

Policy: Students completing training placements during COVID-19 Alert Levels 1 - 4

Scope

This policy applies to students from all health professions who are completing training placements in any setting (ie DHB or non-DHB) while nation-wide or regional COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions are operating.

Current restrictions impacting health and disability services can be viewed here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation>

Definitions

Placement includes any placement in a setting where healthcare or related services are provided to patients or the public.

Student includes all students who have *not* completed all requirements for professional qualification and – only if applicable – registration as a health practitioner under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

Policy statement

1. Although the importance of academic progression, economic consequences, and impacts on the health workforce pipeline should all be considered, the first priority guiding placement decisions is that all reasonable efforts must be made to ensure that students and patients are kept safe.
2. Students undertaking a placement as part of completing their academic programme may start or continue in that placement only in accordance with any current Alert Level restrictions and/or conditions that apply to the setting where the student is placed. It is for the training institution and the placement provider to ensure that each student's placement(s) meet this requirement at all times.
3. Students must inform their supervisor(s) and supervisors must ask students about employment, placement, or any attendance at other settings where COVID-19 Alert Level restrictions are operating. Movement between health or disability settings should only occur if carefully managed and where approved by the relevant organisation(s).
4. All students on placements must have appropriate supervision (as determined by the training institution and placement provider) to help mitigate the enhanced risks inherent in working in the COVID-19 environment. It should be noted that supervisors must prioritise providing services to patients over providing supervision. This may require that the student(s) involved cease working with patients until appropriate supervision can be resumed, and should be clearly communicated by the supervisor to the student(s).
5. Students may decide that they do not want to practise during this time and should not be penalised for that decision. Students should realise, however, that an extended absence from their training programme may delay completion of their training.

Review

This policy will be reviewed and revised as and when necessary.

Note

In order to minimise the spread of COVID-19, serious restrictions on workers and workplaces may be put in place. Some health and disability services will, however, be expected to remain up and running. Employers must continue to meet their health and safety obligations in these circumstances.

These same restrictions and responsibilities apply to students and to those who are responsible for them.

The Ministry recognises and acknowledges that other organisations also have authority and responsibilities in regard to students;

- Training institutions have the ultimate responsibility for their students' welfare.
- Placement providers determine whether or not they continue to provide placements to students.
- [Responsible authorities](#) make decisions regarding accreditation of training programmes, registration (where required), and practising status (including conditions on scopes of practice).

Placements can therefore be altered or discontinued (directly or indirectly) by these other organisations, even where a student's placement is in a service that continues to operate.

Version: 18/09/20