

To: Teaching Practice Coordinators and Preceptors
From: Ontario Midwifery Education Program
Re: Academic Study Day Variation Guidelines

Dear Teaching Practice Coordinators and Preceptors,

The Ontario Midwifery Education Program (OMEP) has reviewed the Academic Study Day policy following the 2019 Normal Childbearing and Clerkship courses. We recognize that the new workload policies were implemented prior to midwifery practice groups planning births numbers with these new policies in mind. As a result, some students, preceptors and tutors made exceptions or variations to the Academic Study Day policy during the winter term to assist students to meet birth number requirements.

We have now developed guidelines to standardize variations to the Academic Study Day, some of which apply to all students and some of which apply to students facing birth number shortfalls. All variations require reporting to and approval by the tutor.

Please review the following guidelines and ensure these are shared with all midwives in your practice who are working with students.

Guidelines for Variations to the Academic Study Day

The Academic Study Day for students in clinical courses is a 24-hour period beginning at 1700 on Thursdays where students are off call and away from all clinical work. Variations to the Academic Study Day policy will be considered on a case by case basis and require approval by the tutor. The tutor will report approved Academic Study Day variations to the course site lead, who will report to the Student Workload Committee at the end of the course.

There are two categories for variations to the Academic Study Day that are outlined below – variations open to all students; and variations due to anticipated or actual shortfall in birth numbers. More flexibility may be required for students with birth shortfalls.

1. Variations for all students

The start time of the Academic Study Day may be adjusted for MEP students to accommodate routine clinic days on Thursdays or Fridays, and/or attendance at an imminent birth on Thursday late afternoon or evening. Students are expected to attend all tutorial classes.

a) Routine clinic days on Thursdays or Fridays

The start time of the Academic Study Day may be adjusted to accommodate routine clinic times on Thursdays after 1700 or Fridays before 1700. The Academic Study Day will remain a 24 hour off call period in most cases, unless an alternate arrangement has been approved by the tutor.

Tutor approval is required *in advance* for variations in the Academic Study Day for routine clinic days. The preceptor must make a written request to the tutor and copy the student. The request must indicate the routine clinic times on Thursdays or Fridays, the proposed start time to the Academic Study Day, whether the clinic time is necessary for the student to meet the standard of 20 prenatal and postnatal visits per week, if the variation request is temporary or ongoing during the placement, and if it is required weekly or on another schedule, e.g. biweekly. The tutor will review the request and inform the student and preceptor if the request is approved or denied.

b) Attendance at an imminent birth

A student may delay the start of the Academic Study Day to attend an imminent birth on Thursday evening. An imminent birth is defined as a birth that is likely to occur between 1700 and 2359 on Thursday. The student must be off call and leave the clinical setting by 2359 on Thursday at the latest, even if the birth has not yet taken place. The student must report their attendance at the birth and the delayed start time of the Academic Study Day to their tutor prior to the following Friday morning tutorial.

2. Special considerations for students with projected or actual shortfall in birth numbers or low out of hospital birth numbers

The preceptor or student will identify to the tutor when a shortfall of births is projected early in a placement or if the student is at risk of a shortfall during the placement. The tutor will arrange a meeting with the preceptor and student to discuss strategies to maximize attendance at labours and births and at out of hospital births if necessary. Strategies to increase planned births may include:

- Increase the number of maximum planned births for the placement
- Assign clients with another preceptor or midwife within the MPG
- Stagger off call days for students to “cover” births for one another

The tutor may also approve temporary or ongoing variations to the Academic Study Day for students with projected or actual birth shortfalls. These variations may include:

- “Soft call” for imminent *primary* births during the Academic Study Day period
- Stagger the start/end time of the Academic Study Day with other students to maximize student attendance at births

The tutor will arrange an ongoing reporting mechanism for these Academic Study Day variations. One tutorial may be missed for variations to the Academic Study Day for students with birth shortfalls. Additional tutorial absences may be approved in exceptional circumstances by the tutor in advance, e.g. the student is at risk of a placement extension due to insufficient clinical experience.