

Our Ref: AHP_ED_COVID-19

Sent via email

To:

Undergraduate AHP students

Postgraduate AHP students

CC: Relevant Healthcare Deans

6 April 2020

Dear students,

Your education programme and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing an extraordinary impact on our everyday lives. Never before have we witnessed such extreme pressures placed on the NHS and the frontline staff who are working heroically to support patients, and each other, through this national emergency. The AHP workforce has been working hard to support the national effort to combat the coronavirus and help save lives. We are also pleased to hear that many AHP students have been asking their education providers and placement providers how their skills and experience can be used to support the health service cope with the pandemic. This demonstrates the strong values that AHP students possess which is characteristic of our professions as a whole. We are writing to you to let you know how you can do this.

Impact on education programmes

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing disruption to your programme progression and we have been working closely with colleagues from across the health system, including the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), Council of Deans of Health (CoDH) and professional bodies, to address the challenges students face in progressing. We now have national guidance for AHP students¹ that will provide you with information on how to progress through your

¹ Please refer to <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-information-AHPs>

programme. 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.

The HCPC also has advice for students on its [COVID-19 hub](#), and we'd encourage you to read both the HCPC and HEE information.

Students in their final year who have completed all their clinical placements (undergraduate and postgraduate)

Given the significant pressures on the system and the need to ensure that front line services are fully supported, it is not possible to continue with your current education and training programme as it was.

Under new legislation, the HCPC now has emergency powers to hold a COVID-19 temporary register. Final year students who have completed all of their clinical placements to a satisfactory standard will be automatically included on the temporary emergency register by the HCPC, and this will mean that you can be employed by the NHS on a fixed-term contract as an AHP prior to graduating. Please discuss whether or not you would like to be included on the temporary register with your university when you speak with them (you can find more information on the temporary register on the HCPC's [COVID-19 hub](#)).

This is voluntary, and if you do not want or feel able to opt-in to this arrangement then you will be supported by your university to consider the options available to you.

In some cases, where students have not completed all their clinical placements, universities may find alternative ways to demonstrate the same learning allowing students to progress on to the temporary register.

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

You will be given the option to opt-in to a voluntary revised programme structure whereby students 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 exact nature of the role to be undertaken and the level of supervision will be agreed between you, your university and the organisation in which you will be working in. These roles may be able to be used to support achievement of required practice hours; your university will determine if this is the case. The purpose of the period of academic study would be to build in continued academic progression and a period of structured contact with the university to ensure ongoing academic and pastoral support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you do not want or feel able to opt-in to this revised programme, you will be supported by your university to consider other options; Universities are working on the principle of supporting all students so they are not disadvantaged in progressing with their education programme based on whether or not they decide to opt in to the revised programme.

Students in their first year of undergraduate programme

We would like undergraduate students in year one³ to remain on your programme and continue with your studies. It is important that we continue to develop and train the AHP workforce of the future so that you can take up an NHS role when the pandemic is ended. However, you may find that nature of the programme is temporarily changed, and that you spend a greater proportion of your time studying academically than you otherwise would do.

You may volunteer or undertake paid work within a healthcare setting while maintaining your academic study if you wish to do so but volunteering or paid work will not normally be counted towards practice hours and experience.

Next steps

For those eligible either to join the temporary register or participate in the revised education programme, we have asked your university to contact you and record how you wish to proceed. To undertake any of the paid elements of work, NHS employers will require further information

² Year 3 of 4-year programme and later if studying part time – please discuss this with your university.

³ Also year 2 part time undergraduate.

to allow us to link you, your university course and the NHS placement provider together. **Please wait for your university to get in touch with you and reply as soon as you can with the details they require.**

Regardless of the choices you make, you still retain the status of a 'student' and will continue to access and receive funding from the Student Loans Company, including your student loan.

If you opt-in and you have a school age child, we will provide you with a letter that you can provide to your child's school, certifying you are a 'key worker'.

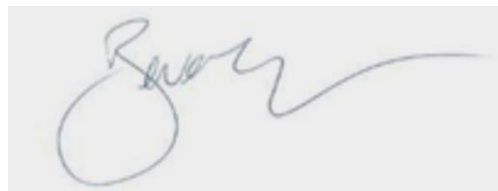
We know this is a difficult time for you and your family. We also know that many of you want to do whatever you can to help the NHS - and your future colleagues - to help patients. We hope the options we've set out for you here will help you to do that while continuing with your training to prepare you to join the fantastic NHS workforce.

Yours faithfully,



Suzanne Rastrick OBE

Chief Allied Health Professions Officer
for England



Beverley Harden

Allied Health Professions Lead
Health Education England