BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Occupational Health and Wellbeing

Birmingham City University

A Guide to Immunisation, Screening & Health Clearance

Prepared by OHWorks Ltd

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Occupational Health and Wellbeing

Introduction

OHWorks Ltd is an independent Occupational Health (OH) service. We are processing your health clearance to ensure you are fit to enrol at the University and fit for your practice placements and we will be responsible for your Occupational Health throughout your time at University. We are a SEQOHS accredited service, which means that our services are regularly assessed by the Royal College of Physicians to ensure that our services are of the highest quality.

Occupational Health is concerned with the effect of health on work, and the effect of work on health. Our role is to safeguard, as far as reasonably practicable, your health, safety and welfare throughout your time at University. This includes time that you will spend on your clinical placement.

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, and also to protect the public who may be affected by your placement activities.

The Occupational Health service is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm. You can contact us on:

Email: bcu@ohworks.co.uk

Tel: 0121 331 7178 or 0121 331 7079

Once you have finished reading this guide, we strongly recommend that you begin to collect your vaccination documentation in preparation for the first clinic. You must bring all available documentation with you otherwise your health clearance may be delayed.

This includes proof of MMR vaccination, proof of chickenpox history or vaccination, proof of BCG vaccination. You may also have proof of hepatitis b vaccination. Some courses will also require proof of pertussis containing vaccine within the past five years (see below).

We know that you may not have had every vaccination but if you have proof of any kind, please bring it along with you.

Data protection and confidentiality

Records are stored electronically and will not be shown, nor their contents be shared, with anyone outside of OHWorks – including University Placement Staff, Tutors, Course Directors or your GP – without your explicit consent. OHWorks is committed to maintaining your privacy, dignity and confidentiality at all times. We adhere to the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR and the NMC and GMC Codes of Confidentiality.

You will be provided with a copy of your vaccination records in due course; however, you also have a right to request access to any other records that we may hold for you.

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, however 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 or in the event of a court order for release of records in a judicial dispute.

Health questionnaire

By now, you should have completed an online health questionnaire. If you have not done so, you must complete one today. The health questionnaire is part of the clearance process and you will not be allowed onto your course if you have not completed the health questionnaire.

You can access the health questionnaire at this website:

https://www.healthquestionnaire.co.uk/bcu/

You have a duty to provide relevant, truthful and accurate information to OHWorks 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 have received automatic clearance if you did not declare any health problems on your health questionnaire or if we felt that your health condition would not affect your ability to study and undertake your clinical placements.

Some students may not yet be cleared. This is because we are still processing the questionnaire as you may have declared a health condition that we would like 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 our OH nurse advisor. This may be by telephone, video call or on campus. Please be as honest as possible during this consultation. One of the main reasons for this consultation is for us consider whether we should advise the University (with your consent) 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 may be because your health is at risk or because we believe we cannot identify suitable modifications or adjustments to enable you to safely undertake your clinical placement and meet the core competencies of the course.

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.

Immunisations and blood screening

The second part of the clearance process is to ensure that you have undergone blood screening and received the vaccinations as recommended by the Department of Health. You will not be fully cleared until we are certain that you have had 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 work.

- Immunisation is the process whereby a person is made immune 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 system 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 state that you are fit for clinical placement without appropriate vaccinations and therefore the University may not accept you onto the course.

You should now spend some time gathering 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 take all

relevant documentation to the first appointment. Please bring evidence of your childhood vaccinations such as red baby book or a printout from your GP as this may save you from requiring further vaccinations.

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

Criteria for clearance

For students on healthcare courses we will issue a fitness certificate to you and the University once you have met the following conditions:

- Health questionnaire clearance
- At least one dose of Hepatitis B vaccine OR evidence of immunity
- At least one dose of MMR vaccine OR evidence of immunity to measles and rubella
- At least one dose of Varicella vaccine OR evidence of immunity to varicella
- TB screening and vaccination where required
- One dose of Pertussis containing vaccine within the past 5 years (Midwifery, Children's Nursing and Paramedic Science only)
- Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) screening (where required)

Without the fitness certificate, you will not be able to start your clinical placement, which may affect your student funding.

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 life-threatening illness leading. 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.

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. Infection is spread 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

In healthcare, you may come into contact with infected blood whilst providing care to patients or through sharps, splash or needlestick injuries. Many people who are a carrier of Hepatitis B have no symptoms at all and may not be aware they are a carrier.

It takes only a microscopic amount of blood to transmit the virus and it is highly infectious - there is up to a 30% chance of acquiring the virus from an infected carrier if you become exposed. The virus can also live outside the body on used instruments and hard surfaces for up to a week. The best protection against developing Hepatitis B is to be vaccinated against the virus therefore it is essential that all healthcare workers be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

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.

Vaccination schedule

The schedule requires three vaccines. You will have the first dose at your first appointment, the second after one month and the third after six months. Some students may be required to have an accelerated schedule on days 0, 7 and 21 depending on their placement dates. A minimum of four weeks after the third vaccination, you will require a blood test to ensure you have responded to the vaccination. In some cases, a booster vaccination is required as immunity levels are not quite sufficient. 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 exposed to a patient's body fluids. Post-exposure treatment is available and can help to prevent infection.

You cannot start placement until you have had at least ONE dose of vaccine. You must complete the course and have a blood test before we release your vaccination and immunity report to you. You will need this when looking for employment after graduation.

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 a clear history that you have had chickenpox OR a copy of a blood test result demonstrating you have immunity OR evidence of vaccination. Students that did not have infection within a temperate climate 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 one-month intervals. You cannot start placement until you have had at least ONE dose. Further blood tests are not required following vaccination.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

We need to ensure you are immune to measles and rubella so that you do not transmit this to patients and we need to ensure we protect you from acquiring it 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. If you are immune to rubella and measles you are considered likely to be immune to mumps and therefore we do not need to screen you for mumps.

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 or rubella will require two vaccines given at one-month intervals. You cannot start placement until you have had at least ONE dose. Further blood tests are not required following vaccination.

Pertussis (whooping cough)

From July 2019, Midwifery, Children's Nursing and Paramedic Science students who have not received a pertussis containing vaccine in the last 5 years must receive a pertussis containing

vaccination booster. These students are likely to work with women in the last month of pregnancy and likely to have close and/ or prolonged clinical contact with severely ill young infants.

Vaccination schedule

Students who do not have evidence of a pertussis containing vaccine in the past five years will require one vaccine. There is no single pertussis vaccine available therefore eligible students will receive a single diphtheria/tetanus/3 or 5 component acellular pertussis (depending on vaccine brand)/inactivated polio vaccine.

Tuberculosis (TB)

We need to ensure you are provided with some protection against TB whilst on your clinical placement. Vaccination does not necessarily make you immune but provides you with some protection; we cannot say how much and for how long, but it is thought to be around fifteen years to a lifetime in some cases.

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 a TB symptom checker form at the clinic. This form will help us to identify which students may require a Quantiferon blood test.

If you do not have a BCG scar we will arrange for you to have either a Mantoux skin test or an IGRA blood test. If you have recently moved to the UK from a country with high rates of TB or have signs and symptoms of TB we will arrange a IGRA blood test to check for infection. The results of the tests will help us decide if you need to have a BCG vaccination.

IMPORTANT: If you need a Mantoux test we will inform you of the date of your two appointments. There will be an appointment for the test and a second for the nurse to check the result of the test 48 hours later and, where appropriate, give you a BCG vaccination. You MUST attend both appointments. Failure to attend Mantoux appointments is one of the main reasons why students miss the deadline for being cleared for placement. We cannot arrange a one-off Mantoux appointment as the vaccine is only available in a multi-dose vial: we arrange Mantoux clinics when lots of students requiring the test can attend on the same date. It is therefore extremely important that you attend the dates that you are given and do not miss them.

Live vaccines

Some students are unable to have live vaccines because of pregnancy and certain types of medication or health conditions. Please ensure you take a list of your medications to your appointment. If you are unable to have a live vaccine (MMR, VZV and BCG) we will review your health clearance to assess whether adjustments can be made so that you can continue on the programme.

Midwifery, Paramedic and Operating Department Practitioner (ODP) students

Students on these courses will be 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. We cannot take the blood test without photographic ID. Failure to have correct ID at the clinic may cause delays to your clearance.

This blood test may be taken before or on the same day as administration of Hepatitis B vaccine but if for some reason a blood sample could not be obtained, there would have to be at delay of at least 3 weeks in testing for hepatitis B surface antigen in order to avoid false positive results.

HIV test

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 is not a barrier to training and we would not notify the University as a matter of routine.

All students may request a HIV test. Simply ask the nurse for a test.

Hepatitis C test

All students may request a Hepatitis C test. Simply ask the nurse for a test.

Meningitis

Rates of Meningitis W are increasing, especially in new university entrants. All students under the age of 25 are eligible for a free MenACWY vaccination. Please contact your GP surgery for vaccination. This is not available through Occupational Health.

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.

Please note we have hundreds of blood test results to process in a short space of time so please be patient. Please do not contact us to check on the progress of your clearance. We will be able to ensure you have the appropriate notification and vaccination before you go on your first clinical placement provided you have attended all of the appointments as required.

Sharps and splash injuries

During your time as a student 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.
- Complete the local Accident/Incident reporting form.
- If the injury happened during office hours (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) then contact OHWorks by calling the number given on page one of this guide. It is important that all injuries are reported immediately so that our nurse can perform a risk assessment over the phone and assess whether all appropriate actions have been carried out.

- If the injury happened outside office hours, or at the weekend, then call us on the next working day to arrange a follow-up appointment.

If the source patient has HIV you may be able to take some medication called PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis). We will advise you whether we think this may be indicated at the time of our risk assessment. There is no post exposure treatment for Hepatitis C.

Following the risk assessment we will arrange for a serum save as soon as possible. This does not test for infection but is used as a comparison if any of the follow up tests are positive for infection. We will then test for HIV at three months and Hepatitis C at six months after the injury. We may also check for presence of Hepatitis B infection. All follow-up blood tests will be undertaken in the OH department at the University.

In the event of a high risk exposure, including those where the source patient is known to have Hepatitis B, C or HIV, you will need to use condoms for sexual activity until all of the blood tests have been completed at 6 months and reported as negative.

Referrals

Some students may be referred to see us by their Course Director during their time at University. The purpose of the consultation is to review the information provided, 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 maternity leave.

We will make recommendations as clinically indicated and we may arrange for you to be seen by the Physician or Psychiatrist if the nurse advisor considers it appropriate.

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 Course Director in the first instance who may then refer you to Occupational Health.

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 adverse 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.

Please note that Occupational Health cannot advise on the location of placement allocation unless for clear health reasons. Social issues such as cost of travel, journey times or childcare issues will need to be discussed with your placement office.

Maintaining wellbeing reviews

During the health questionnaire clearance process, we often identify students with a long-term physical or mental health condition. To ensure that you remain adequately supported during your time at University we may invite you for a confidential consultation. The purpose of this consultation is not to provide treatment but to establish whether there have been any changes in your health status, signpost if needed and to help you maintain your own wellbeing during the course of your

studies. We will notify students if we believe that a review during their first semester would be beneficial.

Consent

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

You are also entitled to see a copy of the report before it is sent to your Course Director or Placement Team. 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 Advisor, Physician or Psychiatrist. You will be required to provide consent to the report within 24 hours. If we do not hear from you within 24 hours we will advise the Course Director 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.

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.

Future appointments

Please be aware that we will inform the University if you fail to attend an occupational health appointment, cancel within 24 hours of an appointment or arrive too late for us to carry out the planned consultation. The University will also be charged for the missed appointment.

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 and voicemail regularly. If we do not hear from you after two attempts to contact you, we will notify the University.

Please ensure that your online 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.

Student Clearance Process

Student required to complete an online health questionnaire via the following link:
www.healthquestionnaire.co.uk/bcu/

If no health conditions or disabilities declared, student is automatically cleared to enrol.

If health condition or disability declared, consultation arranged with OH Advisor, Physician or Psychiatrist to decide on clearance and next steps.

Student completes COVID-19 risk assessment as part of their health questionnaire submission mentioned above.

First Clinic

Student required to attend immunisation and screening appointment to commence course of Hepatitis B vaccinations (if needed) and provide evidence of MMR vaccinations and Varicella (chickenpox) immunity.

If no evidence, then student receives 1st MMR, 1st Hep B, 1st VZV vaccination or has a blood test to check immunity.

Nurse will look for BCG scar. If no scar, either a Mantoux skin test or an IGRA blood test will be arranged (to check tuberculosis status) followed by BCG vaccination.

Students on child facing courses will also have a Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccination.

Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) bloods for students who will perform EPPs, where required.

Please refer to 'Criteria for clearance' on page 3 for more information.

Second clinic

One month later student given second Hepatitis B vaccination.
Any student requiring MMR or Varicella vaccination will also be given.

Cleared for placement

Students who have had all necessary vaccinations will be cleared for placement and sent email confirmation.