

TITLE

FITNESS TO PRACTICE: STUDENT PLACEMENTSSCOPE

Provincial

DOCUMENT

1165

APPROVAL LEVEL

Vice President, Human Resources
Vice President, Quality and Chief Medical Officer
Vice President, Collaborative Practice, Nursing, and Health Professions

SPONSOR

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Student Engagement and Employment, Talent Acquisition

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Employee and Associate Relationships

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Not Applicable

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Not Applicable

NOTE: The first appearance of terms in bold in the body of this document (except titles) are defined terms – please refer to the Definitions section.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the information in this guideline, please contact the Policy & Forms Department at policy@albertahealthservices.ca. The Policy & Forms website is the official source of current approved policies, procedures, directives, and practice support documents.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide safe patient care.
- To minimize health and safety risks to Alberta Health Services' (AHS) patients and staff, and the **educational institution's students and instructors** while they are engaged in **placements**.
- To facilitate compliance with the **Student Placement Agreement** between AHS and the applicable educational institution in relation to student and instructor **fitness to practice**.
- To prevent, minimize, and/or manage disruptions to the education of students who are preparing for or engaged in placements within AHS facilities.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this guideline is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary). This guideline does not limit any legal rights to which you may otherwise be entitled.

This guideline applies to all clinical and non-clinical students and instructors engaged in student placements, supported by a Student Placement Agreement with AHS, but does not apply to post graduate medical residents, fellows, or any other student who receives a wage or salary directly from AHS.

GUIDELINE ELEMENTS

1. Guiding Principles

- 1.1 AHS and educational institutions are committed to providing quality educational opportunities for students from a wide range of health care disciplines.
- 1.2 All stakeholders value the student placement experience and will utilize a collaborative, cooperative, and collegial approach to facilitate the diversity and large volume of placement requests.
- 1.3 A coordinated approach is required in order to facilitate placement requests. The responsibility for determining academic requirements of the student placement primarily rests with the educational institution and the student/instructor.
- 1.4 It is the position of AHS that the primary responsibility for the student **accommodation** rests with the educational institution.
- 1.5 AHS will work with the educational institution to identify supports required and any associated costs for accommodations on a case by case basis. It is the position of AHS that any costs associated with a student or instructor's accommodation are the responsibility of the educational institution.

2. Responsibilities of Alberta Health Services

- 2.1 When approached by an educational institution in relation to a fitness to practice request to implement specific practice restrictions, accommodations and any measures recommended to manage or mitigate risks to patient, staff, student, or instructor safety, AHS will assist by:
 - a) providing information regarding the work environment of the placement such as the *Hazard Identification, Assessment, and Control Worksheet*; job descriptions; *Job Demands Analysis*; recommended immunizations as outlined in the *AHS Standard for Immunization of Post-secondary Students* and the *Alberta Health Act*, or other information to assist as necessary;
 - b) providing Workplace Health and Safety compliance information regarding the placement occupation;
 - c) identifying any **bona fide occupational requirements** of the position of the placement that would or may inhibit the placement;

- d) identifying any safety risks to the student, instructor, AHS patients, and AHS staff, that would or may inhibit the placement;
 - e) collaborating with the educational institution to determine if any necessary specific practice restrictions, accommodations, or measures recommended to manage or mitigate risk can be arranged within the AHS placement practice education work environment;
 - f) informing the educational institution of any additional costs incurred as a result of a student placement pursuant to this guideline; and
 - g) making all effort to apply accommodations determined as reasonable and acceptable by both the educational institution and AHS as effectively and efficiently as possible. AHS cannot be held responsible for delays that could impact student placements.
- 2.2 Where a student or instructor becomes unfit to practice during the course of a placement, AHS will:
- a) determine if there is an immediate need to remove the individual from the placement to eliminate risks to the student, instructor, patient, and/or AHS staff or property; and
 - b) contact the educational institution forthwith to initiate discussions related to the student's or instructor's fitness to practice.
- 2.3 AHS will retain all written communications sent and received and decisions made regarding accommodation requests in accordance with the AHS *Records Management Policy*.
- 2.4 Managers requiring support for an accommodation request will need to contact student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca.

3. Guidelines for Educational Institutions

- 3.1 Educational institutions establish a process to advise students and/or instructors of the requirement to maintain fitness to practice throughout the length of a placement within AHS facilities.
- 3.2 A student's or instructor's fitness must be appropriate for the AHS environment in which they are placed and having regard to:
- a) the student's or instructor's specific condition;
 - b) bona fide occupational requirements;
 - c) the placement environment;
 - d) student, instructor, patient, or AHS staff safety; and

- e) academic requirements of the placement and academic program.
- 3.3 Upon a student or instructor's disclosure to the educational institution or AHS of a **disability** or other factor related to the student's or instructor's health that requires accommodation, the educational institution is responsible for determining whether a **fitness to practice occupational health assessment** must be completed.
- 3.4 The educational institution is responsible for any costs incurred in completing a fitness to practice occupational health assessment.
- 3.5 Fitness to practice occupational health assessments will be conducted having regard to the student's or instructor's specific condition, academic requirements, and the specific AHS environment in which the student's or instructor's placement is or will be occurring. If a student's or instructor's condition changes over the course of the academic program or placement, a re-assessment may be deemed necessary by the educational institution.
- 3.6 The educational institution will determine the method of completing the fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment having regard to all relevant circumstances. A fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment can be completed by the most appropriate regulated health care professional to assess the identified risks and abilities of the student or instructor. Examples include:
- a) physicians and/or occupational health physicians;
 - b) nurse practitioners;
 - c) occupational therapists, physiotherapists;
 - d) public health nurses, when specific to immunizations;
 - e) an independent agency contracted by the educational institution (occupational health professional);
 - f) psychologists or mental health professionals; and/or
 - g) the educational institution (e.g. disability or accommodation services).
- 3.7 Where a student or instructor becomes unfit to practice during a placement, AHS and/or the educational institution may remove the individual from the placement to eliminate risk in accordance with the *Student Placement Agreement* (Article 2.3 (c, d)). The student or instructor may be required to obtain a fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment prior to return to the placement.
- 3.8 Upon completion of a fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment, it is the responsibility of the educational institution to communicate

in writing to their **AHS representative**, with as much notice as possible prior to the placement:

- a) that a fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment has been completed;
- b) any specific practice restrictions, limitations, and accommodations; and
- c) any measures recommended to manage or mitigate risk to patient, staff, student, or instructor safety required for the student or instructor to successfully complete the placement.

3.9 The educational institution shall obtain the necessary consent from a student or instructor before disclosing confidential health information to AHS. Failure to provide evidence of this consent when required by AHS may result in AHS refusing a placement for the student or instructor.

3.10 Upon review of the fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment and confirmation of a need for an accommodation, placement restrictions or measures to manage or mitigate risk, the educational institution will engage with AHS to:

- a) determine if a student can successfully complete the student placement and meet the academic requirements based on available work environment details and acceptable accommodations identified by AHS;
- b) apply specific practice restrictions, accommodations, or measures recommended to manage or mitigate risk where possible; and
- c) meet and work with the student or instructor who requested the accommodation to further discuss any alternate accommodations identified by AHS.

3.11 The educational institution shall retain records of the fitness to practice occupational health assessment or re-assessment, review, and final recommendations completed for the longer of the:

- a) time required by law;
- b) time required by the participant's record retention policy; or
- c) *Student Placement Agreement* (Articles 3 and 7).

4. **Dispute Resolution:**

4.1 When an agreement cannot be reached, with respect to any matter set out in this guideline, AHS or the educational institution will invoke the Dispute Resolution processes identified in the *Student Placement Agreement* (Article 2.6).

DEFINITIONS

Accommodation means making changes to certain rules, standards, policies, workplace cultures, and physical environments to ensure that they don't have a negative effect on a person because of the person's mental or physical disability, religion, gender, or any other protected ground (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2013). This may include, but is not limited to, changes to duties, job modifications, alternate full time employment (FTE), necessary to allow a student to participate meaningfully in a placement.

AHS representative means, for the purposes of this document only, the person designated to work collaboratively with the educational institution and communicate regularly throughout the fitness to practice discussions. Student.placements@albertahealthservices.ca will provide the name of the representative for each discipline when the need arises.

Bona Fide Occupational Requirement means a standard or rule that is reasonably necessary to carry out the legitimate functions of a specific position. For a standard to be considered a bona fide occupational requirement by an organization, the organization has to establish that any changes to the standard to accommodate an individual would create an **undue hardship**.

Disability means:

- a) any degree of physical disability, deformity, malformation, or disfigurement that is caused by injury, birth defect, or illness including, but not limited to, epilepsy; paralysis; amputation; lack of physical coordination; visual, hearing, and speech impediments; and physical reliance on a guide dog, wheelchair, or other remedial appliance or device; or
- b) any mental disorder, developmental disorder, or learning disorder regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder.

Educational institution means, for purposes of this document only, any post-secondary educational institution offering an educational program that requires a placement within Alberta Health Services owned and operated facilities or an organization representing a student or instructor within a placement setting.

Fitness to practice means the physical, mental, and emotional capacity to practice safely in accordance with the student placement. The student and instructor must present and maintain fitness to practice throughout the term of the student placement.

Fitness to practice occupational health assessment or reassessment is an assessment undertaken by a qualified health care professional to determine a student's or instructor's physical limitations and restrictions and need for accommodation based on the student's or instructor's specific condition and in relation to bona fide occupational requirements; the placement environment; student, instructor, patient, or AHS staff safety; and academic requirements of the placement.

Instructor means one or more instructors participating in the placement to include those engaged by and under the employment or direction of the educational institution to provide services for the educational institution for students registered in the educational program.

Placement means the practicum placement of a student with AHS for the purpose of fulfilling the practical component of the educational institution’s program.

Student means one or more students registered in the educational institution’s program participating in a placement and excludes post graduate medical residents, fellows, or any other student who receives a wage or salary directly from AHS.

Student Placement Agreement means the agreement, all schedules attached to the agreement, and all written amendments related to the agreement signed by both the educational institution and AHS related to the placement of students and instructors within AHS sites/facilities for the purpose of fulfilling the practical component of an educational program.

Undue hardship means excessive or onerous conditions placed on an organization’s operation as a result of an accommodation. Undue hardship is determined by reviewing financial costs, size and resources of the organization (ability to absorb the cost of modifying equipment and/or offer a range of accommodation options), disruption of operations, and substantial interference with the rights of other employees, interchangeability of work force and facilities, and health and safety concerns.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
 - *Managing Students Involved in Placements During a Communicable Disease Outbreak, Epidemic, or Pandemic Guideline (#1158-01)*
 - *Records Management Policy (#1133)*
 - *Workplace Accommodation Policy (#1156)*
- Alberta Health Services Resources:
 - *Job Demands Analysis*
 - *Hazard Identification, Assessment, and Control Worksheet*
 - *Standard for Immunization of Post-secondary Students*
 - *Student Placement Agreements*
 - *WHS Compliance Information – Risk Assessments*
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
 - *Alberta Health Act*
 - *Alberta Human Rights Act*
 - *Protected Areas and Grounds under the Human Rights Act Information Sheet* (Alberta Human Rights Commission)

VERSION HISTORY

Date	Action Taken
September 2, 2015	Initial Approval/Effective
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