

Equality and diversity considerations

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The AEI, with its practice learning partners, is responsible for ensuring that the equality, diversity and inclusion needs of all those who are part of an educational experience are taken into account. This includes students as well as practice supervisors, practice and academic assessors, nominated persons and anyone else who contributes to student learning. If needed, they should make adjustments, for example by removing barriers to learning for those that are disabled or to enable religious needs to be met within the requirements of the standards.

The AEI and its practice learning partners should have policies and procedures in place that promote inclusion, show commitment to tackling racism and discrimination of all forms and seek to address under-representation. The diverse needs of all students will need to be supported for this to happen.

Here are a series of examples of how the varying needs of diverse students can be met.

Stewart

Stewart has recently started a pre-registration midwifery degree programme. He is profoundly deaf, and wears hearing aids in both ears. He also has a slight speech impediment as a result of his deafness.

Having made his condition known when successfully joining the programme, the course leader was able to work with Stewart and the organisation's occupational health team at an early stage to ascertain what adjustments may be required to help him reach his potential and be given the best opportunity to successfully complete the course.

Stewart was able to explain that due to a combination of his hearing aids and an ability to lip-read, he could understand what people were saying to him well enough, and providing people were patient with him and his slight speech impediment, he could make himself understood clearly. However, he was concerned that due to the need to wear hearing aids in both ears, he would not be able to effectively use a stethoscope as he would need to remove the hearing aids to insert the earpieces, which then meant he was unable to hear anything.

As a result, and being aware not only of its legal responsibilities to make reasonable adjustments but also the requirements of sections 3.11 and 3.12 of the NMC's Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education, the university were able to provide Stewart with an amplified stethoscope that he would be able to use. This would help reduce any substantial disadvantage he may be put at and would give him a fair and equal chance to meet his proficiencies while providing safe and effective care.

After a bit of practice, Stewart found the amplified stethoscope easy to use and he was able to hear clearly using it and was happy with the arrangements made for him. The use of the amplified stethoscope was also agreed with practice learning providers as a suitable reasonable adjustment to enable Stewart to work safely in their environments.

Mercedes

Mercedes has recently started a pre-registration adult nursing degree programme. She has a diagnosis of narcolepsy, which is a neurological disorder characterised by excessive daytime sleepiness and often an array of additional symptoms including falling asleep suddenly.

Mercedes manages her condition well, mostly by having a good sleep routine and decides to discuss this matter with her course leader, as she is concerned that her programme will involve practice placements that will involve overnight shifts, which will have a negative impact on her health and safety as well as the ability provide safe and effective care.

Her course leader was able to reassure Mercedes. Whilst it is true that sections 3.2 and 3.6 of the NMC's Programme standards for pre-registration nursing programmes require approved education institutions and practice learning partners to ensure that students experience the variety of practice and range of hours expected of registered nurses, section 3.5 places an onus on them to take account of students' individual needs and personal circumstances when allocating their practice learning, including making reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

As a result, it was agreed that Mercedes' practice learning experiences would not include night shifts, although twilight and early morning shifts were still possible. This would enable her to maintain her well-being and not disadvantage her in terms of meeting all the programme outcomes and requirements of the standards.

Mercedes was suitably reassured by this discussion.

Isaiah

Isaiah is an NMC registered nurse who has recently started a Specialist Community Public Health Nursing programme in occupational health nursing. He is recently widowed and is a single parent with two young school-aged children. He is keen to progress his career in occupational health but is concerned that the course will involve a lot of time spent in practice learning.

Thanks to the support of family and friends, he has been able to ensure that his children are taken to and picked up from school most days of the week on a regular basis. However, during term time one morning and two afternoons a week he is unable to have such regular arrangements in place, as a result he would find it difficult to spend the full day on placements on those days.

He would however be able to make arrangements to go on his practice learning experiences on Saturdays and during the school holidays, as he had confirmed that family and friends would be in a position to offer childcare at these times.

Isaiah discussed this situation with his course leader and practice learning providers, who were sympathetic. The NMC Standards for post-registration programmes requires all practice learning that forms part of such programmes to comply with the NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment (section 3.4), which in turn requires that all learning experiences must be inclusive and supportive of the diverse needs of individual students (section 1.9).

That being the case, it was agreed that wherever possible practice learning experiences would take account of the times when Isaiah would be taking his children to or collecting them from school and would be timetabled accordingly so that he could start earlier or finish later on days when that would be possible. It was also agreed that where possible practice learning experiences would be arranged for Saturdays and school holidays, which would ease the pressure on Isaiah as he knew that childcare arrangements could be made on those days.

Isaiah was reassured by this conversation and emerged feeling positive that he would be able obtain the qualification necessary to follow his dream of pursuing a career in occupational health nursing.

Rebekah

Rebekah has recently started a pre-registration mental health nursing degree programme. She is from an orthodox Jewish family, and she observes the Jewish sabbath, which commences at nightfall on Friday and ends at nightfall on Saturday. It would therefore be very difficult for her to attend lectures or practice learning experiences during those hours.

She decides that she needs to discuss some concerns she has with her personal tutor, as she is unsure what will happen with regard to any academic learning that may take place on Friday afternoons, particularly in the winter months when nightfall may occur as early as mid-afternoon, and any practice learning experiences that

may take place on the sabbath. She is anxious not to fall behind with her studies or to be made to feel that she is being given preferential treatment on account of her religious beliefs. She is also keen to stress that she would be more than willing to undertake practice learning experiences on other days of the week, including Sundays, to ensure she completes the required number of practice learning hours needed for her degree.

Her personal tutor listens to Rebekah's concerns, and immediately sets about putting her mind at ease. She makes it clear that Rebekah has every right to have reasonable adjustments made for her on account of her religious beliefs, and that there is no suggestion that she will be receiving preferential treatment.

The tutor confirms that arrangements will be put in place so that Rebekah can catch up on any lectures or other academic learning activities missed because they happen to take place late on a Friday afternoon. She also confirms that arrangements can be made to ensure that she does not have to go on practice learning experiences that clashed with the sabbath. She also stated she appreciated the offer made by Rebekah to do shifts at all other times, as this would make it easier to schedule the total number of hours she would need to complete to meet the requirements of the NMC standards.

Rebekah expressed her thanks and relief that such arrangements can be put in place so that she can undertake her studies safe in the knowledge that she will be able to continue with the religious observances that are so central to her.