

Essential Requirements for Study in Undergraduate Midwifery Programs in Ontario

Midwifery education programs in Ontario are responsible to prepare future midwives with the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours necessary to practice safely, compassionately and independently. Students must meet the requirements to register with the College of Midwives of Ontario. The essential requirements described in this document describe the cognitive, communication, sensory, motor and social capacities students must possess to safely participate in midwifery education.

Purpose

This document outlines the essential requirements for students enrolled in undergraduate midwifery programs in Ontario. It is intended to:

Inform prospective students about the expectations and demands of midwifery education.

Assist students, educators and health care professionals in assessing capacity to participate in the midwifery program.

Assist students, educators, and accessibility service providers in identifying and implementing reasonable accommodations and in understanding the limitations of accommodations in the midwifery program.

Ensure the safety of students and clients during clinical education.

Support the success of students and the development of competent, ethical, and professional midwives.

Context for Learning in a Midwifery Program

Undergraduate midwifery programs in Canada are designed to prepare students to meet the Canadian Competencies for Midwives as defined by the Canadian Midwifery Regulators Council (CMRC). These programs integrate academic learning with extensive clinical placements in diverse settings, including homes, hospitals, and community clinics. Most clinical placements require on-call availability. Students must demonstrate progressive mastery of knowledge, skills, and professional behaviours across all domains of midwifery practice.

Learning progresses from foundational knowledge to complex clinical reasoning and decision-making. Students are expected to engage with clients across the reproductive lifespan and in a variety of cultural and social contexts.

Description of the Essential Requirements

The following domains describe the essential requirements for successful participation in and completion of a midwifery education program:

1. Cognitive and Academic Skills

Students must be able to:

Acquire, integrate, and apply knowledge from biomedical, social, and midwifery sciences.

Demonstrate conceptual and analytic skills and memory necessary to engage in clinical problem solving.

Demonstrate critical thinking and clinical reasoning, including during complex and unpredictable situations.

Engage in evidence-informed decision-making and continuous learning.

Interpret and synthesize information from multiple sources to support safe and effective care.

2. Communication Skills

Students must demonstrate:

Proficiency in verbal, non-verbal, and written communication in English (or French in a Francophone designated program).

The ability to elicit and convey information effectively, including in urgent situations.

The ability to establish therapeutic relationships with clients and families.

Skills in providing informed choice, health education, and advocacy.

Competence in coherently summarizing information both verbally and in writing, including the ability to document in a medical record and electronic charting systems.

Competence in professional and interprofessional communication.

3. Physical and Sensory Capabilities

Students must have the capacity to:

Perform physical assessments and clinical procedures (e.g., palpation, auscultation, IV insertion, suturing).

Respond quickly and effectively in on-call and emergency situations.

Attend care within 30 to 40 minutes when on call.

Work long hours, including nights and weekends (e.g., 24-hour on-call availability 5-6 days per week, working approximately 48 hours per week with an average of two 24-hour periods awake).

Use observational, visual, auditory, and tactile senses to monitor and manage client well-being.

Safely drive at all times of the day or night.

Work in physically demanding environments (e.g., low light situations, noisy environments, standing for long periods, lifting and moving equipment or adult or infant).

4. Interpersonal and Professional Behaviour

Students must:

Demonstrate the emotional well-being necessary to provide safe, compassionate and professional care.

Demonstrate respect, honesty, concern for others, and cultural humility in all interactions.

Demonstrate good judgement and the ability to be responsible and accountable for clinical care.

Uphold ethical standards, confidentiality, and professional boundaries.

Collaborate effectively with clients, families, and interprofessional teams.

Invite and integrate feedback and actively engage in reflective practice.

Take responsibility for self learning.

Have the ability to meet the physical, mental and emotional demands of the program and function effectively in stressful and uncertain situations.

5. Emotional Resilience and Self-Care

Students must be able to:

Manage stress and emotional responses in high-stakes and emotionally charged situations.

Reflect on personal factors that might impact best practice and seek support when needed.

Maintain personal well-being to ensure safe and effective care.

Demonstrate perseverance and adaptability in the face of challenges.

6. Adaptability and Commitment

Students must:

Adapt to diverse client needs, settings, and models of care.

Commit to learning within continuity-of-care models, which require being on-call and attending births at any time.

Commit to meeting attendance requirements and non-academic requirements in all courses and birth number requirements in clinical courses.

Engage in lifelong learning and professional development.

Navigate uncertainty and make decisions in dynamic clinical environments.

Students with Disabilities

Disability is defined by Section 10 (1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Ontario midwifery education programs are committed to equity and inclusion. Reasonable accommodations will be provided in accordance with human rights legislation, provided they do not compromise the essential requirements of the program or client safety. Students are required to review this document carefully and contact accessibility services if a disability may impact their capacity to meet these requirements. Students and health care providers assessing capacity should be aware that on-call availability is an essential component of clinical placements and therefore accommodations to avoid on-call responsibilities are not possible in this program.

Students are encouraged to consult with accessibility services early in the application process to explore potential supports.

Conclusion

The essential requirements outlined in this document reflect the realities of midwifery education and practice. Prospective students are encouraged to assess their ability to meet these requirements, and to consult with accessibility services and program advisors as needed.