

# Part 3: Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes

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## Contents

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|                                                                    |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| About our standards                                                | 2  |
| Introduction                                                       | 3  |
| Legislative framework                                              | 5  |
| The student journey                                                | 6  |
| 1 Selection, admission and progression                             | 7  |
| 2 Curriculum                                                       | 9  |
| 3 Practice learning                                                | 11 |
| 4 Supervision and assessment                                       | 13 |
| 5 Qualification to be awarded                                      | 14 |
| Glossary                                                           | 15 |
| Information about the role of the lead midwife for education (LME) | 17 |

These updated standards were approved by Council at their meeting on 25 January 2023.

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# About our standards

Our standards for education and training include the Standards framework for nursing<sup>1</sup> and midwifery education, Standards for student supervision and assessment, and programme standards specific to each approved programme.

Our **standards** for education and training are set out in three parts:

**Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education**

**Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment**

Part 3: Programme standards:

- **Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes**
- **Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes**
- **Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes**
- **Standards for prescribing programmes**
- **Standards for post-registration programmes: programmes leading to specialist community public health nurse qualifications and programmes leading to community nursing specialist practice qualifications**
- **Standards for return to practice programmes**

Supporting information for our **Standards for student supervision and assessment**, and our **Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes**, can be found on our **website**.

These standards help nursing and midwifery **students** achieve NMC proficiencies and programme outcomes. All nursing and midwifery professionals must practise in line with the requirements of **the Code**, the professional standards of practice, values and behaviours that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are expected to uphold.

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<sup>1</sup> We have used the phrase 'nursing' in this document to apply to the work of nurses and nursing associates. Nursing associates are a distinct profession in England with their own part of our register, but they are part of the nursing team.

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# Introduction

Our Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes set out the legal requirements, entry requirements and entry routes, length of programme, curriculum, practice learning, requirements for supervision and assessment and the qualification to be awarded for all pre-registration midwifery programmes.

Student midwives must successfully complete an NMC approved pre-registration midwifery programme in order to meet the Standards of proficiency for midwives and be eligible to apply for entry to the NMC register.

Public safety is central to our standards. Student midwives will be in contact with **people** throughout their education and it is important they learn in a safe and effective way.

These pre-registration midwifery programme standards should be read in conjunction with the **Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education** and the **Standards for student supervision and assessment**, both of which apply to all NMC approved education programmes. NMC **Approved Education Institutions (AEIs)** intending to deliver pre-registration midwifery programmes must comply with all these standards to run an approved programme.

Education providers structure their education programmes to comply with our programme standards. They also design their curricula around the published proficiencies for a particular programme. Students are assessed against published proficiencies to ensure they are capable of providing safe, effective and kind care that improves health and wellbeing.

Proficiencies are the knowledge, skills and behaviours that nurses, midwives and nursing associates need in order to practise. We publish standards of proficiency for the nursing and midwifery professions as well as proficiencies for NMC approved post-registration qualifications.

Our standards for education and training highlight the need for programmes to adopt an inclusive approach to recruitment, selection and progression, ensuring admissions and all other academic processes are open, fair, transparent and demonstrate an understanding of and take measures to address underrepresentation.

Through our **quality assurance** processes we check that education programmes meet all of our standards regarding the structure and delivery of education programmes and that the programme outcomes relate to the expected proficiencies for particular qualifications. We also check that AEs and **practice learning partners** are managing risk effectively. Using internal and external intelligence we monitor potential and actual risk to quality in education and training, this intelligence gathering includes analysis of system regulator reports.

Before any programme can be run, we make sure it meets our standards. We do this through an approvals process, in accordance with our **quality assurance framework**.

Overall responsibility and accountability for compliance with NMC standards lies with AEs in partnership with practice learning partners.

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# Legislative framework

## Our legislation

Article 15(1) of the Order requires the Council to establish standards of education and training which are necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency. The Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes are established under the provision of Article 15(1) of the Order.

## Lead midwife for education

Rule 6(1)(a)(ii) and Rule 6(3) of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Education, Registration and Registration Appeals) Rules 2004 establish the requirements of the lead midwife for education (LME). Information about the role of the LME is shown in this document after the glossary.

## Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes

AEIs have ownership of and overall responsibility and accountability for education programmes. We expect AEIs to work in partnership with their practice learning partners on the development, delivery and management of pre-registration midwifery programmes. Pre-registration midwifery programmes may offer various routes to registration.

The Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education, the Standards for student supervision and assessment and the Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes provide the overall regulatory framework which enables AEIs and practice learning partners to design programmes that meet our requirements while at the same time allowing for local flexibility, innovation and variability within individual curricula.

Midwifery curricula must include the outcomes set out in the Standards of proficiency for midwives. Students will learn and be assessed in theory, simulation and practice environments and settings.

The involvement of women, partners, families and advocacy groups in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of midwifery curricula is intended to promote public confidence in the education of future midwives. We therefore expect the use of supportive evidence and engagement from people who have experienced care by midwives to inform programme design, development, delivery and evaluation.

On successful completion of an NMC approved programme students will be eligible to apply to the NMC to register as a midwife.

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# The student journey

Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes follow the student journey and are grouped under the following five headings:

## **1. Selection, admission and progression**

Standards about an applicant's suitability and continued participation in a pre-registration midwifery programme

## **2. Curriculum**

Standards for the content, delivery and evaluation of pre-registration midwifery programmes

## **3. Practice learning**

Standards specific to pre-registration learning that takes place in practice settings

## **4. Supervision and assessment**

Standards for safe and effective supervision and assessment for pre-registration midwifery programmes

## **5. Qualification to be awarded**

Standards which state the minimum award and information relating to NMC registration

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# 1 Selection, admission and progression

Approved education institutions must:

- 1.1** appoint a lead midwife for education who is responsible for midwifery education in the AEI
- 1.2** inform the NMC of the name of the lead midwife for education
- 1.3** ensure recognition of prior learning is not permitted for pre-registration midwifery programmes.

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 1.4** ensure selection, admission and progression comply with the NMC **Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education**
- 1.5** confirm on entry to the programme that students:
  - 1.5.1** meet the entry requirements for the programme as set out by the AEI and are suitable for midwifery practice
  - 1.5.2** demonstrate an understanding of the role and scope of practice of the midwife
  - 1.5.3** demonstrate values in accordance with **the Code**
  - 1.5.4** have capability to learn behaviours in accordance with **the Code**
  - 1.5.5** have capability to develop numeracy skills required to meet programme outcomes
  - 1.5.6** can demonstrate proficiency in English language
  - 1.5.7** have capability in literacy to meet programme outcomes
  - 1.5.8** have capability to develop digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes
- 1.6** support students throughout the programme in continuously developing their abilities in numeracy, literacy and digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes

- 1.7** ensure students' **health and character** are sufficient to enable safe and effective practice on entering the programme, throughout the programme and when submitting the supporting declaration of health and character in line with the NMC Guidance on health and character<sup>2</sup>. This includes satisfactory occupational health assessments and criminal record checks
- 1.8** ensure students are fully informed of the requirement to declare immediately any police charges, cautions, convictions or conditional discharges, or determinations that their fitness to practise is impaired made by other regulators, professional bodies and educational establishments, and ensure that any declarations are dealt with promptly, fairly and lawfully
- 1.9** ensure the lead midwife for education, or their **designated midwife substitute** is able to provide supporting declarations of health and character for students who have successfully completed an NMC approved pre-registration midwifery programme, and
- 1.10** ensure NMC registered nurses entering a shortened pre-registration midwifery programme are a Registered nurse: first level (adult).



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## 2 Curriculum

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 2.1** ensure that programmes comply with the NMC Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education
- 2.2** comply with the NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment
- 2.3** ensure programme learning outcomes reflect the NMC Standards of proficiency for midwives
- 2.4** involve women, partners, families and advocacy groups in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of programmes
- 2.5** ensure that programmes delivered in Wales comply with legislation which supports use of the Welsh language
- 2.6** design and deliver programmes that support students and provide relevant and ongoing exposure to midwifery practice
- 2.7** ensure technology and simulated learning opportunities are used effectively and proportionately across the curriculum to support supervision, learning and assessment, including where practice scenarios occur infrequently and a proficiency is required
- 2.8** design curricula that provide an equal balance of 50 per cent theory and 50 per cent practice learning, using a range of learning and teaching strategies, and

**2.9** ensure NMC approved pre-registration midwifery education programmes are of sufficient length to enable students to meet the NMC **Standards of proficiency for midwives** and respective programme outcomes, by meeting the following criteria:

**2.9.1** ensure that all pre-registration midwifery programmes meet the equivalent minimum programme length of three (academic) years for full time programmes, which consist of a minimum of 4,600 hours, or

**2.9.2** where a student is already registered with the NMC as a registered first level nurse (adult), education and training as a midwife shall be a minimum of two years, which consists of a minimum of 3,600 hours, or

**2.9.3** where a student is already registered with the NMC as a registered first level nurse (adult), education and training as a midwife shall be a minimum of 18 months and 3,000 hours, and in order for the qualification to be recognised in EU member states it must be followed by a year of professional midwifery practice.

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## 3 Practice learning

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 3.1** provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to develop and meet the NMC Standards of proficiency for midwives
- 3.2** ensure students experience the role and scope of the midwife, enabling them to provide holistic care to women, newborn infants, partners and families
- 3.3** provide students with learning opportunities to enable them to achieve the proficiencies related to interdisciplinary and multiagency team working
- 3.4** provide students with learning opportunities to enable them to achieve the proficiencies related to continuity of midwifery carer across the whole continuum of care for all women and newborn infants
- 3.5** provide learning opportunities, across the whole continuum of care, that enables students to gain experience to:
  - 3.5.1** support and care for women during pregnancy, undertaking no less than 100 antenatal examinations
  - 3.5.2** support and care for no less than 40 women in labour and conduct the birth. Where 40 births cannot be reached owing to the lack of available women giving birth, it may be reduced to a minimum of 30, provided that the student is given the opportunity to assist with caring for an additional 20 women giving birth
  - 3.5.3** participate in the support and care of women in labour and conduct a breech birth. Where there are no opportunities in practice to gain experience of breech births, proficiency may be gained by simulated learning
  - 3.5.4** support and care for no less than 100 women postnatally and 100 healthy newborn infants
  - 3.5.5** develop the required knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to support and care for no less than 40 women who have additional care needs or develop complications including those related to physical, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual factors

- 3.5.6** care for newborn infants requiring additional care or have complications, including in a neonatal unit and
- 3.5.7** care for women across the life course with additional sexual and reproductive health needs
- 3.6** ensure students gain experience of leadership and team working with different maternity providers
- 3.7** provide students with learning opportunities to experience midwifery care for a diverse population across a range of settings, including midwifery led services
- 3.8** provide learning opportunities that enable students to develop the required knowledge, skills and behaviours needed when caring for women and newborn infants when complication and additional care needs arise, including as they relate to physical, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual factors
- 3.9** take account of students' individual needs and personal circumstances when allocating their practice learning opportunities, including making **reasonable adjustments** for students with disabilities
- 3.10** ensure students experience the range of hours expected of practising midwives, and
- 3.11** ensure students are **supernumerary**.

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## 4 Supervision and assessment

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 4.1** provide support, supervision, learning opportunities and assessment that complies with the NMC Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education
- 4.2** provide support, supervision, learning opportunities and assessment that complies with the NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment
- 4.3** ensure throughout the programme that students meet the NMC Standards of proficiency for midwives and programme outcomes
- 4.4** provide students with constructive feedback throughout the programme to support their development
- 4.5** ensure all programmes include a specific focus on numeracy assessment related to the midwifery proficiencies and the calculation of medicines, which must be passed with a score of 100 per cent
- 4.6** assess students to confirm proficiency in preparation for professional practice as a midwife, and
- 4.7** ensure all proficiencies are recorded in an ongoing record of achievement, which must demonstrate the achievement of proficiencies and skills set out in the NMC Standards of proficiency for midwives.

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## 5 Qualification to be awarded

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 5.1** ensure the minimum award for a pre-registration midwifery programme is a bachelor's degree, and
- 5.2** notify students during and before completion of the programme that they have five years<sup>3</sup> to apply to register with the NMC if they wish to rely on this qualification<sup>4</sup>. In the event of a student failing to register their qualification within five years they will have to undertake additional education and training or gain such experience as specified in our standards.

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**3** Standards and guidance on the requirements for those who first apply for registration more than five years after being awarded an approved qualification

**4** Article 9(2)(a) of the Order

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# Glossary

**Approved Education Institutions (AEIs):** the status awarded by the NMC to an institution, or part of an institution, or combination of institutions that works in partnership with practice placement and work placed learning providers. AEIs will have provided us with assurance that they are accountable and capable of delivering NMC approved education programmes.

**Designated midwife substitute:** must be a midwife who holds registration with the NMC. Their role is to sign declarations of health and character when the lead midwife for education is not available to do so.

**Educators:** in the context of the NMC standards for education and training educators are those who deliver, support, supervise and assess theory, practice and/or work placed learning.

**Health and character:** in the NMC Order those applying to join our register must meet health and character requirements in accordance with the NMC Guidance on health and character.

**Lead midwife for education (LME):** is responsible for midwifery education in the relevant AEI. The lead midwife for education must be a midwife who holds registration with the NMC.

**People:** individuals or groups who receive services from nurses and midwives, healthy and sick people, parents, children, families, carers, representatives, also including educators and students and others within and outside the learning environment.

**Practice learning partners:** organisations that provide practice learning opportunities necessary for supporting pre-registration and post-registration students in meeting proficiencies and programme outcomes.

**Quality assurance:** NMC processes for making sure all AEIs and their approved education programmes comply with our standards.

**Reasonable adjustments:** changes in the way services are offered to prevent students with disabilities from being placed at a substantial disadvantage, ensuring a fair and equal chance of accessing services as set out in equalities and human rights legislation.

**Simulation:** an educational method which uses a variety of modalities to support students in developing their knowledge, behaviours and skills, with the opportunity for repetition, feedback, evaluation and reflection to achieve their programme outcomes and be confirmed as capable of safe and effective practice.

**Student:** any individual enrolled onto an NMC approved education programme whether full-time or less than full-time.

**Supernumerary:** students in practice or work placed learning must be supported to learn without being counted as part of the staffing required for safe and effective care in that setting.

Placements should enable students to learn to provide safe and effective care, not merely to observe; students can and should add real value to care. The contribution students make will increase over time as they gain proficiency and they will continue to benefit from ongoing guidance and feedback.

Once a student has demonstrated that they are proficient, they should be able to fulfil tasks without direct oversight. The level of supervision a student needs is based on the professional judgement of their supervisors, taking into account any associated risks and the student's proficiency and confidence.

**Woman:** the words woman and women have been used throughout this document as this is the way that the majority of those who are pregnant and having a baby will identify. For the purpose of this document, this term includes girls. It also includes people whose gender identity does not correspond with their birth sex or who may have a non-binary identity.



## **Information about the role of the lead midwife for education (LME)**

The LME is responsible for midwifery education in the relevant AEI and is suitably qualified and experienced to lead and advise on matters relating to midwifery education. The LME and their designated midwife substitute must be a midwife who holds registration with the NMC.

We require an AEI to do the following:

- appoint a lead midwife for education who is responsible for midwifery education
- inform the NMC of the name of the lead midwife for education

The requirements of the lead midwife for education are set out in Rule 6(1)(a)(ii) and Rule 6(3) of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Education, Registration and Registration Appeals) Rules 2004.

The LME will:

- be responsible for midwifery education in the AEI
- be accountable for signing the supporting declarations of health and character for applicants applying for admission to the register after completing a pre-registration midwifery programme or for applicants applying for readmission to the register following a return to practice programme
- be accountable for signing the supporting declarations of health and character for applicants who have successfully completed an adaptation programme in the United Kingdom

If the LME (or their designated midwife substitute) cannot be assured of a student's health and character they must not sign the supporting declaration. The student therefore, cannot be recommended for admission to the midwives' part of the register. In the case of a student who is already registered with the NMC, action should be taken in accordance with the NMC Guidance on health and character.

As set out in the Standards for prescribing programmes and Standards for return to practice programmes, the LME works in conjunction with the programme leader and the practice assessor to ensure adequate support for any midwives undertaking prescribing programmes and return to practice programmes.

AEIs in partnership with practice learning partners and/or work based learning partners have overall responsibility for the quality of their education programmes and AEIs may assign the responsibilities they determine appropriate to the LME in order to enable them to carry out their role. This may include, but is not limited to, advising on academic standards and quality in midwifery education, contributing to the development, delivery, quality assurance and evaluation of midwifery programmes and providing input at strategic and operational levels within the AEIs on matters relating to midwifery education.

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## What we do

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery practice that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the independent regulator of more than 826,000 nurses and midwives in the UK and nursing associates in England, we have an important role to play in making this vision a reality.

We're here to protect the public by upholding high professional nursing and midwifery standards, which the public has a right to expect. That's why we're improving the way we regulate, enhancing our support for colleagues, professionals and the public, and working with our partners to influence the future of health and social care.

Our core role is to **regulate**. We set and promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England and quality assure their education programmes. We maintain the integrity of the register of those eligible to practise. And we investigate concerns about professionals – something that affects very few people on our register every year.

To regulate well, we **support** nursing and midwifery professionals and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout professionals' careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address challenges they face. We work collaboratively so everyone feels engaged and empowered to shape our work.

We work with our partners to address common concerns, share our data, insight and learning, to **influence** and inform decision-making and help drive improvement in health and social care for people and communities.

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