

# AMSS Position Statement

## Fair Hours for Clinical Placements



ADELAIDE MEDICAL  
STUDENTS' SOCIETY  
EST 1889

*Policy Date: October 2019*  
*Review Date: December 2020*

This position statement was written by the Adelaide Medical Students' Society (AMSS) in consultation with medical students in Years 4-6 of the medical program. **This position statement is not endorsed by the Adelaide Medical School.** The AMSS believes the Adelaide Medical School is responsible for the medical curriculum of the medical program, and thus is also responsible for the development and implementation of effective policies and procedures governing the amount of time medical students spend completing required activities. This includes the total number of hours medical students are expected to spend participating in clinical and educational activities. **If a medical student attending a clinical placement would like additional support regarding clinical placement hours, the AMSS encourages the student to contact the AMSS Vice-President (Education) or staff at the Adelaide Medical School directly.**

### Expectations of Clinical Placements

**The AMSS** believes that clinical placements are compulsory and a core part of the medical program in Years 4-6

**The AMSS** believes the aim of clinical placements is to

- **Facilitate learning opportunities to improve clinical skills and clinical reasoning**
  - This includes learning opportunities that only occur out of hours, and therefore, participating in some out of hours attendance is expected, including 'long shifts' (e.g. 12 hour shifts), 'evening shifts' (e.g. 3-6 hours in the evening/night time), weekend shifts and night shifts (e.g. 9pm-9am).
- **Expose students to the reality of working as a junior doctor**
  - Therefore, participating in some out of hours attendance is expected, including 'long shifts' (e.g. 12 hour shifts), 'evening shifts' (e.g. 3-6 hours in the evening/night time), weekend shifts and night shifts (e.g. 9pm-9am), as this is required of junior doctors.
  - Medical students must learn that patient care requires (at times) personal sacrifice (including loss of regular sleep patterns, erratic meal times, and absence from personal recreation), and it is therefore crucial medical students develop appropriate strategies to maintain their physical and mental health, as well as appropriate social and personal relationships.

### Principles of Clinical Placements

**The AMSS** believes

- 1. Students' attendance during clinical placements should enable them to participate and learn while also providing time for rest and protection from burnout.**
- 2. The student attendance guidelines should be flexible to address clinical placement variation and the difference in roles between students and junior doctors, and to achieve the best possible balance between learning opportunities and student wellbeing.**
3. Accomplishment of the core clinical objectives should be feasible within the designated time frame of the clinical placement.
4. Didactic teaching and clinical education have priority in the allotment of students' time and energy.
5. Every clinical placement should provide a supportive educational environment with a commitment to patient safety and student wellbeing.

## Purpose of this Position Statement

To outline the total number of hours **the AMSS** believes medical students are required to spend in clinical and educational activities during clinical placements, in order to ensure that students can learn and participate in clinical placements while also attending to their need for rest, study and personal time.

- The AMSS hopes this position statement empowers students to spend adequate time on independent study (prevents clinical placement inhibiting students from completing independent study).
- The AMSS hopes this position statement empowers students to complete part-time work to support themselves financially throughout their studies if required.
- The AMSS hopes this position statement empowers students to achieve increased flexibility related to their specific situation E.g. to ensure students remain able to complete caregiving duties if required.

**To ensure issues related to clinical placement hours are framed as issues relating to medical student safety. It is important to highlight that most clinical placements are conducive to student safety. However, the AMSS hopes this position statement provides a written 'safety net' for students.**

- The AMSS hopes this position statement empowers students to prioritise their wellbeing (e.g. attend GP appointments, attend medical specialist appointments, attend dental appointments, attend rental inspections, etc.)
- The AMSS hopes this position statement encourages students to have enough rest time and hence both learn efficiently and travel to clinical placements safely
- The AMSS hopes this position statement encourages students to develop healthy habits in order to maintain their professionalism

### Definitions:

- Time spent at clinical placement = **time spent onsite for clinical duties and teaching activities** that occur during clinical placement (e.g. SMTS, TTIP, other scheduled tutorials/workshops/seminars)
- Independent study = study that occurs outside of the clinical placement (not onsite) during a student's non-clinical time
- Maximum number of expected hours (per week) = the maximum number of hours that can be reasonably **expected** of students – students should be able to achieve excellent results within this timeframe (see Principle 3 above)
  - **Students can attend MORE than the expected maximum at their own discretion, but this is not an expectation nor requirement to succeed at clinical placement**
- Business hours: between 7am and 5pm on the days Monday-Friday (**excludes public holidays**)
  - This is NOT the definition of a 'business hours' shift, but simply highlights that student attendance for a business hours shift must fall somewhere in the above range (7am-5pm)
  - **Any time beyond this is out of hours attendance – see section below**
- Types of out of hours shifts
  - 'Long shifts' = 12 hour shifts
  - 'Evening shifts' = 3-6 hours in the evening/night time
  - Weekend shifts = attending on Saturday/Sunday
    - **This excludes public holidays – medical students are not expected to attend on public holidays (but may attend at their own discretion)**
  - Night shifts = overnight (e.g. 9pm-9am)

**The numbers included in the table below were reached by the AMSS in consultation with medical students in Years 4-6 and are in accordance with both the South Australian Medical Officers Award and SASMOA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2017 (documents which govern junior doctor working hours). The numbers included in the table below are not endorsed by the Adelaide Medical School.**

	Year 4/5	Year 6
<b>Weekly hours</b>		
Maximum number of expected hours ( <b>per week</b> ) spent at clinical placement <i>One week is 7 days (Mon-Sun)</i>	30 hours	38 hours <sup>1</sup>
Minimum number of expected hours ( <b>per week</b> ) spent at clinical placement <i>One week is 7 days (Mon-Sun)</i>	15 hours	20 hours
Minimum number of expected hours ( <b>per week</b> ) spent on independent study (i.e. non-clinical time) <i>One week is 7 days (Mon-Sun)</i>	20 hours	10 hours
<b>Attending clinical placement out of hours</b>		
Maximum length of an out of hours shift	<b>12 hours</b> with 30min lunch and dinner break <sup>2</sup> e.g. 8am to 8pm e.g. 6am to 6pm	<b>12 hours</b> with 30min lunch and dinner break <sup>3</sup> e.g. 8am to 8pm e.g. 6am to 6pm e.g. 9pm to 9am (overnight)
Minimum length of an out of hours shift	<b>3 hours</b> <sup>4</sup> e.g. 5pm - 8pm e.g. 7pm - 10pm	<b>3 hours</b> <sup>5</sup> e.g. 5pm - 8pm e.g. 7pm - 10pm
Night shifts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximum length of 12 hours (e.g. 9pm-9am)</li> <li>Students should have a rest day either side to calibrate their circadian rhythm</li> <li>Students should never have a night shift scheduled in the week containing summative assessment tasks</li> <li>Adequate rest facilities should be available at every site in which night shifts occur</li> </ul>	<b>Year 4/5 students are not expected to attend night shifts</b>	Year 6 students are expected to attend a maximum of 1 compulsory night shift every 4 weeks
Students are expected to complete a maximum of:	1 of <b>either</b> 'long shifts' (e.g. 12 hour shifts) or 'evening shifts' (e.g. 5pm-11pm) <b>every 3 weeks</b>  1 weekend shift <b>every 4 weeks</b>	1 of <b>either</b> 'long shifts' (e.g. 12 hour shifts) or 'evening shifts' (e.g. 5pm-11pm) <b>every 2 weeks</b>  1 of <b>either</b> weekend shifts or night shifts (e.g. 9pm-9am) <b>every 4 weeks</b>
Compulsory out of hours shifts should be notified to Year 4-6 students in writing at least 4 weeks <sup>6</sup> in advance		
Year 4-6 students may swap compulsory out of hours shifts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If they ask the Course Coordinator in writing with 1 weeks' notice</li> <li>If they perform a direct swap with a willing peer and inform the Course Coordinator within 48 hours</li> </ul>		

<sup>1</sup> South Australian Medical Officers Award, clause 5.1.1.

<sup>2</sup> South Australian Medical Officers Award, clause 5.1.3. states "Maximum 14 hours per shift"

<sup>3</sup> South Australian Medical Officers Award, clause 5.1.3. states "Maximum 14 hours per shift"

<sup>4</sup> South Australian Medical Officers Award, clause 5.6.1.

<sup>5</sup> South Australian Medical Officers Award, clause 5.6.1.

<sup>6</sup> SASMOA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2017, clause 71.1. states "All rosters must be promulgated at least 28 days before commencement of the roster"

Separation of shifts	
Minimum number of hours between clinical placement shifts	<b>12 hours<sup>7</sup></b> e.g. finish a shift at 7pm, not expected to arrive until 7am etc. e.g. finish a shift at 10pm, not expected to arrive until 10am etc. e.g. finish a shift at 1am, not expected to arrive until 1pm etc. <i>(applicable to Year 4-6 students)</i>
Minimum number of hours between clinical placement shifts and scheduled teaching activities	<b>12 hours</b> e.g. if known to have a teaching session at 10am, must leave by 10pm the previous shift e.g. if known to have a teaching session at 8am, must leave by 8pm the previous shift <i>(applicable to Year 4-6 students)</i>
<p>Year 4-6 students who attend clinical placement (including scheduled teaching activities) for <b><u>5 consecutive days</u></b> should have a minimum of <b><u>2 consecutive rest days</u></b>. <b>Attending more than 5 days in a row means students should receive additional rest days.</b><sup>8</sup></p> <p>e.g. Attending clinical placement (including scheduled teaching activities) for <b><u>6 days in a row</u></b>, have <b><u>3 consecutive rest days</u></b> etc.</p> <p>e.g. Attending clinical placement (including scheduled teaching activities) for <b><u>7 days in a row</u></b>, have <b><u>4 consecutive rest days</u></b> etc.</p>	

### Absences

The AMSS believes **legitimate absences should not be penalised** and that make up time is reasonable in some but not all circumstances – it is situational

Factors to consider:

- Length of clinical placement:
  - To maximise the educational benefit of short placements, it may be reasonable for some or all missed time to be made up, as negotiated with the supervisor
- Circumstances of the leave e.g. funeral, conference, etc.:
  - Consider the benefit of rest without the pressure of making up time lost, particularly in the context of stressful events e.g. funeral
- Student overload and unfair hours/timeframe of make up time:
  - If a student is required to make up the lost time by working unreasonable hours (outlined above) this presents a safety issue and will impair student learning
- Options other than make up time:
  - Consider alternative options to students needing to complete make up time e.g. additional written tasks (however, an additional task should not be used if make up time is also used)

*See the Course Outline of each particular course regarding how absences may affect assessment tasks and overall progression throughout the program*

<sup>7</sup> South Australian Medical Officers Award, clause 5.1.7. states “A minimum of 8 clear hours free of rostered duty must be granted before recommencement of duty”

<sup>8</sup> SASMOA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2017, clause 56.1. states “4 days (each of 24 hours duration) free from duty in each 28 day cycle [and] 1 weekend free of duty in each 28 day cycle [and] will not be required to work in excess of 8 consecutive days”