

Extern Program

GUIDE FOR HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Purpose

The Extern Program Guide for Health Care Organizations provides hospitals with information on the Extern Program. It outlines the program framework and provides guidance to facilitate program implementation.

This document also provides information on eligibility, use of funds, and reporting requirements. It includes several resources, implementation considerations, and key contacts.

Table of Contents

- Terms Used 2
- Overview 3
- Eligibility 3
- Reimbursable Expenses..... 3
- Externs 4
- Extern Mentor/Coordinators (EMCs) 5
- Extern Program Implementation..... 6
- Reporting Requirements 7
- Appendix A: Reimbursement Resources 8
- Appendix B: Implementation Resources 9

Terms Used

The full form or explanations provided below pertain to this document only. The terms used here may have other meanings in different contexts and documents.

Term	Full form or Explanation
Program	Extern Program
EMC	Extern Mentor/Coordinator, or equivalent as determined by health care organizations
“hospitals,” “health care organizations,” “hospital organizations,” and “organizations”	Used interchangeably throughout this document
Nursing professional	Includes Registered Nurse Practitioner (NP)/advanced practice nurse (APN), Registered Nurse (RN), or Registered Practical Nurse (RPN)
“the ministry”	Ministry of Health
OH	Ontario Health
LHIN	Local Health Integration Network
Excel Template	Excel Template for COVID-19 Hospital Incremental Expenses

Overview

The Extern Program reimburses selected Ontario hospitals for the cost of employing Externs and Extern Mentor/Coordinators (EMCs) to address COVID-19 related health human resources challenges. The Extern Program covers eligible costs incurred between January 1 and June 30, 2021.

Hospitals participating in the Extern Program can claim the salaries of Externs and EMCs as part of COVID-19 Incremental Hospital Expenses. The current version of the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Hospital Incremental Expenses Guidance Document details the submission process.

The Extern Program leverages the clinical service delivery expertise of participating hospitals. Each organization has the flexibility to identify how Externs and EMCs can be incorporated to best support workflow and patient management.

Eligibility

Hospital eligibility for the Extern Program is based on consultations with regional health care experts and careful consideration of COVID-19 related pressures. The Ministry of Health (the ministry) will notify selected organizations in writing.

The ministry will continue to work with key partners and stakeholders to monitor health care organizations and evaluate the need to expand the Extern Program.

Reimbursable Expenses

In April 2020, the ministry made provisions for the tracking and submission of COVID-19 Incremental Hospital Expenses. Eligible Extern Program expenses incurred between January 1 and March 31, 2021 can be submitted for reimbursement consideration through this existing process. Additional information about submitting expenses incurred between April 1 and June 30, 2021 will follow.

Each participating hospital can claim Extern and EMC wage and salary expenses incurred between January 1 and June 30, 2021.

Up to 36,562.5 Extern hours are eligible for reimbursement at the rate of \$20.60 per hour (including benefits), per organization. Hospitals can claim salary expenses up to \$260,000 (including benefits) for EMC compensation.

The reimbursable expenses outlined above include costs associated with in-service education of Externs and EMCs. Other expenses related to the hiring and onboarding of Externs and EMCs are not eligible for reimbursement through the Extern Program.

The total reimbursable expense amount for each hospital from January 1 to June 30, 2021 is \$1,013,188 (\$260,000 for EMC salaries, and \$753,188 for Extern wages).

Extern Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)

Extern Program funding gives hospitals the flexibility to collaborate with nursing programs and nursing students to determine the appropriate FTEs for Externs. The chart below provides an example of how funding can be used for compensation.

Table 1: Sample Extern FTEs

Maximum Extern Reimbursement	\$753,188
Maximum Extern Hours	36,562.5 hours
Sample FTE Allocation	75 Externs x 0.5 FTE for 6 months

The ministry recognizes that organizations may employ Externs in positions with varying FTEs. Wage expenses for any Extern are eligible for reimbursement regardless of the position’s FTEs until the maximum extern reimbursement amount is reached.

EMC Compensation

The Extern Mentor/Coordinator (EMC) role is designed for a registered nursing professional (i.e., nurse practitioner/advanced practice nurse, registered nurse, or registered practical nurse).

Hospitals have the flexibility to develop EMC compensation structures that meet their unique needs. Hospitals may employ existing nursing employees in the EMC role and provide a mentorship premium. Hospitals could also choose to hire new, salaried individuals for this position. As an example, hospitals could hire up to 4 EMCs for six months at a prorated salary of \$65,000, including benefits.

Salary expenses for all EMC positions are eligible for reimbursement, up to the maximum reimbursement amount of \$260,000.

Externs

Education Requirements

The Extern Program will reimburse hospitals for the cost of employing Externs who are nursing students between second and fourth year of a College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) approved Baccalaureate Nursing (BScN or BN) program, or in their final year of a Practical Nursing (PN)

program. The employment opportunity created by the program enables qualifying students to work in a hospital setting on paid assignments over and above their clinical placements.

Unregulated Care Provider Status

Externs are unregulated health care providers and work as part of an interprofessional team under the supervision of a registered nursing professional.

Extern Scope of Practice

As unregulated health care providers, Externs are limited in their ability to perform controlled acts as defined by the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA). Hospitals should determine the appropriate scope of practice for Externs within their organizations. Appropriate tools and resources, as required by patient needs, organizational policies, and legislation should be used to enable Externs to practice within the determined scope. Such tools and resources could include delegations or medical directives. Considerations for the Extern scope of practice are included in Appendix B.

Extern Supervision and Mentorship

Externs practice under the direct and/or indirect supervision of a registered nursing professional in the care environment. The supervising nurse (i.e., nurse practitioner/advanced practice nurse, registered nurse, or registered practical nurse) is aware of the clients' conditions, activities and associated risks for care and environmental supports (CNO, 2013).

The EMC role will support the education and development of the Externs, provide mentorship, support, team integration, Extern coordination, and overall program implementation and evaluation.

Workflow

The Extern Program leverages the clinical service delivery expertise of participating hospitals. Each organization should identify the how Externs are incorporated in its workflow and patient management.

Extern Mentor/Coordinators (EMCs)

EMC Positions

The Extern Program reimburses hospitals for the cost of employing EMCs, or equivalent, to mentor and support Externs. The number of Externs supported by an EMC is determined by hospitals. Considerations to determine this include the Externs' knowledge, skill, and judgement, along with the Externs' year of study within a CNO approved nursing program.

Considerations Regarding EMCs' Professional Requirements and Qualifications

The EMC roles provide leadership opportunities for experienced nurses who are in good standing with the CNO. The following qualifications may be considered as part of a more comprehensive selection criteria for EMCs:

- Excellent clinical skills and competencies,
- Outstanding communication skills,
- Previous experience teaching, working with learners and/or preceptoring,
- Previous experience as Clinical Instructor or placement supervisor, and
- Demonstrated leadership, change management, and problem-solving skills.

Responsibilities

EMCs are responsible for supporting Externs' practice and integration into the clinical area in accordance with organizational and professional standards, and in collaboration with clinical teams. Appendix B provides a high-level summary and example of EMC roles and responsibilities.

The delineation between the Extern supervision and mentorship roles is at the hospital's discretion. For example, a hospital may choose to have an EMC role that is 80% mentorship and 20% clinical practice.

Extern Program Implementation

The Extern Program enables hospitals to supplement existing health human resources in a flexible way to meet each organization's unique needs. Hospitals participating in the program should leverage organizational insights on clinical service delivery, clinical workflows, along with professional and legislative considerations when implementing the program.

Hiring Externs

Hospitals may choose their preferred approach to identify and hire Externs. For example, organizations may employ nursing students through:

- Existing relationships with educational institutions,
- Employing nursing students completing unpaid placements in the hospital setting,
- Regular position posting, or
- Working with Ontario Health (OH) to market positions and utilizing OH recruitment supports.

Hospitals can request OH support by emailing PracticeOntario@ontariohealth.ca.

Best Practices

Best practices based on the experience of other organizations that have adopted similar models include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing a clear onboarding and education pathway for Externs (e.g., Extern Passport),
- Ensuring Extern supervision structures and mechanisms are in place in the clinical area,
- Establishing a structure for ongoing Extern and practice area support (e.g., debriefs, check-ins, ongoing laddered education, issue resolution),
- Developing organizational guidelines for the Extern scope of practice, and delegations to support practice where required,
- Leveraging existing clinical placement nursing students for Extern program, and
- Providing clear guidelines on the role of Externs as it relates to COVID-19 positive patient care and outbreak response.

Resources to support Extern Program Implementation are included in Appendix B.

Reporting Requirements

Health care organizations seeking reimbursement through the Extern Program must report on program-specific indicators to the ministry. Additional details on reporting will be provided to participating hospitals at a later date.

Appendix A: Reimbursement Resources

Organizations should refer to the Ministry of Health document titled COVID-19 Guidance: Incremental Hospital Expenses for the purpose and context of expense reporting requirements.

Key Contacts

Questions related to guiding principles for expenditure management can be emailed to Hospitals Branch at Hospitals.Branch-HSQFD@ontario.ca.

Questions related to completing or submitting the Excel Template for COVID-19 Hospital Incremental Expenses can be emailed to AskHealthData@ontario.ca.

Appendix B: Implementation Resources

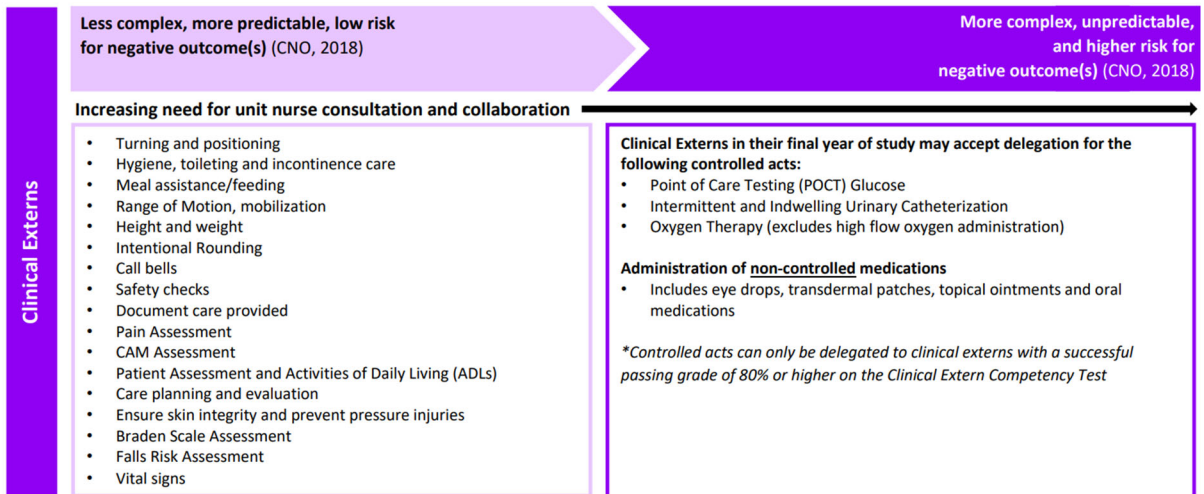
Extern programs have been successfully implemented within hospital organizations. This Appendix includes sample resources from Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre's as one example of how organizations may support program implementation. Resources are shared with permission from Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and questions related to them can be sent to Tracey DasGupta, Director of Interprofessional Practice (Tracey.DasGupta@sunnybrook.ca).

The following resources are included in this Appendix:

- 1) Sample Extern Role At-A-Glance
- 2) Sample Extern Scope of Practice
- 3) Sample Extern Posting
- 4) Sample EMC Roles and Responsibilities
- 5) Sample Extern FAQs

The ministry would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the Hospital for Sick Children and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in developing these resources.

Resource 1: Sample Extern Role At-A-Glance



Reference: College of Nurses of Ontario (2018). *Practice Guideline: RN and RPN practice: The Client, the Nurse and the Environment*

Resource 2: Sample Extern Scope of Practice

Examples of duties that Externs may fulfil include, but are not limited to:

- Participate in patient assessments and activities of daily living,
- Contribute to care planning and evaluation,
- Provide assistance with lifting, turning, transferring, transporting and ambulating as per the hospital policy,
- Provide measures to ensure skin integrity and reduce pressure injuries,
- Assist with comfort measures and patient safety by ensuring the environment is clean and tidy and free of hazards,
- Communicate care (documentation/report),
- Engage in additional skills via delegation as approved by unit leadership (and as applicable), and
- Provide assigned care, under supervision, that they have the knowledge, skill and judgement to do safely, excluding controlled acts.
 - Delegation may be available for Externs in their final year of study, with supervision from a nurse, for the following controlled acts:
 - Point of Care Testing (POCT), glucose level testing,
 - Intermittent urinary catheterization,
 - Indwelling urinary catheterization, and
 - Oxygen therapy (excludes high flow administration of oxygen).
 - Externs should successfully complete the appropriate education to engage in these acts.

It is the responsibility of Externs to:

- Request assistance with assigned duties whenever in need,
- Participate as a team member,
- Maintain dignity and self-esteem of patients and families in delivery of care,
- Practice patient privacy and confidentiality, and
- Practice behaviors consistent with the mission, vision and values of their Employer.

Additionally, it is at each organization's discretion to schedule Externs as needed and shifts may include days, nights and weekends.

Hospitals should evaluate patient safety considerations when determining the scope of practice for Externs. In keeping with best practices, Externs should **not**:

- Initiate Controlled Acts without delegation and competency verification,
- Administer the following drugs:
 - Injections, IV medications, start IV infusions (can prime bags)
 - Opioid, controlled drugs

- High alert medications
- Act as a witness, under any circumstances, for any purpose,
- Be left in sole charge of the unit or any patient under any circumstances,
- Provide independent double checks,
- Take verbal/telephone orders, provide telephone advice, and
- Perform advanced nursing competencies or procedures requiring additional education (i.e., remove chest tube).

Resource 3: Sample Extern Posting

POSITION TITLE: Clinical Extern - Nurse

Reports to: Patient Care Manager

JOB SUMMARY:

The clinical extern will be working in the capacity as unregulated health care provider. Nursing clinical externs work in collaboration with a unit nursing team under direct and/or indirect supervision of an appointed registered nursing professional. They may perform pre-identified Controlled Acts authorized to nursing within the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA) of Ontario delegated to them under the supervision of a nursing professional who is authorized to perform them.

Externs will be hired on contract, during which the Extern will work part time hours to a maximum of full-time hours (37.5 hours per week). The scheduling of these hours will be determined based on unit needs and may include day/evening/night and weekend shifts.

JOB REQUIREMENTS:

- Nursing Students enrolled in their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year of a CNO approved baccalaureate or diploma nursing program
- Demonstrated evidence of excellent academic standing
- Current certificate in Basic Cardiac Life Support required
- Completion of mandatory/required certifications provided via corporate orientation, including extern orientation, and as defined by unit (e.g., Fit Test, WHIMS, AODA, IP&C)
- Demonstrated infection prevention and control practices
- Effective interpersonal and communication skills
- Successful completion of a recent clinical placement in an acute care area preferred
- Students who have successfully completed a recent clinical placement preferred

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Practices under the direct and/or indirect supervision of the nursing professional assigned to them on the unit and in a manner consistent with organizational policies and professional standards, while taking into account CNO guidance for unregulated care providers
- Works with unit nurses to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and judgment needed to perform all actions/duties.
- Provides assistance with lifting, turning, transferring, transporting and ambulating as per the hospital policy.
- Provides measures to ensure skin integrity and reduce pressure injuries.
- Assists with comfort measures and patient safety by ensuring the environment is clean and tidy and free of hazards.
- Requests assistance with assigned duties whenever in need
- Demonstrates excellent problem-solving, decision making and critical thinking skills
- Demonstrates excellent organizational and time-management skills
- Participates as a team member

Resource 4: Sample EMC Roles and Responsibilities

Overview of Role:

Extern Mentor/Coordinators support the planning, education, and integration of Externs.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Support integration of Externs at the organizational and unit level
- Contribute to Extern onboarding
- Create, adapt and deliver orientation and learning resources
- Aid in integration of team processes and role clarity
- Assist Externs to become familiar with the work in their new area of practice
- Support unit teams to collaborate with Externs to provide required patient care
- Maintain regular unit presence to support ongoing education needs and tracking of required skills attainment
- Provide ongoing monitoring and evaluations of Extern role
- Promote Extern staff wellness and team well-being
- Serve as a liaison and conduit between the unit leadership, Professional Practice and Operations.

Resource 5: Sample Extern FAQs

Please note that responses are subject to change based on public health guidance and organizational policies.

Extern - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will I be provided with?

Externs will be provided with the same access to PPE as other clinical staff working with patients, including masks, face shields, gowns and gloves. Details regarding required items as appropriate will be reviewed in orientation and at the local (unit) level.

Can I work as an Extern while attending placement?

In many instances, students can work for a health service provider and attend clinical placements, however, please check with your school for confirmation.

If I am on placement OR work in a long-term care (LTC) home or retirement home (RH):

You may not be able to work as an Extern while attending placement in order to comply with Ontario Regulations 146/20 (LTC) and 158/20 (RH), which limit employees/students/trainees of these settings from working with other health service providers.

What happens if the clinical area I am assigned to goes into outbreak?

In most situations, you may continue to work in the event a COVID-19 outbreak is declared on your unit *as long as you have no symptoms of COVID-19*. If you are deemed by Occupational Health and Safety to have had a significant exposure to COVID-19, you may be required to self-isolate for 14 days. Please remember to wear a mask and eye protection for every patient encounter to minimize your risk of exposure. Please follow instructions below if you also work or attend placement on other units or attend placement at another facility.

What happens if an outbreak is declared on the unit where I work and I am currently in a clinical placement?

You will need to inform your school immediately. Student placements will be reassessed by your school and the organization where you are assigned and must be cleared by them before you can return to placement. You may be required to miss clinical placement time as a result of exposure and/or you may not attend placement at either location for a designated time period, depending on the type of outbreak, or until the outbreak is declared over, whichever is earliest.

What happens if an outbreak is declared on the unit/area I am at for clinical placement and I work as an Extern?

You will need to inform the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) office immediately. OHS will assess your situation and you must be cleared by them before you can return to work as an

Extern. You may be required to miss work as a result of exposure and/or you may not attend placement at either location for a designated time period, depending on the type of outbreak, or until the outbreak is declared over, whichever is earliest.

How does working as an Extern impact my OSAP award?

Income you receive during your study period may be considered in how your OSAP award amount is assessed. Should your income exceed \$5,600 during in a single term (e.g., fall term, winter term, or spring/summer term) then you must report this income to OSAP. The amount over \$5,600 will be included in your OSAP assessment as a resource, which may result in a reduction of your OSAP award entitlement.