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Health Education England



Supporting the Development of Placements for Allied Health Professional Students in Public Health Settings:

A Toolkit for Allied Health Profession students

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healthcare

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Section 1: Finding public health placements

Increasing placement capacity is at the forefront of most education institutions minds as we are aiming to increase the number of AHPs in the workforce. Finding placements can be a barrier to expanding into public health focused services and the administrative burden of setting up placements can further prevent this. If you are starting to consider offering a public health placement, the checklist below may help with guiding your thoughts around this.

Consideration	Complete
Discuss this document with your education institution and check that you are able to source a placement and what the parameters of this are (it maybe that they already work with local services and organisation of placements must be between the university and the organisation contact).	
Make sure you are aware of when this placement would take place within your curriculum (year of study and dates of the placement).	
Explore the services and organisations in your local area, for example, local charities.	
Research what the services/organisations do; who do they work with, what are the aims of the organisation, what services do they offer.	
Consider what you could potentially do on the placement that would fit with what the organisation offers. Think about what you could bring to that organisation and what skills, knowledge or attitudes you could develop from a placement with them.	
Make contact, introduce yourself, explain that you are enquiring about completing a placement with them, and ask to speak to a relevant member of staff.	
Provide as many details as you can about the requirements of the placement; what would you potentially be doing, the length of the placement, what would you need the organisation to do, who would need to support you. It is good practice to provide the details of your education institution should the organisation want further information or to confirm the placement request.	
If the organisation agrees to consider supporting you on placement, contact your education institution and follow their guidance on setting up a placement provider.	
If your circumstances change and you no longer require the placement, ensure you contact the organisation to thank them and let them know of this change. Future students may ask the organisation for support and developing good relationships is key.	



Section 2: Setting up public health placements

Your education institution will need to develop a formal practice-based learning opportunity with the public health based organisation. This can take some time to set up and should be guided by the education institution to ensure that everything is in place for a safe and effective learning environment. In order to assist this process, you should ensure that you communicate any discussions with organisations about placement opportunities with your education institution at the earliest opportunity. You may wish to have a look at the consideration checklist under the “organisations in the public health arena toolkit – section 2” to help understand what this process may include, although you would be guided by your education institution of anything that you would be required to do.

Section 3: Learning areas

As you will be aware, you will need to achieve certain criteria in order to pass your placements and to be able to register with the regulatory body for your profession. This means meeting certain standards of proficiency or practice. The Health and Care Professions Council ([HCPC](#)) Standards of Proficiency (2013; 2014) and the Osteopathic Practice Standards (2019) for each of the AHPs were mapped to the [Public Health Skills and Knowledge Framework](#) (2016, updated 2019). This work developed an understanding of how some of the standards were aligned with the skills and knowledge identified as being crucial within public health settings. This alignment was used to develop seven learning areas that capture the work you may undertake that would fulfil both your requirements for registration and the development of public health skills and knowledge. The learning areas are as follows;

Learning Areas	
Learning Area One	The Public Health Conversation: Communicating, using a variety of methods and techniques, with individuals, groups and communities, information on health promotion, harm prevention, and the wider determinants of health.
Learning Area Two	Working together to enhance the public's health: Enhancing collaboration, advocacy, leadership, and ability to influence in relation to the health promotion, health protection, health risks and the wider determinants of health.
Learning Area Three	Researching the public's health: Sourcing and analysing information on the wider determinants of health, using information to inform health improvement, health protection or reductions in inequalities.
Learning Area Four	Evaluating and quality assuring public health initiatives: Designing, conducting or analysing evaluations, audits and quality assurance processes of initiatives to support health improvement, health protection or reduce inequalities.
Learning Area Five	Public health policy, strategy and legislation: Understanding and engaging in safe and accountable practice within the public health domain.
Learning Area Six	Planning public health initiatives: Planning and designing assessments, interventions or education aimed at the wider determinants of health and promoting health, preventing ill health, and reducing inequalities.
Learning Area Seven	Delivering public health initiatives: Providing assessments, interventions or education to address the wider determinants of health, health protection, health improvement and to reduce inequality.

These learning areas may be useful to determine the type of activities a student may undertake during a public health placement. The full document can be found on [XXX](#) (HEE weblink to be inserted) which includes the full mapping detailing which Standards of Proficiency/ Osteopathic Practice Standards and Public Health Skills and Knowledge criteria are met by each of the areas.

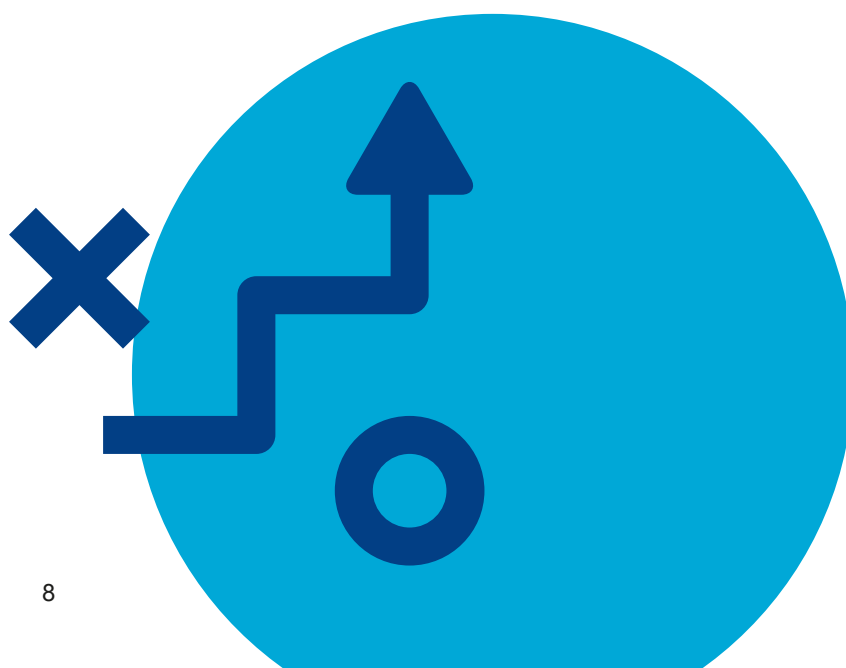
Section 4: Establishing what the students will do

The [case studies](#) in this document discuss various different activities AHP students have been involved in during public health focused placements. This includes project-based work, developing or delivering interventions for health promotion or education, exploring the wider determinants of health, and researching the needs of the local population. Students may come to the placement with learning outcomes set by the education institution which you will have discussed when setting up the placement, or they may be able to set their own objectives which may be helpful to set and discuss with the student and education institution (discussed in the section on supporting students). The following table provides some ideas of activities students could undertake alongside which learning areas may be met.

Activities	What the student may do	Completed			
Project based work	The student may be asked to source and critically analyse information surrounding a public health topic that would benefit the organisation. They may work with other organisations, teams or individuals to complete the research and will be able to communicate this back to the organisation either verbally or in written form. The information may then be used to help plan for future public health initiatives and have an impact on the organisation. Alternatively, the student may be involved in designing or conducting research or analysing results, again working with others and communicating findings back to the organisation alongside suggestions for the implications for practice. The research may lead to the design of an evaluation or audit, or form a part of this.	1	2	3	4

Activities	What the student may do	Completed			
Evaluation work	The student may be asked to design, be involved in, or undertake an evaluation, audit or other quality assurance process of the organisation. They will work with other members of the team, or with individuals, groups or communities, to perform the evaluation and communicate findings in an appropriate way. They may use previous evaluation/audit information to help inform ideas for practice, critically analysing the information to make suggestions and effectively communicating the findings.	1	2	3	4
Designing health resources	The student may design health resources focused on public health for the local population and that meets the organisation's need. The student would research the information needed, ensuring this was up to date and evidence based, and work with others to ensure different perspectives were gained. They would need to consider how they communicated the information in the materials to ensure this was appropriate and accessible. The resources may be used to plan a future educational session(s).	1	2	3	6
Education sessions	The student may conduct education sessions, working with individuals, groups or communities to conduct a public health focused intervention. They would need to ensure their communication style was appropriate and adapted to meet the needs of the audience, and to engage people in the session to encourage learning. They would need to ensure they are working within policies, guidelines and a safe environment. Alternatively, the education session may be to the organisations staff team about the role of the AHP, and how this may work alongside the organisation.	1	2	5	7

Activities	What the student may do	Completed			
Delivering initiatives	The student may be working with individuals, groups or communities, delivering interventions specific to their AHP role (including relevant clinical skills and knowledge). They will need to engage with the service users, using communication skills and working within guidelines and policy.	1	2	5	7
Planning initiatives	The student may design or plan initiatives for the organisation, based on research and information obtained from previous evaluations. They may work with other relevant stakeholders, including service users, to design an initiative that is relevant to the organisation and the local population. This should be presented and communicated back to the organisation on completion.	1	2	3	6
Developing strategy or policy	The student may work to explore the strategy, legislation, policy or law surrounding the area the organisation operates in. This may involve analysing the information, including from previous quality assurance and audit processes, and making suggestions on how this could translate into practice, or by suggesting new processes for the organisation in order to implement changes in policy or strategic goals. The student would work with relevant policy and process makers for the organisation or sector, and communicate effectively their outcome.	1	2	4	5



Section 5: Supporting and supervising students

As you will know, you will need support from members of staff whilst on placement. You should have a main contact point whilst on placement, either physically or remotely, for any concerns or questions, and this person should be able to liaise with your education institution if needed in order to provide support.

The education institution will be able to let the placement provider know what is expected and required of them in order to support you on placement. This is likely to include an induction and interviews at various points in the placement to check on your progress. Education institutions or placement providers may already have appropriate paperwork in place for these and you should check with your education institution what is required. You may wish to explore the “organisations in the public health arena toolkit – section 5” to consider if these elements are similar to what you have experienced on previous placements.

You may wish to complete a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis when thinking about the placement opportunity that could help to inform what you want to achieve from the placement. If you are able to develop your own learning outcomes or objectives for the placement, you may want to complete the SMART objectives template below that can be used in discussion with the organisation and education institution to set learning objectives. You can use the information from section 3 and 4 above to help consider what you might do during the practice-based learning opportunity.

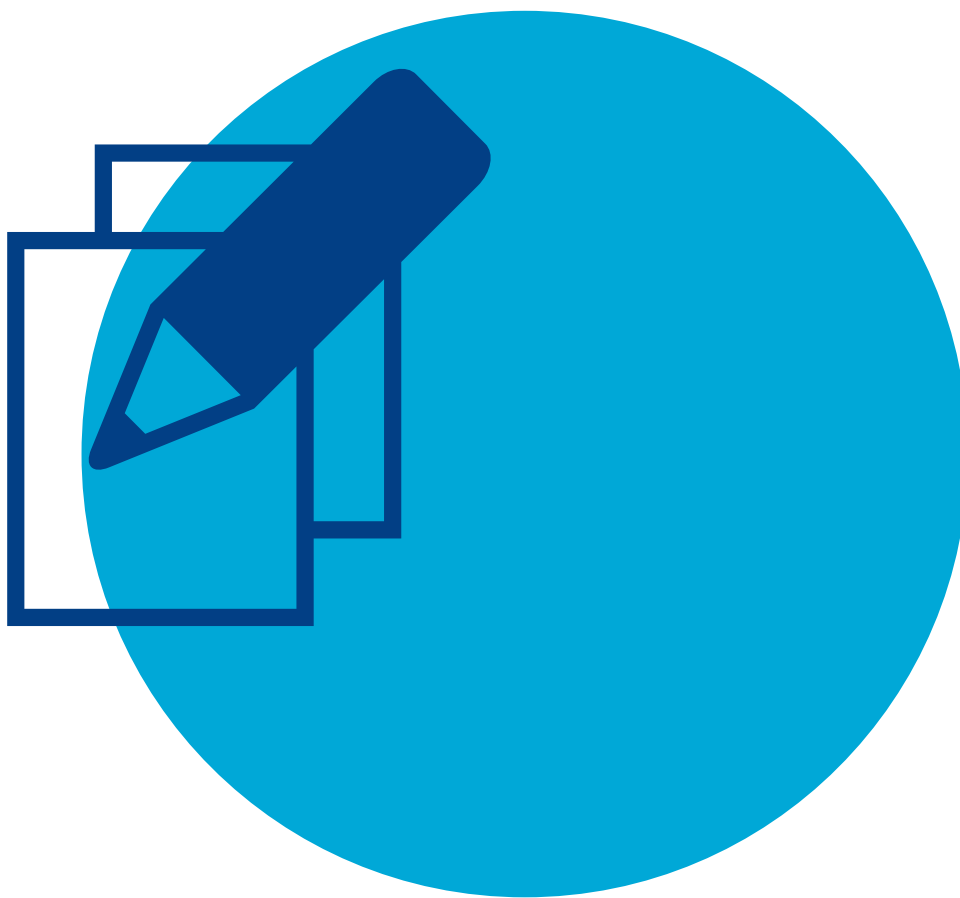
You are a learner rather than an employee and therefore, require supervision. Supervision of students whilst on placement can take many forms and be offered by different staff members in organisations. You may be on placement in an observational role or may play a more active role, depending on the learning outcomes you need to achieve, the remit of the placement organisation, and the conversation held between the placement provider and education institution to agree this. Your education institution and placement provider will discuss the requirements of supervision and ensure this is available to you whilst on placement.

Student SWOC analysis template to help set learning outcomes

	Notes
Strengths: What are my strengths? How might these skills, knowledge or attitudes help in this placement?	
Weaknesses: What skills, knowledge or attitudes do I need to develop? How might this be achieved in this placement?	
Opportunities: What opportunities do you think might be available to you during this placement experience?	
Challenges: What barriers to your learning do you think may occur during this placement experience?	

Learning outcomes (SMART) template

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Timebound
What is your specific learning outcome/goal for this placement?	How will you measure if this goal has been achieved?	Is this goal possible to achieve? How do you know this? Consider the timeframe of the placement, your skills, the equipment or materials you need, and what the placement is offering.	How is the goal going to aid with your development? How might achieving this help the organisation? What are the benefits to people and is it realistic to say these benefits will be met?	When will you achieve this goal by?



Section 6: Assessing students

Whilst you are on placement, you will be undertaking formative experiences and learning that will help you to develop your skills and knowledge. The placement may have a formative or summative assessment at the end and your education institution will provide you with any details needed, including any formal assessment documents that are required to be completed. When setting up the placement, your education institution and the organisation will discuss the assessments and that the learning opportunities enable you to meet these.

If a placement is formative, or you are able to set your own learning outcomes, the placement provider may wish to develop their own way of assessing how you are progressing in the placement. An example template for an assessment using the learning areas discussed earlier can be found below. This template can be amended to include the learning areas relevant to the placement experience. This assessment should be discussed with the organisation and the education institution to consider its suitability.

Suggested assessment template mapped to the learning areas

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
1 : The Public Health Conversation	The student is able to communicate effectively using verbal and non-verbal communication					
	The student is able to adapt their communication style to suit a range of audiences					
	The student has demonstrated their ability to listen, communicate, engage and respond to individuals, groups and/or communities					
	The student has effectively communicated information on health promotion, harm prevention and/or the wider determinants of health to reduce inequalities					
	The student is able to use a range of different medias to communicate with others					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/ progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
2 : Working together to enhance the publics' health	The student is able to build effective relationships with individuals, groups and communities					
	The student has demonstrated their ability to work in partnership with other staff members during the placement					
	The student has demonstrated their ability to work with individuals in a collaborative way that enables consultation and empowerment in decisions about their involvement					
	The student has successfully identified and made referrals to other services to support individuals					
	The student works in a way to empower and connect communities to access resources to support their health and wellbeing					
	The student works with others in a respectful and professional manner					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/ progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
	The student demonstrates leadership skills in the management of projects, service delivery or activities					
	The student has demonstrated their ability to share their ideas, knowledge and skills to help others to develop					
	The student has shared information in an appropriate way to ensure safeguarding of individuals					
	The student is able to effectively solve problems					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
3: Researching the public's health	The student is able to obtain and organise relevant data in order to understand the health needs of the population					
	The student is able to interpret, appraise and present data on the health needs of the population					
	The student is able to critique and synthesise research evidence to reach conclusions that can be applied in practice					
	The student is able to use data and information to consider how to help improve health, reduce inequalities and work in a preventative way					
	The student is able to work with others to design research ideas or evaluations					
	The student is able to work with others to conduct research into the public's health					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/ progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
	The student is able to identify gaps in research, evidence or knowledge that affects practice and can make suggestions as to how to address this					
	The student is able to undertake an economic evaluation of a service in order to establish the benefits of any costs					
	The student demonstrates the ability to appraise new technologies, services, activities or practices in a balanced and structured manner					



Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
4: Evaluating and quality assuring public health initiatives	The student is able to collate and analyse information that can help towards future planning or decision making for the service					
	The student has participated in audits or quality assurance processes and is able to report the findings					
	The student has demonstrated their ability to consider what data is needed in the future for an evaluation and design ways to undertake this					
	The student has undertaken work to monitor and evaluate their practice and report back on the impact of this					
	The student has participated in the development of standards or protocols which incorporate best practice guidelines					
	The student has effectively conducted risk assessments and communicated any findings					
	The student assesses the impact the organisation, service, or activity has on improving the public's health and reducing inequalities					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/ progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
5: Public health policy, strategy and legislation	The student is able to manage personal information in line with the organisation's policy					
	The student is able to manage their own workload and resources in order to work effectively and complete tasks					
	The student acts in the best interest of individuals and treats everyone with the same respect					
	The student acts in line with current legislation around their role and those that affect the organisation					
	The student is able to gain consent from individuals, groups or communities					
	The student maintains confidentiality where applicable and is aware of the limitations of this					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
	The student is aware of and acts within their duty of care					
	The student seeks out opportunities to develop their skills and continue their professional development					
	The student is able to keep accurate and legible records in line with the organisation's policy					
	The student maintains the safety of the individuals, groups or communities they are working with and acts in line with all health and safety policies					

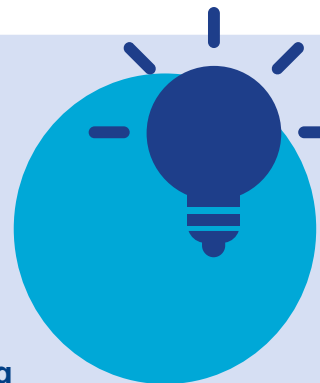


Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
6: Planning public health initiatives	The student is able to plan different initiatives using a variety of approaches					
	The student is able to plan for emergencies where applicable, or for unforeseen circumstances related to the organisation and suggest alternative actions					
	The student has demonstrated their ability to scope ideas for future projects, activities, interventions or initiatives to address health inequalities, promote health or prevent harm, and presents these ideas with supporting evidence					
	The student is able to plan for the use of resources in order to deliver initiatives to individuals, groups or communities					

Learning Area	Suggested outcome	Achieved at mid-point interview		Achieved at final interview		Action plan to achieve/ progress
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
7: Delivering public health initiatives	The student is able to work with individuals, groups or communities with the aim to facilitate change to promote health, prevent ill health or reduce inequalities					
	The student effectively implements interventions, projects, activities or initiatives to individuals, groups or communities					
	The student is able to make decisions on what interventions to use and implement these					
	The student is able to effectively and collaboratively problem solve should the situation require this					
	The student demonstrates the ability to undertake assessments with individuals, groups or communities to assess their needs or to help implement initiatives that help to promote health, prevent ill health and reduce inequalities					
	The student demonstrates their ability to create and work within a safe environment when delivering initiatives to individuals, groups or communities					

Top tips for student Allied Health Professionals from the case study authors

- Take as many different types of placement opportunities as possible, even if these can only be insight days, and embrace many different ways of working.
- Be prepared and review your own skills before undertaking the placement as well as during and after which helps to show how much you have learnt.
- Be committed to understand what a public health perspective is asking of you.
- Keep an open mind to opportunities.
- Try to understand the population and their complexity of need; shift your perspective to working with complexity not conditions.
- Aim to look under the bonnet of everything, understanding reality and how it connects with theoretical ideal world scenarios.
- Ask as many questions as possible and put yourself forward.
- Clinical skills are just one part of what you do; administration, communication, negotiation, being strategic, managing 'team dynamics', and how to facilitate change are all skills you need to thrive in a team and the wider system. These skills help to develop our identities and you should try to develop these in your placement experiences.
- The placements help to enhance your skills and so use these placements as an opportunity to have public health conversations and help behaviour change.
- Talk to everyone and try to make connections.
- Appreciate and understand the working practices of other Allied Health Professionals.
- Work across the Allied Health Professions to try and create a common dialogue to support the public health agenda.
- If you are running an event, try to do as much collaborative PR as possible to help attract people to events as well as casual passers-by.
- Consider what the local population's needs are and the best time to hold an event to enable people to stop and talk.
- Acknowledge that you will be challenged professionally and personally but the benefits are worth the discomfort you might have.



Link to case studies

- [links to A student perspective](#)
- [links to An organisation perspective](#)
- [links to An education provider perspective](#)

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