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8th March 2021   
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‎Dear Mr. Carroll,

The Minster for Health, Mr Stephen Donnelly, T.D., has asked me to thank you for your correspondence in respect of students of Social Care Work programmes.

During the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the HSE ceased clinical placements on HSE sites as part of the overall response to reduce the risk of exposing patients to a risk of infection from non-essential exposure, to reduce the risk for healthcare students, to manage footfall in clinical areas and to reduce the demand for educational support on clinical staff.

CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health and social care regulator. Its role is to protect the public by regulating the health and social care professions designated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended).

 One of the functions of each CORU Registration Board is to approve the Criteria and Standards for Education and Training Programmes for their profession, i.e. to set the minimum requirements to ensure public protection. Each Profession has a requirement for a minimum number of practice placement hours to be completed. While CORU has no say in how educators deliver their course content, it is aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges for some educational institutions delivering CORU approved education programmes, or programmes which have been submitted to CORU for approval. Accordingly, since the start of the pandemic, CORU has made clear to education providers that they have flexibility in how they ensure their students meet the standards of proficiency relevant to their profession.  Many educators have adapted to the situation arising and most students in CORU approved courses have been facilitated by their educator in either attaining the required placements hours or are being facilitated with appropriate alternatives.

The Minister understands that this may not be the way that some students’ have experienced accessing information in relation to their particular course and would suggest that affected students raise the issue with their college itself, possibly the programme director of their course.

‎Yours sincerely,

Miriam Rooney

Private Secretary to the Minister for Health