



Managing your internship

Catherine O'Connor gives an overview of the rights and entitlements of interns

UNDERSTANDING rights and entitlements when transitioning from being supernumerary students to employed internship students can sometimes be challenging, so I have compiled some of the most frequently asked questions I have received in recent weeks to provide some clarity.

What are my annual leave entitlements?

Interns are entitled to 14.5 days of annual leave during their internship.

What are my break entitlements?

All employees are entitled to breaks as outlined in the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, which can be accessed via the INMO Information Department. You are entitled to a 15-minute break once you have worked up to four and a half hours, and a 30 minute break once you have worked up to six hours, which may include the first break.

How many hours should I be working each week? Nursing and midwifery interns working in the public sector are required to work an average of 39 hours per week, inclusive of four hours protected reflective time.

What is protected reflective time (PRT)?

The NMBI's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics sets out that all nurses and midwives should engage in reflecting on their practice so as to identify areas where they need to improve in order to provide high quality to those in their care. Protected reflective time is time that is set aside where a student (both supernumerary and internship) has the opportunity to consolidate theory and practice.

How many hours of PRT should I be getting and how can I take it? Intern nurses and midwives are entitled to a minimum of four hours of PRT per week. There is some variation in how it is delivered between areas, and sometimes this is calculated as an average, eg. having a day of structured reflection with CPCs could count as PRT for multiple weeks of placement.

Is PRT paid? Yes, as an intern, PRT is paid.

Is PRT included in my 39-hour work week?

Your internship is calculated as an average

of 35 hours of clinical placement and a minimum of four hours PRT per week. This is comprehended by HSE HR circular 030/2009 and endorsed by a 2014 LRC Agreement.

What do I do if I am sick and have to miss a clinical day? Should you be ill during your internship, you need to refer to your local sick leave policy, which will outline the steps you need to follow. Although you are now classified as an employee in your clinical area, you are still a student and so still need to ensure you meet the minimum NMBI hours required to qualify. For this reason, you may need to pay back the hours missed.

Will I be paid for sick leave? Will I be paid for paying back time? Interns may be granted up to eight weeks of paid sick leave during their internship, provided they comply with the sick leave policy in their area, as per the HSE HR Circular 030/2009. The hours required to be paid back in order to meet the NMBI mandatory requirements will be paid.

How much should I be getting paid for internship? According to the HSE consolidated pay scales 2020, internship students are paid €14,671 for the 36 weeks of rostered placement.

What about premium pay? Premium rates of pay apply where employees work unsociable hours. Internship students should have access to premium hours in line with their staff nurse/midwife colleagues on a pro rata basis. A nurse/midwife who works a 'five over seven' roster (liable to work weekends) and is scheduled to work on Saturday is entitled to a premium payment of €15.30. This is a fixed amount and is payable irrespective of the number of hours worked. Sunday and public holiday premiums are both calculated as time + time (ie. double time) for each hour worked. Night duty premium is calculated as time + one-quarter per hour worked between midnight and 7am. For hours worked between 8pm and midnight, the rate of pay is calculated at time + one-sixth per hour worked. Additionally, for hours

worked between 6pm to 8pm (twilight rate), nursing/midwifery students are paid at a rate of time + one-sixth.

Am I paying the right amount of tax? As you are now employees in your clinical areas, it is important to make sure you are paying the correct amount of tax. This can be done by logging on to revenue.ie and clicking on the 'myAccount' button in the top right-hand corner, followed by 'register now'. This will bring you through the steps of registering with Revenue and will allow you to apply for tax credits.

What about flat-rate expenses? Nurses and midwives can claim flat-rate expenses for their uniforms. While you would not have been able to claim this for your supernumerary placements, as you are now employees you can claim this online by using your Revenue 'myAccount'.

I don't feel like I'm coping well with internship – what should I do? Going from being a supernumerary student in third year, to being counted as 0.5 of a nurse/midwife in the roster can be daunting in the beginning, so do reach out for support.

If you have a good relationship with your preceptor or CNM, talk to them about concerns you're having. If you feel more comfortable with your CPC, link in with them. There are also supports in your college, eg. tutors, programme co-ordinators, counselling services. The INMO also provides access to a 24/7 telephone counselling helpline for members. Remember that it's normal to feel nervous in the beginning and to wonder if it's ever going to improve. Things will begin to 'click' in time – so give yourself some credit for making it this far and trust in yourself that you can make it through the rest of the internship!

Preceptor of the year

Check out our preceptor of the year award application form on the opposite page.

Get in touch

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