

Guidance regarding students on practice placements and surge capacity

Organisations will have students learning alongside their substantive workforce while on practice placements and they can provide a valuable contribution to clinical care while achieving their learning outcomes. Students include trainee nursing associates, RN apprentices and student nurses undertaking a full-time degree study.

Organisations may be opening additional inpatient facilities over the winter and will be considering the appropriate placement of students. Such temporary additional clinical capacity will not have been approved by the education provider as a practice placement.

For all students, the NMC-approved education provider, in partnership with the placement providers, is responsible for the practice placements and will audit the clinical learning environment to ensure the regulatory requirements are met. This will take place prior to students being placed in any additional inpatient facilities, and at regular intervals thereafter.

The following should be considered, in partnership with the education provider, when making decisions regarding allocation of learners to additional inpatient facilities:

- All students must be appropriately supported and supervised at all times and in accordance with NMC Standards for Student Supervision and Assessment (2018) and placed within teams on a supernumerary basis
- The placement must provide the ability for the student to meet their learning objectives within the clinical environment
- Nightingale Hubs are to be used in instances of extreme pressure and if these are opened, students should not be placed in the hubs, but they can make a valuable contribution within teams in wards, departments and services within the organisation
- Areas not approved by the education providers for placements but where learning outcomes can be met with appropriate supervision may, with prior agreement and proper approval with the education providers, be considered as placements

Apprentices

All apprentices are employees of an organisation throughout their training period, and most are undertaking their apprenticeship on a part time basis. This means that for part of the working week they will be in a student capacity and usually have part of the week where they are working within their substantive support worker role.

- While undertaking learning as an apprentice the guidance above should be applied
- When the individual is working as a support worker the employer may exercise discretion as to their deployment as they would for any support worker, i.e., ensuring they have the appropriate skills, competency and supervision if deployed away from their usual base.

It is recognised that placement providers have positive relationships with their local education providers and where there may be questions or concerns regarding placements. These can usually be resolved through these links. Additionally, each education provider will have a contact with the NMC and are able to escalate any questions or concerns they may have.