SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK BSc (Hons) Nursing (all fields): ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Students on the BSc (Hons) Nursing programme are subject to a number of attendance regulations. These are underpinned by University of Hull programme regulations and statutory requirements linked to Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards for nurse education.

This document summarises the requirements of the programme, and outlines the processes for reporting absence, making up missed time and escalating concerns regarding student attendance.

Attendance regulations and requirements

The NMC is required by an Act of Parliament to satisfy itself that all persons admitted to the nursing register have received adequate training and experience. As a result, the NMC Standards for Education stipulate that any student wishing to join the register must have completed at least 4600 hours of preregistration nurse education, split equally between theory and clinical practice over the 3-year duration of the programme.

The BSc (Hons) Nursing programme has been developed to ensure that the 4600-hour threshold is reached. In addition, the design of the programme allows students to be absent for up to 75 hours each year (37.5 hours each of practice and theory) and still meet the NMC requirements for registration. Any time missed above this threshold will impact on a student's ability to register.

The expectation of students on the programme is that they will attend all timetabled sessions (including introductory and other sessions delivered during assessment periods) and will attend the requisite number of placement hours per semester (as outlined in the practice documentation). Where time is allocated for directed study, students are expected to complete the prescribed activities; failure to do so would result in directed study hours being marked as 'absent'. Students should be aware that all absences from theory and practice are reported to potential employers within academic references.

For the purpose of the programme, a 'theory' week consists of 40 hours made up of taught and self-directed study time; a 'practice' week consists of 37.5 hours, usually made up of five 7.5 hour shifts or the local equivalent in 'long day' shifts.

Students are required by the NMC to participate in 24-hour care of patients/clients during the course of the programme. This means working a range of shift patterns, including early, late, night shifts and weekends (where the working patterns of the placement area facilitate this). Some practice placements work predominantly 12.5 hour shifts, and whilst students are encouraged to attend for the full duration of such shifts, they are not obliged to. Students should seek to confirm their shift patterns on placement at least two weeks in advance and should document these within the formal record of 'off-duty' in line with local processes.

Monitoring of attendance

The School has a number of mechanisms for monitoring and documenting attendance in theory and practice. Any attempts by students to falsify registers of attendance or completed hours of practice

will be considered a serious offence and lead to investigation utilising the University's disciplinary regulations.

Attendance at theory sessions

Attendance in the classroom is monitored by students scanning their Student ID card into an electronic register or signing a hard copy register. Usually, registers are completed at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session; however, the member of staff responsible for managing the learning environment may choose to do this at different (or additional) times during the teaching day.

Failure to scan an ID card or sign a register will result in a student being marked as absent for that session. Students will, on occasions, forget or lose their ID cards, so will be present at a session but be unable to 'scan in'. When this occurs, students have a responsibility to approach the lecturer at the start of the session to explain the situation. At the end of a lecture, students should ask the lecturer to sign and date their session notes – this will serve as the evidence required to make up theory time (see later).

Where students arrive late at a session, the amount of time missed should be documented by the lecturer on the form accompanying the register. Repeated late attendance by a student may result in disciplinary action.

Where cohorts are split into specific groups for lectures, students must ensure that they attend with their designated group. Failure to do so may result in the electronic register marking them as absent.

Attendance in practice

Attendance on clinical practice is logged by the student in their practice documentation and verified by their mentor, associate mentor or nurse-in-charge. Where possible, completion of attendance records in practice should be contemporaneous – it is not good practice to retrospectively complete attendance logs at the end of a placement experience.

Notification and recording of absence

Where students are absent from either theory or practice, they are expected to inform the relevant parties as soon as possible. It is not acceptable for a student to be absent without informing the University and/or practice placement in advance without good reason. For monitoring and reporting processes, absence will be classed as either: Sickness, Personal reasons (e.g. absence on compassionate grounds),Un-notified absence (where students fail to attend without any notification)

Notification of absence from theory

When students are going to be absent from theory sessions, they should notify the Faculty via the Student Hub. Telephone: 01482 463342, Email: fhs-studenthub@hull.ac.uk.

Notification of absence from practice

When students are going to be absent from practice placement, they should notify the placement area directly (speaking, if possible, to the nurse-in-charge or their mentor) and inform the University via the Student Hub. Students on placement should also adhere to specific practice area policies on sickness/absence reporting. Text messages and social media are not acceptable mechanisms for notifying practice colleagues of absence.

Supporting evidence

Students who are absent from theory or practice for 7 days or less (including non-working days) are able to 'self-certify', whether this is due to sickness or personal reasons. Beyond this length of time, students absent due to sickness must provide medical evidence to the University in the form of a fit note from their General Practitioner.

Where students are absent for more than 7 days due to personal reasons (e.g. due to bereavement), either third party evidence must be provided and/or support for the absence must be provided by the student's Academic Support Tutor (AST).

Recording of absence

Whether due to sickness, personal issues or un-notified absence, recorded theory absence will only equate to the amount of time actually missed. For example, if a student phones in sick for a theory day on which they have two 50-minute lectures, they will be marked as absent for 1hr and 40mins, rather than the full 8-hour day. On practice placements, the time recorded as absent will mirror the length of shift missed.

Where absence is recorded for defined periods of directed study, this will reflect the length of time allocated on the module timetable. For example, if students are given a full day to complete a task, then any student failing to complete the work will have 8 hours' absence recorded.

Monitoring of absence

Programme administrators maintain an overview of student absence on a day-to-day basis and will escalate any concerns to other members of programme team (see 'escalation and management of absence concerns').

ASTs should discuss attendance records with students as a standard element of tutorials. This information can be accessed via the Nurse Training System (NTS) and Academic Information System (AIS). The former includes a record of all time missed and made up; the latter an attendance record for theory sessions. A brief summary of the student's level of absence (and any necessary interventions) should be included in the tutorial record. ASTs will be required to disclose total days/hours of student absence (even where time has been made up) within any references requested by prospective employers.

Students are encouraged to maintain personal records of attendance and absence. Printouts of the attendance records may be obtained from the Student Hub on request.

Making up theory and practice hours

The design of the programme allows students to be absent for up to 75 hours each year (37.5 hours each of practice and theory) and still meet the NMC requirements for registration. Where levels of absence go beyond these limits, students will need to make up the excess time.

Student attendance is evaluated at the end of each academic year. Where students have excessive absence, their end-of-year results letter will contain a plan of action identifying the number of hours they must make up, along with a specified timeframe to do so.

Making up practice time

The arrangements for making up missed practice hours will vary depending on a range of factors, such as the amount of time absent and the point in the placement in which the student was absent. Given the amount of variability, only general principles can be identified here – specific situations will need to be addressed in consultation between the student, the mentor, practice support staff (i.e. practice learning facilitators or clinical skills tutors), University link lecturers and ASTs. There are two questions to be explored in relation to making up practice hours:

does the student need to make the time up? At what stage can the time be made up?

Does the student need to make time up?

Where a student has missed occasional shifts during a placement, there may be no need to make up this time. The decision on whether time should be made up (and how much time) during the placement depends on three factors:

 Minimum time required on placement. The absolute minimum number of hours to be worked in any placement is 150 (i.e. equivalent to 4 weeks of full-time attendance). Completion of fewer than 150 hours will result in a mentor being unable to make a decision on whether the student has passed the placement. In turn, this will result in the student requiring an additional period of practice, usually following a period of intercalation. Students therefore need to make up enough time to reach this threshold.

Mentor's views on student progress. Even when a student has completed the minimum of 150 hours, a mentor may feel that they have not worked sufficient time with a student to sign off practice documentation. This will certainly be the case if the mentor has not worked 40% of shifts with students, as outlined in practice documentation. In these cases, the amount of time to be made up will be agreed between the mentor, student and practice support staff. If the student does not make up the time suggested by the mentor, then this may result in practice being failed.

Time missed over the course of the academic year. It is good practice to ensure that missed practice hours are not allowed to mount up as the year progresses. Students are therefore advised to make up time above and beyond the 37.5-hour threshold as soon as possible.

When can the student make time up?

Where possible, episodes of absence should be made up during the timetabled placement period. For example, if a student is absent from a 12-hour shift one week, they can work an additional shift

the following week. However, students must ensure that they do not work excessive shifts that would impact on their health and wellbeing or breach the European Working Time Directive (WTD) limit of an average of 48 hours over a 7-day period (this includes any part-time work the student may have).

Making up time outside of the planned placement period is not encouraged. It should only be done in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the mentor, the practice setting manager, practice support staff, intake/programme leader and the University link lecturer. The criteria to be met for making up time outside of the placement period are:

 That the student meets one or more of the criteria for needing to make time up (see earlier)

That making the necessary time up within the placement period is not feasible due to the need to maintain student wellbeing and/or the constraints of the EU WTD

That time is not made up during timetabled theory weeks (this would result in double-counting of hours). Students will need to utilise annual leave and assessment periods to make hours up

That only the minimum time required is made up

That the student's extended presence in the placement area does not impact adversely on the learning of other students, the care of patients/clients or the delivery of services.

Recording of made-up time

Students should document all made-up hours in the appropriate section of their practice documentation. When this documentation is handed-in, the additional hours will be recorded by the programme administrator on the student's record.

Escalating and managing absence issues

Students are expected to attend all timetabled theory sessions, to attend placement as scheduled and to complete all directed study tasks. Failure to meet these attendance requirements may impact on a student's ability to successfully progress through and complete their programme of study. The School has a robust set of mechanisms to identify attendance issues, develop action plans and, where necessary, take disciplinary action.

Programme administrators record and monitor absence for all students. As such, they are best placed to identify and escalate concerns regarding student absence. Given the complexity of student attendance patterns, it is not possible to identify objective 'trigger points' for all circumstances where escalation is necessary; however, some broad examples of where action is required are outlined below:

Un-notified absence. Failing to attend a theoretical or practical element of the programme without informing a member of staff (either in the School or practice) is unacceptable. Any instances of unnotified absence should be reported to the student's AST, who should contact the student, request an explanation and explain the importance of absence reporting.

Absence due to personal circumstances. Where a student has informed the Student Hub of an absence due to personal reasons, such as a bereavement, their AST should be informed (and vice versa). This is to ensure that students are signposted to necessary support services and have the opportunity to discuss related issues such as the need for a mitigating circumstances application.

Prolonged sickness absence. Where any student has more than seven days' absence due to sickness, their AST should be informed. As with absence due to personal circumstances, this is to identify necessary support structures that will allow the student to recommence their studies as soon as possible

Repeated absence. Where students have repeated, short periods of sickness or personal absence, the programme administrators will contact the AST, who should meet with the student to discuss steps that need to be taken to improve attendance

Repetitive failure to engage with attendance policy. Where students demonstrate a pattern of minor indiscretions in relation to attendance, the programme administrators will escalate this to the AST. Examples of behaviours include repeatedly forgetting an ID card, repeatedly arriving late for sessions, or repeatedly attending sessions with the wrong group. In these circumstances, the AST will meet with the student to develop an action plan that will result in improved compliance with attendance regulations.

Failure to make up hours as instructed. When a student has received an end-of-year letter outlining the need to make up time, they are expected to do so in the timeframe outlined. If they fail to do so, the programme administrator will contact the student's programme/intake lead. An action plan will be developed in which the student will be given a further four weeks to make up the necessary time; the student will also be given a School warning for failure to engage with academic processes.

Fitness to practice and study

Where a student's attendance record raises concerns regarding their overall fitness to attend practice and/or theory sessions, the programme/intake lead should meet with the student to discuss any necessary support. The Faculty's policy on fitness to practice and the University guidance on fitness to study should be followed in these cases, and the guidance of the University Occupational Health department may be sought.