

Changes to curriculum for nursing due to Covid19

School/ Directorate

School of Nursing and Health Sciences

Person Responsible

Jennifer Donnachie

Created

6th May, 2020

Last Review

7th May, 2020

Status

Complete

Next Review

1st March, 2021

Screening Data

What is the name/title of the policy/activity?

Changes to the curriculum flow due to Covid19

Describe the aim, objective and intended consequences of the policy/activity.

Decisions have been made in relation to nursing students who should have been on placement or are engaging in their nursing studies.

This EIA considers the differential impact of the varying outcomes of these decisions.

Who is responsible for the policy/activity and who implements it?

The School of Health Sciences implements the decisions taken, however some of the influences have come from the professional statutory body, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Scottish Government Health Department and NHS Education Scotland. Therefore many of the actions taken are out with the control of the School and University.

Who is effected by this policy?

Student nurses from the School and health professionals who are participating in the Schools Undergraduate programme are directly affected.

Is there any indication that this policy is relevant to equality and the protected characteristics or that those with any of the protected characteristics will have a different experience in relation to the intended outcomes of the policy?

Yes. In relation to nursing there is a disproportionate balance in respect of women studying nursing and the decisions taken will have a greater impact on women students across the University student population. Women are also more likely to have responsibility for childcare and at this time home schooling. This is likely to impact on study time and the study environment if studying from home.

In addition it will impact on those students who have underlying medical conditions which place them in the category of vulnerable. The requirement to isolate or screen because of that is likely to have a different outcome for them in relation to others when it comes to achieving their degree. This is due to the nature of the style of learning and need for placement work.

Covid19 has also been found to have a greater impact on those from particular groups, including BAME communities. This is likely to cause greater levels of anxiety amongst BAME students in relation to both their families and their own vulnerabilities. This is supported by findings from NHS fatalities amongst staff.

The impact of the change to programme flow as described above specifically impacts the September 17 and 18 cohorts related to opportunity for paid placement and programme continuity. For both cohorts, access to supernumerary placements for those who did not opt for paid placement will be variable and this will impact on

progression and eventual registration. However, the implication for September 19 whilst lesser for now, will begin to impact when SHS looks to return to 'normal' and again, access to supernumerary placement will be a challenge. The changes impact all cohorts in relation to theory flow.

Relevant statistics around the student population groups are as follows:

Sept 2019 – 40 Male, 424 Female, 2 MX (gender Neutral). BAME data not available as yet.

Sept 2018 – 25 Male, 380 Female, One MX. 30 BAME students.

Sept 2017 – 33 Male, 324 Female, One MX. 17 BAME students.

Student Theory/Placement Data

September 2018 – 196 Paid Placement and 210 Theory. No Shielded.

September 207 – 332 Paid Placement and 18 Theory. 8 Shielded.

Recommend this EA for Full Analysis?

Yes

Comments

The decisions taken with regard to how student nurses will be affected by the Covid19 situation in relation to their learning outcomes will have a differential impact which relates to some of the protected characteristics and will have a differential impact on all the students in comparison to the wider University student population.

Rate this EA

Low

Impact Assessment Data

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Age?

- Yes

Nursing has a higher proportion of mature students, relative to other programmes. This in conjunction with the fact that many are women, means that they are disproportionately more likely to have to take on the wider caring responsibilities that have arisen out of the Covid19 lockdown (childcare, home schooling, care for older relatives)

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Disability?

- Yes

Students with some disabilities will have to isolate or shield due to increased risk and that prevents their ability to participate in some of the projects which students are involved in. This includes the ability to participate in placements, meaning that those with disabilities or long term medical conditions are unlikely to be able to fully complete their year/course within the expected timescale.

In addition those who care for family members with disabilities may also be required to isolate and similar impacts will affect them.

Issues around working space will also add to the negative factors for those who are in isolation or shielding.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Gender Reassignment?

- No

It will not impact directly because of gender reassignment, however any student reassigning will be affected because they are studying nursing and are affected by the external decisions being taken.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Marriage and Civil Partnership?

- No

The decisions taken will not detriment people because of their status of marriage or civil partnership.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Pregnancy and Maternity?

- Yes

Those who are pregnant are classed as vulnerable and so the opportunities to participate in activities, including placements, will be removed. All the pregnant students in the School are currently shielding. As supernumerary placement resume students who are more than 28 weeks pregnant will require to start maternity leave, if they are due to be in placement at that point. This aligns with healthcare workers. It may affect the student's completion date for the programme.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Race?

- Yes

Evidence coming from both America and the UK seem to indicate a greater risk to BAME communities from Covid19. The greatest numbers of NHS staff to have died from the virus are from BAME backgrounds.

That research is likely to increase anxiety amongst the BAME community, which may result in increased health and wellbeing issues for some.

However the impact of changes to how individuals will study and whether or not they can carry out placements may also affect the visa requirements of Tier 4 students. This includes availability of funding for them and attendance requirements, in addition to the challenges faced by all students.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Religion and Belief?

- No

There is no indication that there is direct impact as a result of Covid19 and the decisions being taken as a consequence.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Sex?

- Yes

This is because of the disproportionately high numbers of women in nursing. The changes to the opportunities for placement, combined with the disproportionately higher levels of caring expectations, is likely to result in a greater detriment to women studying nursing against women studying in other subject areas.

Although male nurses will also be impacted, the caring responsibilities and expectation are usually much less in the case of men.

Many of those studying nursing are of an age where they have young children, hence the increased responsibility for caring at this time when schools and nursery facilities are closed or operating on minimum provision.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Sexual Orientation?

- No

There not specific Not specific difference in relation to sexual orientation, however there is likely to be the same concerns as a result of the decisions being taken for those studying nursing

Taking account of the findings so far, is there a possibility that the implementation of this policy would result in a different experience or a detriment for those with protected characteristics?

- Yes

The decisions being taken only apply to nursing students. Because of the disproportionately high numbers of women studying nursing, this will have an automatic differential impact on women students. In relation to disability, although the numbers of students disclosing a disability is low, there will be a greater overall impact on those who have to isolate because of that disability. The ability to participate in placements has been removed from them because of their vulnerability. This will have a long term effect on their learning outcomes and their expected completion date and therefore their opportunities for employment.

In general there will also be a greater responsibility for caring duties for children at home, older family members and those with disabilities. This will have a disproportionate impact on women students because women remain the primary carers in our society.

In relation to race there may be increased levels of anxiety given the evidence so far of greater risk to our minority ethnic populations and also a potential risk to any visa conditions for Tier 4 students.

The nature of the delivery of nursing training and the decisions that have been taken with regard to that delivery, have had a greater impact on nursing students overall by comparison to students in other study areas.

Based on your findings so far, what recommendations or changes (if any) would you make in relation to the policy and how it is implemented?

In relation to nursing students, many of the decisions being taken are from external bodies and cannot be changed from within the University. However the Council of Deans can highlight the disproportionate impacts identified to the relevant bodies, who may reconsider the position. In addition where Tier 4 students are concerned, the Council of Deans should consider liaising with the Home Office to determine how the matters relating to visa conditions is being addressed.

Within the grasp of the University is the No Detriment Policy. This refers in the main to theoretical learning and does not accurately reflect the practical placements required for nursing in particular. The policy should consider how the effect of the removal from practical placements will be addressed for nursing assessments.

1. Council of Deans for Health gather Scotland wide information on disproportionate impact on student nurses and health professionals and provide impact report to governing bodies - this can be shown by the delayed completion of studies for different year groups, as well as those with underlying health issues that render them vulnerable to Covid 19.

2. The findings relating to the disproportionate impact on learning outcomes and graduation for student nurses should be highlighted to the University UEG

3. The No Detriment Policy must reflect the considerations to be given to those students whose studies require them to undertake practical placements, as well as theoretical studies. The evidence is that there does not appear to be any consideration to those whose prospect of graduation is delayed because of an imposed inability to complete placements.

Where you have recommended actions/changes to the policy, what are the timescales for completion of these

29-05-2020

What monitoring arrangements do you have in place to identify changes in any impact or relevance?

The School has identified the student groups most likely to be impacted in relation to completion of clinical placements. This will be extended to look at specific groups, including race and disability.

At this point the monitoring will have to consider whether or not changes can be made to the current approach being taken.

Continuing comparisons against other non clinical student completion and graduation rates will provide strong evidence of impact.

Comments

In relation to the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, the decisions being taken regarding student clinical placements has a disproportionate impact on women because of the levels of women in the sector. However the main concern is that all nursing students are likely to see a delay in the completion of their course and therefore their earning potential. Although some nursing students will be 'fast tracked' to the NHS, this will be highly dependent of caring responsibilities, disabilities or underlying medical conditions which will determine whether they can participate in the practical aspects of health care.

In relation to race and ethnicity, there may be impacts on the delay in completing studies on their visa permissions and attendance requirements associated with that.

Although the current circumstances are exceptional, the deciding bodies governing health professionals and visa compliance should be made aware of these implications on students. The University should also consider how it will reflect the No Detriment Policy on those students who are unable to undertake the required placement work.

Organisation Sign-off Data

Having read the EIA, do you approve its findings and recommendations?

- Yes

What are your reasons for approving/not approving the EIA?

The EIA has highlighted the key issues affecting nursing students in relation to the Covid pandemic and had specifically noted issues that disproportionately affect students with protected characteristics.

If you have approved the EIA, do you agree with the monitoring arrangements in place?

- Yes

The requirement to monitor the impact of Covid at national, university and School levels is clear.

Where you have not approved the monitoring process, what other steps do you require to be taken?

N/A

Comments

The EIA has identified the impact for all nursing students of the Covid 19 pandemic. This relates particularly to practice learning, though the move to online learning has also impacted on all students across the institution. The EIA specifically identifies more significant effects on groups with protected characteristics. These will need to be monitored and adjustments made for both practice and theory learning. This is already happening and will be reviewed regularly. Monitoring will take place at School level and also within the university and nationally.

Next Review Date

2021-03-01

Outstanding Actions

No outstanding actions