

# Scottish Cluster Dietetic Placements

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## Scottish Dietetic Practice Placement Allocation Policy-

### Key points for students 2023-24

Since October 2004 the three Universities within Scotland training student Dietitians (Queen Margaret University (QMU), Robert Gordon University (RGU), and Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)) work as one to manage and allocate dietetic practice placements throughout Scotland.

In order to maximise placement supply within Scotland and in a bid to manage demand throughout the year, practice placements are grouped in cohorts. The A, B and C practice placement cohorts accessed by the three Universities programmes are detailed in the table below. Each University will inform students on which cohorts they are most likely to be allocated along with the earliest and latest placement start dates for each placement block.

**Table 1: ABC Cohorts for 2023**

A	<b>Winter (January)</b> QMU (PG) QMU (UG)	<b>Summer (May – September)</b> GCU (UG) RGU (UG)
B	<b>Spring (April)</b> QMU (UG) RGU (UG)	<b>Summer (June)</b> GCU (UG) QMU (PG)
C	<b>Winter (January)</b> QMU (UG) GCU (UG) cohort B	<b>Autumn (September)</b> GCU (UG) cohort A QMU (PG) RGU (UG)

### Applications

Applications for each placement required in 2023 are made at the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year (normally September). Programme/Placement Tutors support students to complete their practice placement application form. Application forms are signed by students indicating that all the information is correct and that they have read and agree to abide by the terms and conditions of the allocation process. Application forms are confidentially held by individual Universities and securely destroyed in accordance with local University data protection processes.

### Applications for the individual matching of placements

It is acknowledged that some students may have particular needs, which in some instances can only be supported by the student undertaking their practice placement(s) in a specific location. Students are requested to complete an individual matching of practice placement application form and to provide evidence to support their application. Students can only make a case for this based on the criteria given below:

- student with young/school age children or with other family responsibilities e.g. sole carer of an older relative
- student with health problems that requires individual matching of placement due to those specific health grounds.

It should be noted that individual matching is not always granted and an approved application for individual matching allocation does not guarantee a placement.

An individually matched placement allocation is normally based on the principle of a placement allocation approximately no more than 70 miles from permanent home or University address dependent on individual circumstances and on placement availability.

Students are required to provide a supporting statement outlining their specific needs and provide relevant supporting evidence, which may or may not include the need for supporting information from a medical practitioner.

Individual matching forms and associated supporting evidence are held and destroyed by individual University Tutors in accordance with local data protection processes. The Scottish Dietetic Placement Administrator will only be informed of whether a student has individual matching status or not.

Applications which fail to provide supporting evidence, for example the evidence is missing or it cannot be verified will result in the application being declined.

Evidence, which is subsequently proven to be false and has resulted in a placement allocation will result in that practice placement being withdrawn and the student will be placed at the bottom of any existing waiting list to be allocated a placement only after all other students (including those from other Universities and Programmes) have been allocated placements. Such students may also be referred to their University Fitness to Practice/Non-academic Misconduct procedures'

Students are required to keep Programme/Placement Tutors informed of any changes in circumstance either qualifying or disqualifying them.

### **Process of allocating placements**

- For the purposes of the Scottish placement allocation system all practice placements in Scotland are considered to be local to all of the three Universities within Scotland
- Each University in line with their demand/cohort requirements is initially allocated a random selection of placements from those placements available
- Students are then allocated to placements as per their own Universities processes.

### **Declining a Practice Placement**

There are implications for future progression should a placement allocation be declined by a student (see below). In order to avoid the unnecessary declining of a placement allocation, students are strongly advised **not** to make travel/holiday plans until they have been allocated a placement **and** a start date has been confirmed with the individual Practice Provider.

Students who decline an allocated practice placement(s) will be placed at the bottom of any existing waiting list for an alternative placement. A further offer will only be made once all other students above them on the waiting list (including those unallocated from other Universities) accessing that cohort time have been allocated placements. Students are strongly recommended to discuss all such decisions with their course tutor. **NB** this does not apply to unallocated students who qualify for an individual matching of a placement.

Students who decline an allocated placement due to a change in their circumstances which then qualifies them for an individual matching of a placement will be offered an alternative placement subject to availability. The necessary evidence must be provided and submitted to the Practice Placement Administrator to support such a change.

### **Informing Programme/Placement Tutors of changes in personal circumstances**

Students are responsible for informing their Programme/Placement tutor of any issues which may affect practice placement allocation. This may include: changes in personal circumstance which may qualify or disqualify them for individual matching of a practice placement or affect the completion of a practice placement in the time allocated; a personal decision to defer undertaking a practice placement or withdrawal from the course.

### **Exam Failure**

Students who have been allocated a placement and subsequently fail any of their required pre placement examinations (reference should be made to individual University regulations) will lose their allocated placement and be suspended from the allocation process until all the relevant examinations have been retrieved. Students who subsequently retrieve the required examinations will then be reinstated into the allocation system to await the allocation of a placement at the next available cohort time accessed by their University and their Programme (UG/PG) after all other students progressing normally. **NB** This also applies to students requiring individual matching of a placement.

### **Alterations to Practice Placement Allocations**

The Scottish placement administrator may be required to make a change to allocated practice placements due to the practice placement no longer being available. Students will only be reallocated by the Placements Administrator if there is an alternative practice placement available. Every effort is made to identify practice placements for students whose initial practice placements have been withdrawn. Although this is subject to availability these students will be prioritised over other students on the waiting list. Students will be notified of any changes to practice placement allocation by their course tutor.

### **Unallocated students**

Whilst the Universities use their best endeavours to place students within their normal allocated cohort there may be from time to time a shortfall of practice placements in Scotland and therefore this cannot be guaranteed and some students therefore may not be allocated practice placements at the time they require them. Students in this situation are described as “unallocated” and placed on a priority waiting list for a placement as and when additional placements become available. Although it is recognised by all Stakeholders that this may delay progression the Universities continue to work with NHS Education Scotland, NHS Scotland and individual Health Boards to identify practice placements for all students concerned and will make every effort to place the student as soon as possible to minimise disruptions to student progression this cannot be guaranteed. The Programme/Placement tutor will keep the student informed regarding the situation. Students should discuss any concerns regarding practice placements with their Programme/Placement tutor.

### **Finance on placement**

Practice Placement expenses e.g. travel and accommodation are not met by either Health Boards or Universities. However students funded by SAAS may be able to claim expenses incurred as a consequence of Practice Placements. Further information is available directly from SAAS.

Students with concerns about additional costs in relation to practice placement(s) should in the first instance discuss this with their course/placement tutor who may be able to advise on alternative student funding sources.

### **Living accommodation on placement**

Placement Providers are under no obligation to provide accommodation for students. If a placement cannot offer accommodation and students are unfamiliar with the area students are advised to contact Practice Providers directly who may be able to advise students on the area and local accommodation.

### **Practice Placement Approval**

All practice placements within Scotland must be approved by the agreed Universities and cluster approval and monitoring mechanisms. This is administered on a Scottish wide basis by the Universities. All NHS Boards involved in training are aware of this and subscribe to the approval, monitoring and practice placement allocation processes.

**NB** In accordance with University approval & monitoring processes students can only undertake placements with approved practice placement providers

**All placements are allocated as defined by existing policy and at no point should students contact practice placement providers directly to negotiate (or modify their own training), as such actions will not influence allocations made. Those students that do so will be referred back to their University.**

Further information (including the full allocation policy document) can be found at the Scottish Dietetic Placement website: [www.rgu.ac.uk/dietetic-placements-scotland](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/dietetic-placements-scotland)