# FHS - 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 37.5 hours for the whole programme 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 three weeks in advance and should document these within the formal record of ‘off-duty’ in line with local processes.

**Monitoring of attendance**

The Faculty of Health Sciences has a number of mechanisms for monitoring and documenting attendance in both 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 on entry and exit to the lecture theatre. Failure to scan an ID card when entering or exiting the lecture will result in a student being marked as absent. 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.

Where cohorts are split into specific groups, students must ensure that they attend with their designated group. Failure to do so will show an unauthorised attendance for the session and absent for their actual session.

**Attendance in practice**

Attendance on clinical practice is logged by the student completing electronic Time Management System timesheet in Placements on the Web (POW) and submitting it to the Practice Assessor for verification.

**Notification and recording of absence**

A student is absent from either theory or practice, they are expected to inform relevant parties as soon as possible. It is not acceptable for a student to be absent without informing the University and/or practice placement. 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**

A student is going to be absent from theory sessions, they should notify the Faculty via my portal Student Information Desk (SID) or by calling the Student Hub. Telephone: 01482 463342.

**Notification of absence from practice**

A student is 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 SID. 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**

A Student is 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, students 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 Personal Supervisor (PS).

**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’).

PSs should discuss attendance records with students as a standard element of tutorials. This information can be accessed via the PEP. Students should monitor their absence in POW.

**Making up theory and practice hours**

The design of the programme allows students to be absent 37.5 hours for the whole programme 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 they will receive a plan how this can be addressed.

**Does the student need to make time up?**

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 **less** than 150 hours will result in a Practice Assessor being **unable** to make a decision on whether the student has passed the placement. In turn, this will result in the student mitigating this placement, and at a later date requiring an additional period of practice during consolidation or following a period of suspension.

Even when a student has completed the minimum of 150 hours, a practice assessor may feel that they have not worked sufficient time with a student to sign off practice documentation. If less than 50% of the proficiencies aligned with the assessment of Professional Values in Practice assessment are not achieved, these proficiencies may be re-assessed in the next practice placement. If 50% or more of the proficiencies aligned with the assessment of Professional Values in Practice assessment are not achieved, these proficiencies maybe reassessed in a repeat practice placement also known as a retrieval placement.

It is good practice to ensure that missed practice hours do not 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?**

Episodes of absence should be made up during the timetabled placement period where possible.

For example, if a student is absent from a 12-hour shift, they can work an additional shift during the remainder of the placement. However, students must be aware **not** to work excessive shifts which could 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 undertake).

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 practice assessor, the practice manager, PLF team and placement team. The criteria for making up time outside of the placement period is:

* Making time up within the placement period was not feasible, due to the need to maintain student wellbeing and/or the constraints of the EU WTD
* 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
* Only the minimum time required is made up
* The extension of the placement 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 TMS (timesheet – Made up Time) when approved by the practice assessor these hours will be automatically updated in POW.

**Escalating and managing absence issues**

Students are expected to attend **all** 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. The Faculty has a robust set of mechanisms to identify attendance issues, develop action plans and, where necessary, take disciplinary action.

Administrators 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 is unacceptable. Any instances of un-notified absence should be reported to the student’s PS, who will contact the student, request an explanation and outline the importance of absence reporting.
* Absence due to personal circumstances. When a student informs the Student Hub of an absence relating to personal reasons, such as a bereavement, their PS will be informed (and vice versa), to ensure students are signposted to any necessary support services and an opportunity to discuss related issues such as the need for Additional Considerations.
* Prolonged sickness absence. A student has more than seven days’ absence due to sickness, their PS will be informed. As with other absence, this is to identify necessary support structures allowing the student to recommence their studies as soon as possible
* Repeated absence. A student has repeated, short periods of sickness or personal absence, the programme administrator will contact the PS, who will meet with the student to discuss steps needed to improve attendance
* Repetitive failure to engage with attendance policy. A student demonstrates a pattern of minor indiscretions in relation to attendance, the programme administrator will escalate this to the PS. 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 PS 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. 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 Faculty warning for failure to engage with academic processes.

**Fitness to practice and study**

A student’s attendance record raises concerns regarding their overall fitness to attend practice and/or theory sessions, the programme/intake lead will 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 sought.