

Practice Hours and Retrieval Guidance

School of Health and Social Wellbeing
BSc (Hons) Nursing (all fields)

Last Updated: August 2025

Practice Hours

1. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards (2018) require students to complete a minimum of 2300 practice hours by the end of the nursing programme.
2. Practice hours consist of placement hours during placement blocks and simulation days done during theory blocks.
3. Placement blocks and simulation days are calculated across the programme to ensure students meet the 2300-hours requirement. However, this is based on 100% student attendance throughout the programme. If a student's attendance is lower than 100%, they may be required to make up trailing hours in future placements or during a retrieval placement.

Placement Blocks

4. Placement blocks are defined periods during the academic year when students will go out on placement to gain practice hours. Students are not able to gain placement hours outside of these blocks or during annual leave periods.
5. The expectation is that students gain 37.5 hours during each placement week. To calculate the expected hours for a placement (i.e. 100% attendance), multiply 37.5 by the number of weeks in the placement block.
6. Placement blocks may contain bank holidays and the expectation is that the student will work a normal 37.5-hour week during these weeks as well. The only exception is if the very first day of the placement block is a bank holiday, in which case the placement will start the day after the bank holiday.
7. For some practice areas, such as community placements, the allocated team may not work on bank holidays. If this is the case, the student will miss out on the hours for the bank holiday. Alternatively, they may be able to agree project work related to the clinical placement with their Practice Assessor that they can complete at home on the bank holiday to gain hours for the day.
8. All placement hours must be recorded on the electronic timesheet at the end of each week and authorized by the practice setting in order to count towards practice hours.
9. Students should have breaks during their shift while on placement to support their health and wellbeing. However, breaks do not count towards placement hours. Breaks must

therefore be recorded on the electronic timesheet, so that they are subtracted from the overall length of the shift.

10. There may be occasions, due to illness or personal circumstances, where a student has not completed 100% of the practice hours within a placement block or across the programme and is trailing hours.
11. To pass the practice modules, students must achieve a minimum of 90% of the expected hours for the placement blocks included in the module. If a student's attendance is below this level at the end of module, the student will be required to do a retrieval placement to make up the trailing hours. However, in the final year the NMC requirement to achieve 2300 hours supersedes this requirement.
12. While absences that do not take attendance below the 90% requirement will not result in a retrieval placement, it should be noted that anything significantly less than 100% attendance is likely to impact on the achievement of the 2300 hours requirement and may result in the need for a retrieval placement at the end of the programme to achieve this specific requirement.
13. Students can make up trailing hours during a future placement block if the setting they are allocated can accommodate this. Any extra hours need to be negotiated with the Practice Assessor in advance to ensure that the setting can support this. The student's health and wellbeing, and the capacity of practice staff to supervise the student need to be taken into consideration, to ensure any extra shifts are reasonable and manageable. If required, this should also be discussed with the Academic Assessor.
14. It is recommended that students making up trailing hours during a placement do not work more than 48 hours in a week (including both placement hours and any paid work), in line with the Government's maximum weekly working hours guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours>
15. Due to the nature of the course and the fact that student nurses are supernumerary when on placement, it is not possible to opt out of the 48-hour limit.
16. The maximum number of trailing hours that can be made up across a placement block must not exceed 25% of the expected placement hours. Doing any more than this could potentially be detrimental to the student's health and ability to learn.

For example, if a placement block is 8 weeks long, it would have expected hours of 8 weeks x 37.5 hours = 300 hours, so the number of trailing hours made up should not exceed 300 hours x 25% = 75 hours.

17. It is not acceptable to 'bank' extra placement hours above the expected hours to shorten the length of a placement or the programme. Students should be in each placement for the full length of the placement block until the allocated finish date.

Simulation Days

18. Each simulation day counts for 7.5 practice hours. Checks will be done to confirm students' attendance on each day.
19. While there is no specific attendance requirement for simulation days, the expectation is 100% attendance. Any absences may affect the student's achievement of the 2300-hours requirement.
20. There is no opportunity to repeat simulation days, so any trailing hours resulting from absences will need to be made up during placement blocks.

Retrieval Placements

21. All retrievals are subject to Award Board agreement that a further opportunity is permitted. When a student has been referred in more than one placement module or when there may be other factors to consider, the retrieval period (if granted by the Award Board) will be need to be discussed on an individual basis with the Programme Lead.
22. A retrieval placement is a repeat of the summative placement to give the student an opportunity to resit the relevant practice module. The standard retrieval period will be a 5-week placement block in the break between consecutive academic years.
23. A clear Action Plan to address the learning outcomes that have not yet been achieved (such as Proficiencies, Episodes of Care, Medicines Management and Professional Values) should be developed and the student should receive support from the Practice Assessor and Academic Assessor.
24. Where possible a student should undertake their retrieval placement in the same area in which they were previously assessed. However, the decision to move a student to a new placement to undertake a retrieval may be necessary due to the following reasons:
 - Placement capacity
 - Availability of supervisors
 - Extenuating circumstances
25. The length of the retrieval placement is based on the following guidance:
 - a. Student has been failed on Proficiencies/ Episodes of Care/ Medicines Management or Professional Values (irrespective of placement attendance):

5-week retrieval placement during the standard retrieval period

- b. Student has passed all placement requirements except 90% of expected hours:

The length of retrieval will vary depending on the number of trailing hours, with a minimum of 1 week and maximum of 5 weeks retrieval, during the standard retrieval period.

- c. Final year student needs more than 5 weeks to achieve the 2300 hours requirement:

The retrieval length will be calculated in whole weeks with the aim of taking the student above the 2300 hours requirement. This retrieval will start during the standard retrieval period, but will be extended beyond the standard 5-week placement block.

The maximum length of this extended retrieval placement is limited by the requirement that the outcome must go to the standard retrievals Award Board. If a student is unable to reach the 2300 hours requirement during this extended retrieval period, they will be required to retake the placement module.

26. A student who has missed a standard placement block during the academic year may use the 5-week retrieval period as a standard block in order to complete their placements (even if this is shorter than the standard placement length).
27. If this student needs a retrieval placement, the 5-week retrieval will be timetabled in the following standard placement block and the student's placements will need to be moved on by one (including making use of the following year's retrieval period for a placement).
28. Only one placement module can be undertaken in a placement block, so if a retrieval placement is undertaken in a standard placement block. The spare weeks of that block cannot be used to start the next placement.