Brief: Allied Health Professions student support guidance during COVID-19 Outbreak

April 2020

We are currently delivering healthcare in exceptional times with unprecedented demands for frontline healthcare service delivery. There is work underway to increase the capacity of all healthcare professions to support such requirements. Emergency legislation was passed by the UK Government, giving the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) powers to automatically register former Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) who had de-registered in the last three years and final year AHP students on UK approved programmes who have successfully completed their final clinical placements. The intention for the HCPC temporary Register is to ensure there are no regulatory barriers for former registrants and students in practising on a temporary basis in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

HEE has worked collaboratively with the HCPC, professional bodies, Royal Colleges, Council of Deans of Health, Government departments of the four nations, NHS Employers and staff side representatives to consider how best to support AHP students to continue their studies and where appropriate use their skills and expertise to support the health and care system during this time of emergency in the safest possible way.

HEE has published national guidance for AHP students which provides information on undergraduate and postgraduate programme progression and processes for AHP students deployed to support the healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic (Annex A). AHP students training as art therapists, drama therapists, music therapists, orthoptists, prosthetists and orthotists, and osteopaths should consult with their university about how their education programme will be delivered as it is expected to be different from other AHP professions.

In addition, HEE has also established an online deployment system which allows eligible students to be matched to employers; thus, providing both oversight of the potential and current deployment capacity at any time which will enable effective logistic planning across England. The effectiveness of this system is dependent on effective collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs), HEE and students.

It should be noted that this is a fast-changing and emerging situation and advice may be subject to further development. Therefore, the principles contained in the national guidance should be used in conjunction with advice and guidance from students’ HEIs, the HCPC, professional bodies, Royal Colleges and trade unions.

First year undergraduate students¹
Undergraduate students in year one will continue their learning in line with their current programme objectives via distant/online learning approaches. Clinical placements will be paused which means students may not be able to complete the usual level of practice hours in their first year. The HCPC will work closely with HEIs to assess implications for students and provide support to enable students to reach the required learning requirements across the remaining period of the course. Students may volunteer or work in healthcare settings, however normally this will not be counted towards their degree.

Students in Year 1 (postgraduate), Year 2 (undergraduate)² and all final year students who have not completed all their clinical placements
Students are invited to opt in to a voluntary revised programme structure whereby they can spend, for example, a maximum of 60% of their time in a support worker role, which would be remunerated, and a minimum of 40% of their time in academic study. The purpose of the period of academic study would be to build in continued academic progression and a period of structured contact with the HEI. The exact

¹ Also second year part time undergraduates.
² Also students in year 3 of 4-year programmes.
nature of the role to be undertaken and the level of supervision will be agreed between students, HEIs and the organisations students will be working in. These roles may be able to be used to support achievement of required practice hours, HEIs will determine if this is the case. Students on the voluntary revised programme structure will be remunerated in line with national guidance (e.g. Agenda for Change) and in most cases this will be at Band 3 level on a fixed-term NHS contract, subject to discussions at the NHS Staff Council.

Students who do not feel able to opt in to the revised programme will be supported by HEIs to consider alternative options which include continuing academic elements of their studies through distance learning/online approaches or an authorised break in their studies.

Students in their final year who have completed all their clinical placements (undergraduate and postgraduate)
Final year students who have completed all their clinical placements to a satisfactory standard will be automatically included on HCPC’s COVID-19 temporary Register and contacted by their HEI (unless they explicitly ask for their name to be removed) to enable them to be employed as an AHP prior to graduating. No fees will be charged in relation to the COVID-19 temporary Register. HEIs will be working with the HCPC to ensure that temporary registrants are enabled to complete their programme of study during or after this emergency period and to register fully once qualified. HEI’s will continue to maintain contact and provide support to students until they complete their education programmes. Final year students on the temporary Register are likely to be employed on a fixed-term NHS contract which will be paid at the starting point of Agenda for Change Band 5, subject to discussions at the NHS Staff Council.

Students who do not feel able to opt in to this employment will be supported by their HEI to consider the options available to them including continuing with the academic elements of their study through distance learning/online approaches.

Funding arrangements
All students retain student status whilst they work in supportive roles in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue receiving funding from the Student Loans Company. Further student funding updates are provided on the SLC website.

Indemnity arrangements
Arrangements are in place to indemnify existing and returning healthcare workers for clinical negligence liabilities associated with Coronavirus through state indemnity that are not covered by alternative indemnity arrangements such as those provided by the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts, insurance companies or medical defence organisations.

The Government does not want indemnity to be a barrier for other groups of people working as part of the COVID-19 response and is therefore planning to introduce additional indemnity coverage for clinical negligence liabilities that may arise for healthcare workers and others working as part of the COVID-19 response, or undertaking NHS work to backfill others, in the event that existing arrangements do not cover a particular activity. https://resolution.nhs.uk/2020/03/19/covid-19-and-business-continuity/

Further enquiries
Students should contact their HEIs with any queries relating to programme progression and ways of supporting healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Annex A – Process flowcharts

Students in year 1 (postgraduate), year 2 (undergraduate), and final year students who have not completed all their clinical placements

1. **Student and university discuss options**
   - **Student opts in to revised programme delivery**
     - Student completes HEE deployment tool with support from university
     - Student is contacted by NHS organisation with details of role and agrees start date
     - Student commences employment
   - **Student decides to opt out of revised programme delivery**
     - University discusses alternative options including authorised break in studies
Final year students who have completed all their clinical placements

University places eligible students on the HCPC temporary Register

Student opts in and agrees to enter into practice

- Student completes HEE deployment tool with support from university
- Student is contacted by NHS organisation with details of role and agrees start date
- Student commences employment

Student opts out and decides not to practice

- University discusses alternative options including authorised break in studies