
Uniform and Dress Policy

Pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery

1. Introduction

Student nurse and midwife dress standards exist to:

- Ensure compatibility with safe moving & handling principles.
- Ensure compatibility with evidence-based infection prevention & control principles.
- Ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of students during practice-based learning.
- Ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of peers, colleagues, and service users when delivering any aspect of nursing or midwifery care.
- Minimise risk during interventions such as breakaway or physical restraint.
- Promote and maintain public confidence in the nursing & midwifery professions.
- Convey your role as a student and your year of study.

For these reasons, DMU-issued uniform should be worn for the duration of most clinical placements (Sections 2-4). Occasionally, there may be specific placement environments where alternate uniform standards or plain clothes dress are more appropriate (Sections 3 & 5). All students should adhere to the standards in Section 6.

Students with religious dress considerations should refer to Appendix 1 for additional standards and permitted exceptions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the uniform policies or guidance applicable to the clinical area or NHS Trust that you have been allocated to. It is each student's responsibility to identify any additional requirements on first contact with each placement and to adhere to these requirements for the duration of the placement. These standards do not exempt any student nurse or midwife from local policy or procedures.

2. Obtaining Your Uniform

2.1 The De Montfort University Student Nurse and Student Midwife Uniform is designed to align with the NHS England Healthcare Uniforms *Learner* colourway.

2.2 Five sets of uniform will be provided by the University. Each set consists of a scrub top and trousers. Both the top and trousers are designed with a unisex fit.

2.3 The HLS Placement Team will contact all students within the first two weeks of the programme with full instructions for ordering uniforms, as well as the process for exchanging them. Uniforms will be delivered to the address that you specify. You must ensure that you will be able to accept delivery. If you are certain that your uniform may not be securely delivered to your term-time address, you may specify delivery to the University. One free size exchange will be allowed within a limited time period specified by the placements team or uniform supplier.

2.4 Uniform allocations should last the duration of the course. In the event of size fluctuations or damage occurring, replacements can be purchased at your own cost.

2.5 New or additional uniforms will be provided by DMU when necessitated by a medical condition, disability, or pregnancy. Evidence should be provided to your Personal Academic Tutor, who will in turn authorise the HLS Placements Team to purchase additional uniforms. There can be an 8-10 week order time for uniforms, and so these requirements should be raised as soon as reasonably practical to avoid disruption.

2.6 The HLS Placements Team are based in Edith Murphy House 1.23

2.7 If you discontinue the programme before completion, you must destroy your uniforms by cutting through all identifiable marks, including the DMU logo, before disposing of them.

2.8 You must not provide any part of your uniform to any other individual for any reason. This includes gifting or selling your uniform.

3. Wearing Your Uniform

3.1 This policy does not apply to academic elements of the programme, such as lectures or seminars.

3.2 DMU Uniform (**Section 4**) should be worn during all placements unless you are explicitly advised otherwise. Plain clothes should adhere to the standards in **Section 5**. Specialist clothing, such as laundered scrubs in Operating Theatres, must be worn and used according to local policy.

3.3 Uniform may be required in certain practical learning environments on the DMU campus such as OSCEs, simulation, and clinical skills sessions. Where this is the case, it will be communicated to you in advance.

3.4 DMU students in uniform are representatives of their profession and their university. It is therefore best practice to cover your uniform when travelling to and from placement or to travel in your own clothes. Uniform should not be worn for any private, work, or social activity outside of the practice learning environment.

3.5 Students should ensure that their uniform is fully covered or removed when smoking or vaping and take steps to ensure that their uniform does not smell of smoke on return to the clinical area.

3.6 Your DMU-issued photo ID badge should always be worn. You may be required to wear additional ID badges in certain placement environments. These should be worn on a double-sided ID card holder.

3.7 You will be issued with a blue HLS student lanyard and are advised to use this for the duration of the programme for ease of recognition both on- and off-campus. You may wear your own lanyard or ID clip at your discretion. These must not depict discriminatory words or imagery, represent a safety hazard, or be otherwise incompatible with upholding the professional image of a student nurse or midwife.

3.8 You will be invited to order a DMU “Hello My Name Is” name badge at the start of your programme. This will include your role as a student nurse or midwife. It is your choice whether you include your full preferred name (nursing and midwifery), just your first name (nursing only), or your personal pronouns (nursing and midwifery) on this badge. The name badge does not replace your DMU photo ID.

3.9 Fob watches may be worn and must adhere to the same standards as lanyards. Stethoscopes should be stored in pockets rather than around the neck, as this presents a contamination and ligature risk.

4a. Uniform Standards (September 2025 onwards)

These standards apply to student nurses and midwives who began their studies **after** September 2025. Legacy standards for the pre-2025 uniform are detailed in Section 4b

4.1 Sleeves should not fall below the elbow at their lowest extent. Trousers should be 2cm from the ground at their lowest extent.

4.2 Bare Below the Elbow (BBE):

- To avoid contamination risk and ensure the ability to wash or sanitise hands and wrists up to the elbow, you must always be 'bare below the elbow' in the clinical area.
- The 'clinical area' is any area in which direct patient care or medicine preparation takes place.
- Wristwatches, bangles, and bracelets must not be worn in the clinical area.
- A plain black, white, or blue long-sleeved shirt may be worn under the uniform, however this must be securely rolled above the elbow within the clinical area.
- Sleeves may be rolled down to cover the forearm outside the clinical area.
- Disposable oversleeves may be worn in the clinical area, if available.

4.3 Red Year Bars corresponding to the correct year of study should be worn on the scrub top sleeve at all times. You will receive instructions for obtaining these from HLS placements at the start of each Academic Year.

- For Part (Year) 1, the single Year Bar will come pre-attached to your uniforms.
- You should wear two and three Year Bars for Parts (Years) 2 and 3 respectively. You must attach them underneath and parallel to the previous Year Bars.
- It is your responsibility to attach new bars at the start of each year. You may use iron-on hemming web to attach the bars, but sewing is recommended to ensure a secure fastening.
- You must not wear your new Year Bars until you have completed all practice-based assessments within the previous Part (Year).

4.4 Plain black shoes and socks should be worn. Shoes should feature minimal graphic elements, be water-resistant, and have non-slip flat soles. Toes and heels must be closed. Shoes should be well-fitting with comfortable insoles as they may be required to offer support for twelve or more hours per day.

4.5 Uniforms should be washed at the highest permissible temperature between each use. Five sets are provided to allow a continuous rotation of uniforms to be washed together.

4.6 Uniforms must be free from stains and creases. Allowing uniforms to air-dry rather than tumble-drying will reduce the amount of creasing. You will be expected to iron out any creases and may be turned away from any practice learning environment if your uniform is creased or soiled.

4b. Uniform Standards (Prior to September 2025)

These standards apply to student nurses and midwives who began their studies **before** September 2025. These standards will apply for the remainder of your programme.

4.7 Dresses should fall just below the knee and may be worn with plain black, navy or beige tights, or black socks. Dresses may be tailored to the appropriate length. Neither DMU nor the uniform supplier provides tailoring services and you must arrange it yourself.

4.8 Tunic and dress sleeves should not fall below the elbow at their lowest extent.

4.9 Trousers should be 2cm from the ground at their lowest extent.

4.10 Bare Below the Elbow (BBE):

- To avoid contamination risk and ensure the ability to wash or sanitise hands and wrists up to the elbow, you must always be 'bare below the elbow' in the clinical area.
- The 'clinical area' is any area in which direct patient care or medicine preparation takes place.
- Wristwatches, bangles, and bracelets must not be worn in the clinical area.
- A plain black, white, or blue long-sleeved shirt may be worn under the uniform, however this must be securely rolled above the elbow within the clinical area.
- Sleeves may be rolled down to cover the forearm outside the clinical area.
- Disposable oversleeves may be worn in the clinical area, if available.

4.11 Epaulettes corresponding to the correct programme and year of study should be worn at all times, fastened medially (closest to the neck). You will receive an email with instructions for obtaining these from HLS placements at the start of each year.

- Midwifery: no epaulettes, lilac and purple epaulettes for 1, 2, and 3 respectively.
- Nursing: light, medium, and dark blue epaulettes for 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

4.12 Plain black shoes and socks should be worn. Shoes should feature minimal graphic elements, be water resistant, and have non-slip flat soles. Toes and heels must be closed.

4.13 Uniforms should be washed at the highest permissible temperature between each use. Five sets are provided to allow a continuous rotation of uniforms to be washed together.

4.14 Uniforms must be free from stains and creases. Allowing uniforms to air-dry rather than tumble-drying will reduce the amount of creasing. You will be expected to iron out any creases and may be turned away from any practice learning environment if your uniform is creased or soiled.

4.15 For placements in high-security or prison environments, the alternative uniform (blue DMU-branded polo shirt) should be worn. This is to ensure student safety by differentiating student nurses or midwives from prison officers, police, and other prison staff. Contact the HLS Placements Team to arrange the collection of this uniform

5. Non-Uniform Dress Standards

5.1 In some environments, primarily those with vulnerable or distressed service users, the healthcare professionals you work with may wear plain clothes. In this instance, you should not wear your uniform and adhere to the following standards instead:

5.2 You must be clearly identifiable as a student nurse or midwife. DMU and any required local ID should always be visible, except in placement areas where this is identified as a potential wellbeing or safety hazard for students or service users. In this scenario, students should have ID on their person and must be able to produce it at any time. If a lanyard is worn, it should be a DMU-issued lanyard that clearly shows that you are a student nurse or midwife.

5.3 Plain dress shoes should feature minimal graphic elements and must be of a single plain colour, comfortable, water resistant, and have closed heels and toes. Heels should not exceed one inch (2.4cm) in height.

5.4 Shorts, skirts, and dresses should fall between the level of the knee and 2cm from the ground at their minimum and maximum extents. Tights should be a single dark or skin-shade colour.

5.5 Clothing must convey a smart, professional image and be fit for purpose. Jeans, leggings, jogging bottoms, vests, and cargo or combat-style trousers must not be worn. Cropped tops or low-waisted trousers exposing the abdomen must not be worn.

5.6 Clothing depicting discriminatory language, imagery, or referencing any subject incompatible with the standards set out by the NMC Code, must not be worn.

5.7 Jewellery, wristwatches, tops, blazers, and jackets must have the ability to be removed or securely rolled up above the elbow in situations such as providing direct patient care, hand washing, or medicines preparation & administration (4.2).

6. Standards for All Students

6.1 You may be required to wear various forms of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including masks, gloves, and aprons. Local policy and procedures should be followed for all usage of PPE. If you have a latex allergy or any other barrier to the safe usage of standard PPE, you must make your Personal Academic Tutor aware of this immediately.

6.2 Visible tattoos and body art must not depict any discriminatory language, imagery, or reference any subject incompatible with the NMC Code. Temporary body art (including henna) may be worn but will likely be degraded by hand hygiene procedures. You must always follow hand hygiene policy.

6.3 Plain metal rings with no engraving or inset jewellery may be worn and are compatible with BBE principles.

- Placement environments may stipulate the allowed location, type, or number of rings. You must remove rings when required by local policy.

6.4 Necklaces should not be worn as these present a contamination and ligature hazard.

6.5 Piercing jewellery must be robust and without small components such as inset jewels which may become detached and contaminate the clinical area. Piercing jewellery should be chosen to minimise the risk of being caught on masks, lanyards, patients, or objects.

- DMU recognises that there is no conclusively proven objective infection control or safety reason to limit the location or number of visible body or facial piercings.
- Placement environments may stipulate the allowed location, type, or number of visible piercings. You must replace, cover, or remove such piercings when required by local policy.

6.6 You must be able to tie hair, hair extensions, or wigs up and back to ensure that it does not touch the scrub top or swing in front of your face if required by local policy.

- DMU recognises that there is no conclusively proven objective impact on an individuals' ability to provide professional, safe, and competent care based on their hair style or colour.
- Placement environments may stipulate that 'extreme' colours and styles are covered up. You must be prepared to cover your hair with a suitable covering when required by local policy.

6.7 False nails or extensions should not be worn and must be removed before placement. Nails must not protrude past fingertips when looking at the palm of the hand.

6.8 Nail varnish, nail polish, and false eyelashes are permitted under this policy. However, many placement environments prohibit these items, and you must follow local policy. You are responsible for the cost of removing these items and may be turned away from the practice learning environment until they are removed.

6.9 Makeup may be worn by any student.

6.10 You are expected to maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene. The use of simple or lightly fragranced deodorant is appropriate and encouraged, but you should not use strongly scented perfumes or aftershave as staff or service users may be sensitive to such products.

6.11 All lanyards worn around the neck should have at least two breakaway fasteners. Some placement environments require a triple-breakaway design. Lanyards should be tucked in a pocket and must not swing freely when providing direct patient care. Reel-type badge holders are discouraged as these present a significant ligature risk.

6.12 You may wear badges and pins in the clinical area. These may be fixed to lanyards or clothing. Badges should be relevant and not feature discriminatory language, imagery, or reference any subject incompatible with the standards set out by the NMC Code.

- You must exercise professional judgement over the number and placement of badges, and they must not interfere with any professional duties.
- Placement environments may ask you to remove some or all of your badges, where there is an assessed risk of staff or service user harm due to the presence of pins or magnetic fasteners.

6.13 Students with religious considerations should follow the additional information in Appendix 1.

7. Equality Considerations & Penalties

This policy has been reviewed by:

- DMU Faith Team
- Programme Leads - Nursing & Midwifery
- Practice Division
- Practice Learning Committee
- HLS Placements Team

Individual alterations and exemptions to this policy must be discussed with and approved by the Practice Division, supported by relevant stakeholders such as the Programme Lead(s), Placements Team, Occupational Health, and practice partner representatives.

Students found in breach of this policy will face the relevant penalty to their circumstance. This may include awarding a failure/'not achieved' for the relevant practice assessment criteria (*i.e. Professional Values*).

8. Supporting Documents

Bearman, G., Bryant, K., Leekha, S., Mayer, J., Munoz-Price, L. S., Murthy, R., Palmore, T., Rupp, M. E., & White, J. (2014). Healthcare personnel attire in non-operating-room settings. *Infection control and hospital epidemiology* 35(2) pp.107-121

British Islamic Medical Association - Bare Below the Elbows Toolkit

British Islamic Medical Association - Theatre Hijab Toolkit

Cox, G., Sobrany, S., Jenkins, E., Musipa, C., & Darbyshire, P. (2021) Time for nursing to eradicate hair discrimination. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 30(9-10): e45-e47

De Montfort University - Policy on protecting and supporting trans, gender fluid and nonbinary staff and students

De Montfort University - Religion or Belief Policy Statements and Guidance for Staff and Students

Dorwart, S., Kuntz, S. & Armstrong, M. (2010) Developing a Nursing Personnel Policy to Address Body Art Using an Evidence-Based Model. *The Journal of continuing Education in Nursing* 41(12) pp.540-546

Equality and Human Rights Commission - Guidance on the wearing of Sikh articles of faith in the workplace and public spaces

Leicestershire Partnership Trust - Work Wear and Uniform Policy (2024)

[NHS Supply Chain - NHS Healthcare Uniforms](#)

Nursing & Midwifery Council - *The Code* (2018)

St Andrew's Healthcare - Code of Conduct

University Hospitals of Leicester - Uniform and Workwear Policy (2023)

Appendix 1: Religious Considerations

Students with religious dress considerations may modify their uniform in the following ways:

- The Kara (plain metal bangle) and Kirpan (ceremonial dagger) may be worn by Sikhs but the Kirpan must not be visible and must be secured under clothing at all times.
- The Kara must be washed during hand hygiene procedures. You may be asked to temporarily remove the Kara in certain environments, such as around strong magnetic fields and in operating theatres.
- Some placement environments may require that the Kirpan is removed and stored safely until you leave the clinical area when valid staff or service user safety risks are assessed to be present.
- A single religious necklace may be worn. The chain must be long enough to tuck underneath the uniform and not swing freely when providing direct patient care. In areas where necklaces represent a potential ligature risk, you may be asked to remove your religious necklace temporarily.
- Religious head and neck coverings including the hijab and turban may be worn, as long as they adhere to the head covering standards below.
- Forearms may only be covered at the times set out in **Section 4.2**. There is no outright religious exemption to the BBE principle in the clinical area - all students must abide by this principle. Depending on local availability, disposable oversleeves or alternative PPE may be worn as a sterile cover whilst maintaining compatibility with hygiene protocols.
- You can approach your Personal Academic Tutor or the DMU Faith Advice Team directly with any questions or concerns: <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/wellbeing-disability/chaplaincy-spiritual-support/faith-advice.aspx>

Head and neck coverings may be worn for any reason, including for religious observance:

- All head coverings must be tucked underneath the scrub top.
- Head coverings must not obscure the eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, nose, or mouth. Full-face veils must not be worn in any placement environment.
- The Kanga (wooden comb for Sikhs) may be worn, if it is securely fixed under the turban.
- Plain, dark-coloured material that can be washed at a high temperature with uniforms should be used for all head coverings.
- Some placement environments (primarily operating theatres) may provide disposable hijabs, hair coverings, or orthopaedic hoods. These must be used and disposed of according to local policy. You are entitled to secure and private changing facilities where these garments are required.