

# **Nursing and midwifery student placements suspended to redeploy qualified nurses and midwives to support COVID-19 response**

From [Department of Health](#)

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- **decision to suspend nursing and midwifery student placements for 1st to 3rd year to facilitate redeployment of additional qualified nurses and midwives to support the COVID-19 response**
- **Minister reassures Student Nurses and Midwives that all options shall be examined to resume clinical student placements as soon as possible**

Qualified nurses and midwives are to be released from the supervision and educational support of student nurses and midwives to assist with the COVID-19 response.

In response to the current surge of COVID-19, and its impact on staffing across the health service, particularly in critical care areas, all options to maximise the workforce are being actioned.

The HSE has requested that experienced and qualified staff who currently support undergraduate training for students in Years 1-3 are released for redeployment as part of the COVID-19 response.

In light of this development, all clinical placements for student nurses and midwives in Years 1-3 will be suspended for a period of at least two weeks from January 18, 2021, as there will be no educational and support infrastructure for them while in the clinical learning environment.

This is an evolving situation and is under constant review in the context of the current COVID-19 demand trajectory.

At present, student nurses and midwives in Years 1-3 are supernumerary and their clinical education is in addition to the normal or requisite number of qualified nurses or midwives.

The temporary suspension of these student placements will free up clinical placement co-ordinators, practice co-ordinators, as well as nurses and midwives working in other educational and policy development roles so they can support the HSE at this challenging time.

Students in Year 4, the final year before qualification, are counted for rostering purposes as 0.5 of a fulltime equivalent nurse/midwife. Student nurse and midwife placements for interns,

who are in fourth year, will continue with the appropriate education and support infrastructure in place.

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD said:

"I would like to thank all student nurses and midwives for their ongoing commitment to the future of our health services. This is an uncertain time for them and I know many will be disappointed by this news. I would like to reassure them that all options will be considered in re-starting these placements as soon as it is possible."

Rachel Kenna, Chief Nursing Officer in the Department of Health, said:

"I recognise the enormous commitment students have made in participating in the clinical learning environments at a very challenging time. The education of student nurses and midwives is a priority for all of us, but this must be done safely, with the appropriate supports and supervision structures in place."

In making this decision, the Chief Nursing Officer is engaging with the HSE, the Higher Education Institutes and the regulator, to ensure that the impact of this decision is minimized for all nursing and midwifery students.

In addition, the Department of Health is engaging with the student nurse and midwife representative organisations this evening advising them of this development, and they will be kept regularly informed of further developments on this matter.

The HSE's Office of the Nursing & Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD), Senior Nurses and Midwives from clinical services, the Chief Nursing Office (CNO) in the Department of Health and the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) support this position.

**ENDS**

## **Notes**

### **What a clinical placement is, and why student nurses and midwives need to undertake them**

A Clinical placement represents the practice experience of a student's undergraduate programme where he/she will develop the practical knowledge, clinical skills and professional values required to meet the standards to qualify and to join the professional register.

### **Why supernumerary placements are so important**

The student nurses and midwives practice experience must be gained under the supervision of a registered nurse. The nurses and midwives providing the supervision are called preceptors and, have completed additional training to meet the clinical placement education needs of their students. Supernumerary status means that the student is not included in the workforce numbers of the clinical area and that they do not carry a clinical caseload. This ensures

protected learning, essential to support students in gaining the range of skills and experience needed for qualification.

### **What the difference is between supernumerary and internship placement**

Nursing and midwifery students get a chance to apply some of what they have learned when they do their final placement which is called their internship. The internship is a continual 36-week rostered clinical placement. Depending on the programme, students will get opportunities to learn in practice in a variety of health care settings the intern placement is a paid placement as the student nurses and midwives can take a reduced caseload. During the Internship placement students remain under supervision and are considered as 0.5 WTE of the workforce. This is to ensure a lighter patient case load, maximising patient and student safety with supported learning throughout. Throughout the internship placement the students must have a preceptor to monitor their clinical progress and supervise their patient caseload.

### **Can student nurses be used to replace registered nurses**

No. Students are not qualified registered practitioners and cannot be responsible for a patient caseload. Registered nurses or midwives cannot be replaced by students.