

Student support guidance for Allied Health Professions during COVID-19 outbreak

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Health Education England is asking universities to contact their eligible Allied Health Professional (AHP) students to discuss their options for using their education programme to help with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students will soon be contacted by their university to discuss their options and will be asked if they would like to opt-in to undertake a paid employment opportunity.

Students will be provided with HEE guidance and a letter from the National Allied Health Professions Lead at Health Education England, Beverley Harden, and Suzanne Rastrick, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (England), outlining how selected student AHPs at some stages of their training can opt to take up a paid NHS role.

Health Education England is writing to universities that provide AHP courses to ask them to submit information to HEE on the status of their third-year undergraduate AHP students. These students are the first to be contacted by their university and asked about their interest and whether they would like to opt-in to a paid placement.

You can view the guidance, and the letter online here: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-information-ahps> [8]

The options vary depending on the student's stage of study. 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.

Emergency legislation was also passed by the UK Government earlier in March, 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.

Beverley Harden, National Allied Health Professions Lead, Health Education England, said;

"We are continuing to develop proposals to provide safe and beneficial opportunities for our AHP students that allows them to keep developing their skills while supporting the NHS at this difficult time. I would like all students to read Suzanne's and my letter to them, and for those eligible to consider voluntary opting-in to help in the COVID-19 response alongside their registered AHP colleagues.

AHP students, during the course of their education and training all spend a large percentage of their time working in clinical environments, learning alongside qualified staff to develop into the outstanding professionals we need.

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.

We would also like to thank all the former registrants who are coming forwards to use their skills to support the NHS. The commitment from the AHP sector to helping the NHS at this crucial time is amazing."

Suzanne Rastrick, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (England), said;

"The COVID-19 pandemic is having an extraordinary impact on all our lives. The response of the AHP workforce, to support the national effort to combat the coronavirus and save lives has been phenomenal.

This is no less true of our AHP students, many of whom have been keen to understand how their skills and experience can be utilised to support health and care services in this response.

"Whilst the national priority is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that we support AHP pre-registration students, to ensure the advancement of our next generation of AHPs. It is, however, inevitable that there will be some disruption to courses, at this time. The guidance that has been developed, in collaboration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), Council of Deans of Health (CoDH) and the professional bodies, will enable pre-registration students to be supported to contribute to the national agenda in a way that is comfortable for them and ensures progression into the AHP workforce of the future.

"I am extremely grateful for the adaptability and commitment shown by all the AHP workforce at this time."

HEE is also supporting the 'Your NHS Needs You?' campaign asking former registrants to consider returning to support health and care services.

To read the letter sent to AHP students visit: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-information-AHPs> [9]

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Links

[1] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work>

[2] <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>

[4] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events>

[5] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about>

[6] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/covid-19>

[7] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/complaints>

[8] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-information-ahps>

[9] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-information-AHPs>