

A Guide to Occupational Health Clearance, Screening & Immunisations for new Students on Undergraduate Regulated Health Care Programmes



The following important information is regarding your pre acceptance health screening and preparation for clinical placement – please read carefully.

Students who have applied to study health programmes are required to obtain Occupational Health clearance. This is to ensure that you are fit for all aspects of the course, (including its core competency standards), and for your clinical practice placements; and also to protect the public who may be affected by your placement activities. The University Occupational Health (OH) service will process your health clearance and we will be responsible for your Occupational Health needs throughout your time at University.

Data Protection

Occupational Health records are retained in accordance with best practice and the Data Protection legislation and will not be shown, nor their contents shared, with anyone outside of Occupational Health – including University Placement Staff, Tutors, Course Directors or your GP – without your explicit consent. The only exception might be in the event of a court order for release of records in a judicial dispute. You have a right to request access to any other records that we may hold for you.

Confidentiality

Occupational Health is committed to maintaining your privacy, dignity and confidentiality at all times. We adhere to the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the NMC and GMC Codes of Confidentiality. You may speak to us confidentially about any health issue that you feel may affect you whilst you are on your course. We may advise you to share information with the University if we feel that adjustments could be made that would help you during your studies.

We will never reveal any information that you have given us without your consent, unless we have good reason to believe that you, or another person, may be in danger.

Health Questionnaire

You are required to complete a health questionnaire. The health questionnaire is part of the clearance process and you will not be allowed onto your course if you have not submitted a completed health questionnaire.

You have a duty to provide all, relevant, truthful and accurate information to Occupational Health and no information should be withheld. Any failure to do so may result in the offer of a place being withdrawn or reconsideration of your fitness to continue with the course.

Dishonesty is incompatible with training in a regulated profession and may lead to you being removed from the course. Please ensure that you answer all questions truthfully.

You will receive immediate clearance onto your course if you did not declare any health problems on your health questionnaire or if we feel that your health condition would not affect your ability to study and undertake your clinical placements.

Some students may not immediately be cleared. This is because we will be undertaking further assessments regarding any declared health condition that we may need to follow up. This is to ensure that we put in place the appropriate support for you to be able to undertake your course. We also need to ensure that you will be well enough to complete your course.

Where needed, we will contact you to arrange a health interview with an Occupational Health nurse advisor or Occupational Health physician. This may be as a telephone consultation or face to face on campus. Please be as honest as possible during this consultation. One of the main reasons for this consultation is for us to advise the University what additional support you may require on the course. It is rare for us to recommend that an individual should not enrol on the course. In these rare exceptions, it is because we believe the necessary modifications cannot be made to enable you to safely undertake your clinical placement and meet the core competencies of the course.

We will issue a Medical Suitability to Commence Course certificate to the University after we have completed our initial Health questionnaire screening assessment.

Immunisations and blood screening

The second part of the clearance process is to ensure that you have undergone blood screening and commenced vaccinations specific to your course, before any clinical placement. You will be provided with an appointment to attend the Occupational Health department. You

will not be cleared for clinical placement until we are certain that you have commenced the necessary vaccinations or blood tests.

As a healthcare student, you must comply with Department of Health guidelines on immunisations and screening required to protect you and your patients during the course of your studies.

- Immunisation is the process whereby a person gains immunity or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine.
- Vaccination is the administration of a vaccine to stimulate an individual's immune response to develop immunity to a specific disease

We require you to be vaccinated for some infectious diseases if you do not already have immunity to them. Whilst we cannot force you to have a vaccination it is unlikely we will allow you to undertake a clinical placement without appropriate vaccinations and therefore the University will not accept you onto the course.

You need to gather and provide us with as much of your vaccination history as possible as this will speed up the clearance process. If you have received vaccinations from your GP or another occupational health service, you will need to provide us with evidence of your vaccinations/blood test results.

Your health clearance will be processed much more quickly if you are able to provide relevant documentation at the first appointment. Please provide evidence of your childhood vaccinations such as red baby book or a print out from your GP as this may save you from requiring further vaccinations. You should also contact your last school for contact details to source your school vaccination record as your GP record may be incomplete.

If you have worked in healthcare before and know that you have evidence of immunity to Hepatitis B, Measles, Rubella, Varicella and Tuberculosis (TB), please forward a copy of your occupational health vaccine records to us.

Criteria for clearance

We will issue a Certificate of fitness for Clinical Placement to you and the University once the required Immunisations and blood screening have been completed. Different health care programmes require different blood screening and vaccinations, but usually a Certificate of fitness for Clinical Placement will be produced after the following has been met;

- Completion of Hepatitis B vaccine programme (where indicated) OR evidence of immunity
- Evidence of 2 varicella vaccines OR evidence of immunity to varicella

- TB screening
- Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) screening (where required)
- Evidence of 2 MMR vaccines OR evidence of immunity

Do not be concerned if you are not called to attend for some of the above as these may not be a requirement for your course.

Some programmes will not allow you to start your clinical placement without a Certificate of fitness for Clinical Placement.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. It may start as an acute disease, causing a mild illness that lasts for a few weeks, or it can be a severe illness leading to death. For some people the Hepatitis B virus lingers, causing a lifelong chronic illness that may result in long-term liver problems such as cirrhosis or liver cancer. Many people who are a carrier of Hepatitis B have no symptoms at all and are not aware they are a carrier.

Hepatitis B is spread when infected blood, semen, or other bodily fluid enters the body. An infected mother can pass the disease on to her child at birth. You can also get the disease by:

- Having unprotected sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug paraphernalia
- Using something that may contain an infected person's blood, such as a razor or toothbrush
- Contact with infected blood through sharps, splash or a needle stick injury.

Vaccination against Hepatitis B will be offered to students who may come into direct contact with infected blood through sharps, splash or needle stick injuries whilst directly involved in sustained regular and intimate patient care.

How effective is the vaccine and is it safe?

The vaccine for Hepatitis B is highly effective. The majority of adults who receive one dose develop protective levels of antibodies within one month of receiving a single dose. It is important, however, to complete the course of three vaccinations and have a blood test afterwards to ensure immunity is achieved.

As with all medications, there is the potential for side effects but the safety record of the vaccine is outstanding. The most common side effect of the Hepatitis B vaccine is soreness at the injection site. Since 1982, when the Hepatitis B vaccine became available, more than 100 million people have been vaccinated.

Serious side effects include a severe allergic reaction within a few minutes of receiving the vaccination, but such occurrences are extremely rare.

Vaccination schedule

The course requires three vaccines. You will have the first dose at your first appointment, the second after one month and the third after six months. Approximately 6-8 weeks after the third vaccination, you will require a blood test to ensure you have responded to the vaccination. Some people simply do not respond to the vaccination and do not develop immunity. It is important to identify these people so we can advise what to do if you were directly exposed to a patient's body fluids.

Chickenpox (varicella)

You must be immune to chickenpox as it is important to protect you and patients from this, particularly those who have cancer, are immunocompromised or are pregnant.

We need to have evidence that you have had chickenpox OR a copy of a blood test result demonstrating you have immunity OR evidence of vaccination. Students born in tropical countries will need to be screened for chickenpox if no documentary evidence is provided. If you have no evidence of immunity, we will take a blood test to ascertain this. We will notify you if you need vaccination because you are not immune.

Vaccination schedule

Students that do not have immunity to chickenpox will require two vaccines given at 1 to 2 month intervals. Further blood tests are not required following vaccination.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

We need to ensure you are immune to measles, mumps and rubella so that you do not transmit this to patients and we need to ensure we protect you whilst on your clinical placement. We need to see documentary evidence of a blood test demonstrating you have immunity to measles and rubella OR evidence of receiving two MMR vaccinations.

Everyone is entitled to receive two doses of MMR vaccine, as it is part of the national Public Health schedule for immunisations. Therefore, you may choose to attend your GP practice to obtain these vaccinations in advance of enrolment. The GP should not charge you for this service.

Vaccination schedule

Students that do not have immunity to measles, mumps or rubella will require two vaccines given at one-month intervals. Further blood tests are not required following vaccination.

Tuberculosis (TB)

We need to check if you have protection against TB, and that you do not present a risk to others. TB is an infectious illness caused by the airborne bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

We will be looking for evidence of a BCG scar (likely to be on your left upper arm) or evidence from your GP that you have had the BCG vaccination. All students will be required to complete the TB risk assessment within the Health Questionnaire. This form will help us to identify which students may require a blood test for TB infection.

If you are from a country with high rates of TB we may need to arrange for you to have a blood test if you have recently arrived in the UK.

If you are an international student and have undergone Health Screening as part of Visa entry requirements please supply copies of documentation, e.g. chest X-ray result/blood tests.

The screening results will help us decide if you need to have a BCG vaccination. Vaccination does not necessarily make you immune but provides you with some protection.

Please note: There is currently a UK shortage of BCG vaccine. The Department of Health has confirmed that students will be able to commence clinical placement without vaccination. We will recall you when the supply situation changes.

During your time in clinical practice you may have contact with TB materials or patients with TB. TB can only be caught directly from someone with infectious TB in their lungs or throat. Although TB is spread through the air when people who have the disease cough or sneeze, it does take close and lengthy contact with an infected person to be at risk of being infected.

Patients with TB are looked after in accordance with strict infection control procedures to minimise the risk of cross infection, and are generally rendered non-infectious after 2 weeks of treatment.

The most common symptoms of TB include:

- A persistent cough that lasts over three weeks and gets progressively worse
- Loss of weight for no obvious reason
- Fever and heavy night sweats
- A general and unusual sense of tiredness and being unwell
- Coughing up blood.

All these may also be signs of other illnesses so if you have them and are worried you should seek medical advice.

Live vaccines

Some students are unable to have live vaccines because of pregnancy and certain types of medication or health conditions. If you are unable to have a live vaccine, we will review your health clearance to assess whether adjustments can be made so that you can continue on the programme.

Medical, Dental, and Midwifery students

Medical, Dental and Midwifery students undertaking Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) work during their training and will need to be screened for HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B surface antigen, in accordance with Department of Health regulations. You will need to provide photographic ID such as a driving licence or passport at the time of the blood test. You will be provided with separate/additional information regarding obtaining these tests.

Healthcare students have a professional responsibility to ensure that they are well enough to work in clinical practice. For many courses, a diagnosis of HIV, Hepatitis B or C is not a barrier to training and we would not notify the University as a matter of routine, however in some circumstances regular Occupational Health reviews will be arranged.

Meningitis

Rates of a highly virulent form of Meningitis (MenW) are increasing, especially in new university entrants. All students under the age of 25 are eligible for a free MenACWY vaccination for protection against 4 meningococcal groups (A, C, W and Y).

All new entrants should ideally have been vaccinated with the MenACWY vaccine at least two weeks before starting at university. Please contact your GP surgery for this vaccination. It is not available through Occupational Health.

Registering with a GP

We strongly recommend that you register with a local GP. To find a GP near you, please enter your postcode into the following site:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4>

Needle phobia

We know that many students may be anxious when they attend clinic. Please make sure that you have plenty to eat and drink before attending and tell the nurse if you are anxious or have a needle phobia. In many clinics we have a couch available for you to lie on whilst having injections or blood tests. Please also wear a short sleeve top to enable us to access your upper arm easily for vaccination and taking blood.

Sharps and splash injuries, (Inoculation injury)

During your time in clinical practice you may sustain an accidental splash or sharps injury. This can be very frightening; however, it is very important that you report any injury. You will not be blamed for what happened. If you have a splash or sharps injury you should follow this procedure:

- Wash the puncture wound liberally with soap and water immediately and encourage bleeding. Cover the wound with a waterproof dressing.
- Exposed mucous membranes including conjunctivae should be immediately irrigated copiously with water. The eyes should be irrigated before and after removing any contact lenses.
- Inform your mentor or practice supervisor about the incident.
- The source patient should be identified and, if possible, arrangements made for a blood sample to be obtained, with informed consent. This process will be managed by a senior member of staff within your clinical placement.
- Complete the local Accident/Incident reporting form.
- If the injury happened during office hours (9am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday) then contact Occupational Health. It is important that all injuries are reported immediately so that a risk assessment can be undertaken to determine whether all appropriate actions have been carried out.
- If the injury happened outside office hours, or at the weekend, then contact the hospital Trusts Occupational health department or attend the A&E department.

Further information can be found on the Occupational health Intranet site and your Trust placement.

Hand care

During your time in clinical practice you will be required to adhere to infection control procedures including frequent hand washing. It is important to ensure that you look after skin.

- Check your hands and nails before each span of duty for any abrasions or cuts.
- If you have any cuts or abrasions, including scratches: cover with a waterproof dressing whilst on duty in order to minimise risk of infection or reaction to latex proteins in rubber gloves.
- Keep finger nails clean and short.
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after any patient care activity.
- Do not wear dress rings or wrist watches whilst on 'hands on' duty. Such items impede effective hand washing technique.
- Avoid dry and cracked skin, which is vulnerable to infection by regularly applying a good quality hand cream as often as practicable and especially at bed-time.
- It is important to remember that hand cream must be removed before the use of gloves.

- Where there is a risk of contact with blood or body fluids, protective gloves should be worn. Ensure that gloves are worn for the minimal amount of time needed. After removing gloves, the hands must be washed and dried thoroughly.

The onus is on you to report any skin disorder affecting your hands e.g. eczema, psoriasis or dermatitis. You must see your GP or contact Occupational Health for advice.

Referrals

Some students may be referred to see us by their Programme Director/Course Tutor during their time at University. The purpose of the appointment is to assess whether any health conditions may impact upon practice and whether a student will need adjustments to help them on placement. Referrals may also be made following a period of absence or return from extended leave. We will make recommendations where required.

If you feel that you may need further assistance whilst on placement or if you have concerns about your physical or mental health you should speak to your Programme Director/Course Tutor in the first instance who may then refer you to Occupational Health.

Consent

You will be asked to provide your consent for any reports sent to your Programme Director/Course Tutor. You may choose to release the report without prior viewing and you will then be emailed a copy for your own records.

You are also entitled to see a copy of the report before it is sent to your Programme Director/Course Tutor. It is important to note that the purpose of prior viewing is to correct any factual inaccuracies, not to alter the opinion of the Occupational Health Clinician. If we do not hear from you within 3 days we will advise the Programme Director/Course Tutor that you have not provided consent to release the report.

Any delay in receiving your consent could result in you being asked to interrupt your placement whilst the University considers your fitness to practice and/or study in the absence of an Occupational Health report.

Additional information

Occasionally we may need to write to your GP or Specialist for additional information. We will ask you to provide your written consent to allow us to do so. It can take 6-8 weeks for Specialist reports to be issued therefore any specialist reports that you may already have may be useful in the interim. Please forward these if asked to do so by the nurse advisor.

Adjustments

Occupational Health is an advisory service and you should note that we cannot tell the University what to do. If Occupational Health advises adjustments, the operational decision on the feasibility and implementation of any adjustments ultimately rests with the University and the placement areas. Consideration will be given to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, best practice standards as well as the core competencies of your course. The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as a physical or mental condition that has a substantial and long-term effect on your ability to carry out your daily activities. Decisions will be based on the individual's needs and whether any adjustments would be reasonable within the placement setting. The University and placement areas will need to consider health and safety factors, patient safety and the protection of the public.

Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS)

The university is committed to supporting students with disabilities. Disabled students make up over 11% of University of Manchester students, and we're proud to offer an accessible and inclusive service. The Disability Advisory and Support Service (sometimes called the DASS) help prospective students with a disability to get support in place, ready for when they arrive at the University. The service is entirely confidential. You should register with DASS to discuss the support you need. We would encourage you to do this early in the application process, as this gives you the best chance of getting all support that you need in place before you start your course. The easiest way is to tick the disability box when completing your UCAS form. Use the site below to find out more about DASS, who is eligible for support, and how to access support. <http://www.dass.manchester.ac.uk/>.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback and you may be asked to complete a feedback questionnaire. You are welcome to contact us at any time if you have feedback whether good or bad.

Some students have jeopardised the start of their placements by not engaging with Occupational Health. It is your responsibility to ensure that you cooperate with all occupational health procedures. Do not leave the process until the last minute and make sure that you check your emails regularly. If we do not hear from you after two attempts to contact you, we will notify the University.

Please ensure that your health questionnaire is completed as soon as possible and that you have located all of your vaccination records ready for the immunisation clinics. Failure to complete the occupational health process means failure to comply with the requirements of your course.