

COVID-19 Guidance for Higher Education Institutions Amended Programme Structures; Updated 6th April 2020

Background

In response to COVID-19, the CSP has drawn together advice for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that will help teams manage the impact of the measures set out by the government in response to the pandemic.

We have been working alongside the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), Council of Deans of Health (CoDH), Health Education England (HEE), other Professional bodies, and the Chief Allied Health Professions Officers from the four nations to help shape our national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 6th April 2020 the AHP leads [published a joint statement](#) with the CODH and HCPC on how they plan to support and enable the student AHP workforce to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The statement was signed by the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (CAHPO) of all four countries and sets out ways in which both final year and middle year students may choose to join the workforce in paid roles whilst enabling them to progress with their studies. At the same time, HEE has also published guidance for England on how students can expect to be supported. Similar guidance is expected for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The CSP's updated guidance for educators in Higher Education Institutions will help our members in universities to enable this in a way that is appropriate for their students. Our intention is to create clear guidance that complements national guidance and also seeks to address issues specific to expectations of CSP accredited physiotherapy programmes.

Additionally, we have produced several FAQs for students which will be updated as the situation continues to evolve. Although we're trying to pre-empt as many of the implications that we possibly can, we cannot provide advice for all eventualities as the situation is changing so rapidly.

Given the differences in delivery that exists across programmes, each team will need to consider the local implications for whatever plans they choose to implement.

Proposed Utilisation of the Student Workforce

Final year students

We now have confirmation that the Coronavirus Bill 2019-21 has confirmed that **final year students** who have successfully completed their required practice placements are eligible to become part of the workforce via a temporary HCPC register before they formally complete their studies. They will be eligible to work as Agenda for Change Band 5 employees.

HEIs will have responsibility for identifying eligible students for the temporary register and putting forward the names of students to the HCPC. This route will not lead to automatic entry to the register after the response to the pandemic has ceased. Students will need to apply for the full register once they have completed their academic studies.

Other years

National guidance has confirmed that those on the following list will be invited to opt-in to paid positions (Agenda for Change Band 3) while continuing their studies. We advise that students choosing to take up this

opportunity split their time between working and academic study (for example, 60% working and 40% study). It will apply to:

- Second year BSc students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or third year students in Scotland
- First year students on MSc programmes
- Those in the final year of study who are deemed not ready to be added to the temporary register.

The recently released guidance doesn't make clear at what point a first-year pre-registration MSc student is eligible to take up this offer. As with all decisions to date, the HEI programme team will need to exercise their professional judgment, taking into account the structure of their programmes.

For first year students there will be no expectation that they will join the workforce, rather that they will continue on their programmes. We encourage year one students to stay connected with their programmes and take a break from studies during holiday periods. If they are employed as support workers, they can continue to do so if they feel able but will not be gaining 'credit' for placement hours.

As with all students not on the register, first year students may volunteer should they wish. This volunteering will not count towards placement hours, but will no doubt provide invaluable experience for the individual student as well as being appreciated by the workforce.

Temporary Adaptations to Programmes

In order to enable students to contribute to the increased demands of the workforce and enable continued progression of students where appropriate, there is a requirement for HEIs to consider making adaptations to its accredited programmes. As each HEI operates with autonomy and sets its own regulations, it is your own institution's regulations which will need to be considered carefully.

It is worth repeating a point made in previous iterations of this guidance: there will be programme teams who feel that it is not possible to offer all opportunities to all individuals in their cohorts. **You will need to take into account the structure of your programmes or individual student's personal circumstances to make your decision.**

Where adaptations are made, it will be important to explain the outcome of your decisions to the cohorts/students involved, and that those who cannot participate are not made to feel lesser than those who are able to participate. You will need to find alternative routes for these students to complete their programmes so that they are not disadvantaged. You should ensure that you have identified and put in place contingencies, including alternative assessments, so that you can assure yourselves as well as your students, their employers and ultimately service users, that students have met the HCPC Standards of Proficiency.

It is worth noting that this is a temporary measure that will only be in place to help manage this extraordinary situation. We have waived the need to notify the CSP of any changes formally through the **Notification of Change** process. However, through direct contact or the national and regional webinar series that we have been running (and will continue to run through this period) we have heard from almost every physiotherapy team about their planned approaches. **It is clear that the decisions you are making locally are ably balancing these often-competing priorities.**

For final year students

Programme teams will need to explain clearly what students will need to complete in order to graduate and receive the full academic award. Students should be encouraged to plan appropriately to do this so they can join the full HCPC register. Given that programme teams have been making nuanced decisions this may well need to be tailored to each individual student.

Students who have not completed sufficient clinical placement hours and are therefore not eligible for the temporary register, should have the opportunity to work as a Band 3 support worker. In order to continue their academic progression, this opportunity should allow accreditation of placement hours (see middle year students).

However, even with these measures, there will still be some students who are unable to graduate at the normal point of graduation. Teams should feel empowered to make the difficult decision that a student is not ready and put in place action plans to support them to graduate as soon as in possible.

For middle year students

We are asking universities to consider changes to the programmes of study for students in the middle of their studies (see above list) to enable them to spend some time working in a support worker role (which would be remunerated Band 3 Agenda For Change), and some time in academic study, e.g 60/40 split. The time set aside for academic study should build in continued progression and a period of structured contact with the university to ensure ongoing academic and pastoral support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student's time in clinical practice may be used to support achievement of required practice hours. We are encouraging education providers to think creatively as to how this could be achieved. For example, using multiple supervision models and long-arm supervision. It will be up to the education provider to agree if credit is to be given for hours spent in clinical practice as a support worker.

Supporting students

The exact nature of the role undertaken by the student whilst working as a support worker may vary but should be embedded within physiotherapy services wherever possible. When roles are more generic, students are encouraged to recognise development of transferable skills and how these might contribute to their professional development, e.g team working, leadership and communication.

It is recognised that students will need to be supported and supervised clinically during such deployment to develop their confidence and skills. Education providers should advise students on how this will be managed.

As teams, you will need to find a way to support your students to apply their physiotherapeutic knowledge, skills, behaviours and values within these settings. It is therefore important that students have a mentor within the workplace and a named academic tutor from the programme team.

Students are likely to be geographically spread, however, given that university support will take place virtually, the mechanics will be the same for all students. We encourage you to consider the level of pastoral care that will need to be built in for regular check-in points and whether the number of times you connect with your students need to be increased to support this.

If students are gaining credit for their paid Band 3 work they must have a named clinical supervisor/educator in practice. This will usually be a supervisor from the same profession but if not, professional supervision should be provided via long-arm supervision. Students should also have a named academic tutor, and have arrangements in place. If clinical hours are to be accredited towards academic programmes, this must include a learning agreement, opportunities for learning and reflection and assessment processes.

The CSP is looking at developing a potential volunteer register for long-arm supervisors who could provide support. We will communicate with you directly when this piece of work is ready to launch.

This is an **opt-in** arrangement and not all students will wish to take up this offer. It is important that students who are not able to take up this offer should be informed and that arrangements are in place for those

students to continue their studies at the appropriate time. Again, teams are going to need to exercise their sound professional judgement, and even make decisions at an individual level if necessary.

Post-pandemic planning

Once the UK emerges from the COVID-19 crisis, plans will need to be in place to enable all students to complete outstanding practice-based learning alongside the remainder of their academic studies. Given the pre-existing workforce supply challenges, there is a national emphasis of facilitating graduation as close to original timelines as reasonably possible, given the circumstances. The CSP will continue to lobby for a national response to address any financial disadvantage that may result with regard to additional tuition fees, etc.

CSP support - here for you

We recognise that teams are having to make immediate and difficult decisions. Please do continue to link directly with your CSP education rep or the team here at csp.learning&development@csp.org.uk should you want support.

The dates for the next set of national drop-in webinars have been circulated with Subject Heads, these are Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th April. We are in the process of setting up regional Zoom meetings and also a series focused on **admissions**. We recognise there will be complexities around admissions for next year's cohort which will need to be worked through in due course.

Proposed launch of the Common Placement Assessment Form

In order to support the assessment of employed clinical experience as contributing to placement hours, we are looking to pilot the Common Placement Assessment Form (CPAF). We will be communicating directly with universities when it is ready to launch.

The form and its associated guidance will bring a consistent and standardised approach whilst students are geographically dispersed and may reduce barriers for clinical sites to take students. We hope this will be a welcomed tool, though it does not have to be used. We hope it will provide a useful resource. For teams who do use the form during the pilot, with permission, we will collect data on its use to inform its further development.

Useful links

In addition to this guidance, teams will find it useful to link to the following:

[The CSP's COVID response hub](#)

[HCPC website pages](#)

[Health Education England guidance](#)