



T: 0131-244 2314 F: 0131-244 3465
E: fiona.mcqueen@gov.scot

15 January 2021

**Open letter to all nursing and midwifery students in Scotland
from Fiona McQueen, Chief Nursing Officer**

I wanted to write to you to let you know that 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 paid placement. It 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.

In Scotland, the progress of the covid-19 pandemic is not currently at the same stage as in England, and we do not believe it is appropriate to disrupt your programmes through authorising full-time student deployment at this time. Our top priority is the timely graduation of final year students, and we want students to retain their supernumerary status and their position in the clinical area as learners. 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 in Scotland as we were in the early stages of the pandemic, nor are we in the same position as in England.

We will be writing to you shortly with guidance which will enable all health care students (nursing, midwifery, allied health, medicine and dentistry) to take up part time paid employment in such a way that it does not directly interfere with your programmes of study, or your placement experience. I know many of you are already undertake bank work and would like to maximise this for Boards in greatest need at this time. We want to allow those of you who are able to contribute by providing an additional, flexible workforce to be used where it is most needed within health care in Scotland, while at the same time ensuring that when you are on placement you are still able to be supervised, supported, and placed where there are appropriate learning opportunities. Further details will be published shortly, and will be available via your universities.

I recognise that this is stressful time for everyone, and acknowledge that many students may not have had much experience of the health and care services, either because you are new, or because of changes to your programme in 2020. To reiterate my comments in December, I want to thank you all, whatever role you have been able to undertake since the beginning of the pandemic, for your commitment to the profession, and for your continued efforts in the weeks and months ahead. The extraordinary hard work, dedication, skills and commitment of every one of you has helped pull our health service through at an exceptional time.

Fiona McQueen

