

Confidentiality in Summative Assessments

Regarding confidentiality, the duties of nurses and midwives are governed by the Data Protection Act (1998) and the NMC code of professional conduct: standards for conduct, performance and ethics (the Code) (2008)

The NMC state that nurses and midwives have a duty to protect confidential information and explicitly state:

- You must respect people's right to confidentiality
- You must ensure people are informed about how and why information is shared by those who will be providing their care
- You must disclose information if you believe someone may be at risk of harm, in line with the laws of the country in which you are practising

The Data Protection Act (1998) makes provision for the legal processing of personal data relating to individuals, including the obtaining, holding, use or disclosure of such information.

The School interprets the requirements of the NMC and the Data Protection Act to mean that for the purposes of student coursework (including written, practical and oral summative assessments) all personal data relating to patients (including those of their carers and significant others) should be removed or anonymised so that patients cannot be identified. This includes their names and any written materials relating to their particular treatment(s).

The names of clinical areas and staff members are not considered to be personal data and in some types of course work, the identification of work place and mentors, for example, is mandatory. The important principle is that patients should not be able to be directly identifiable. Students are not required to include in their written work a statement that data have been anonymised. This will be assumed.

Breach of confidentiality can be avoided by students:

- By not using real names; the use of descriptors such as 'Mrs X' removes any possible ambiguity arising from the use of fictitious names.
- Never including in any submitted work photocopied material from patient notes (unless specifically required to do so). If required, all personal identifying information must be removed or masked prior to the copy being made, and not simply obscured afterwards.

The School considers all breaches of confidentiality where patients can be identified to be serious, and will take the following action:

- In the case of a first offence, the work will be given a mark of zero, and a School warning will be issued
- In the case of a second offence, the work will again receive no marks, the School warning will be activated and the student will be discontinued.

Students should also note that it is not necessary or required that any statement should be made in the body of an essay or other course work that the NMC guidelines have been followed or that pseudonyms have been used, as this will be assumed in all cases.