

1 July 2020

## **Allied Health Professions**

We have taken time to work with partners across the system to review our approach to placements Allied Health Professional (AHP) students as we transition back to standard placements; to ensure our approach is right for current AHP student education and training needs and the future AHP workforce supply.

Thank you to everyone for your hard work, patience and support to maximise learning opportunities, continue course progression and clinical learning in a pandemic situation.

### **Background:**

All AHP students are required to complete practice placements as part of their pre-registration education programme. These placements are normally unpaid but to recognise the special circumstances and as part of the response to Covid-19 these clinical hours have been paid.

NHS England are funding the monies for paid placements, which are arranged between the universities and placement providers.

We committed at the outset of the pandemic to ensure that we would support students to complete their studies and to be ready to join the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) register. We are now looking at the transition back to standard placements enabling students to progress with their education programmes.

### **What are the next steps for students?**

We recognise that the pandemic has been disruptive, and it is important that we support you back onto your education programme or into employment. We therefore need to re-establish standard unpaid placements and prepare for the cessation of the HCPC temporary register. Placements are essential to develop the skills and proficiencies necessary to be registered as an Allied Health professional with the HCPC.

Arrangements for the transition in England are detailed below:

- The HCPC is currently reviewing the point at which the temporary register will cease.
- Any paid-placements need to have started on or before 30 July. No new paid-placements can be created after this date.
- From 31 July, we will transition to standard placements for those students continuing their studies. Any new placements from 31 July onwards, will be standard placements (unpaid).
- Employers and universities should work with students to bring paid placements to a close no later than 31<sup>st</sup> August. This will be part of a voluntary learning agreement between student, placement provider and university.
- Any student in the last six months of their programme on paid placement will be fully paid until the end of their employment contract offer, unless voluntarily ended early by the student as part of a learning agreement, between the student, placement provider and university, to conclude the contract early.
- Placement providers will be reimbursed for the costs of any paid placement for the duration of the student's contract/placement. This provides increased flexibility for ending employment arrangements

For those students nearing the end of their programme, once you have completed both your practice and clinical and academic components, you will then be ready to join the HCPC register, take up substantive roles and be paid as registered AHPs.

We are aware that there are a small number of students who have been issued with a contract to cover their paid placement and who will complete their course before the end of their contract.

This will mean there will also be a period of time between the course completion and receipt of your HCPC registration which enables you to start work as a registered AHP. In these circumstances, we ask employers to identify the relevant students and have a conversation around the employment options available following the course completion.

It was agreed by all partners, including the Council of Deans of Health and unions, to support these arrangements.

A few important questions we are regularly asked:

**Are students being made redundant?**

No. We want to make it clear that students are not being made redundant. We are now looking at how we can support you back into placements where you will be extra to the established workforce or onto the HCPC permanent register.

**I have questions about my contract. Who should I speak to?**

Most of your questions can be quickly resolved in discussion with your line manager. Contractual arrangements for students on paid placements were agreed locally and do vary between employers. Employers are speaking to those students who are on paid placements as fixed term contracts are ended. Students should speak to their employers about the best way to manage this given their own personal circumstances. If you are still unable to resolve your concerns you can contact your university or local union representative.

**I have annual leave to take. What should I do?**

Your entitlement to paid annual leave will be set out in your contract. Your line manager will be able to help you understand how much leave you are entitled to and enable you to book that time off. Annual leave hours will not be counted towards your required practice placement.

**I have been off sick during my paid placement, how will that affect me?**

If you have an NHS contract that means you have entitlement to NHS terms and conditions which will include paid sick leave. If you have any questions about this, please talk to your employer. Any hours away from your placement, including sick leave, will not count towards your practice placement.

**I've completed my programme, I am on the temporary register, I have now completed my degree and am waiting for my full registration. What can I do?**

We are aware that there may be some students on paid placements who have completed their programme, are on the temporary register, have now completed their full degree and are awaiting full registration with the HCPC. You can continue to work as a temporary registrant at band 5 until your full registration is received. Please be aware the temporary register will be closed down at some point after 31<sup>st</sup> August (date yet to be agreed). It is essential that you still pursue full registration as soon as you are able to. Such appointments cannot however be paid for from the emergency COVID-19 fund and will be by arrangement with individual employers. It is essential that you fully register with the HCPC prior to the cessation of the temporary register if you wish to continue on a band 5 contract. You should speak to your employer about your future employment options before your temporary contract ends.

**I'm a final-year student and still need placement hours to finish my programme. What can I do?**

Any student in the last six months of their programme and on paid placement will be fully paid until the end of their employment contract offer, unless this is voluntarily ended early by the student, as part of a learning agreement between the student, placement provider and university to conclude the contract early.

At that point you will then be able to complete your programme and join the HCPC register and progress to a registered AHP position.

There may be some individual circumstances where further study or placement time is required to enable the university to sign off a student. This will be discussed with you by your university and plans put in place to enable you to complete your degree.

**I am in my final placement; can I finish my programme early?**

To join the HCPC register you need to have completed the placement and academic parts of your programme. Your university will work with you to enable you to complete your programme and join the HCPC register when this is complete.

**I have not been out on placement as I have been shielding, how can I complete my programme?**

Each individual circumstance will be different. If you talk to your university they will be able to help you understand what academic and placement requirements you need to finish your degree and how these may be completed. We are aware some students may face difficulties in achieving the placement exposure required to achieve the required learning outcomes and continuing your studies and we are actively working together to consider how best to support you.

**I still have some questions, who should I contact?**

The first point of contact for questions about your programme or placements will be your university. If you have questions about your contract and work arrangements, please talk with your line manager or supervisor.

Most questions and concerns can be addressed quickly this way. If you are still finding problems, you can contact your local union representative who will be able to help and advise you.