Loans Company have issued the following guidance which will continue to be updated at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/slc-coronavirus-covid-19-update>

SLC is continuing to support students, universities and colleges and we will be providing further relevant updates as necessary.

Will I still get my next student finance payment?

SLC have confirmed that students will receive their scheduled or next instalment of their maintenance loan at the planned start of their summer term, regardless of whether their university or provider has made alternative arrangements for teaching.

Can I still apply for student finance?

You will be able to apply online for student finance as normal. Postgraduate and part-time, undergraduate student finance applications for academic year 2020 to 2021 are scheduled to launch in June. If this changes, we'll let you know through our social media channels.

What does this mean for the recently announced maintenance grants?

Government remains committed to implementing maintenance grants to the timescales previously announced. Eligible students will be notified of the application process in due course.

Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Care has confirmed that all Learning Support Fund, NHS bursary and SW Bursary payments will continue to be paid during the period. Eligible students should continue to apply for payments through the NHS Business Services Authority in the same way as they do now.

What action do students need to take?

Your university will be in touch with you to discuss your options either the revised programme delivery model or future temporary registration to help you to know what it means for you:

- If you decide to opt in to work in clinical practice your university will work with you to identify your preferences, If you opt in to temporary registration and once confirmed your NHS organisation will then be in touch with you to discuss your deployment in more detail and answer your questions. You will be able to 'opt out' again at a later stage if necessary via your University.
- If you decide you do not want to work in clinical practice, your university will discuss your alternative options with you including continuation of the academic elements of your programme.

Student health and wellbeing during the emergency period

Looking after yourself and others

Over and above the precautions protecting you from transmission of the coronavirus, it will be crucial over the coming weeks and months that you look after yourselves, reflecting on both your physical and mental health.

Your university will continue to provide pastoral support to you when in clinical placement and if you move into clinical practice on the temporary register you will have a line manager who will provide support.

You can also access the NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework here - <https://www.nhsemployers.org/retention-and-staff-experience/health-and-wellbeing>

Staff wellbeing and support – employers' duty of care

Employers have a moral and statutory duty of care to protect employee's health and safety and provide a safe environment to work. NHS organisations need to be proactive in protecting employees and supporting them to feel safe and secure in their employment. It is critical employers support staff by listening to concerns, responding appropriately and reinforcing the need to follow the latest [PHE guidance](#).

Employers have the same duty of care to their staff during a pandemic as in other circumstances, and will take steps to safeguard the health and safety of their staff.

[PHE's infection prevention and control guidance](#) principles should be applied and reflected in local plans.

During your time in clinical practice you should:

- Have regular breaks to reduce the onset of fatigue and associated risks - additional arrangements may need to be considered by organisations where staff are working longer shifts and/or additional hours - this could involve the repurposing of offices into rest spaces.
- Know where to go to access local support e.g. Occupational Health contacts, employee assistance provider (EAP) information and psychological support - provisions for accessing counselling or other provisions.
- Have an effective safety induction into new areas where you are being deployed, ensuring they are familiar with emergency procedures, reporting procedures and any equipment they may be asked to use
- Be supported to raise concerns and seek reassurance/explore and agree solutions with line manager where required

Frequently asked questions

Temporary registration

What is the COVID-19 temporary register?

The Government is seeking to pass emergency legislation to establish a temporary part of the NMC register. This will allow for final year nursing students in the last six months of their nursing programme to be temporarily registered to practice by the NMC during the period of emergency.

The NMC will only consider asking student nurses whether they would like to join this emergency register if we believe that this is necessary to further benefit our health services and the people who use them. Further details about this will be made available to students on the NMC website at <https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/coronavirus/temporary-registration/>

Universities will support you in understanding the choices and options available to you at this time. As with the permanent register, your temporary registration will be listed on the NMC website.

What does it mean when it says that temporary registration has conditions of practice?

The NMC conditions of practice and proposed conditions of practice for nursing students going onto the Covid-19 temporary register state that:

You must ensure that you are supervised any time you are working. Your supervision must consist of:

- Working at all times with, but not always directly observed by, a NMC registered nurse, midwife, or other registered health care professional, who is not on a temporary register.
- You must not carry out any activity in which you have not been assessed as competent and appropriately signed off during your training unless you are supervised by NMC registered nurses, midwives, and other registered health care professionals who are not on a temporary register (unless a lifesaving intervention is required to avoid sudden and unexpected death).
- These conditions of practice would be published on the temporary register for any nursing student registrant.
- The NMC will also inform students who were opting onto the register that they would be subject to those conditions.

Will I have to pay to join the temporary register?

No – there will not be a fee to join the temporary register.

Will I be able to transition from the temporary register to the full register if the end of my programme falls during the emergency period?

In exceptional circumstances – where students are very close to meeting the requirements for full registration, it may be more appropriate for students to complete their studies and apply to the full register route than to join the temporary register.

If you join the temporary register your university will need to decide whether you have met all the outcomes of your programme. In any eventuality they will advise and support you about what you need to do to reach full registration.

What happens if someone raises a complaint about me to the regulator?

The royal colleges and trade unions have confirmed that if a nursing student enters on to an temporary register at the NMC during the crisis, and if they need legal representation for employment or regulatory issues arising from their time on those registers, their union will provide that representation even if their membership status remains that of student. Accordingly, there should be no barrier to you taking on new duties and you would not need to inform your union, and you can be confident that royal colleges and trade unions will provide you with the same support as if you had a full membership.

It should also be noted that where a concern is raised about a temporarily registered professional, the NMC will always consider the specific facts of the case, taking into account the factors relevant to the context and environment in which the professional is working. The NMC will also take account of any relevant information about resources, guidelines, or protocols in place at the time. Detail on the temporary register can be found on the NMC website

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/coronavirus/temporary-registration/>

Deployment

What will I be expected to do?

We acknowledge that you may be anxious about changes within your role especially in these unprecedented circumstances. Please be assured that there is no expectation that you will work outside of your skills or capabilities.

Where you are a temporarily registered as a nurse with the NMC up-to-date information can be accessed about the Code of Practice and other professional standards can be found on their website - <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/>

How will indemnity work?

Arrangements are in place to indemnify healthcare workers for the NHS work they already do, through state indemnity schemes operated by NHS Resolution on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. During a pandemic existing indemnity arrangement will continue. The Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts (CNST) will cover student nurses and midwives working for NHS trusts, and the Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice (CNSGP) will cover student nurses and midwives who work for general practices undertaking normal NHS contracted work. These arrangements should cover all healthcare workers for the in the majority of cases of NHS services. However, we recognise that there will be a need for

changes to working arrangements during this emergency period. We do not want indemnity to be a barrier to such changes. The Government is therefore planning to introduce additional indemnity coverage for clinical negligence liabilities that may arise when healthcare workers and others are working as part of the COVID-19 response, or undertaking NHS work to backfill others, in the event that existing arrangements (CNST, CNSGP or individual arrangements) do not cover a particular activity.

Further information regarding indemnity is available on NHSR's website:

<https://resolution.nhs.uk/2020/03/19/covid-19-and-business-continuity/>

Where can I work?

Where possible, you will be offered work at an organisation where you have undertaken a clinical placement before. There might be rare occasions where we would ask if you would consider moving to a different area to cover local needs but this will be in accordance with your identified knowledge, skills and competencies and will be discussed with you beforehand. Any such decisions will also take into account wider government advice on limiting travel.

Does the changes to my student clinical placements in the revised programme options apply to midwifery and all four fields of nursing?

Yes – this applies to all student nurses and midwives.

We will work in partnership with universities to place you in an organisation where you have undertaken a clinical placement before with the decision about your role made between you, your university and the local organisation to ensure you feel supported and able to meet the requirements of the role.

What training and support will I receive before I am deployed?

You will be provided with training prior to commencing in your role. This will include induction as appropriate to your needs and to enable you to practise safely. This is likely to include:

- The care certificate (if not already completed)
- Statutory and mandatory training
- Local induction
- Specific guidance associated with the unprecedented situation i.e. the management of coronavirus and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

For individuals joining the temporary register, you should also expect to receive a further preceptorship package to support transition from band 4 to band 5.

I have children – do I qualify as a critical worker?

The Department of Health and Social Care has confirmed to the NHS Business Services Authority that students undertaking clinical healthcare courses are

contributing to the national Covid 19 response and can confirm that these students are able to self-identify as critical workers.

If you require any evidence to support discussions with your school or childcare provider this can be obtained via your university.

What if I decide I can no longer work?

As set out in this guide opting in to work in clinical practice is voluntary. If at any time you feel unable to continue to work, you should speak to your employer and university link who can support you.

Terms and conditions

Will I get paid and how will this be agreed?

Yes, you will be remunerated for any work you do in a way that reflects the responsibilities you undertake. This will be discussed with you at the point you commence work.

Will I have a contract?

You will have a contract that incorporates the terms of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook plus any local agreements in place in the organisation to which you are deployed. A digital copy of the terms and conditions handbook can be found here:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/>

How many hours can I work?

Your working hours and pattern will be agreed between you and the organisation in which you have decided to work. This agreement will take in to account working time regulations and expectations that sufficient rest time is provided.

Will I join the NHS Pension scheme?

If you hold a contract of employment with an NHS employer and are on payroll, then you will be automatically enrolled into the NHS Pension Scheme upon starting your NHS employment.

Joining the NHS Pension Scheme allows you to get a head start on saving for retirement which you can continue throughout a future career in the NHS. Membership also provides valuable life assurance benefits whilst working for the NHS.

The pension scheme is contributory, which means that all members and their employers pay into the scheme each month. However, membership of the pension scheme is voluntary and you can decide to opt-out at any time. If you opt-out within the first pay period after starting NHS employment, you will be treated as having never joined and your contributions are refunded. Your temporary employer will be able to help you with this.

Will I be paid my student loan even though I will be working rather than being on my course?

Yes. We will treat you as being in attendance for the purpose of student finance. Payment for the third term will be made after Easter.

Will the wages I receive while working as part of the COVID-19 response affect my student loan?

No. In nearly all cases, earnings received by students during the academic year are disregarded for the purposes of calculating entitlement to maintenance loan. You

will receive your payment for the next term as normal. For the majority of students this will be for the third term and payments will be made after Easter.

I am an independent student. Will the wages I receive while working as part of the COVID-19 response affect my student loan?

No. In nearly all cases, earnings received by students during the academic year are disregarded for the purposes of calculating entitlement to maintenance loan. You will receive your payment for the next term as normal. For the majority of students this will be for the third term and payments will be made after Easter.

Your health and wellbeing

What if I'm concerned about my health, I'm pregnant, immunosuppressed, have health problems or am a primary carer?

Given the increased risks associated with COVID-19 in those with co-morbidity and in the elderly population, we would of course advise against taking up patient-facing clinical work if you belong to this group. There are a range of opportunities you may wish to consider in non-patient facing roles that may be more suited and these can be discussed in more detail as part of your bespoke offer. For more information on vulnerable groups please access [here](#).

What if I become ill when I am working or concerned that I may have coronavirus?

If you become ill while working, local policy and national guidance must be followed to ensure your safety and the safety of others. You should immediately inform your line manager and withdraw from work. You will be entitled to the same sick pay as permanent employees in the organisation you are working in. If you have concerns regarding COVID-19 please follow national guidance which you can access via [NHS111](#).

Where can I get more information?

For further information, advice or support the following may be of interest:

- [NHS111 coronavirus guidance](#)
- [NMC information for students:
https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/coronavirus/information-for-students-and-educators/](#)
- [NMC joint Statement from Chief Executives of Statutory regulators of Health and Care Professionals](#)
- [Royal College of Midwives – Coronavirus – what you need to know](#)
- [RCN publication of UK coronavirus action Plan](#)
- [Council of Deans for Health – Response to Coronavirus](#) news updates
- [Unison: your rights at work \(coronavirus\)](#)
- [Public Health England – Coronavirus Resources](#)
- [NHS Employers guidance \(include hyperlink\)](#)

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- [SLC guidance on gov.uk](#)
- [NHS BSA](#)

Annex A - Glossary

Agenda for Change - national system for pay and terms & conditions for all NHS staff, with the exception of doctors, dentists and most senior managers.

Approved Education Institutions – bodies approved by the NMC to offer educational programmes for nurses, midwives and nursing associates.

The care certificate – the Care Certificate covers the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of job roles in the health and social care sectors. It's made up of 15 minimum standards that should be covered if you are 'new to care' and should form part of a robust induction programme.

Council of Deans of Health – represents the UK's university faculties providing education and research for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals

Employee assistance – an employee benefit offered by employers and intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health and well-being.

Learning Support Fund – a programme of financial support for students to assist with the costs of dependent children, travel & accommodation and financial hardship.

NHS Business Services Authority - responsible for assessing applications to the Learning Support Fund and making payments to eligible pre-registration students.

Nursing and Midwifery Council - the professional regulator of nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associates in England. Ensure that these professionals have the knowledge and skills to deliver consistent, quality care that keeps people safe

Preceptorship – the period in which newly qualified practitioners are guided in their transition from a student and support to develop their practice further.

Statutory and mandatory training – training for staff that is required by law or a compulsory requirement of the organisation to ensure safe and effective care.

Supernumerary - students are normally considered 'supernumerary', meaning that they are not counted as part of the staffing required for safe and effective care in that setting. This ensures that students can be supported to learn and practise skills safely.

Supervision – supervision of student nurses and midwives in practice learning environments by registered nurses to ensure that students can meet the relevant learning outcomes whilst ensuring public protection

Temporary register – a new part of the NMC register, established by emergency legislation, to which nurses whose registration recently lapsed and nursing students may be admitted.