

Sent via email

To: Chief Nursing Officer / Director of Nursing

19 January 2021

Dear Colleague,

Re: NMC Emergency Standards

Following a request from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has re-introduced a set of emergency standards that enables final year nursing students (not including those in their final year of a two year post graduate diploma programme) to undertake up to 100% of their time in clinical practice, while that standard remains in effect.

The NMC emergency and recovery standards are not mandated and it will be up to each approved education institution (AEI) working with local placement providers to determine if their adoption is needed. We are all committed to minimising the disruption to student learning and, as far as possible, enabling our students to continue with their study, graduate and join the workforce as registered nurses.

These arrangements are for final year undergraduate nursing students only and do not apply to those on the shortened postgraduate entry programme or to midwifery students. The rationale for this is that the greatest need is within nursing. Additionally, nursing students, in their final year, have a greater level of experience and knowledge and will therefore be better able to maintain patient safety and their own wellbeing during their loss of supernumerary status.

Trusts will receive funding retrospectively to reimburse them for the costs of any final-year nursing students who choose to undertake a 12-week clinical placement. As costs will span two financial years, this will be reflected in the timing of funding allocations.

We are therefore writing to you to encourage you to join with your AEI partners and consider the need for this option to support your nursing workforce. In so doing you need to bear in mind the following:

- Final year students must be able to choose whether or not to move into clinical placement.
- AEIs will retain control and oversight of students and of where they are placed. This is to ensure learning outcomes are met and students on paid placements are supported to complete their learning outcomes.

- Third year students who are remunerated by employers must still be treated as students, with guidance setting out the professional accountability of the Directors of Nursing and registrants working with students. Employers will need to recognise the limits of the students' abilities, competence and confidence.
- While students working under these arrangements will not be required to be supernumerary, they must continue to be supported, supervised and assessed in line with the NMC's education and training standards.
- Students are able to practise without direct supervision in things that they have already been assessed as competent.
- Supervisors should be aware of the learning outcomes that students still need to be assessed in and enabling them to be confident to ask for supervision and support in those.
- Students must be considered as part of the workforce and supported with training, including induction supplied with appropriate PPE and be part of the vaccination and testing programme alongside substantive staff
- Universities will map their students' hours and learning outcomes to ensure students will have met the requirements to join the NMC register.
- Partners from across the health and social care system must take full responsibility for protecting Black, Asian and minority ethnic students from any additional risks they may face during clinical placements, including ensuring appropriate PPE for all students and undertaking appropriate risk assessments.

While these emergency standards remain in place, they will enable final year nursing students in areas of clinical need to choose to undertake 12-week clinical placements for up to 100% of their programmes. Working with individual students, you can agree the work hours and pattern taking into account the need for their academic study, working time directive and ensuring appropriate rest periods.

For nursing students in their first year:

The NMC has stated that although it would like first year students to continue with their practice placements, it recognises that this may not be possible. The NMC has therefore reinstated the emergency standard which allows first year nursing students to focus on academic and online learning rather than participating in clinical placements.

The emergency standards are optional for universities to adopt and, where first years can continue their placements as normal, this should be actively supported and encouraged.

For 2nd Year Students

It is acknowledged that many second-year students have been out of clinical practice in the first wave of the pandemic. Therefore, second year students will have their supernumerary status maintained.

Additionally, and in response to requests from educators and clinical placement providers to help relieve current pressures, the NMC has reintroduced one of the emergency standards in relation to Student Supervision and Assessment. This allows students to be supervised and assessed by the same person during this period. Adoption of this standard is optional.

It is critical that health education institutes and providers facilitate an effective induction and mandatory training for every student. We would remind providers of their duty of care to facilitate the wellbeing and safeguarding of allocated students. To this end, we will make available all of the free national staff wellbeing and NHS safeguarding materials.

Time should be built in for pastoral support, reflection and protected learning which the NMC expects to see to be facilitated by the AEI. Furthermore, we strongly recommend that all providers allow students to access existing restorative and resilience-based supervision sessions and listening lounges to support the students' own safeguarding. We will ensure the safeguarding adult and child designated professionals, named safeguarding practitioners and provider safeguarding teams are available to offer advice and support in this regard.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Radford
Chief Nurse,
Health Education England
& Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for
England



Ruth May
Chief Nursing Officer, England