

UniSA Clinical and Health Sciences: Nursing & Midwifery

Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements (Practice-based Learning) Guidelines and Procedures

1. Definitions

In this document the following definitions apply:

“AHPRA” means Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency;

“APPM” means University of South Australia (UniSA) Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual;

“Business day” means a day on which the University is open to the public for normal business operations;

‘Clinical placement’ means a placement experience in the HHHS, a hospital or health service/clinic setting that is required as part of a unit where the student undertakes clinical training (another common description of a clinical placement in this context includes, but is not limited to, “a practicum”);

“Course Coordinator” means the person appointed to lead a course of study in a program who works closely with the Program Director to ensure learning and teaching practices in the course are consistent with the *Code of good practice for University teaching*;

“Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements” means the requirements of a program (clustered under eight domains) that are essential to undertake nursing and midwifery placement activities in a range of practice-based learning environments (including the HHHS, hospitals and health services/clinics) and are described in further detail in the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placement Requirement document;

“Dean of Programs (Nursing & Midwifery)” means the Dean of Programs (Nursing & Midwifery), Clinical and Health Sciences;

“Horizon Hospital and Health Service (HHHS)” the on campus simulated hospital and health service spaces where students undertake workshops related to particular theory courses or preclinical workshops;

“Practice-based learning” as described in Section 4 of the UniSA Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual;

“Program” or **“programs”** means a program leading to entry to practice as a nurse or midwife where completion is required for professional registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia or a specialist program or course requiring clinical placement;

“Program Director” means the person appointed to the role of program director for a nursing or midwifery program in Clinical and Health Sciences (CHS), or an alternative staff member nominated by the Dean of Programs (Nursing & Midwifery);

“National Law” means the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (South Australia) Act 2010;

“NMBA” means the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia;

“Reporting person” means the person reporting concerns that the student may not be able to meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements of their course.

2. Introduction

These Guidelines and Procedures describe the processes to be followed when concerns are raised regarding a student’s ability to meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placement requirements of a program and/or course. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to academic staff and students regarding the physical, sensory, mental, emotional and behavioural requirements needed to undertake nursing and midwifery workplace learning. This document should be read in conjunction with the Section 4: *Practice-based learning* of the University of South Australia (UniSA) Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.

UniSA Clinical and Health Sciences is committed to supporting the rights of all people who wish to pursue a career in nursing or midwifery. The Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placement Requirement Statements have been developed to identify the essential abilities, knowledge and skills needed to achieve the core learning outcomes of accredited programs required for professional registration with the NMBA through the AHPRA inclusive of programs that require a clinical placement experience to meet the program/course learning outcomes. The programs included are:

- Bachelor of Nursing
- Bachelor of Midwifery
- Graduate Certificate in Nursing
- Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing
- Master of Nursing (Nurse Practitioner)

Nursing and midwifery programs include substantial practice-based learning elements in which students are exposed to clinical practice and the public. UniSA Clinical and Health Sciences has an obligation under the National Law to notify AHPRA if a student enrolled in an approved program has:

“an impairment that, in the course of the student undertaking clinical training, may place the public at substantial risk of harm” (Clause 141 (1) (b)).

The Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements Requirement Statements have been developed to advise potential applicants and students of the requirements necessary to undertake a clinical placement as a student in preparation for entry (registration) into the nursing and midwifery professions or for specialist/advanced practice. All students must confirm that they meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements on entry to the program and before they undertake a course related clinical placement. It is important to note that the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements of the programs are not necessarily synonymous with an impairment requiring notification under the National Law.

Students with a disability or chronic health condition may be able to have reasonable adjustments made to teaching and learning, assessment, clinical practice and other activities to enable them to participate in their course and meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements.

However, reasonable adjustments should not fundamentally change the nature of the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements.

3. Information to applicants and students

Information about the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements will be available to potential applicants to the Nursing and Midwifery programs on the University website and in the relevant program information and course outlines. Prospective students will be required to confirm that they have read and understood these requirements and complete the *Fitness to Practice Declaration Form* as part of the program enrolment process.

All students enrolled in programs will be advised of their obligations under the National Law, University rules and policies and UniSA Clinical and Health Science (CHS) procedures associated with practice-based learning through the relevant Nursing and Midwifery Program Handbooks, the *Learn Online* program site and the Clinical Placement Unit website. All students will be asked to confirm their ongoing ability to meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements prior to each annual re-enrolment and on enrolment in each course that requires clinical placement **(including all UniSA Horizon Hospital and Health Service campus facilities; simulated hospitals and health services and associated UniSA clinics)**.

4. Student Services and Support

The University provides a range of student services and support <http://w3.unisa.edu.au/current-students/StudentServices/StudentServices.html> Students who have a disability, mental health or medical condition which may impact on their studies are strongly encouraged to [Register for Disability Services](#) on accepting an offer into a program.

Students with a disability or medical condition who have an assessment with a Disability Adviser will be provided with an Access Plan (AP). This document will propose reasonable adjustments that can be made to assist the student to achieve the relevant program's Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements aligned to the program learning outcomes and program rules. The provision of an AP should not be construed as a determination by the University that the student can meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements of the specified program. The reasonable adjustments proposed in the AP are approved by the Dean of Programs or Program Director and may be subject to amendment if they consider the proposed adjustments are inconsistent with the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placement requirement statements of the program.

5. Fitness to Practice Procedure

The following procedure must be initiated when concerns are raised regarding a student's ability to meet each of the eight domains of Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements.

It is essential that any concerns of this nature are properly investigated. Students who are not fit to practice during a clinical placement may pose a risk to the public, clinical placement host staff, UniSA staff and other students if they are permitted to participate in clinical placements. These students may also fall within the mandatory notification requirements under the National Law. The University shall carry out the procedure described below in a manner that is as timely and discrete as reasonably practicable and provides procedural fairness for students who are the subject of investigations. All information collected by UniSA Clinical and Health Sciences as part of the procedure described below shall be retained and dealt with in a manner that is consistent with the UniSA Confidentiality of students' personal information.

The following circumstances are examples which could raise doubts about a student's ability to meet one or more of the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements requirements and **potentially** cause a student to be unfit to practice during a clinical placement.

These examples are illustrative only and are not intended to be exhaustive:

- i. Evidence of chronic drug or alcohol misuse;
- ii. Severe mental illness;
- iii. Acting in a violent or aggressive manner;
- iv. Intimidation of patients/clients, placement host staff, UniSA staff and fellow students;
- v. Fraudulent or dishonest behaviour;
- vi. Failure to comply with legislative and compulsory pre-clinical document requirements for clinical placement; and
- vii. Convicted or found guilty of an offence punishable by imprisonment in Australia and/or overseas.

6. Requirement for Medical Clearance

Where the Program Director decides that a medical clearance from a registered medical practitioner is necessary to make a determination about a student's fitness to practice the student will be requested to provide a report from a medical professional within ten (10) business days (or such longer period as may be approved by the Program Director). A template form has been developed by UniSA Clinical and Health Sciences for this purpose. Through the Program Director, the University can stipulate the medical practitioner the student is required to consult for an independent assessment.

Concerns about a nursing or midwifery student's ability to meet the Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placement requirements of the program and to demonstrate fitness to practice on a clinical placement, will be managed in accordance with the UniSA Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual Subclauses 4.2 *Medical fitness and clinical placements* and 4.3 *Suitability for practice-based learning activities*.

7. Related laws, policies, rules and procedures

7.1 Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements (Practice-based Learning) Requirements are subject to all policies of the University: <http://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/university-policies/>

Examples of pertinent University policies and procedures include:

UniSA Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 4 Practice-based learning
<http://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/codes/assessment-policies/>

A-46.12 - Confidentiality of students' personal information

<https://i.unisa.edu.au/siteassets/policies-and-procedures/docs/academic/a-46-confidentiality-of-students.pdf>

C-7.5 Students with Disability Policy

<http://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/university-policies/corporate/c-7/>

Statute 7: Student Misconduct

<http://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/act-statutes-and-by-laws/university-of-south-australia-statutes/#p7>

UniSA Work Health and Safety Wellbeing

<https://i.unisa.edu.au/students/student-support-services/wellbeing-at-unisa/>

UniSA Code of Conduct for Students

<http://i.unisa.edu.au/policies-and-procedures/codes/students/>

UniSA Clinical Placement Unit - Clinical Placement Key Requirements

<https://study.unisa.edu.au/student-placements-and-internships/nursing-health-medical-sciences/cpu/#keyrequirements>

UniSA Clinical Placement Unit: Students with Disabilities section

<http://i.unisa.edu.au/students/health/cpu/disabilities/>

7.2 National Law

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (South Australia) Act 2010

[https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/Health%20Practitioner%20Regulation%20National%20Law%20\(South%20Australia\)%20Act%202010.aspx](https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/Health%20Practitioner%20Regulation%20National%20Law%20(South%20Australia)%20Act%202010.aspx)

7.3 Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Codes and Standards

<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>

- Code of conduct for midwives (March 2018)
- Code of conduct for nurses (March 2018)
- Midwife standards for practice (October 2018)
- Registered nurse standards for practice (June 2016)

Acknowledgements:

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Johnson, A., Allan, T., Phillips, K., Azzopardi, T., Dickson, C., Goldsmith, M & Hengstberger-Sims, C. (2011). Program Requirements of Nursing Education (IRONE), UWS School of Nursing & Midwifery and Student Equity & Disability Services.

Edith Cowen University (2016) School of Nursing and Midwifery, Fitness to Practice in Clinical Placements Guidelines and Procedures.