



Advice for first year students

Catherine O'Connor shares advice with incoming first year nursing and midwifery students joining the INMO

I WOULD like to extend a very warm welcome to all of the incoming first year nursing and midwifery students joining the INMO. You are entering a challenging yet hugely rewarding and valued profession and the INMO is here to support you during your training and career.

The role of the union is to promote the interests of nurses and midwives. As a student member you can contact the union for free advice, information, support and

representation if you experience any issues while on clinical placement. You can also access a variety of services, such as our library, continuing professional development courses and discounts on expenses like car insurance through INMO Rewards.

As your student and new graduate officer, I am here to answer questions that you may have in relation to your clinical placements and I can advise you on your rights and entitlements. I will update you

on issues that may affect you through a *Student Link* e-zine, which will be emailed to you regularly. If you would like to learn more about how the union works and how you can get involved as a rep for your class, please do contact me. Please read below to hear advice from some of your fellow students based on their experience.

Catherine O'Connor is the INMO's student and new graduate officer. If you have a question for her, please email catherine.oconnor@inmo.ie

Laura Henry, final year midwifery student and chair of the INMO Student Section

"To the new student midwives and nurses: congratulations! This is one of the first steps on an important path. Things are uncertain (a word I never used so much before this year), but there is so much help for you. I'm nearly finished my undergraduate journey – this is my advice to you as you begin yours.

"Remember why you started. Think about where you want to end up, and who you hope to be when you get there. Understand the system – who is in it, how it works, how you can fit in and how you can improve it. Find your people: friends, classmates, colleagues, other union members, people on other courses and in other colleges. Celebrate the small stuff. Be proud of what you achieve on the way to qualifying. Reach out when you need help and don't be afraid to ask questions."

Maria Tservjatsuk, RGN and member of the Dublin Youth Forum

"Well done on making it here! While you are at the beginning of your journey, the best piece of advice I can give you is to be patient with yourself. Everything may seem hard at first, but know that you are not alone. We all felt that way, and eventually things fall into place. You will be able to link theory and practice, but it might take a little bit of time.

"Ask questions. No question is too silly. Taking notes of things you learn as you go along while on placement also really helps. I used to have a mini notebook that went to every placement with me. Nursing is hands on, so don't be afraid to ask to get involved on the wards, and if you are not sure about something, please ask. Preceptors can be very busy, so even offering to help is great. We know you are there to learn and we love the enthusiasm.

"Don't be afraid to ask for help. College can be a lonely time; try to keep in touch with old friends and make some new ones. If you are struggling with something or an experience you had on placement, chances are you are not alone, so talk about it. Don't forget to enjoy your time in college. The four years go by so fast, so try to remember that while the studies are very important, you can still have fun. Join societies and clubs, and make memories!"

Melissa Plunkett, midwifery mature student and student rep on the INMO Executive Council

"I know it's cliché, but go to your lectures. So many times I've been in an exam looking at a question and have remembered the lecturer talking about that topic. Honestly, you'll be amazed at how much you take in, even on your slow days. I wouldn't describe myself as organised, but for college it really helps to put the effort in. I find that taking notes on the lecture slides is the best way to learn, whether that's digital or with a pen and paper. It makes revision easier as your notes are already linked to the topic and you're not left wondering what that random note is about! For those of you not blessed with organisational skills, get yourself a diary and write your deadlines into it. This has saved me more than once. I have been known to pretend the deadline is earlier so that procrastination won't stress me out! Do whatever works for you. Your lecture hall might be massive but the people you chat to in there will become your second family. You will support each other throughout the course, offering encouragement, coffee and hugs when needed. I'm proud to say that I have made lifelong friends.

"When it comes to placement it's normal to be nervous. You're not alone and this is where your support network of classmates will help. Don't be afraid to speak to other students; we were once in your shoes and are probably just as nervous for our placement. Small notebooks are really handy to keep in your pocket and jot things down while on placement. Invest in comfy shoes – your feet will thank me later. Ask questions; honestly, it may seem scary but ask anyway. Your preceptor will appreciate it and you'll learn loads.

"To my fellow students who are also parents: you can do it. Take a breath and remind yourself that this is but a moment in time and that the kids will survive."