

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1. The University is contractually and legally responsible for ensuring students enrolled on health, social care and teacher training courses undergo health screening as part of the entry requirements onto the course. The university also has a responsibility for ensuring that any new health declarations or change to health throughout the duration of study are assessed by Occupational Health through the appropriate process. This ensures that students remain fit to practise for the duration of their course.
2. Although the University holds responsibility, Sheffield Occupational Health Service (SOHS) are contracted to undertake the screening on behalf of the University and so this policy refers to their policies and guidance.
3. Occupational Health screening enables the University to:
 - Confirm a student's fitness to complete the course, including placement. This is in line with [Higher Education Occupational Practitioners](#) (HEOPs) standards of medical fitness required to train as teachers, health care professionals and social care professionals.
 - Indicate where additional support and adjustments are required to ensure completion of placement.
 - Ensure that students on professional health courses meet the [Department of Health \(DoH\) Green Book standards / current guidelines or equivalent evidence-based standards](#).
4. A referral to Occupational Health does not automatically mean that a student is unable to commence or continue their placement. To suspend a student from placement activity, a Risk Assessment must be completed by the Course Leader in conjunction with Student Policy, Casework and Compliance.
5. If the course team are unsure about when it is appropriate to refer to SOHS, then a discussion should be had with Student Policy, Casework and Compliance prior to completing the referral form.
6. The Degree Apprenticeship employer has contractually agreed to vaccinate DA students to the required levels to undertake placement experiences as outlined in the Department of Health Green Book. We are not responsible for providing or covering the cost of vaccinations for these students, however, there may be occasions where the student's employer does not have an established OH provider. Therefore, it may be required for us to sign post these students to a private provider, or to SOHS.
7. If employers have not vaccinated students to the DoH Green Book standard, then DA students will not be able to attend placements on the Universities placement circuit.

SECTION 2 – CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN AN INITIAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT OR REFERRAL SHOULD BE MADE

Assessment of fitness to join the course

8. To ensure compliance with Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, it is mandatory for all students on health, social care, and education courses to engage with Occupational Health screenings in a timely way. All offers on courses are subject to satisfactory health clearance and students will complete an initial Occupational Health Assessment prior to enrolment.
9. Students are expected to complete the initial health assessment accurately and honestly, providing full details of any health condition(s) and medical history.
10. If historic/current health or medical related information is declared, this will be reviewed by appropriately trained medical staff at SOHS, who may contact the student to obtain further information (either in person or via third party specialists) and an assessment will be made on fitness to undertake the course/profession.
11. Whilst awaiting the review any students on professional health courses will not be able to attend pre-course medical appointment to commence vaccinations and will be contacted by Student Policy, Casework and Compliance to explain this and direct students to SOHS as appropriate.
12. If students have not completed the health screening process by the course start date, they may be able to conditionally enrol for a maximum of 4 weeks until the requirements have been met and have been suitably assessed. Failure to meet clearance requirements within 4 weeks will result in withdrawal from the course. Any further application for study at the University will be considered in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy.
13. The following outcomes are communicated to SPPC following initial assessment on entry to the course;
 - **Cleared for the course with no restrictions or adjustments** - No further action is required by the University.
 - **Cleared for the course with recommended restrictions or adjustments** – This information is provided to the Course Leader and/or College Disability Co-ordinator to assess whether the recommendations received are reasonable and would enable the student to meet all course requirements as required by the relevant professional, regulatory, or statutory body. Where appropriate, placement areas are consulted with, and students are risk assessed in line with provider policies.
 - **Not cleared** - Occasionally SOHS will reach the medical opinion that an individual is not cleared as suitable for their chosen course in line with HEOPS guidance and other relevant guidelines and legislation. In this instance SPPC will inform the student of the medical opinion and that they have not met the suitability requirements for the course. If a period of medical stability is suggested, and the duration of this is outlined, a deferred place to join the course the following year will be recommended.
14. Upon successful clearance, students agree via the enrolment task to take responsibility to engage fully with occupational health and comply with any occupational health referral processes for the duration of their course.

Transferring courses within health/social care professional courses

15. If a student transfers to a course with higher clearance requirements (such as Exposure Prone Procedure courses) then Academic Administration will inform Student, Policy, Casework and Compliance (SPCC) of the transfer and SPCC will send the student a health questionnaire.

Change to health during the course

16. Students are expected to notify the University upon re-enrolment of any changes in health status and failure to self-report may lead to action under the Fitness to Practise Regulations.
17. If a student declares a change in health upon re-enrolment, they are advised to speak to a member of the course team to discuss whether any supportive local arrangements can be easily implemented (e.g. change to shift patterns), or whether a referral to SOHS is required. The Student Policy, Casework and Compliance team can provide advice on whether a referral is appropriate.
18. If a student has a change in their health during the academic year, such as a new medical diagnosis or a change in an existing medical condition which is beyond what was declared on enrolment, it is expected that the student provides medical evidence of this to a member of the Course Team where possible to support a condition and/or adjustment. This could be a confirmed medical diagnosis or referral to specialist services.
19. A referral can also be made when there are concerns that students have not maintained the level of health required to continue on a teacher education, health or social care course and/or their health is impacting on their ability to engage with the professional requirements of the course.
20. It is the Course Teams responsibility to complete an OH referral form in liaison with the Student Support Advisor and submit an OH referral to the Student Policy, Casework and Compliance team for processing.
21. **SOHS is not a GP service and does not diagnose conditions** therefore it is expected that the student has already/or is in the process of seeking support prior to referral.
22. To make a medical judgement and ensure a detailed assessment whilst considering the nature of the professional role to which the course leads, SOHS require detailed information about the student's circumstances and specific course requirements. This must be from the perspective of the course team outlining how the student's placement and progression on the course is affected.
23. If a referral is made due to the student having concerns regarding the placement area e.g. location/travel distance, then the student must provide medical evidence or be in the process of seeking support for a diagnosis.
24. If a student provides medical evidence to support a disability, the course team should signpost the student to Disabled Student Support to discuss implementing a Learning Contract if not already in place.

Returning from Break in Study (BIS)

25. Where students take a break in study for health-related reasons and/or if there have been any changes to health during the break in study, students will require an Occupational Health

screening and will require a reassessment prior to returning to study. This is a requirement of re-entry onto the course.

26. It is the responsibility of the Student Support Advisor to complete the OH referral form and submit to Student Policy, Casework and Compliance for processing.

Fitness to Practise

27. If students are referred to be considered under the Fitness Practise Regulations, an outcome of an investigation or Panel may be the requirement of a referral to SOHS for a reassessment. The referring person (normally the Course Leader) will discuss this with this student and complete the OH referral form.

Research Passport Students and Bioscience and Sports Courses

28. Students who elect to undertake a placement or research activity in a healthcare setting may be required to undertake additional checks prior to commencing. These checks may include health screening. Once a student has identified and confirmed their placement / research setting the student should contact the area/department to identify with them any additional requirements they need to complete prior to commencing.

SECTION 3 – CONSENT AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS

29. The referring member of the course team must discuss the reason for referral to SOHS with the student prior to referring. This discussion will include informing the student that they will receive a screening appointment from SOHS, what questions may be asked in the appointment, the possible outcomes, and that failure to attend will mean they are not permitted to commence any placement activities until a re-assessment of health can be carried out by SOHS.
30. If students are unable to attend a scheduled occupational health screening appointment, then they are responsible for cancelling and re-arranging the appointment directly with SOHS. Appointments cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice will be considered as non-attendance.
31. Students are provided three opportunities to attend an occupational health appointment. Failure to attend the third and final arranged appointment will be considered non-engagement under the Student Engagement Policy.

SECTION 4 - OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

Consent to release

32. A report outcome is produced by SOHS following a referral appointment. Students can provide consent for the report to be released immediately following an appointment, or the student can ask to review the outcome before consenting for the report to be released.
33. If a student has not consented to release the report within 5 working days, SOHS will notify the University and SPCC will contact the student and ask for them to contact SOHS to release the report.
34. If consent to release the report is not provided, students will not be permitted to commence any placement activities, and the case will be considered under the Fitness to Practise Regulations.

35. If consent is given, the outcome of a referral will be communicated to the Course Team (full report) and the Placement Team (recommendations only) who will consider and manage the facilitation of the recommended adjustments. If necessary, the student should also be signposted to Disabled Student Support to discuss implementing a Learning Contract if not already in place.

Recommendations and adjustments

36. Although the Placement team cannot disclose the health conditions of students to placement providers, they will endeavour to ensure that students are placed with placement providers who can facilitate the adjustments required. The Placement team may need the student's consent to share more specific information with the placement provider. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to inform/discuss recommendations or adjustments within the report with their placement provider to ensure they receive the required adjustments. This will be communicated to the student by the Course Team in liaison with the Student Support Advisor.

37. If the University or a placement provider cannot put in place recommendations, or adjustments are deemed unreasonable and another placement cannot be sourced, and all efforts to support accessing practice placement have been exhausted, there may be no other option but for the student to withdraw from the course or transfer awards.

38. In accordance with Higher Education Occupational Practitioners (HEOPs) guidance, *'if an adjustment is ineffective, excessively costly or increases risk substantially, then a training institution is not obliged to implement that adjustment. An adjustment which would place patients or service users at substantially increased risk would be self-evidently unreasonable.'*

Not Fit

39. If the report outcome states a student is not fit for the course, the Course Leader and Student Support Advisor discuss options with the student such as taking a break in study, transferring to another course, or withdrawing from the course.

40. If the report outcome states a student is not fit for placement but can carry on with academic study in the current academic year (if applicable), a student cannot re-enrol onto the next academic year until they have been reassessed by OH and been given health clearance. Students will need to take a break in study (if applicable to their circumstances) pending health clearance. Where a BIS is not possible, they will need to withdraw from the course.

41. If the student does not agree to take a break in study or withdraw from the course, then a referral may need to be made under the Fitness to Practise regulations.

Appealing the OH decision

42. To appeal against a medical decision students must follow the appeals guidance found [here](#) within 10 working days of receiving the medical decision.

43. Students must provide the 'Medical outcome appeal request' along with evidence and the grounds for the appeal. If the appeal does not provide any new medical information/supporting documentation the University and Occupational Health can decline an appeal on this basis and this decision will be final. Disagreement with medical judgement cannot itself constitute grounds for appeal. This should be provided directly to:

- Health courses - HWB-professional-issues@shu.ac.uk
- Education courses - professionalchecks@shu.ac.uk

SECTION 5 - VACCINATIONS (HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STUDENTS ONLY)

43. Students must protect service users, colleagues, and themselves by being immunised against serious communicable diseases when vaccines are available and are required demonstrate they have met the [Department of Health \(DoH\) Green Book standards / current guidelines or equivalent evidence-based standards](#).
44. Failure to provide evidence of vaccinations, or refusing vaccines or blood tests, will jeopardise a student's place on the course as the University cannot meet the requirements of the DoH and the immunity requirements of our placement providers.
45. Failure to meet the outlined vaccination requirements 6 weeks prior to the start of placement will mean a student's placement will be delayed. This information will be communicated to the placements team directly by SPCC. This may affect progression on the course as this may result in trailing hours and not meeting the required competencies.

Student, Policy, Casework and Compliance

Approved via HWLS FTP Steering Group and Sheffield Institute of Education

September 2023