



## INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF MIDWIVES

### Global Standards for Midwifery Education (2010)

#### Introduction

The ICM *Global standards for midwifery education (2010)* are one of the essential pillars of ICM's efforts to strengthen midwifery worldwide by preparing fully qualified<sup>1</sup> midwives to provide high quality, evidence-based health services for women, newborns, and childbearing families. ICM's pillars include updated core competencies for basic midwifery practice, midwifery education, midwifery regulation and strong midwifery associations. The education standards were developed in tandem with the update of the *Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice (2010)* as these competencies define the core content of any midwifery education programme. The education standards were also completed in harmony with midwifery standards of practice and regulation (See web links to these other documents). The Education standards are founded upon the guiding principles and core documents of the ICM that are listed in Key References at the end of this document.

The midwifery education standards\* were developed globally using a modified Delphi survey process during 2009-2010 and represent the **minimum** expected for a quality midwifery programme, with emphasis on competency-based education rather than academic degrees. Companion Guidelines were also developed to address the following questions: "What is needed to implement each standard (suggested guidelines)?" and "How does one determine whether the standard has been met (evidence needed)?" A glossary of key terms used throughout the Standards is offered to assist in understanding.

\*[The definition of **standard** used in this document is "a norm/uniform reference point that describes the required level of achievement (performance) for quality midwifery education"]

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<sup>1</sup> The use of "fully qualified" as a modifier for the words "midwife" or "midwives" in this standards document refers to the midwife who is educated and trained to proficiency in all the ICM basic competencies. Throughout this document, the term "midwife" applies to those individuals who are fully-qualified, whatever the routes of entry into a midwifery education programme.

## **Preface to the Standards**

### **Purposes of Midwifery Education Standards**

Having global standards for midwifery education available to countries and regions, most especially those without such standards currently, will help to set benchmarks for the preparation of a midwife based on global norms. Standards also help to define the expectations for performance (competencies) and scope of midwifery practise for a given country or region needed to promote the health of women and childbearing families. These minimal education standards can be expanded to include higher expectations and to reflect country specific needs for curriculum content and cultural appropriateness.

Specifically, the purposes of midwifery education standards are to:

- Hold the midwifery programme accountable to the public – the profession, consumers, employers, students – and to one another by ensuring that midwifery programmes have philosophy statements, goals and outcomes that prepare individuals as fully qualified midwives;
- Provide the framework for designing, implementing and evaluating the ongoing quality of a midwifery education programme;
- Promote an education process to prepare midwives who have all the essential ICM competencies for basic midwifery practise as well as additional competencies based on individual country needs;
- Promote safe midwifery practise and quality midwifery care for women and their families;
- Reinforce the autonomy of the profession of midwifery and midwives as autonomous practitioners; and
- Foster continuing improvement in midwifery programmes and thereby, in practise.

## ICM Education Standards: A Value-Based Initiative

The founding values and principles upon which these standards have been developed are as follows.

The founding values include:

- Fostering **trust** in the midwifery education processes through the global development of midwifery education standards by midwives and a select panel of experts
- Stimulating and supporting **continuous quality improvement** in midwifery programmes and their outcomes
- Maintaining **integrity** through a consistent, fair and honest education process
- Fostering an education climate that supports students, graduates and faculty in their pursuit of **life-long learning**
- Promoting **autonomy** of the profession of midwifery, midwives, and midwifery programmes

The founding principles include agreement that the<sup>2</sup>:

- **Minimum** entry level of students is completion of secondary education
- **Minimum** length of a direct-entry midwifery education programme is three (3) years
- **Minimum** length of a post-nursing/ health care provider programme is eighteen (18) months
- Standards are congruent with current core ICM documents, and position statements relating to the preparation of a fully qualified, competent midwife and midwifery teachers
- Midwifery programmes will engage in self-evaluation of personnel, procedures and services to maintain quality and 'fit-for-purpose' programmes in a given country

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<sup>2</sup> The minimum entry level and length of midwifery education programmes were agreed as part of the modified Delphi survey process. ICM understands that time periods are an informed estimate of the time needed to achieve full competency in the practise of midwifery, whatever the route of entry into the education programme. The actual time needed may vary depending on many factors within countries. The important point is education to a predetermined level of competency.

## Intended Use of the Standards

ICM developed the *Global standards for midwifery education* to assist primarily three groups of users: 1) countries who do not yet have basic midwifery education but are wanting to establish such programmes to meet country needs for qualified health personnel, 2) countries with basic midwifery education programmes that vary in content and quality who wish to improve and/or standardise the quality of their midwifery programme(s), and 3) countries with existing standards for midwifery education who may wish to compare the quality of their programme to these **minimum** standards. ICM expects that those countries whose current standards exceed these minimum standards will continue to offer the higher level of preparation for midwives in their region.

It is anticipated that these global standards for midwifery education will be used by governments, policy-makers, ministries of health and education, and health care systems as well as midwives and midwifery associations. The shared goal is that competent midwives will be prepared and available to meet the health needs of the population, particularly women and childbearing families.

It is understood that some countries wishing to start and/or upgrade their preparation of midwives who are educated and trained to proficiency in the ICM *Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice (2010)* may not be able to attain every one of the minimum standards initially – especially in areas where sufficient qualified midwife teachers or learning resources are not yet available. It is expected that such countries will work collaboratively with government agencies, education institutions, donors and midwifery consultants to develop a plan for attaining or exceeding all the education standards. Midwives will work with policy-makers in each country to determine the time frame for implementation of these global standards.

## Contact and Support

The ICM Education Standing Committee (ESC) is the primary resource group for these standards and guidelines, and can be contacted through ICM Headquarters or under Standing Committees section of this website: [www.internationalmidwives.org](http://www.internationalmidwives.org)

## Summary

The *Global standards for midwifery education (2010)* and *Companion guidelines* are living documents. They will undergo continual evaluation and amendment as the evidence concerning midwifery education and the health care needs of childbearing women and families change. The *Glossary of terms* for the standards were agreed globally and in collaboration with the essential competency and regulation task forces. It is vital to use the three documents together for maximum understanding, beginning with the *Glossary*, then the *Global standards for midwifery education*, followed by a review of the *Companion guidelines*.

## **ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education (2010)**

### **I. Organisation and Administration**

- I.1.** The host institution/agency/branch of government supports the philosophy, aims and objectives of the midwifery education programme.
- I.2.** The host institution helps to ensure that financial and public/policy support for the midwifery education programme are sufficient to prepare competent midwives.
- I.3.** The midwifery school/programme has a designated budget and budget control that meets programme needs.
- I.4.** The midwifery faculty is self-governing and responsible for developing and leading the policies and curriculum of the midwifery education programme.
- I.5.** The head of the midwifery programme is a qualified midwife teacher with experience in management/administration.
- I.6.** The midwifery programme takes into account national and international policies and standards to meet maternity workforce needs.

### **II. Midwifery Faculty**

- II.1.** The midwifery faculty includes predominantly midwives (teachers and clinical preceptors/clinical teachers) who work with experts from other disciplines as needed.
- II.2.** The midwife teacher:
  - II.2.a.** has formal preparation in midwifery;
  - II.2.b.** demonstrates competency in midwifery practise, generally accomplished with two (2) years full scope practise;
  - II.2.c.** holds a current license/registration or other form of legal recognition to practise midwifery;
  - II.2.d.** has formal preparation for teaching, or undertakes such preparation as a condition of continuing to hold the position; and
  - II.2.e.** maintains competence in midwifery practise and education.

- II.3.** The midwife clinical preceptor/clinical teacher:
- II.3.a.** is qualified according to the ICM *Definition of a midwife*;
  - II.3.b.** demonstrates competency in midwifery practise, generally accomplished with two (2) years full scope practise;
  - II.3.c.** maintains competency in midwifery practise and clinical education;
  - II.3.d.** holds a current license/registration or other form of legal recognition to practise midwifery; and
  - II.3.e.** has formal preparation for clinical teaching or undertakes such preparation.
- II.4.** Individuals from other disciplines who teach in the midwifery programme are competent in the content they teach.
- II.5.** Midwife teachers provide education, support and supervision of individuals who teach students in practical learning sites.
- II.6.** Midwife teachers and midwife clinical preceptors/clinical teachers work together to support (facilitate), directly observe, and evaluate students' practical learning.
- II.7.** The ratio of students to teachers and clinical preceptors/clinical teachers in classroom and practical sites is determined by the midwifery programme and the requirements of regulatory authorities.
- II.8.** The effectiveness of midwifery faculty members is assessed on a regular basis following an established process.

### **III. Student Body**

- III.1.** The midwifery programme has clearly written admission policies that are accessible to potential applicants. These policies include:
  - III.1.a.** entry requirements, including minimum requirement of completion of secondary education;
  - III.1.b.** a transparent recruitment process;
  - III.1.c.** selection process and criteria for acceptance; and
  - III.1.d.** mechanisms for taking account of prior learning.
- III.2.** Eligible midwifery candidates are admitted without prejudice or discrimination (e.g., gender, age, national origin, religion).
- III.3.** Eligible midwifery candidates are admitted in keeping with national health care policies and maternity workforce plans.
- III.4.** The midwifery programme has clearly written student policies that include:
  - III.4.a.** expectations of students in classroom and practical areas;
  - III.4.b.** statements about students' rights and responsibilities and an established process for addressing student appeals and/or grievances;
  - III.4.c.** mechanisms for students to provide feedback and ongoing evaluation of the midwifery curriculum, midwifery faculty, and the midwifery programme; and
  - III.4.d.** requirements for successful completion of the midwifery programme.
- III.5.** Mechanisms exist for the student's active participation in midwifery programme governance and committees.
- III.6.** Students have sufficient midwifery practical experience in a variety of settings to attain, at a minimum, the current ICM *Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice*.
- III.7.** Students provide midwifery care primarily under the supervision of a midwife teacher or midwifery clinical preceptor/clinical teacher.

#### **IV. Curriculum**

- IV.1.** The philosophy of the midwifery education programme is consistent with the ICM *Philosophy and model of care*.
- IV.2.** The purpose of the midwifery education programme is to produce a competent midwife who:
  - IV.2.a.** has attained/demonstrated, at a minimum, the current ICM Essential competencies for basic midwifery practice;
  - IV.2.b.** meets the criteria of the ICM Definition of a midwife and regulatory body standards leading to licensure or registration as a midwife;
  - IV.2.c.** is eligible to apply for advanced education; and
  - IV.2.d.** is a knowledgeable, autonomous practitioner who adheres to the ICM International code of ethics for midwives, standards of the profession and established scope of practise within the jurisdiction where legally recognised.
- IV.3.** The sequence and content of the midwifery curriculum enables the student to acquire essential competencies for midwifery practise in accord with ICM core documents.
- IV.4.** The midwifery curriculum includes both theory and practise elements with a minimum of 40% theory and a minimum of 50% practise.
- IV.5.** The midwifery programme uses evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning that promote adult learning and competency based education.
- IV.6.** The midwifery programme offers opportunities for multidisciplinary content and learning experiences that complement the midwifery content.



**V. Resources, facilities and services**

- V.1.** The midwifery programme implements written policies that address student and teacher safety and wellbeing in teaching and learning environments.
- V.2.** The midwifery programme has sufficient teaching and learning resources to meet programme needs.
- V.3.** The midwifery programme has adequate human resources to support both classroom/theoretical and practical learning.
- V.4.** The midwifery programme has access to sufficient midwifery practical experiences in a variety of settings to meet the learning needs of each student.
- V.5.** Selection criteria for appropriate midwifery practical learning sites are clearly written and implemented.

**VI. Assessment Strategies**

- VI.1.** Midwifery faculty uses valid and reliable formative and summative evaluation/assessment methods to measure student performance and progress in learning related to:
  - VI.1.a.** knowledge;
  - VI.1.b.** behaviours;
  - VI.1.c.** practise skills;
  - VI.1.d.** critical thinking and decision-making; and
  - VI.1.e.** interpersonal relationships / communication skills.
- VI.2.** The means and criteria for assessment/evaluation of midwifery student performance and progression, including identification of learning difficulties, are written and shared with students.
- VI.3.** Midwifery faculty conducts regular review of the curriculum as a part of quality improvement, including input from students, programme graduates, midwife practitioners, clients of midwives and other stakeholders.
- VI.4.** Midwifery faculty conducts ongoing review of practical learning sites and their suitability for student learning/experience in relation to expected learning outcomes.
- VI.5.** Periodic external review of programme effectiveness takes place.

## Key References/Sources for Standards and Guidelines

Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (2009). *Criteria for programmatic accreditation (2009), Policies and procedure manual (2009)*. [www.midwife.org/acme/cfm](http://www.midwife.org/acme/cfm) (20 February 2009)

ECSACON (2001). *Nursing and midwifery professional regulatory framework*. North Carolina: INTRAH. Chapter 8: Nursing and midwifery education standards, pp. 67-72.

EU Law 2005/136/EG (2005). Annex Midwives; [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/qualifications/docs/future/annex\\_midwives\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/docs/future/annex_midwives_en.pdf)

International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) documents:

- ICM *Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice* (2002)  
Available at: <http://www.internationalmidwives.org/> (18 December 2009)
- ICM *Philosophy and Model of Care* (2005)  
Available at: <http://www.internationalmidwives.org> (Core documents) (18 December 2009)
- ICM *International Code of Ethics for Midwives* (2005)  
Available at: <http://www.internationalmidwives.org> (Core documents) (18 December 2009)
- ICM Position statement: Basic and On-going Education for Midwives (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Collaboration and Partnership for Healthy Women (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Ethical Recruitment of Midwives (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Heritage and Culture in Childbearing (2005)
- ICM Position statement: Keeping Birth Normal (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Legislation to Govern Midwifery Practise (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Midwifery Care for Women with Complicated Births (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Professional Accountability of the Midwife (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Qualifications and Competencies of Midwifery Teachers (2008)
- ICM Position statement: Role of the Midwife in Research (2008)  
Available at: <http://www.internationalmidwives.org> (Position statements: 18 December 2009)

Mansfield: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. (2004). *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning* (2004) Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf> (18 December 2009)

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004). *NMC Standards for pre-registration midwifery education*. Available at: [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org) (education, midwifery)

Pan American Health Organization (2006). *Strengthening midwifery toolkit (Herramientas para el fortalecimiento de la partería profesional)*. Washington, DC: PAHO & USAID.

WHO (2009). *Global standards for the initial education of professional nurses and midwives*. Geneva: WHO. Available at [www.who.ch](http://www.who.ch)