

The Optometry Clinics Dress Code Policy for Staff and Students

This procedural document supersedes Dress Code for Optometry

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Target audience:	All Optometry Clinic teaching staff and students

Introduction:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff (both directly and indirectly employed) and student optometrists involved within the Optometry Clinics are dressed in such a way that maximises staff, student and patient safety, and projects a professional image. All clinic staff and students are expected to adhere to this Policy.

The University of Manchester respects the right for staff and students to adhere to religious and cultural observances. However, consideration should be given to infection control, the operation of machinery, clear identification of staff and students and clear communication with patients.

Purpose:

Adhering to the Dress Code Policy applies to and is mandatory for **all** Optometry Clinic **staff** and **students**. Standards of personal presentation in the workplace are expected to be high at all times.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that all staff and students are clear on the standard of dress expected while at work in the Optometry Clinics. The dress code details the standards and image which we wish to convey to all patients/clients, partners and members of the public.

Duties and Responsibilities:

It is every individual's responsibility that this policy is upheld.

Clinic sessions include:

- Year 1 Optometric Examination practical
- Year 1 Dispensing practicals
- Year 2 Optometric Examination practicals
- Year 2 Binocular Vision practicals
- Year 2 Instrumentation practicals
- Year 2 Dispensing practicals
- Year 2 Contact Lens clinics
- All Year 3 clinics

Failure to follow the policy may result in disciplinary action.

Procedure:

General Principles

Clothing and appearance should project a professional image and must not cause embarrassment or offence to patients, colleagues, other staff, students or visitors to the clinics.

All staff and students should ensure that their clothes, shoes and jewellery worn do not pose a potential hazard to themselves, patients or clients and other staff or students, from both an infection control and a health and safety perspective.

Where a member of staff or a student provides patient care a '**bare below the elbows**' policy must be adopted. Jackets or fleeces etc. should be removed and long sleeves rolled up above the elbow in the clinical environment. The use of PPE should be used in accordance with [College of Optometrists guidelines](#).

Personal Hygiene

All staff and students should maintain a high level of personal hygiene and appearance

Choice of Clothing

Clothing should be clean, modest and tidy. The following should be avoided: Clothes that are revealing and may cause embarrassment or offence, (i.e. above mid thigh length; showing the midriff or underwear). Other examples include: clothes with logos or advertisements; sports clothing; shorts and jeans or excessively high heeled footwear.

Staff and Student Identification

Students should wear a University of Manchester logo name badge with their name clearly visible to staff and patients. **This is particularly important when the wearing of face masks is required.**

The wearing of lanyards is discouraged within clinical areas. Where staff wear a lanyard this must be designed to break/or fitted with a tug release to prevent strangulation. Lanyards must be tucked in to prevent an IPC risk if dangling during patient contact. The hygiene of the lanyard must be considered and a replacement item obtained if it is visibly soiled.

Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices

Utilisation of mobile phones or electronic devices in clinical areas e.g. tablets must be strictly for patient benefit i.e. recording of patient care on University of Manchester or Primary Eyecare Services databases or software systems, or reviewing clinically related applications appropriate to the task being undertaken.

The use of mobile phones for any other reason (E.g. phone calls or text messages) is not allowed during clinical activity.

White Coats

In line with Infection Prevention and Control recommendations, students are no longer required to wear white coats when in clinical sessions (either student based or patient facing).

Appropriate certified PPE as well as single use aprons and gloves (when necessary) should be worn as recommended by the [College of Optometrists](#) and [Public Health England](#).

Footwear

Footwear must be appropriate. Open toe shoes or sandals, mules and flip-flops or trainers must not be worn.

Jewellery

Jewellery should be plain and easily moved to ensure appropriate hand hygiene. Raised stones or elaborate embellishments that are not easily cleaned should not be worn as they can harbour microbes.

Wrist watches must be removed when giving direct patient care. Fob watches may be worn.

Where, for religious reasons, staff or students wish to cover their forearms or wear a bracelet when NOT engaged in patient care, they MUST ensure that sleeves or bracelets can be pushed up the arm and secured in place for hand washing and direct patient care activities.

Ties

Where clinical staff or students wear ties these must be tucked into shirts, removed or held back with a tie pin whilst carrying out patient care. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure these are laundered or dry cleaned regularly.

Hair

Hair should be clean, well groomed, tidy and off the collar, to reduce the incidence of bacterial growth around the collar. Staff and students (male and female) should have their hair tied back if it falls below the collar or is longer than collar length. A long fringe should be fastened back and prevented from swinging across the face.

This applies to all hairstyles and types, including extensions and wigs etc. Staff and students should consider the risks of wearing ponytails when caring for violent and aggressive patients. Where hair clips are worn, they must not have the potential to injure staff, students or patients, and must be kept clean to meet infection control standards. Where hair bands /fixings are worn they should be cleaned regularly.

Male staff and students should ensure they are clean shaven or facial hair kept short, neatly trimmed or tidily secured.

Head Coverings

Head coverings/turban and skull caps may be worn for religious reasons. All head garments must be clean, washed and changed daily and secured without loose ends. The wearing of

facial veils during clinics is not permitted.

Make up and Nails

Make up should be discreet. Finger nails should be kept short and clean. Staff and students must not wear nail varnish, nail art or artificial nails whilst in the clinic. When viewed from the palm of the hand the natural fingernails should not project far beyond the pad of the finger. The wearing of /acrylic or gel nails is strictly forbidden, as they pose an infection control risk. Please refer to the **Optometry Clinics Infection Prevention and Control Policy**.

Tattoos

It is recognised that in today's society many individuals now have tattoos. Where a staff member or student has a tattoo in an area that remains exposed when in the clinic (E.g. due to the 'bare below the elbow' policy) this must not be offensive. Where a tattoo is considered inappropriate or likely to cause upset to patients, carers, visitors or other staff and students, the individual will be requested to cover the tattoo.

Training and Awareness:

All new staff and students will be made aware of this policy as part of their induction process. Existing staff and students will be made aware of this policy via annual policy updates in the Optometry and Optometry Staff communities sections on Blackboard.

Equality Impact Assessment:

The Optometry Clinics at The University of Manchester aim to design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our service, population, workforce, and students, ensuring that none are disadvantaged over others. Our objectives and responsibilities relating to equality and diversity are outlined within our equality schemes. When considering the needs and assessing the impact of a procedural document any discriminatory factors must be identified.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted on this procedural document.

The purpose of the EIA is to minimise and if possible remove any disproportionate impact on staff or students on the grounds of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religious belief. No detriment was identified.

Advice From Muslim Spiritual Care Provision (MSCP) in the NHS

Exposure of the forearms is not acceptable to some staff and students because of their Islamic faith. In response to these and other concerns, the MSCP convened a group including Islamic scholars and chaplains and multi-faith representatives, as well as Department of Health policy-makers and external experts in infection prevention. Based on these group discussions, the MSCP prepared a list of recommendations to ensure that local dress code policies are sensitive to the obligations of Muslims and other faith groups whilst maintaining equivalent standards of hygiene.

- Clothing may include provision for sleeves that can be full length when staff and students are not engaged in direct patient care activity.
- Clothing can have three-quarter length sleeves.
- Any full or three-quarter length sleeves must not be loose or dangling. They must be able to be rolled or pulled back and kept securely in place during hand-washing and direct patient care activity.
- Disposable over-sleeves, elasticated at the elbow and wrist, may be used but must be put on and discarded in exactly the same way as disposable gloves.

Strict procedures for washing hands and wrists must still be observed.

Use of hand disinfection gels containing synthetic alcohol does not fall within the Muslim prohibition against natural alcohol (from fermented fruit or grain).

References:

World Health Organisation Global Report on Infection Prevention and Control
<https://www.who.int/news/item/06-05-2022-who-launches-first-ever-global-report-on-infection-prevention-and-control>

Guidance on uniform and workwear policies for NHS employers
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/uniforms-and-workwear/>