



**School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Undergraduate Nursing & Midwifery Students**

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**Glossary**

PLE	Practice Learning Experience (or Environment)
PLSP	Practice Learning Support Protocol (formerly Cause for Concern)

## **1. Introduction**

This policy has been developed to contribute to the requirements for attendance monitoring in order to comply with the professional requirements of the courses/programmes.

As an approved provider of Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) courses/programmes, the School is required to evidence that it has robust processes for monitoring students' attendance to meet the required standards.

The NMC states that students on all nursing and midwifery course/programmes must meet the required level of attendance and demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes for both theory and practice. This is vital for entry onto the appropriate part of the NMC Register.

It is acknowledged that during any period of study there may be times when students are unable to attend theory or practice due to ill health or personal reasons. Throughout the course/programme students can access advice and support from the Course/Programme Team and the University's Student Services which are outlined in the student handbook.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all undergraduate nursing and midwifery students.

Students on post graduate courses/programmes with practice learning experiences (PLEs) will have a duty to inform their employer as per their absence protocol. Postgraduate students should also let their module co-ordinator or personal tutor know so that support can be offered as necessary, including advice about course work and make-up time on PLE.

Students on the Return to Practice programme will be advised by their Course Leader.

## **3. Principles of Policy**

The following principles will apply:

- HEI staff and practice partners will implement the attendance policy consistently, fairly and transparently.
- Students will be given clear and unambiguous information relevant to the attendance requirements of the course/programme.
- Students will adhere to the Attendance Policy and seek support as required.

- Exemptions to the Attendance Policy will be considered and may be applied when exceptional circumstances occur.

## **4. Course/Programme Requirements**

### **4.1 University Attendance**

Students who attend a course/programme of study that leads to a professional qualification are required to attend all timetabled sessions and engage in all learning opportunities associated with timetabled classes.

### **4.2 Punctuality**

Given the potential for class disruption, as highlighted in student feedback, students are expected to attend all scheduled classes on time. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late may not be permitted to enter the classroom dependent on nature of class; however, they will still have access to online material via CampusMoodle. Late arrivals will be considered on an individual basis.

Module team members will contact personal tutors if punctuality is a persistent concern. Personal tutors will then contact students to discuss concerns.

### **4.3 Mandatory Training**

All students must attend all scheduled and timetabled mandatory training sessions and annual updates. Students will not be permitted to commence PLE if they fail to attend.

### **4.4 Attendance in Practice**

It is an NMC requirement that undergraduate nursing and midwifery students undertake learning that reflects the 24 hour, 7 day a week delivery of care. For example, in hospitals shifts are normally 12.5 hours in length, commencing at 07:00, and in community 8 hours per day. Students should normally undertake the shift pattern of the PLE they are attending and will be allocated their off duty. Students should not self-roster, must comply with the off duty and access the usual request process of the PLE area if a specific duty request is required. The only exceptions to compliance with normal shift patterns would be for students with protected characteristics or reasonable adjustments, or who are under 18 years of age.

Students must be aware that, although there are a minimum number of hours of attendance required to be graded in each PLE and to complete the course/programme, these are minimum limits and students are required to attend all hours allocated for each PLE.

Appendix 1 outlines the School's procedures for monitoring achievement of clinical hours which ensures NMC requirements for attendance in practice are met.

## **4.5 Leave Entitlements**

### **4.5.1 Annual Leave Entitlement**

The annual leave dates are pre-determined within the course/programme timetable and are designed by the Course/Programme Team at the University. Students receive annual leave dates on a yearly basis. If the University makes changes to the course/programme which impact on annual leave dates, students will be informed. If these changes affect pre-booked holidays, they will be honoured if students can provide evidence that booking was made prior to being informed of course/programme changes.

Any periods of leave taken out with timetabled annual leave periods will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **4.5.2 Public Holidays**

Students are expected to follow the rostered shift pattern whilst on PLE; this may include public holidays. The actual hours undertaken should be recorded on the student's timesheet. In the event of lost hours due to service closure, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Guidance*).

### **4.5.3 Make-up Time Guidance**

The Make-up Time Guidance is relevant for students undertaking **undergraduate courses/programmes only**.

Within their programme/course students must undertake a pre-determined number of practice hours as per the relevant professional body standards or programme/course requirements. This can result in students having to retrieve hours lost during the programme/course at the end of their programme/course.

The aim of this policy is to provide students with the opportunity to reduce the amount of time they must make up at the end of the programme/ course by arranging additional hours in practice during their allocated practice learning experiences throughout their programme/course.

This policy normally only applies to periods of absence from practice, which are either due to sickness or authorised absence. Further information relating to absence management is available on the practice education webpages.

## Procedure

If carrying out additional hours in practice, the following must apply:

- It is the student's responsibility to know how much sickness or authorised absence they have had in practice.
- It is the student's responsibility to negotiate additional hours with the Team Leader/Charge Nurse/Midwife/PEF in the practice area.
- The EU working time directive must be adhered to – on average no more than 48 hours worked per week (a maximum of 50 hours will be credited per week\*).
- The additional hours must be agreed with the practice learning environment in advance and the student must be added to the duty rota, supported by an identified Practice Supervisor/Practice Assessor.
- It is recommended that no more than 160 hours of 'make-up' time is carried out within an academic year in order to ensure the additional hours being undertaken do not affect the student's performance.

\* the only exception to this is when the practice learning environment's normal working pattern exceeds this e.g. ICU, midwifery students called in to provide continuity of care.

### 4.5.4 Authorised Absence

The term 'authorised absence' refers to unscheduled, specific time off from a course/programme that is approved by designated individuals on behalf of the Course/Programme Management Team.

Normally, authorised absence is requested by students and approved by a designated individual. It is the student's responsibility to inform the relevant designated individual of the need for authorised absence at the earliest opportunity. Where necessary, students should continue to communicate with the individual who has approved the authorised absence to inform them of any further issues or developments in their circumstances.

When on PLE students should, in the first instance, request a change to their allocated days off or shift pattern as specified on the scheduled 'off-duty' rota. This will minimise the need for authorised absence and the loss of attendance hours. Authorised absence will be approved where this is not feasible and where students' needs relate to a category specified within this policy (see 5.0 Authorised Absence Provision).

Please note that authorised absence will result in loss of clinical hours and may result in make-up time being required at the end of the course/programme (see *4.5.3. Make-up Time Guidance*).

#### **4.6 Designated Individuals**

Normally, the personal tutor (when students are based within the University) or the named Practice Supervisor/Practice Assessor (PS/PA) (when students are based within a PLE) will approve authorised absence for students. PLE staff, however, may decide that the area manager will authorise absences rather than the PS/PA. In exceptional circumstances other designated individuals may authorise absence for students. [Other designated individuals include: personal tutor buddy, course/programme leader or deputy, PLE manager or deputy, practice educator, practice education facilitator, practice education lecturer, Principal Lecturer or Dean.]

#### **4.7 Non-attendance/Non-engagement**

Any concerns that are raised regarding students' attendance on their course/programme will be brought to the attention of the relevant course/programme leader.

Many undergraduate nursing and midwifery students receive payments from the Scottish Government Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary Award. The provision of the bursary carries with it a responsibility to ensure students fully engage with their studies. Bursary payments will be suspended for unmitigated absences from the course/programme.

In instances where persistent non-attendance or non-engagement with online learning has occurred for any reason, students may be subject to a non-academic misconduct or Fitness to Practise hearing which may lead to their discontinuation from the course/programme.

#### **4.8 Absence and Bursary Regulations**

Under SAAS regulations, bursary may not continue for more than 12 weeks when a student is absent from their course/programme, either due to illness or for any other reason. (All absences due to illness must be either self certificated or supported by medical certification. Absence for any other reason should be authorised by the course/programme leader.) All students will be asked to suspend their course/programme after a 12 week absence and their bursary will be stopped.

Bursary continuation may be approved for students on temporary suspension of studies (TSS) from the course/programme who meet the necessary conditions.



## 5. Authorised Absence Provision

### 5.1 Personal Events

#### 5.1.1 Serious Illness/Bereavement

This category refers to circumstances that relate to serious illness, acute need or death of a family member, dependant or close friend. Normally up to one week authorised absence can be approved for circumstances specified above. Individual needs vary however and students may not require a full week. Alternatively, an extension of this time can also be approved. The following factors should be taken into account:

- The relationship of the student to the individual who is ill or has died;
- The student's need to travel; or
- The student's responsibilities for an individual who is ill, or the estate when an individual has died.

Where it is envisaged that authorised absence may be required beyond 14 working days, the course/programme leader should be consulted to determine whether changes to the student's course/programme is feasible, or whether temporary suspension of study is a more appropriate option. Where these options are not viable, the course/programme leader will approve longer periods of authorised absence where this is deemed necessary.

On return to the course/programme following authorised absence in this category, personal tutors, practice teachers or mentors should meet with students to review their progress on the course/programme. Consideration should be given at this meeting to the student's need for support. Students should be encouraged to access relevant support services.

#### 5.1.2 Personal Health Issues

This category refers to circumstances that relate to the need to secure emergency dental or medical care or treatment and does not include routine appointments for check-ups or ongoing treatments unless this requires attending appointments with specialist medical practitioners, or the need to have specialist investigations.

Students must endeavour to arrange for such appointments to take place out with programmed University attendance or the planned duty rota on PLEs; however, it is acknowledged that this can be difficult to achieve. During PLEs a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested.

In the event of lost hours due to health related appointments, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Guidance*).

### 5.1.3 Other Personal Circumstances

This category refers to occasions where students may need to consult other professionals about personal events, such as solicitors, or be legally required to attend meetings, e.g. court appearances (not jury service). This category does not include attending job interviews or training associated with jobs or driving tests: These events need to be arranged during the student's own time.

Students must endeavour to arrange such appointments out with programmed University attendance or the planned duty rota on PLEs. It is acknowledged, however, that this can be difficult to achieve. During PLEs a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested in the first instance to avoid the requirement for authorised absence.

In the event of lost hours due to service closure, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see *4.5.3. Make-up Time Guidance*).

For attendance at social events during PLEs, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested. In the event of lost hours due to such absences, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see *4.5.3. Make-up Time Guidance*).

When attending University, the student should contact their personal tutor to discuss authorised absence. Authorised absence should be kept to a minimum in such circumstances; approval can be given for authorised absence ranging from a ½ day to 2 days (where travel is involved and students are a close relative or are playing a key role in the event).

## 5.2 Unforeseen or Emergency Situations

### 5.2.1 Domestic Situations

This category refers to circumstances that are unforeseen and where urgent attention is required to secure the situation and prevent ongoing issues. Such circumstances include break-in to the home, fire, burst pipes or flooding, car theft or accident.

During PLEs a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested in the first instance. Normally, authorised absence ranging from ½ day to a full day can be approved for the circumstances specified above.

In the event of lost hours, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see *4.5.3. Make-up Time Guidance*).

### 5.2.2 Severe Weather

During theory time the University will communicate with students any changes to scheduled classes.

During PLEs when there is no evidence of police advice not to travel, all reasonable attempts should be made to attend. In the event of police advice not to travel within a particular geographical area and public transport is compromised, in the first instance, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be negotiated. Where the above is not possible, the actual hours worked should be recorded on the student's timesheet.

Where severe weather results in child care issues for students, every effort should be made to make alternative arrangements for child care to prevent loss of clinical hours. If this is not possible, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested. Where the above is not possible, the actual hours worked should be recorded on the student's timesheet.

In the event of lost hours due to adverse weather, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see *4.5.3. Make-up Time Guidance*).

### 5.2.3 Carer Arrangements

The term 'carer' within this policy is defined as students who have a dependant/s who normally live in the same house, e.g. spouse/partner, child, parent, grandparent or other relative, and who take responsibility for the day to day care of the dependant/s. It is noted that there may be carer arrangements that may not fully reflect the above definition and these will be considered on an individual basis.

This category addresses circumstances where unforeseen or urgent issues related to planned care arrangements arise. This may be the breakdown of care arrangements or developments that challenge usual care arrangements, e.g. child becomes ill, or parent is unexpectedly discharged from hospital to student's care.

During PLEs a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested in the first instance. Normally, authorised absence, ranging from ½ day to 2 days, can be approved for the circumstances specified above and such authorised absence is designed to enable the student to make alternative arrangements for care. The actual hours worked should be recorded on the student's timesheet.

In the event of lost hours due to carer commitments, the student should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time guidance (see *4.5.3. Make-up Time Guidance*).

Where care arrangements become problematic, are ongoing and impact on students' regular attendance and ability to meet the course/programme requirements, students will be requested to discuss their options with their personal tutor in the first instance.

## **6. Attendance at Conferences/Leadership Events**

Students may be given the opportunity to attend conferences or other events during their programme. If approved attendance falls during scheduled theory time, the hours will be recorded as theory. Attendance that falls within a scheduled PLE will only be accredited if it is possible within the relevant course regulations and can be mapped to relevant course proficiencies. Travel time to these events will not be credited.

## **7. Recording of Absence**

### **7.1 Authorised Absence**

In all cases where authorised absence is approved, the designated individual as defined within this policy, should complete the Authorised Absence form, available from: [www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning)

The completed form should be submitted as soon as possible to Room H510 or scanned and emailed to: [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk)

Where authorised absence from PLE has been approved, support/administration staff will inform personal tutors of the authorised absence, length of approved absence and reason for absence. Personal tutors will be able to determine whether additional support may be necessary for students.

### **7.2 Recording and reporting attendance to meet programme requirements**

Within the University students are expected to register attendance at on-campus and online teaching events using the Attendr App – see: [Course: Attendance and Engagement \(rgu.ac.uk\)](http://rgu.ac.uk/course/attendance-and-engagement)

All students are expected to attend all timetabled classes unless exceptional circumstances prevent them from doing so.

During PLEs students are required to record the actual hours worked on timesheets. The timesheets are verified by a designated individual in practice and submitted on completion of the PLE. All completed timesheets should be emailed to [SNMPRecords@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:SNMPRecords@rgu.ac.uk).

### 7.3 Recording and Reporting Sickness and Absence

**If students are unable to attend a University class**, they must follow this procedure:

- Email [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk) soon as possible to inform the School of their absence providing an anticipated duration of absence if known.
- Alternatively, students can report absence using the Attendr App – see: [Course: Attendance and Engagement \(rgu.ac.uk\)](#)
- Email the [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk) to report return to University.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the information is relayed promptly and accurately.

**If students are unable to attend a PLE**, they must follow this procedure:

- Telephone the PLE as early as possible before commencement of the shift.
- Provide anticipated duration of the absence if known.
- Record the name of the person taking the message.
- Record the date and time the telephone call was made.
- Email the [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk) as soon as possible informing the School of their absence with an approximate date of return if known.
- When fit enough to return from sickness, students must contact the PLE (ideally at least 12 hours before commencement of their next shift).
- Email the [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk) to report return to PLE.

Within the nursing and midwifery courses/programmes sickness is recorded when students do not attend theory or practice because of ill health and have followed the procedure outlined above for notification of sickness.

An absence is recorded if students are absent from theory or practice and fail to notify the appropriate personnel using the relevant procedure as outlined above. Unauthorised absences should not occur during any part of the programme.

Failure to notify the University or PLE area of sickness will result in students being recorded as absent.

#### 7.3.1 Certification

If students are off sick for up to 7 days, a self-certificate should be completed, available from: [www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning)

The completed form should be submitted to Room H510 or scanned and emailed to: [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk)

If students are off sick for 8 or more consecutive days, they must obtain a medical certificate from their General Practitioner. This certificate should be sent to Room H510 or scanned and emailed to the [snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk) where it will be held in the student's file.

## **8. Guidance for Managing Students' Attendance in Practice**

The processes relating to reporting absence within this policy should be followed. On return to the PLE following any period of absence a 'return to placement' discussion should take place between the student and their PS/PA or PLE manager. Please consider the following:

### **8.1 Before the discussion**

- Identify if there are any patterns or trends in the absence e.g. on, before or after days off/annual leave, same day each week.
- Ensure fairness and consistency.
- Consult the practice team - Practice Education Facilitator (PEF), Practice Educator or Practice Education Lecturer (PEL), in the event of 3 or more absences within the PLE to consider whether a [Practice Learning Support Protocol \(PLSP\)](#) (internal-only access) should be instigated.
- Consult the practice team to instigate a PLSP if the student has repeatedly failed to adhere to the processes outlined within this policy.

### **8.2 During the discussion**

- Reasons for absence should be discussed and can be recorded in general terms e.g. health issues, personal issues. The student may not wish to divulge exact details of the circumstances of their absence.
- Summarise the actions to be taken.
- Note that the discussion has taken place and any agreed actions within the student's practice assessment documentation.
- If a PLSP has been instigated, the required documentation should be completed during discussion.

### **8.3 After the discussion**

- Monitor and review regularly, informing the practice team if repeated absences occur.

- If a PLSP has been instigated, the required documentation should be sent to the relevant PEL.

Recurrent or unauthorised absence from practice and/or repeated failure to follow the absence reporting procedures may result in the PLE area raising a PLSP.

Relevant documentation is available from the Practice Learning Support Protocol and Raising Concerns section on the Practice Learning webpage:

[www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning)

The Practice Education Team can offer guidance as required.

## Appendix 1 - Monitoring and Achievement of Clinical Hours

- All programmes are allocated more clinical hours than required to meet the NMC minimum requirement of 2300 hours.
- All undergraduate student clinical hours achieved within practice learning experiences (PLEs) are recorded on a timesheet which is verified by Practice Supervisor/Practice Assessor/Practice Educator/PLE Manager.
- Timesheets are submitted at the end of each PLE by students to [snmprecords@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:snmprecords@rgu.ac.uk) and totals are recorded in the InPlace placement database by the Registry & Records Team.
- Students are advised by Practice Education Lecturers during preparation for practice sessions to keep a copy of their timesheet prior to submitting to the School as this enables them to monitor their achievement of clinical hours.
- Students are informed of the School make-up time guidance – a maximum of 160 clinical hours can be completed using make-up time guidance in each academic year.
- Clinical hours achieved across the programme are totalled at the end of the 1st Stage 3 PLE by the Registry & Records Team. An estimate is made of hours that will be achieved by the student by the end of their programme/course.
- Prior to commencing 2nd Stage 3 PLE, students are sent a spreadsheet showing each PLE completed to date, the hours achieved at each PLE, total number of hours and estimated hours on completion. If estimated total is less than 2300, student will require make up time.
- At this point, the Make-up Time Guidance is re-iterated to students as they may be able to complete some additional hours in the final PLE to negate the need for make-up time at the end of their programme.