



The University of Manchester

## School of Nursing Midwifery and Social Work

### Guidance and procedure for applicants to the Bachelor of Midwifery (Honours) and Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) programmes

#### The Legal Situation

The University of Manchester (“**University**”) has certain obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (“**the Act**”). The University's key obligations in relation to disability under the Act are:

1. a prohibition on discrimination arising from disability; and
2. a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

The University is required to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled students, including prospective students, can fully participate in the education and services provided by the University for students. This is implemented by the University making ‘reasonable adjustments’.

The reasonable adjustments duty is to avoid, as far as possible, by reasonable means, the disadvantages which a disabled student experiences because of their disability. The duty requires the University to take positive steps to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in the education and other benefits, facilities and services provided for students.

Notwithstanding this general obligation to make reasonable adjustments, the University **is not** required to make any reasonable adjustments to the application of a competence standard.

Within the Act 'competence standards' are defined as the 'academic, medical or other standard(s) applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability'. In the case of vocational courses, competence standards are based on the requirements of the regulatory bodies and decisions of fitness to practise should be made with reference to these. A competence standard must not in itself be unlawfully discriminatory. It must therefore apply equally to all students, be genuinely relevant to the course, and be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

#### Pre-Acceptance

A list of the core competencies will be displayed on the School website and the attention of applicants called for interview will be directed to this information.

A potential student with a health or disability related problem may be concerned as to their ability to fulfil the competency standards of the course. Any such applicants are encouraged to contact Occupational Health and/or The Disability Support Service at an early stage in order to explore the situation in depth and consider the feasibility of making reasonable adjustments. Hopefully the process will prove helpful to the student in deciding whether to pursue an application.

#### Possible Action

- Obtain further specialist information (with informed consent) via the Occupational Health services.

- Arrange for the student to undertake work experience/ observation/assessment. In some cases this may best be arranged in a clinical skills laboratory.
- Arrange for the student to visit one of our placement providers.

The intention is for all involved and most especially the potential student to explore the situation in depth and, where necessary, consider the feasibility of making reasonable adjustment/s. In the rare cases where a significant impairment may preclude the student from meeting the core competencies they will be advised appropriately. The intention is that the student will recognise that the decision has been taken after very careful consideration (see note re decision to refuse student a place on page 4) and will give all applicants the opportunity to consider any available alternatives.

#### Student Offered a Firm Place Subject to Medical Clearance

Following a successful application all students complete a Pre-Acceptance Medical Questionnaire which is returned to the Occupational Health Department, the information provided having been checked and countersigned by their GP. It is requested that completed questionnaires are returned within 4 weeks [or 2 weeks during clearing]. All medical and personal information is held in confidence by the Occupational Health service and reviewed by experienced Occupational Health professionals to decide whether, on the basis of the information provided, the student would be able to fulfil the competencies of their chosen course. All students applying for the BMidwif (Hons) programme are required by the Department of Health [DoH] to also undergo Blood Borne Virus screening. Detailed information and links to the relevant DoH documents is contained in the following University 'blood born virus' document:



Blood Borne  
Virus.docx

<b>Examples of the impairment needing careful assessment to ensure safe nursing and midwifery practice include:</b>
• Immunity and infection status
• Mobility and speed of movement
• Upper limb function
• Vision
• Hearing
• Speech
• Literacy and Numeracy
• Skin function and integrity
• Interruption of consciousness
• Mental well being
• Concentration, awareness, memory and ability to learn and understand

Detailed guidance in relation to functional capacity is published by the Higher Education Occupational Physicians/Practitioners (HEOPS) and available at [http://www.heops.org.uk/HEOPS\\_Nursing\\_Student\\_fitness\\_standards\\_2015\\_v9.pdf](http://www.heops.org.uk/HEOPS_Nursing_Student_fitness_standards_2015_v9.pdf) 'Medical fitness standards for Nurse and Midwife Training'

\*\* please see different fitness standard criteria for the MA SW

**Pre course:**

ALL BMIDWIF (HONS) students are required to have a pre course Blood borne virus [BBV] blood test and complete a Medical Questionnaire. Please note BNURS students are offered a BBV blood test after starting at University [this is entirely voluntary]

Following Receipt of the BBV results and Medical Questionnaire the applicant's status is then 'flagged' as follows:

**Green:**

The applicant is considered fit to start the course based on the information supplied on the pre-acceptance form and those undertaking the BMID course require clearance with regards to BVV test results. All available medical information is reviewed against national fitness standards and if no concerns are raised, no further formal screening is required before the start of the course.

Each BMID or BNURS student will be seen for the usual review of vaccinations and a health screening appointment on commencement and this is recommended to be prior to commencing initial clinical placement. Admissions will be advised by Occupational Health when each applicant medical information has been processed and they are medically suitable to commence their chosen course

The health screening appointment on commencement includes a simple vision test and skin assessment alongside a review of current and recent physical and mental health and a review of the vaccination information provided. Occupational vaccinations will be recommended and courses commenced and students will be advised with regards the University support services.

**Yellow:**

The applicant is considered fit to start the course but will be seen as soon as possible on arrival. Occupational Health may consider it necessary to seek a Specialist report with regards an applicant's recent or current health issue. A consent form is included in applicants OH paperwork from admissions which should be completed and returned on request directly to the Mill Occupational Health department. In many cases this additional information allows the Occupational Health service to confirm Yellow flag status which means the student is medically suitable to commence their course but to be 'seen on arrival' for an early review ie in the initial 6-8 weeks wherever possible and this is recommended to be prior to commencing initial clinical placement. Then support and advice can be put in place which is recommended to be prior to a student's initial clinical placement. The health screening appointment on commencement allows for a simple vision test and skin assessment to be undertaken alongside a review of current and recent physical and mental health and vaccination history then occupational vaccinations can be commenced and support services be recommended as necessary.

**Red:**

If it is considered appropriate for an additional information or action is required [such as a Specialist report and a face to face review with an experienced Occupational Health Practitioner] prior to the

OH service being in a position to make an informed decision on the applicant's fitness to commence the course then you will be advised. Consideration will be made to whether an applicant's current health might not allow them to meet the schools core competencies at this time or pose a risk to colleagues or clients. The Consultant OH physician at this stage may recommend to the school that the applicant is currently:

- 1] **medically suitable to commence** then they have their 'initial health screening' on arrival as above and reviewed as per recommended schedule
- 2] **recommend the school undertakes a workplace assessment** –ie an experienced representative from the School and the Universities Disability Advisory Support Service [DASS] meets with the applicant to assess their current capacity and whether this can be accommodated
- 3] **recommendations for an applicant case conference** wherever possible with representatives from the School, DASS and OH considering the applicants current capacity and whether this can be accommodated. . Case conferences can also be called during the programme as needed
- 4] **recommended to defer commencement** – this would be following a face to face meeting and with consideration of all medical information available. A letter will confirm the discussion had on the day and the OH recommendation. It is also advised that any applicant deferred who wishes to return to the programme the following year seeks a review with Occupational Health at least 8 and preferably 12 weeks prior to the commencement of the programme.

5] **Unfit for the programme** this is recommended when the applicant's health status cannot meet the national fitness standards or the Universities core competency standards as outlined below:

Reasons for deferment:

- There is concern that the student's functional capacity has been diminished through current or recent illness and where deferment will allow for a recovery and/or additional treatment.
  - In cases where the prognosis for recovery of an illness is not yet clear the decision on fitness for the course may be deferred.
  - It may be necessary to obtain additional information.
  - It may take time to make "reasonable adjustments".
2. In only extremely rare situations would a decision be made at this stage that the applicant is medically unfit for the course (see note re decision to refuse student a place on page 4).
  3. If there are concerns as to whether he/she will be able to fulfil the competencies a case conference will be arranged.
  4. A case conference (again with informed consent) will involve a Disability Support Adviser, representative of the course/school, Occupational Health and on occasions the student concerned. Such a meeting would be an opportunity to highlight the areas of concern and explore the possibility of appropriate adjustments. The outcome of such a meeting would depend on the nature of the condition/disability and may include:

*A Work Place Assessment* with appropriate supervision normally to include an experienced practitioner and disability support at an appropriate venue e.g. clinical skills laboratory/hospital ward/classroom etc.

*A Risk Assessment* to consider the possibility of reasonable adjustments.

### **Following Case Conference/Assessment etc**

- Depending on the outcome, the student may decide that they are unwilling to take the risk that they may fail to gain the competencies to qualify (even with adjustments) and may decide to withdraw.
- The School may decide to refuse the student a place. **It will only be lawful to refuse entry to a course of an otherwise qualified applicant where there is material and substantial reason to believe that the person will be unable to achieve one of the curriculum outcomes, or where the nature of concern is patient safety and where a specific assessment of the risk has been undertaken including consideration of adjustments that could be put in place to contain any risk.**
- The School may decide that it is possible to make reasonable adjustments and will appoint a co-ordinator/mentor for the student. This should be an experienced member of staff who will liaise with placement supervisors etc and co-ordinate responses and communicate with Occupational Health/Disability Support and the School. Normally regular reviews/appointments will be arranged with Occupational Health and/or Disability Support and as considered necessary review meetings will be arranged for those involved with the initial case conference and others if necessary.

Please note. Communication between those involved is essential and it is acknowledged that to fulfil these recommendations, appropriate time will be necessary.