



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Student clinical placements

Updated guidance: **7 October 2020**

In the changing coronavirus (COVID-19) environment, content is often being updated. To ensure you are aware of the most recent changes, all content updates and the date the document was last updated will be highlighted in yellow.

Purpose

This guidance provides specific advice to education providers, students, Victorian health sector entities and aged care providers on student clinical placements during Second Step restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne and Third Step restrictions in regional Victoria.

This guidance applies to all students who undertake clinical placements within Victorian Health Services as part of their health course. The full list of disciplines is listed in Appendix A.

For the most up to date advice regarding coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit the Department of Health and Human Service's website: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

This guidance note can be read in conjunction with *Movement of healthcare workers and health service employees during coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic factsheet* (<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/Movement-of-healthcare-workers-and-health-service-employees-during-the-coronavirus-COVID-19-pandemic-doc>). This factsheet is not specifically directed at students but provides some important measures that are applicable to both healthcare workers and students.

General recommendation on student clinical placements during the **current restrictions**

Whilst clinical placements of health students are permitted to continue under the current restrictions (Second and Third Steps), preference should be given to those placements that are critical for students to progress in their training and achieve graduation. This is to ensure there is not a detrimental flow-on effect on students being able to enter our critical healthcare workforce.

Clinical placements that are for experiential or observation-based learning (i.e. those students in the early years of their courses) must be delayed wherever possible in **metropolitan Melbourne (Second Step)** at this time in order to reduce risk to both students and patients.

Learning that can be done remotely must still be conducted in this way in both Second and Third Steps.

Worker permits for accessing childcare and kinder are no longer required during Second Step restrictions for metropolitan Melbourne. Further information is available on the DHHS website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/access-onsite-childcare-kindergarten-permit-higher-education-covid-19-doc>.

Student clinical placements *within* health services

Clinical placements for students in health services can continue if the student is based at a single campus/setting. During the Second Step restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne and Third Step restrictions in regional Victoria,

students cannot rotate across multiple sites during a clinical placement. For example, if students are on a clinical placement at Eastern Health - Box Hill Hospital, they cannot be on placement at any other campuses e.g. Maroondah Hospital or Angliss Hospital.

Students cannot undertake clinical placements in coronavirus (COVID-19) wards or coronavirus (COVID-19) specific emergency departments (EDs). Students should also not undertake placements in EDs or urgent care centres where there is not a separate area for respiratory or suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) patients to be assessed. Health services should reassign students to other clinical areas within the health service at this time.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has challenged the health and education sectors and will continue to impact student placements. Collaboration, flexibility and consideration of alternative arrangements and solutions is encouraged, and it is strongly recommended that cancellation fees be waived during this time.

Student clinical placements in aged care settings

There should be limited engagement between students and vulnerable patient cohorts; this includes aged care residents. Clinical placements of students in aged care facilities in Victoria should not continue at this time. Movement of students between a Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) where they are employed and a health service where they are undertaking a clinical placement should also be avoided wherever possible, because of the risk of transmitting infection into or out of these settings.

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) prior to clinical placements

Students are not required to be routinely tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) prior to commencing a new clinical placement at a health service, unless requested to do so under surveillance testing guidance.

If a student is undertaking a clinical placement within a facility that is experiencing an active outbreak, the student should be advised to follow the public health advice and health service advice about whether they need to go into quarantine or be tested for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Students **must get tested if they feel unwell** regardless of if there is an outbreak at their health service. Students should be encouraged to be vigilant for symptoms and to report even the mildest symptoms to their supervisor. Students will need to isolate whilst awaiting test results. Students will not be permitted to continue their clinical placements during this period.

Movement of students during Second Step restrictions for metropolitan Melbourne and Third Step restrictions for regional Victoria

Second Step restrictions are in place for metropolitan Melbourne. The definition of metropolitan Melbourne is based on the Planning and Environment Act 1987 which sets out the local government areas that form metropolitan Melbourne and does not include Mitchell Shire. Further information on Victoria's restriction levels and the coronavirus (COVID-19) roadmap for reopening can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>.

All employers who require staff to attend a work site in metropolitan Melbourne must issue a Permitted Worker Permit to their employees. This applies to students who are undertaking clinical placements in a health service. New directions for students on clinical placement came into effect on 13 August 2020 which state that it is the education provider's responsibility to issue Permitted Worker Permits, for students undertaking clinical placements in health care settings. Where a permit has already been issued by the host organisation, it is not necessary for the

training provider to reissue a permit. Further information can be obtained from <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/permited-worker-permit-higher-education-covid-19-doc>.

Whilst permits can be provided to students for travel between metropolitan Melbourne (Second Step) and regional Victoria (Third Step) to complete a clinical placement, given it is a permitted activity, this type of student movement should be minimised where possible given the potential risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading further into regional Victoria.

Students on existing placements in a different restricted area to their current residence can complete their placement. Where possible, education providers should consider alternative placements within the same restricted area where the student resides for new placements.

Student employment in settings external to their clinical placement

Many students undertake part time employment during their studies. If a student is employed within a facility which is experiencing an active outbreak, the student may be advised to get tested and to quarantine for 14 days. Students will not be permitted to undertake clinical placements during this period.

Please note that permitted workplaces and employees now have specific obligations in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) under the new Chief Health Officer's Workplace Directions. Employers and employees must refer to these directions for full detail of the legal requirements (<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/permited-worker-scheme-covid-19>).

Students who are employed have access to government financial support at this time. Victorian workers can apply for a \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment that provides financial support while they isolate and wait for coronavirus (COVID-19) test results. Victorian workers who test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or who are a close contact of a confirmed case may be eligible for the \$1500 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Worker Support Payment that provides financial support while quarantining at home. Please refer to <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid-19-worker-support-payment> for further information.

Where a student is employed in a particular health service, education providers are requested to consider clinical placements within the same health service to reduce the movement of students across multiple sites.

Reducing risk during a placement

In addition to limiting student movements across and within health services, education providers, including aged care providers, should implement the following to further reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) on student clinical placements:

- Implement alternative ways of achieving learning objectives instead of face-to-face interactions with patients and residents, wherever possible.
- Minimise student exposure to aerosol inducing procedures.
- Limit student face-to-face interaction with vulnerable groups.
- Ensure students complete a daily attestation to confirm that they are free from coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and have not had contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the previous 14 days, prior to commencing a shift or any work at the provider's premises.
- Ensure students are adequately trained in the safe use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and local infection prevention protocols. Education providers and health services are encouraged to establish processes to observe students whilst donning/doffing PPE to support students as they familiarise themselves with local prevention protocols.

- Ensure students are properly orientated and briefed on area-specific infection prevention policies and procedures that relate to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Ensure students have adequate training in hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and are aware that they should not come to placement when unwell.
- Ensure students know who to report to if they develop any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Ensure physical distancing, hand hygiene, and frequent cleaning and disinfection are supported in non-clinical as well as clinical areas where staff or students may congregate (e.g. lunch areas).
- Ensure students are encouraged to participate in telehealth or virtual consultation where possible to limit face-to-face contact with patients.
- Ensure students are cohorted to limit the number of students who come into contact with a given patient.
- Ensure the number of students and staff in a patient's room complies with physical distancing recommendations and is kept to the absolute minimum to achieve proper care of the patient.
- Limit the number of people at handover and on ward rounds to the absolute minimum.
- Preference the use of video conferencing or other virtual means for meetings, assessments, performance reviews, where practicable.
- Ensure only healthcare workers and health service employees essential to the delivery of care are entering areas where patients with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) are being cared for, and laboratory testing areas.

For more information on reducing the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) in healthcare settings, please see

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19>

Appendix A

List of disciplines

1. Medicine (including undergraduate and postgraduate courses);
2. Nursing, including registered nursing and enrolled nursing and Initial Registration for Overseas Nurses (IRON);
3. Midwifery;
4. Paramedicine;
5. Art therapy;
6. Audiology;
7. Biomedical science;
8. Chiropractic;
9. Dentistry
10. Diagnostic imaging medical physics;
11. Dietetics and nutrition;
12. Exercise physiology;
13. Medical laboratory science;
14. Medical imaging;
15. Music therapy;
16. Nuclear medicine;
17. Occupational therapy;
18. Optometry;
19. Oral health (not dentistry);
20. Orthotics and prosthetics;
21. Orthoptics;
22. Osteopathy;
23. Pharmacy;
24. Physiotherapy;
25. Podiatry;
26. Prosthetics and orthotics;
27. Radiation oncology medical physics;
28. Radiation therapy;
29. Radiography;
30. Psychology;
31. Clinical-based Psychology;

32. Social work;
33. Sonography;
34. Speech pathology;
35. Speech therapy;
36. Health assistant (nursing);
37. Allied health assistant;
38. Individual support workers; and
39. Allied Health interns

**To find out more information about coronavirus and how to stay safe visit
DHHS.vic – coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>**

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450

**For information in other languages, scan the QR code or visit
DHHS.vic –Translated resources - coronavirus (COVID-19)
<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>>**



For any questions

Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (24 hours)

Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only

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