

British Dietetic Association advice to pre-registration dietetic education providers

COVID-19: Impact on Learners

The British Dietetic Association [BDA] fully appreciates the concern amongst education providers and learners about the impact of COVID-19 on learners' progression through pre-registration education programmes, and practice-based learning in particular. The BDA is working with, and taking advice from, government during these exceptional global circumstances. We are taking a pragmatic and proportionate approach to the application of our BDA Curriculum Framework 2013 with the intention of supporting education providers to act in the best interests of their learners, staff, partner organisations and the public, while upholding the Standards against which they are accredited.

The BDA will continue to provide advice and guidance, often in conjunction with other professional and statutory bodies, to enable learners to progress in a way that is most appropriate in these rapidly changing, highly complex and unprecedented circumstances.

Course delivery

- As we move into a new academic year (September 2020) we recognise that many programmes have now moved to an online or blended delivery approach in line with their HEI's approach to managing COVID-19 in the longer term, and adapted assessment strategies to accommodate these changes. The BDA continues to be fully supportive of the current move taking as much academic content online as is feasible.

Major change

- The BDA has re-introduced the normal major change process with effect from September 2020. This means that any further changes that programme teams wish to introduce to the delivery of BDA-accredited programmes for the 2020/21 academic year will need to be presented to the BDA for approval in advance of their implementation from September 2020. Please contact C.mccgibbon@bda.uk.com for further information.

Practice-based learning outcomes

- At the initial height of the pandemic, learners in some parts of the UK were given the opportunity to opt-in to work as Band 3 support workers to assist with the increased demand on service provision. Where learners did opt-in, the time spent in Band 3 employment may contribute towards the required 1,000 hours of successful practice-based learning, if it was agreed with the education provider and where it was undertaken in parallel with their academic studies. The extent to which this was feasible will have depended very much on the nature of the role that a learner went into (which could potentially vary widely from those with which the profession is very familiar to those that are very new to us), and will have required discussion and negotiation on an individual level. Programme teams will need to have contemporaneously recorded those aspects of learners' learning and achievements in their Band 3 roles that reasonably contributed to meeting established practice-based learning outcomes and hours.

Risk Assessments

- Moving beyond the initial emergency response most learners are now able to return to practice-based learning to support their progression through their programmes of study, and ultimately entry into the registered workforce. Undertaking risk assessments will continue to be a shared undertaking between HEIs and practice-based partners, as it was pre-COVID-19. In recognition of the heightened concerns associated with the ongoing influence of COVID-19, helpful guidance regarding risk assessments relevant to practice-based environments are collated here.

The Council of Deans of Health's guidance provides a very clear and balanced overview of risk assessments and life assurance linked to practice-based learning within pre-registration programmes.

- [CoD returning to clinical practice guide \(PDF, 316.11KB\)](#)

The COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool for Wales referred to on page 3 in the clinical practice guide document (within which the link is broken) can be found [here](#).

- [CoD information for students on placements \(PDF, 61.81KB\)](#)

NHS Scotland's COVID-19 risk assessment guidance is very much in line with the information from the Council of Deans but provides an additional level of detail and explanation that it might be helpful to read through.

- [NHS Scotland COVID-19 occupational risk assessment guidance](#)

Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland provides workplace safety guidance during COVID-19 [here](#).

An additional source of information and perspective is provided by the Medical Schools Council's guidance.

- [Risk assessment Medical School's Council \(PDF, 187.14KB\)](#)

Life assurance cover

Learners in Northern Ireland already have death in service cover in place as part of standard placement arrangements.

In Scotland, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has agreed to offer temporary COVID-19 linked death in service cover to learners undertaking placements in NHS Scotland and in August 2020 this was extended to cover learners on placement in all health and social care settings.

- [CNO CMO CDO letter to HEIs on testing \(PDF, 64.56KB\)](#)
- [Council of Deans -Returning to clinical placements guide](#)

In Wales, learners on placement will be considered at the Minister's discretion under the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme. Further information is available [here](#).

In England, the Secretary of State has discretion to make life assurance payments to the families of learners on placement if the individual case fulfils the scheme's strict criteria. The Department of Health and Social Care has produced a factsheet about the scheme in England which is available [here](#).

HCPC temporary COVID-19 register for final year learners?

The HCPC have announced that the temporary registers for learners will close at the end of November 2020. This is to allow learners to progress with their education which the government sees as a priority for the future of the AHP workforces across the UK. [Find further information](#).

Learner finance

The Student Loan Company has issued [updated guidance](#) for applicants, current students, and those repaying their student loans. Additionally, there is [guidance](#) relevant to students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Student Finance Wales has issued updated [guidance](#) for applicants and current students information about [student loan repayments](#) is also available.

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