Fitness to Practise: a guide for students

This guide explains what to expect in relation to your contact with the Fitness to Practise Committee and gives information about the support available to you.

Fitness to Practise: What does it mean?

Fitness to Practise means having the skills, knowledge, character and health to practise your profession safely and effectively. As you are a student on a programme leading to registration with a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) (e.g. Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) or Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)), you are expected to demonstrate that you will be able to meet the standards expected by your profession.

Developing your skills, knowledge and professional values for safe and effective practise are part of your overall programme of education. You receive feedback and are regularly assessed on these aspects of your Fitness to Practise, both in theory and during your Practice Experiences. However, your Fitness to Practise is not just about your skills and knowledge.

Fitness to Practise also includes issues relating to your conduct & character. This involves anything that you do in your professional or personal life that may impact upon the public - particularly their safety or the trust and confidence that they place in the health professions. Your own health and well-being are another important part of your Fitness to Practise; therefore we have a role in supporting you to maintain sufficient health & well-being to practise safely and effectively. To achieve this, we work in partnership with you and OHWorks.

What issues raise concern about a student’s fitness to practise?

A range of issues may raise concern about Fitness to Practise amongst students. The most common concerns that we deal with as a Fitness to Practise Committee are:

- Health or Disability Concerns
- Cheating or Plagiarising
- Inappropriate use of Social Media sites
Fitness to Practise a guide for students
July 2019

How will the FtP Committee deal with a concern about my Fitness to Practise?

We, the Fitness to Practise Committee, protect the public and support you in the development of your Fitness to Practise by using a staged approach to dealing with any matters of concern. We always start with an informal approach and the majority of concerns are managed at the Informal Stage (Stage One) of our processes.

Our process has three stages (see flowchart in Appendix One):

1. **Informal Stage** (Stage One)

2. **Investigation/Assessment Stage** (Stage Two)

3. **Formal Stage** (Stage Three)

Whilst the ultimate goal of any Fitness to Practise processes is to protect the public, we recognise that you are still learning about the expectations and standards of conduct of your intended profession. Very often our recommendations to you emphasize what you can do to promote your learning and professional development to enhance your conduct and behaviour. This is often the outcome at the Informal Stage of our processes.

Sometimes our processes recommend that there is additional monitoring of your progress. In exceptional circumstances (after the Formal Stage of our process) we may recommend a sanction or recommend to the Board of Studies that you are discontinued from your programme of study.

At all stages of the process, we advise that you seek appropriate support, and ask any questions that you may have at the time. Please also remember the need for confidentiality, and acting honestly in your account of any events. Acting honestly means more than simply answering questions truthfully. It would be dishonest of you to allow the Committee to gain a false impression of a situation even if you did not actually lie to do so. Acting honestly throughout
the Fitness to Practise process demonstrates appropriate professional values and is likely to positively influence the decisions made by the Committee.

The stages of the process are explained in more detail in the following pages.

Our correspondence with you should explain at which stage your case is being considered.

If you have any questions please ask.

Stage One: Informal Stage

All of our processes start with this stage and here we review the information that we receive and decide how best to deal with the concerns raised. Remember that we successfully deal with most concerns at this Informal stage of our processes.

If you have been suspended from your Practice Experience, although we will be notified of the details of this, our first recommendation will be a meeting with your Personal Supervisor and/or Link Lecturer, usually with your practice mentors to explore whether there are processes within the Practice Assessment process (e.g. Action Plan) that can be used.

For all other concerns, we deal with your case individually and take into account the stage of your professional development and the nature of the concern. Usually, this involves coming to an Informal meeting with either the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Fitness to Practise Committee to discuss the matter. We will write to you briefly outlining the nature of the concern so that you are aware of this. This gives you an opportunity to seek help and support before the meeting (See below).

At this Informal meeting we will listen to your explanation of events and decide how to best to deal with the issues raised and how to proceed. In most cases, we suggest guidance and a range of support (e.g. from your Personal Supervisor, Student & Academic Services for support from Student Welfare Advisor, Open Door Team or Disability Services). In some cases, we decide that we need further information in order to make a decision, and you will progress to Stage Two of Fitness to Practise process which is an Investigation or Assessment (see flowchart in Appendix One).
What Help and Support is available at the Informal stage?

It is important that you do not go through this alone, but arrange for someone to help you prepare for, and accompany you to, the Fitness to Practise Committee informal meeting. Remember that help and support is always available to you.

Under University regulations you are entitled to be accompanied by a representative who may be a full-time member of the University or president or full-time officer of the University of York Students’ Union (YUSU). The Advice and Support Centre of YUSU is based in the Student Centre in James College. It gives professional, independent and confidential advice, guidance and information on student academic and welfare issues, assists and represents students at all stages of the Fitness to Practise processes and signposts to University Student Support Services.

- York University Students Union (YUSU) Contact: (01904) 324207 or (01904) 323720, asc@yusu.org or visit in person between 10.00am and 4.30pm.
- Graduate students would access support from the GSA (Graduate Students’ Association) Contact: 01904 322 718 or visit the GSA office located on the 2nd floor in Wentworth College, email advice@yorkgsa.org
- Student Support Hub Contact: (01904) 324140, student-support@york.ac.uk or visit in person between 09.00am – 5.00pm (term time) and 10.00am and 4.00pm (outside term time) in Market Square.

They are likely to want to meet you beforehand, and to discuss the issues with you, and it is vital that they have as much notice as possible.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding the informal meeting your point of contact should be by email to the Fitness to Practise email account: dohs-ftp@york.ac.uk

Stage Two: Investigation/Assessment Stage

At this stage of the process our goal is to gather more information about the concern.

If the concern about your Fitness to Practise is about your health or well-being, this will involve a referral to Occupational Health for assessment. You will be given a copy of the referral, for your
information, to make sure that you are fully aware of the nature of the request being made. The appointment details will be emailed to your University email address. This is a confidential appointment between yourself and the Occupational Health team. The outcome will be reported back to the Fitness to Practise committee with your consent and we will then be able to discuss and plan for any recommended adjustments, support or other follow up to enable you to practise safely (See Appendix One for the possible outcomes of this assessment).

If more information is needed regarding a concern about your conduct & character, we will recommend an Investigation. This is where an Investigating Officer is identified and appointed to examine and explore the concern about your conduct and character in greater detail. The Investigating Officer will be an academic member of the Fitness to Practise Committee who has not been involved in the raising of the concern and does not have a significant relationship with you. The Investigation is carried out as quickly as possible and aims to minimise disruption to your programme of study, however this may not be always possible. You and other relevant people will be interviewed as part of the Investigation. It is very important to maintain confidentiality during the Investigation process and uphold the relevant Code of your PSRB at all times.

It is vitally important that you act honestly at all times when being interviewed by the Investigating Officer. Acting honestly means more than simply answering questions truthfully. It would be dishonest of you to allow the Investigating Officer to gain a false impression of a situation even if you did not actually lie to do so. Acting honestly throughout the Investigation process demonstrates appropriate professional values and is likely to positively influence the decisions made by the Committee.

The purpose of an Investigation is to:

- Identify the exact nature of the concern(s)/issue(s)
- Identify, collate and analyse all relevant information exploring the concern(s)/issue(s)
- Identify whether the information gathered points to a potential risk to public safety, breach of professional standards or impacts upon the reputation of the profession relating to your PSRB.

The Investigation report, along with all of the supporting evidence, will be reviewed fully by the Chair/Deputy Chair of Fitness to Practise. Two other members of the Fitness to Practise Committee will also review the report and from this, appropriate action is decided. We write to you about this and sometimes ask you to attend a meeting with the Chair or Deputy Chair to discuss the outcomes of an Investigation. This gives an opportunity to discuss suggestions for future learning and guidance on your conduct with you.

If it is found that your fitness to practise is likely to be impaired then we will convene a full Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing which is the Formal stage of our processes (Stage Three) (see flowchart in Appendix One).
What Help and Support is available at Stage 2?

For an Occupational Health Assessment:

If you are attending Occupational Health for an Assessment, please see the Occupational Health Leaflet for details of how to access this service and who can support you (See Appendix 2).

For a Stage Two Investigation:

It is important that you do not go through an Investigation alone. It is advisable to arrange for someone to help you prepare for, and accompany you to, any meetings including the interview with the Investigating Officer. Remember that help and support is always available to you.

Under University regulations you are entitled to be accompanied by a representative who may be a full-time member of the University or president or full-time officer of the University of York Students’ Union (YUSU). The Advice and Support Centre of YUSU is based in the Student Centre in James College. It gives professional, independent and confidential advice, guidance and information on student academic and welfare issues, assists and represents students at Fitness to Practise Committees and Investigations and signposts to University Student Support Services.

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They are likely to want to meet you beforehand, and to discuss the issues with you, and it is vital that they have as much notice as possible.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding the Investigation or your Occupational Health Assessment your point of contact should be by email to the Fitness to Practise email account: dohs-ftp@york.ac.uk
Stage Three: Formal Stage

This stage is the Formal stage of the Fitness to Practise process. At this stage concerns about your Fitness to Practise are presented to a Hearing of the Fitness to Practise Committee. The role of the hearing is to consider the evidence received by the Investigating Officer. At this stage the Fitness to Practise Committee hearing has a responsibility to ask you questions to ensure that the concern(s)/issue(s) are explored and examined satisfactorily. It is the role of the Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing to ensure that all evidence is looked at in its entirety, especially when the evidence and information is disputed (see flowchart in Appendix One). The Hearing will determine whether your Fitness to Practise is impaired and, if so, which sanction(s) (if any) are recommended to be applied to your case.

What Help and Support is available at this Formal stage?

It is important that you do not go through this alone, but arrange for someone to help you prepare for, and accompany you to, the Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing. Remember that help and support is always available to you. Under University regulations you are entitled to be accompanied by a representative who may be a full-time member of the University or president or full-time officer of the University of York Students’ Union (YUSU). The Advice and Support Centre of YUSU is based in the Student Centre in James College. It gives professional, independent and confidential advice, guidance and information on student academic and welfare issues, assists and represents students at Fitness to Practise Committees and Investigations & Hearings and signposts to University Student Support Services.

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They are likely to want to meet you, and to discuss the case with you, and it is vital that they have as much notice as possible as they will need time to help prepare your case including any submissions.
If you have any queries or concerns your point of contact should be by email to the Fitness to Practise email account: dohs-ftp@york.ac.uk

What will happen in the run up to the Fitness to Practise Hearing?

Unless already specified in your correspondence from the Fitness to Practise Committee you must continue to attend University and/or your practice placement. One week before the Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing you will receive all of the written evidence which will be considered on the day. It is extremely important that you take time to read these documents and discuss with your representative well in advance. You will also receive a copy of the Department of Health Sciences Fitness to Practise Policy.

The Fitness to Practise Committee will give you a deadline for any additional information pertaining to your case to be received by. Any information received after the given deadline will not be taken into account by the Committee unless in exceptional circumstances and with agreement of the Chair/Deputy and with your full consent. If significant new information is submitted too late to be circulated to everyone involved, the Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing may need to be adjourned so that the new information can be considered.

If you have a disability and need special arrangements please let the Fitness to Practise Committee know well in advance of the meeting (dohs-ftp@york.ac.uk).

Attendance at a Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing is obligatory. If you are ill and not able to attend, you will need to supply a medical certificate to the Fitness to Practise Committee (dohs-ftp@york.ac.uk). If you do not attend without a reasonable explanation, the committee can consider your case in your absence.

What will happen at the Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing?

The Committee will usually convene about 30 minutes prior to commencement to decide on the format and the exact nature of the questions to ask you. These questions will be based upon the information included in the Investigating Officers report. The Committee will be guided and led by the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Fitness to Practise Committee. In the meantime you and your representative will report to the Department of Health Sciences Student Information Services and will be shown to a waiting area. A member of the Fitness to Practise Committee will collect you and your representative and take you both into the hearing venue, where you will be shown to your seats.
The Chair/Deputy of the Fitness to Practise Committee will then introduce the committee members present; most will be academic staff from the Department but there will be a senior nurse or midwife from one of our Practice Partner organisations. The Chair/Deputy Chair will ask you if you have received all of the necessary paperwork before the committee hearing can formally begin. Initially the Investigating Officer will present a summary of their findings outlining any interviews which have taken place and any evidence which has been collected so far. You will then be asked questions by the committee members in turn. Each Committee member will focus on a slightly different area of your case. Remember, Committee members are not trying to ‘catch you out’; rather they are trying to get a better understanding of the facts that led to the situation. You will then be able to make some concluding remarks, giving you an opportunity to tell the Committee anything you think is important to the Hearing. Whoever accompanies you will also be asked if they wish to say anything on your behalf or clarify any points of order. Once the questions are complete you will be asked to leave the room to enable the Committee to consider your case. When the Fitness to Practise Committee has finally reached a decision a member of the Committee will collect you and ask you to return to the room to hear the outcome.

The Chair/Deputy Chair of the Committee will ensure that your welfare is always paramount. If for any reason you are finding it difficult, please remember that you can ask the Chair/Deputy Chair for a short break. If you should become upset or emotional in anyway, please do not be afraid to ask for some time to compose yourself.

You should uphold the relevant Code of your PSRB at all times. It is vitally important that you act honestly at all times, both when being interviewed by the Investigating Officer and when you are answering questions at the Hearing itself. Acting honestly means more than simply answering questions truthfully. It would be dishonest of you to allow the Committee to gain a false impression of a situation even if you did not actually lie to do so. Honesty, trustworthiness, sincerity and candour are all virtues that the Committee will be looking for when they are considering your case.

All members of the Fitness to Practise Committee will ensure that the hearing maintains a neutral stance by respecting the difficulty of your position when appearing at the Hearing. All members of the committee will ensure that their questions are neither confrontational nor oppressive. Remember, the Committee are only trying to get a better understanding of the situation at hand.

What will be the possible Outcomes and Sanctions following the Committee Hearing?

When considering possible sanctions and outcomes, the Fitness to Practise Committee will take into account the stage of your programme to ensure that sanctions are appropriate to your development. The Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing will also take into account the guidance set by your relevant PSRB and the rules, regulations, and ordinances set by the University of York.
If you have raised significant mitigating circumstances during the Fitness to Practise Committee Hearing then these will be taken into consideration when deciding on the most appropriate course of action.

If at the conclusion of the Hearing a unanimous decision cannot be reached by the Fitness to Practise Committee, the opinion of the majority will prevail. If the Committee hearing reaches a hung decision, the Chair/Deputy Chair will decide upon the formal outcome(s) and/or sanction(s).

If you receive a warning or sanction, then it will be explained to you:

- Why you have received the warning or sanction.
- The intended purpose of the warning or sanction.
- The expected duration of the warning or sanction
- Whether or when your fitness to practise will be considered again.

Possible outcomes or sanctions may include the following:

**That you are Fit to Practise and are:**

- permitted to continue on the programme without change
- permitted to continue on the programme in conjunction with provisos determined by the Panel
- permitted to continue with the programme under close supervision
- permitted to continue on the programme but with a formal reprimand or warning placed on your file
- permitted to continue on the programme but with a formal reprimand or warning placed on your file

**That you are not Fit to Practise and:**

- you are required to undertake an occupational health assessment
- your studies are suspended until such time as any undertakings, recommendations or conditions imposed by the Committee have been fully met (normally an occupational health assessment)
- you are required to undertake any other action considered appropriate by the Committee to enable your successful completion of the remainder of the programme
- a recommendation is made to the Chair of the Board of Studies that your programme of study leading to a professional qualification be terminated but that you be permitted to seek admission to an alternative academic qualification
- a recommendation is made to the Chair of the Board of Studies that your programme is terminated and that you are required to withdraw from the University. Subject to the recommendation of a Progression and Award Board, you may be eligible to receive any lower exit award to which you are entitled.
Can I appeal against the outcome of a decision of the Board of Studies?

You have the right to appeal against a recommendation by the Department of Health Sciences Board of Studies to suspend or terminate your programme. A recommendation to terminate your programme is heard by the University of York Special Cases Committee (Special Cases Committee has powers devolved by University Senate to deal with academic misconduct cases, appeals and suspension of studies). You have the right to request that the Special Cases Committee hearing turn into an appeal against the recommendation from the Department of Health Sciences Board of Studies. For further information please see the following web link under Regulation 6 of the University Ordinances & Regulations:

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/aso/ordreg/r6_new.htm#appeals

If, after exhausting the Appeals stage, you feel that the outcome is unreasonable in relation to the evidence, then a review may be requested from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), within 3 months of the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter by the University of York.

Contact details for the Independent Adjudicator are:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator
Third Floor Kings Reach
38-50 Kings Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 3AA

Information may also be obtained directly from the OIA at: http://www.oiahe.org.uk
Appendix 1 FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE PROCESS

Please note that the above outlines typical processes, however as issues of Fitness to Practise are investigated and dealt with on a case by case basis, variations in this process may be applied to accommodate specific issues and requirements.

INFORMAL STAGE (Stage 1)

- Issue of health or conduct considered by the Chair/Deputy Chair
- No further action
- Student advised to access Student Support services i.e. Open Door, YUSU, Disability support
- Student attends an informal meeting with Chair/Deputy Chair

INVESTIGATION STAGE (Stage 2)

- No further action
- Investigation is required (see investigation flowchart)
- Suspension from practice initiated by the placement provider if appropriate (see policy for process)
- Occupational Health report received
- Occupational Health referral for Assessment

- No further action
- Investigation is required (see investigation flowchart)
- Occupational Health referral
- Occupational Health report received
- Case conference
- OH support plan
- Additional monitoring, supervision or appraisal
- Progress to a Fitness to Practise Hearing

FORMAL STAGE (Stage 3)

- No further action, no sanctions placed on the student record
- Student continues on their programme with additional monitoring, supervision or appraisal
- Student continues on their programme with a formal warning issued by the Chair/Deputy of Fitness to Practise Committee and placed on the student’s file
- Recommendation to Board of Studies for Discontinuation
A Guide to Immunisation, Screening & Health Clearance

Prepared by OHWorks Ltd
March 2019
Introduction

OHWorks Ltd is an independent Occupational Health (OH) service. We are processing your health clearance to ensure you are fit to enroll 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 9am to 5pm. You can contact us on:

Email: york@ohworks.co.uk
Tel: 01233 345 482

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 dates, Chicken Pox history or vaccination, proof of BCG vaccination and also proof of Hepatitis B if you have already had this.

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

Data Protection

Records are retained electronically in accordance with best practice and Data Protection Regulations and will not be shown, nor their contents be shared, with anyone outside of OHWorks – including University Placement Staff, Personal supervisors, Programme Lead 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 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.
Confidentiality

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 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

By now you should have been invited to complete an online health questionnaire. If you have not done so, please 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 have a duty to provide all, 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 to enroll 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 your questionnaire as you may have declared a health condition that we would like to follow up. We need to ensure that you will be well enough to undertake your course and that the appropriate support and/or adjustments are put in place for you.

Where needed, we will contact you to arrange a health interview with an OH nurse advisor. This may be by telephone or at a clinic. 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 we cannot make modifications to enable you to safely undertake your clinical placement and meet the core competencies of the course.

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.
Immunisations and blood screening

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 allow you to undertake a clinical placement without appropriate vaccinations and therefore the University will 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 print out 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 immunity to Hepatitis B, Measles, Rubella, Varicella and Tuberculosis (TB), please forward a copy of your occupational health certificate to us.

Criteria for clearance

We will issue a fitness certificate to you and the University once you have met the following conditions:

- Health questionnaire clearance
- At least two doses 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
- Exposure Prone Procedure (EPP) screening (where required)

Without the fitness certificate, you will not be able to start your 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.

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

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

It takes only a microscopic amount of blood to transmit the virus. 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 as it is very infectious – there is up to a 30% chance of acquiring the virus from an infected carrier if you become exposed. It is therefore essential that all healthcare workers be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

**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. In that same time period, the incidence of acute Hepatitis B declined by about 82%.

Serious side effects include a severe allergic reaction within a few minutes of receiving the vaccination, but such occurrences are extremely rare. As an occupational health provider, we have never had an individual have a severe reaction and we administer over 10,000 Hepatitis B vaccinations each year.
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. 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.

You cannot start placement until you have had at least TWO doses. 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 from your GP that you have had chickenpox OR a copy of a blood test result demonstrating you have immunity OR evidence of vaccination. Students born outside of the UK 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.

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 blood test for TB infection.

If you do not have a BCG scar we will arrange for you to have a Mantoux skin test or a blood test if you have recently arrived from a country with high rates of TB. 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 to 72 hours later and, where appropriate, give you a BCG vaccination. You MUST attend both appointments. Failure to attend Mantoux appointments is probably the main reason why students miss the deadline for being cleared for placement. We will NOT arrange a one-off Mantoux appointment: we arrange Mantoux clinics when lots of students requiring the test can attend on the same date. It is therefore important that you attend on the dates you are given.

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, we will review your health clearance to assess whether adjustments can be made so that you can continue on the programme.

Midwifery students

Midwifery students 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.

Please note we have hundreds of blood test results to process so it is likely to take us several weeks to contact you if needed. Please do not contact us to check on the progress of your clearance. We will, however, ensure you have the appropriate notification and vaccination before you go on your first clinical placement.

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.

Sharps and splash injuries
During your time as a student you may sustain an accidental splash, bite 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.

• **Attend the nearest Emergency Department/ minor injuries unit where you will have a blood test**

• 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. Initial blood tests will be performed in the nearest ED but 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 Fitness to Practise 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 maternity leave.

We will make recommendations where required and we may arrange for you to be seen by the Physician or Psychiatrist if the nurse advisor considers it to be 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 Personal Supervisor in the first instance, who may then suggest a referral to Fitness to Practise Core Committee for an assessment at Occupational Health.

**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 confidential review meetings. The purpose of this appointment is not to provide treatment but to establish whether there have been any changes in your health status and to help you maintain your own wellbeing during the course of your studies. We will notify any students if we believe that they may need a review during their first term.

**Consent**

You will be asked to provide your consent for any reports sent to the Fitness to Practise Core Committee. 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 the Fitness to Practise Core Committee. 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 Fitness to Practise Core Committee 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.

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

Appointments will either be face to face on campus or via telephone or digital e.g. FaceTime. This are held every month in the Department of Health Sciences and where possible these have been arranged to accommodate your timetable so you can attend. We often send a text reminder prior to your appointment.

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

The Department of Health Sciences has a policy in place that states that the cost of missed appointments will be passed onto students who do not attend.

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.