

# ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education

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# Preface to the Standards

The ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education are essential to strengthen midwifery worldwide. They promote high quality pre-service education programmes that prepare midwives to meet the [ICM International Definition and Scope of Practice of the Midwife](#). Importantly, these Global Standards address the inclusion of the [Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice](#) as the basis of pre-service midwifery curricula.

The purposes of the ICM Standards for Midwifery Education are to:

- Set benchmarks for programmes that prepare students for entry to practise as a midwife, by:
  - Promoting high-quality teaching and learning methods
  - Ensure the ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice are incorporated into the curriculum
  - Provide a framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating the quality of a pre-service midwifery education programme
  - Assist programmes to engage in continuous quality improvement as an ongoing process
  - Enable systematic reporting of quality indicators to the public, the midwifery profession, the health, and education systems.
  - Contribute to systematic improvement of midwifery education programmes across the world

Additionally, the ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education may be used to:

- Promote a common understanding and approach to midwifery education,
- Guide the development of new programmes or the restructuring of existing programmes, and
- Assist midwifery accrediting agencies, government health/education departments and education institutions within countries/states to develop or revise their own standards-



ICM has set the [Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice](#) and the [Global Standards for Midwifery Regulation](#). These should be reviewed along with additional ICM guidance and resources to support the implementation of the [Global Standards for Midwifery Education](#).

**Please refer to the [ICM website](#) for more resources.**

For more information on the terms used in this document, please refer to the ICM [Midwifery Education Glossary of Terms](#).

## **Category 1: Programme Governance**

- 1.1 The midwifery programme conforms with jurisdictional (such as, state, country, etc.) requirements such as registration, Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics.
- 1.2 The host institution/agency/branch of government supports the midwifery education programme.
- 1.3 The head of the programme is a qualified midwife teacher with experience in management/administration.
- 1.4 The head of the programme has overall responsibility for the quality and organisation of programme delivery, appropriate delegation of roles and responsibilities, faculty development and assessment of faculty performance.
- 1.5 The head of the midwifery programme advocates for the midwifery programme and profession and, engages with key stakeholders such as government, community groups, professional associations, other professions.

## **Category 2: Faculty**

- 2.1 The faculty is comprised predominantly of midwives who work with experts from other disciplines as needed.
- 2.2 The midwife teacher:



- 2.2.1 is qualified according to the ICM Definition of a Midwife,
- 2.2.2 demonstrates ongoing competency in practice,
- 2.2.3 2.2.3 holds a current licence/registration or other form of legal recognition to practise midwifery,
- 2.2.4 has formal preparation for teaching, or undertakes such preparation as a condition of continuing to hold the position,
- 2.2.5 engages in ongoing development as a midwifery practitioner, teacher/lecturer and leader,
- 2.2.6 is an advocate within the programme and profession, and
- 2.2.7 contributes to developing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum.

2.3 The midwifery clinical preceptor/ teacher:

- 2.3.1 is qualified according to the ICM Definition of a Midwife,
- 2.3.2 demonstrates competency in practice, accomplished with a minimum of 2 years of full scope practice,
- 2.3.3 maintains competency in both midwifery practice and teaching competencies
- 2.3.4 holds a current licence/registration or other form of legal recognition to practise midwifery and
- 2.3.5 has formal preparation for clinical teaching or undertakes such preparation as a condition of continuing to hold the position.

2.4 Other professionals who teach in the midwifery programme must be qualified in the content they teach.

2.5 Midwifery faculty provide continuing education and mentoring to clinical preceptors/teachers who teach and evaluate students in midwifery practice sites.

2.6 Midwife educators/teachers and clinical preceptors/teachers communicate regularly to facilitate and evaluate students' learning.

2.7 The ratio of midwifery students to clinical preceptors/teachers is based on the learning context and students' needs.



- 2.8 The competence of midwifery faculty members is reviewed on a regular basis following an established process.
- 2.9 Programme policies protect teachers' personal health, safety, and wellbeing in learning environments (e.g. in-person and online harassment; exposure to infectious, environmental or political hazards; verbal or physical abuse).

## Category 3: Students

- 3.1 The midwifery programme has clearly written admission policies that are accessible to potential applicants. These policies include:
  - 3.1.1 Entry requirements, including minimum requirement of completion of secondary education,
  - 3.1.2 A transparent recruitment process,
  - 3.1.3 An equitable selection process and criteria for acceptance, and
  - 3.1.4 Mechanisms for recognition of prior learning (RPL) if applicable.
- 3.2 Eligible midwifery candidates are admitted without prejudice or discrimination (such as, age, national origin, gender religion).
- 3.3 Midwifery faculty make decisions about the number and selection of prospective students considering resources and (where they exist) maternity workforce plans.

The midwifery programme has clearly written student policies that include:

- 3.4.1 Expectations of students in the programme including professional behaviour in all settings and interactions,
- 3.4.2 Statements about students' rights and responsibilities and an established process for addressing student appeals and/or grievances,
- 3.4.3 Mechanisms for students to provide feedback and ongoing evaluation of the midwifery curriculum, midwifery faculty, and the midwifery programme,
- 3.4.4 Requirements for successful completion of the midwifery programme, and



- 3.4.5 Protection of students' personal health, safety and wellbeing in learning environments, such as, hours of continuous work, exposure to infectious or environmental hazardous commutes, verbal or physical abuse.
- 3.5 Programme policies provide opportunities for student representation in midwifery programme governance and committees.
- 3.6 Students have sufficient midwifery practice experience in facility-based and community care settings, including women's homes, to attain the current ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice.
- 3.7 Students participate in providing continuity of midwife care to women and gender diverse people through pregnancy, birth, and the postnatal period, and for sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent healthcare more broadly.
- 3.8 Students provide midwifery care primarily under the supervision of a midwife teacher/midwifery clinical preceptor/teacher.
- 3.9 Students' individual needs and personal circumstances are considered when allocating learning opportunities, including making reasonable adjustments.
- 3.10 Students have access to learning resources and technical support for various methods of programme delivery.

## **Category 4: Midwifery Programme & Curriculum**

- 4.1 Midwifery programmes incorporate ICM core documents and position statements into their philosophy and programme delivery.
- 4.2 The midwifery curriculum integrates the ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice and assesses the student progress in achievement of these competencies.
- 4.3 The purpose of the midwifery education programme is to produce a competent midwife who:



- 4.3.1 Has attained/demonstrated, at a minimum, the current ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice,
  - 4.3.2 Meets the criteria of ICM's International Definition and Scope of Practice of the Midwife and regulatory body standards leading to licensure or registration as a midwife,
  - 4.3.3 Has knowledge and understanding of the ICM key documents including the practice standards and applies these to the scope of midwifery practice of their jurisdiction,
  - 4.3.4 Meets the regulatory requirements of the jurisdiction for entry to practice.
- 4.4 The minimum length of a direct-entry midwifery education programme is 36 months, which may be three calendar years or longer to permit vacation/break periods. The length of the course must be sufficient for students to acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be a competent midwife. (See notes 1 below)
- 4.5 The minimum length of a post-nursing/healthcare provider (post-registration) midwifery education programme is eighteen (18) months or longer to permit vacation/break periods. The enrolment time must be sufficient for students to acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be a competent midwife. (See notes 2 below)
- 4.6 The midwifery curriculum is organised systematically so that it enables students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and behaviours essential to become an autonomous practitioner.
- 4.7 The midwifery curriculum includes both theory and practice elements with a minimum of 40% theory and a minimum of 50% practice .
- 4.8 Instructional methods in the midwifery programme are based on current evidence about the teaching-learning process.
- 4.9 Midwifery faculty use fair, valid and reliable formative and summative assessment methods to measure student performance and progress in learning. For example, knowledge, skills and behaviours ,



- 4.10 Criteria for assessments and the results of assessments are shared with students.
- 4.11 The curriculum addresses equity considerations, including the impact of gender inequality on women's health and the midwifery profession.

### Notes 1

The length of the programme is a recommendation based on input from a review of midwifery programmes across a variety of contexts. The estimated number of hours for a full-time direct-entry programme of study is approximately 4600. This number varies from region to region depending on what constitutes 'full time;' for example, cumulative hours range from 4600 to 4908. It is important to note that institutions calculate theoretical and practice credit hours differently depending on institutional and regulatory policies. Calculating the cumulative experience does not in itself provide a measure of quality or competence. Provision of sufficient time for the student to achieve the Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice is the most critical factor in determining programme length.

### Notes 2

The length of the programme is a recommendation based on input from a review of midwifery programmes across a variety of contexts. The estimated number of hours for a full-time post-nursing programme of study is approximately 3600. This number varies from region to region depending on what constitutes 'full time;' for example, cumulative hours range from 3600 to 3765. It is important to note that institutions calculate theoretical and practice credit hours differently depending on institutional and regulatory policies. Calculating the cumulative experience does not in itself provide a measure of quality or competence. Provision of sufficient time for the student to achieve the Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice is the most critical factor in determining programme length.

## Category 5: Resources





- 5.1 The midwifery programme has sufficient and up-to-date teaching and learning resources including access to current teaching aids, anatomical models, simulation models, literature (online and/or print texts, journals, guidelines), technical support for virtual learning, adequate physical space, to meet programme needs.
- 5.2 The midwifery programme has adequate human resources to support the administration and delivery of programme activities, such as, student placements, theoretical and applied learning, curriculum development, etc.
- 5.3 The midwifery programme has adequate physical space, equipment, and support staff for faculty and students.
- 5.4 The midwifery programme has adequate physical space for students' independent and group learning, and informal gatherings.
- 5.5 The midwifery programme has a variety of midwifery practice sites but not limited to tertiary, secondary, primary and birthing centres in sufficient numbers to meet student learning needs.
- 5.6 The quality of care provided in the midwifery practice sites supports students to become competent midwives.
- 5.7 The midwifery programme / host institution facilitates access for students to support services such as academic accommodation and counselling, mental health counselling, and financial aid.

## **Category 6: Quality improvement**

- 6.1 Midwifery faculty conduct regular reviews of multiple aspects of the programme as part of quality improvement, including but not limited to curriculum, admission policies, student progress, attrition, registration pass rates and adequacy of resources.



- 6.2 The midwifery programme has an external advisory committee that provides input into programme operations and development.
- 6.3 External review of the midwifery programme is undertaken at regular intervals and the results are used for continuous quality improvement.
- 6.4 The midwifery programme makes publicly available current information about the programme including the outcome of external reviews and, where applicable, its accreditation status.