

Employment of Undergraduate Nursing Students as Assistants in Nursing in the Public Sector

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Summary Specifies requirements in furthering the clinical nursing skills through exposure to the clinical setting while working part-time.

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Dept of Health, Public Hospitals

Distributed to Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Health Associations Unions, Health Professional Associations and Related Organisations, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Hospitals, Tertiary Education Institutes

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Compliance with this policy directive is mandatory.

CIRCULAR

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EMPLOYMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS AS ASSISTANTS IN NURSING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

This Circular applies to the employment of currently enrolled undergraduate nursing students who are employed under the Award classification of Assistants in Nursing (AINs) in the NSW Public Health System.

This Circular **does not** apply to undergraduate nursing students who are undertaking a clinical placement at a health care facility as a component of their university program. The clinical experience gained through employment in this context does not replace the university clinical placements. Likewise the employment of undergraduate nurses should not negatively impact on the provision of clinical placement opportunities.

Many nursing students wish to work part-time, to financially support themselves while they are undertaking their undergraduate studies. The employment of undergraduate students by health care services facilitates this and at the same time is an opportunity for students to further develop their clinical nursing skills through exposure to the clinical setting. It also enables them to develop links for future employment and as such is a worthy initiative for employers, to enhance recruitment and retention strategies. It is acknowledged that many enrolled nurses who are undertaking undergraduate nursing studies are employed on a part time or casual basis as an enrolled nurse.

NSW Health recognises that there is a difference between the clinical skills and the nursing practice that an undergraduate student is educated to perform and the nursing activities that an AIN performs.

The practice of undergraduate students assisting registered nurses with some additional responsibilities in an 'extended role' is supported. Delegation of additional nursing responsibilities must be commensurate with the undergraduate student's level of education. This is consistent with the Delegations of Directors of Nursing for the work undertaken by nursing staff. Extension of the role must only occur with the DON's written authorisation and may occur only under the supervision of a registered nurse. The DON must ensure that a safe level of nursing care is maintained at all times.

Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

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In accordance with the provisions incorporated in the Accounts and Audit Determination, the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and their equivalents, within a public health organisation, shall be held responsible for ensuring the observance of Departmental policy (including circulars and procedure manuals) as issued by the Minister and the Director-General of the Department of Health.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. All nursing practice will be carried out according to the policies and procedures documented in the health service's Nursing Practice Manual and NSW Health Department Circulars, including those related to medication administration.
2. An undergraduate student employed as an AIN will provide nursing care under the close supervision of a registered nurse.
3. An undergraduate student employed as an AIN will be responsible for their own actions and remain accountable to the registered nurse for all delegated duties.
4. An undergraduate student employed as an AIN will be delegated nursing activities at the discretion of the DON and will function within the parameters of a written position description.
 - 4.1 Any additional nursing functions delegated to the undergraduate student must be documented on the position description. Such additional nursing responsibilities must be clearly differentiated on the position statement from routine functions and where required, additional provisos such as "only under direct supervision of a registered nurse" or "only in the final semester" will be clearly documented.
5. Undergraduate students will be assigned to appropriate clinical areas and provided with adequate support at all times. There would normally be no more than one undergraduate student nurse working per shift at any one time in a specific clinical area.
6. The undergraduate student will report and document the functions that they perform.
7. The undergraduate student working as an AIN will wear a uniform and identification badge that indicates their undergraduate nursing student classification. This should be distinct from that of undergraduate students on clinical placement.
8. Priority of employment is to remain for RNs and ENs. AINs are not to be employed where RNs or ENs are available for employment.
9. Employment as an AIN in this mode is contingent on their current enrolment at a minimum rate of progress in an undergraduate degree in nursing. Should their enrolment be discontinued for any reason, then their employment will also lapse.
10. 2nd & 3rd year student status with regard to the duty statements (Attach A) is to be conferred on completion of all scheduled university subjects for those undergraduate years. Students are to demonstrate completion of their studies through their results sheets or academic transcripts.
11. Students employed as AINs in this mode cannot continue in this nursing classification once they have graduated from the Bachelor of Nursing program.
12. A system is to be set in place to monitor the number of students working in this classification and also to monitor their career progression once they have graduated as

RNs if they are employed in the public sector.

13. Ongoing evaluation of this nursing classification will occur and the policy and attachments reviewed annually in consultation with professional and industrial nursing organisations.

Michael Reid
Director-General

DUTIES AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT MAY PERFORM

The following nursing functions may be performed by **first year** undergraduate students employed as AINs:

- Sponging and bathing of patients
- Changing and making beds
- Attending to pressure area care
- Lifting and positioning of patients
- Performing mouth, hair and nail care
- Giving and collecting urinals and bedpans
- Oral feeding of patients
- Assisting patients with their mobility
- Weighing patients
- Measuring patient height and girth
- Monitoring and safely maintaining the physical environment
- Assisting patients with deep breathing and coughing exercises
- Assisting and monitoring patients with prescribed movement exercises
- Responding to patients emotional, spiritual and cultural needs
- Escorting patients
- Applying TED stockings
- Ensuring privacy and dignity
- Ensuring Infection Control practices are followed

In addition to the above the following nursing functions may be performed by **second year** undergraduate students employed as AINs following an assessment to ensure competency to perform the clinical skill:

- Urine testing and urinalysis
- Fluid balance charting
- Collecting specimens eg urine, sputum or wound swabs
- Recording temperature, pulse, respiration, blood pressure, apex beats and oxygen saturation
- Plaster checks
- Monitoring and reporting of pain levels
- Attending to simple wound care management

In addition to the above the following nursing functions may be performed by **third year** undergraduate students employed as AINs following an assessment to ensure competency to perform the clinical skill:

- Performing ECGs
- Removing indwelling catheters
- Removing intravenous cannulas
- Neurovascular observations
- Mini mental tests
- Discharge risk factor assessments
- Falls prevention assessments

In addition to the above the following nursing functions may be performed by **third year** undergraduate students employed as AINs following an assessment to ensure competency to perform the clinical skill and **only under the direct supervision of a registered nurse:**

- Insertion and removal of a nasogastric tube
- Gastric aspiration
- Gastric feeding
- Changing enteral sets and monitoring flow rates of feeds
- Stoma care