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Council of Deans of Health Scotland (by email)
Scottish Executive Nurse Directors (SEND)

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The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has today announced it will reintroduce emergency education standards to enable final year nursing students to opt-in to support the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, via extended clinical placement.

This decision follows a request from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, supported by the Chief Executive of the NHS in England, in response to the continuing, intense pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Given that the progress of the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland is not currently at the same stage as in England although we are very mindful of the increasing pressure on our NHS and staff, we are concerned not to disrupt healthcare students' programmes and learning through authorising full-time student deployment at this time. The timely graduation of this year's cohort is essential for the maintenance of the health and social care workforce, across the regulated professions. We wish students to retain their supernumerary status and their position in the clinical area as learners, as our top priority. This position is under constant review, but it is important that as many students as possible complete as many practice hours as possible at present. We are not in the same position as we were in the early stages of the pandemic, and any changes to students' status will be made following careful planning and consultation.

To balance this and recognising the pressure our NHS is under, the action we are taking currently is to produce additional guidance to enable all health care students (nursing, midwifery, allied health, medicine and dentistry) to take up paid employment in such a way that it does not directly interfere with ongoing programmes of study. This will provide an additional, flexible workforce to be used where it is most needed within health care in Scotland. Further details of this guidance will be published shortly.

The NMC has also reinstated the emergency standard related to Student Supervision and Assessment, which will allow students to be supervised and assessed by the same person during this period. This is strongly supported by the Scottish Government, given it is likely to enable placements to be used that would otherwise not be possible. It should be adopted along with a flexible and solution-focussed approach to placement availability, including involving students with vaccination programmes where this can be an appropriate learning opportunity, and allowing students to follow their supervisors where placements are reconfigured at short notice in response to the pandemic.

The NMC has also made changes to the requirements for first year nursing and midwifery students, enabling them to focus on academic and online learning rather than participating in clinical placements while the system is under pressure due to the pandemic.



The adoption of any or all of the standards is optional, however it is the Government's desire that all nursing and midwifery students remain in their education programmes in clinical placements and undertaking academic learning, as planned. Recent discussions with nurse directors have indicated that they are willing and able to take students at present.

The Government does not consider the bulk cancellation of placements to be appropriate at this time. We do, however, recognise that not all students will be able to participate in placements, and universities should consider every student's individual circumstances, and consider online, simulation or other types of practice experience where these are available, or offer students appropriate support to take time out.

In summary, no paid placements at this time, retention of supernumerary placements and offer fixed term part time (or bank) contracts to all healthcare students.

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