

Guidelines for midwifery students undertaking the “Connect Program”

As a midwifery student you are required by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) to complete a minimum of **10 continuity of care experiences** (known as the ‘Connect Program’ at UniSC), over the duration of your program. This is in conjunction with your other supervised midwifery practice experience requirements. Combined these two clinical elements goes towards your eligibility to apply for registration as a midwife in Australia. The Connect Program commences in the first year of your program upon successful completion of the clinical assessment in HLT132.

ANMAC (2021) state that a Continuity of Care Experience (CoCE) is defined as:

“Ongoing midwifery relationship between the student and the woman from initial contact in pregnancy through to the weeks immediately after the woman has given birth, across the interface between community and individual health care settings. The intention of this experience is to enable students to experience continuity with individual women through pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period, irrespective of the carers chosen by the woman or the availability of midwifery continuity of care models.” (p.5)

Engagement with the Connect Program will enrich your ability to engage with woman-centered care, whereby you will be supported to fulfil the following requirements stipulated by ANMAC (2021):

- Establish, maintain, and conclude a professional relationship while experiencing continuity with individual women through pregnancy, labour and birth, and the postnatal period, regardless of model of care.
- Provide *midwifery* care within a professional practice setting and under the supervision of a midwife -in collaborative practice arrangements supervision by other relevant registered practitioners (for example, medical officer qualified in obstetrics, child health nurse or physiotherapist) may be appropriate but maternity care needs to be the focus.
- Engage with a **minimum of 10 women** over the course of your degree. Engagement involves attending **four antenatal and two postnatal episodes of care** and for the **majority of women, the labour and birth (minimum = 6)**.
- Maintain a record of engagement with each woman incorporating reflection, which will be reviewed by the course coordinators of your midwifery clinical courses. You can view the full ANMAC Midwife Accreditation Standards at the following link:
https://anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/06920_anmac_midwife_std_ee_2020_updated_fa.pdf

Responsibilities of the Student

- Always inform clinical staff of your role as a student, which includes, scope of practice and level of the program, to ensure you are not put in a position where you are asked to perform skills in which you are not yet deemed competent.
- Maintain a therapeutic relationship in accordance with the NMBA standards (Standard 2), with all women engaged in the Connect Program.
- It is imperative each woman, completes and signs a consent form with **all details clearly written**, which you upload the original to SONIA Online Connect (in PDF format – A photo is not acceptable- there are free scanner apps that you can download, alternatively there are scanners available on campus) as soon as possible. Instructions on how to upload are available in the 'Quick Guide to SONIA checks Connect Online', available on the SONIA (Connect Program) homepage.
- Provide the woman with a copy of the signed consent for her to keep in her hand-held record.
- Attendance at Connect appointments is determined by the care requirements of the individual woman and the recommended schedule of antenatal visits. These are usually organised ahead of time which allows you to schedule them into your diary, however at times emergent appointments may occur and attendance is negotiated with the individual women and yourself. Home/community visits are NOT to be attended if the student is unaccompanied by a health practitioner.
- Log on to SONIA Online and select 'Connect Program' (not Nursing and Midwifery). Read the information on the homepage and read and adhere to the venue specific notes relevant to the women you have recruited. Please note, these differ between hospitals.
- Print Connect Log of Hours and complete at each episode of care for each Connect woman. This needs to be signed by the health care provider at each Connect episode. This is to be uploaded to SONIA Checks at the completion of the Connect experience (following at least 2 postnatal visits OR if the woman withdraws from the program for any reason).
- Maintain contact with the Connect Program Coordinator and seek advice or assistance when necessary.
- Episodes of care should always be supervised by a registered health practitioner and you should not meet women and their families socially (eg for a coffee).
- Notify the Connect Program Coordinator of any concerns regarding the relationship with women engaged in a continuity of care experience.
- Provide the woman with a mobile phone number for you to be contacted on for antenatal and postnatal appointments, emergent hospital presentations and labour and birth.
- It is anticipated you will be 'on call' for labour and birth episodes for your Connect women, however it is also understood that there will be times that you are unavailable, and this should be communicated to the woman. You will need to manage your attendance at these events around your university and personal commitments.
- Students may attend homebirths with private practicing midwives or as part of the publicly funded homebirth program. **Students must be observational only** during the intrapartum period.

- Always refer to the appropriate practitioner if the woman asks for advice, counselling or assistance.
- All of your CoCE's are to be documented in your Midwifery Practice Experience Portfolio and also noted on the Connect summary page.
- Attend a minimum of **4 antenatal episodes of care** with the woman under the supervision of a midwife or other relevant registered practitioner (e.g., obstetrician or GP) in a professional practice setting.
- You are required to attend the labour and birth **for the majority of women (n=6)**, with their consent. Although a privileged experience being able to act as primary accoucheur for a Connect woman, you are not required to, for the birth to be considered 'attended'. For Connect purposes, an attended birth includes a vaginal birth, an elective or emergency caesarean, a medically induced birth and an assisted birth.
- You are required to attend a minimum of **2 postnatal episodes of care**, ideally one of which will be the final 6-week postpartum check. Postnatal episodes of care may include provision of postnatal care **after** the immediate postpartum (i.e., **must not** include the first 2 hours post birth), visiting the woman and where possible her baby whilst still in hospital, attending midwifery home visits, routine GP appointments at 1 and 6 weeks postpartum and child health and lactation clinics.
- Completed *Connect Log of Hours* form is to be uploaded to SONIA Checks at your earliest convenience, following completion of the Connect follow through experience (i.e., following at least 2 postnatal visits OR the woman has withdrawn from the Connect program for any reason).
- CoCE's may be counted towards your supervised midwifery practice experience requirements (e.g., antenatal and postnatal care, acting as primary accoucheur, providing labour care, caring for women with complex needs or neonatal examination).
- De-identify any records made prior to removal from the health care facility if using a person's personal information for the purpose of study or research.
- All incidents are to be reported to the Clinical Placements Office and both University and health care facility incident forms are to be completed. If an incident occurs and it is related to a clinical situation, in the first instance you should consult your facilitator. If this is not possible, please contact the course coordinator or clinical program coordinator or SafeUSC immediately. At this time, if indicated, an [Incident Form](#) is completed and submitted to the university. The student and the clinical facilitator are responsible for reporting the incident to the university. You and your facilitator must document the incident according to university and facility (e.g., hospital) protocols. For further guidance, please see [Near-miss, hazard and incident reporting guidelines](#). See UniSC Midwifery Clinical Placement Handbook for further information.
- Individual facilities will have both policies, procedures and standard documentation that must be adhered to by students.
- Students are NOT permitted to recruit relatives as a CoCE, due to the nature of the relationship and the requirement to develop, maintain and conclude professional relationships in a way that differentiates the boundaries between professional and personal relationships

(NMBA Standard 2.7).

- Recruiting friends is **not encouraged**; please contact the Connect Coordinator if you are planning on recruiting a friend.
- You must wear your **UniSC uniform** and always have your student ID with you whilst with a CoCE woman unless you have been advised otherwise as per the venue specific notes located on WILS- Connect Program.
- You **cannot** leave a midwifery clinical placement to attend a continuity of care experience **unless it is within the same health care facility** and is negotiated with your facilitator/ midwife buddy prior.
- Please refer to the Midwifery Clinical Placement Handbook for more details, specifically regarding Fitness for Practice and Health and Wellbeing.

Connect Program Special Requirements

- The Connect component of the program must be suspended if a midwifery practice course has not been completed in the preceding 12-month period. Connect activity may recommence once the scenario based clinical exam in the respective midwifery practice course, or the Clinical Connections Module, is successfully completed.
- The Connect component of the program must be suspended if a midwifery practice course is failed. Connect activity may recommence once the scenario based clinical exam in the respective midwifery practice course is successfully completed.

Student to discuss with the woman

- Women volunteering for the Connect program are required to sign a consent form with the midwifery student. This is in no way a binding contract and a woman may withdraw at any time.
- Women should not participate in any relationship with a student that causes them concern or anxiety, therefore women are able to withdraw at any time, without need for explanation.
- Women should contact the designated Connect Program Coordinator with any concerns regarding student's behaviour, actions or attitude, or if she wishes to discontinue in the program.
- Feedback regarding the woman's experience of the Connect Program is encouraged and would be greatly appreciated.
- Inform the student of scheduled appointments or any unplanned visits to hospital or their health care provider.
- Provide a contact mobile phone number that she wishes to be contacted on.

References

Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC). (2021)., *Midwife: Accreditation Standards*,
https://anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/06920_anmac_midwife_std_ee_2020_updated_fa.pdf

Relevant standards, codes, guidelines and policies (students to adhere to)

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council. (2021). *Midwife accreditation standards 2021, essential evidence*.
https://anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/06920_anmac_midwife_std_ee_2020_updated_fa.pdf

International Confederation of Midwives. (2014). *International Code of Ethics for Midwives*.<https://www.internationalmidwives.org/our-work/policy-and-practice/international-code-of-ethics-for-midwives.html>

Nursing & Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). (2018). *Code of Conduct for Midwives*.
<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). (2018). *Midwife Standards for Practice*.
<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>

Nursing & Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). (2018). *Social media: How to meet your obligations under the National Law*. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Social-media-guidance.aspx>

University of the Sunshine Coast. (2023). *Midwifery Student Clinical Handbook*.
https://fileassetsuscsaprodae01.blob.core.windows.net/wil/Nursing%20Com/Public%20Folder/Sonia%20Support%20Mandatory%20Fact%20Sheets/Nursing%20&%20Midwifery/Midwifery_ClinicalPlacement_Student%20Handbook.pdf

University of the Sunshine Coast. (2022). *Social Media – Operational Policy*.
<https://www.usc.edu.au/about/policies-and-procedures/social-media-operational-policy>