

Coronavirus (Covid-19) update for medical schools

This update provides you with the latest advice on common questions we've been asked about coronavirus, and our role as regulator of undergraduate medical education.

[GOV.UK](#) is the official site for the latest information on the outbreak. The advice is updated regularly by the UK government and includes [information for the public](#) and [guidance for doctors](#).

The [NHS](#) also has more information about how coronavirus is spread. It answers [common questions about the virus](#) and provides information about the [111 service](#) for those who need specific advice.

How we will regulate

We have published a [joint statement with other statutory health and care regulators](#) in the UK to set out how we will all carry out our roles as professional regulators should coronavirus spread further. It recognises the vital role that health and care professionals will play in an outbreak or pandemic and acknowledges the anxiety or concern that people may be feeling in the current situation.

While safe care is the first concern of registered health professionals, in highly challenging circumstances they may need to depart from established procedures in order to care for patients and people. Our regulatory standards are designed to be flexible and to provide a framework for decision-making in a wide range of situations.

The statement also reiterates that where a concern is raised about a registered professional, it will always be considered on the specific facts of the case, taking into account the situation in which the professional is working and any protocols in place at the time.

Patient safety, and the health of students and staff

The health of patients, and patient safety is the first priority. Medical students, staff and others must manage their own health. That means not attending teaching sessions or assessments when sick, and self-isolating if required to do so. This is obviously particularly important when staff and students are in a clinical environment.

We are aware that the health service and clinical environments are being put under significant pressures. We urge medical schools to work with their local education providers to make contingency arrangements for medical students if necessary.

Medical students and staff health

If medical students or staff are on placement or working in clinical environments, and have pre-existing health conditions that place them at increased risk of infection, they should discuss this with their medical school or local education provider.

Medical schools, employers and contracting bodies should take all necessary steps to make sure that those who are learning or working in clinical environments are suitably equipped (for example, with protective clothing) and have the right information to minimise the risk of transmission.

Final year students

We understand the current situation brings significant challenges to teaching and assessment. We recognise that students may not be able to receive clinical teaching and assessments in clinical locations; and that teachers, other staff and students may be off sick or self-isolating. Where possible, we'd ask medical schools to:

- prioritise the teaching and assessment of final year students
- work with local partners to make appropriate contingency arrangements
- document any adjustments they make from the course and planned assessments.

Provisional registration

At this stage we don't have any plans to change our usual process for provisional registration of final year students. We expect to contact and register them in the normal way.

It's also important to say that we're not currently planning to register students early, although this could change *in extremis*. If this did happen, we'd provide detailed advice and guidance to medical schools and students.

We understand that medical schools may have to make adjustments to final year assessments. Legally, the decision to graduate a student is a matter for the university, but we'll continue to work with medical schools to ensure that final year students can graduate and receive provisional registration in time to start work in August.

Volunteering in our health services

If the outbreak worsens and an emergency is declared, it may be possible for final year medical students to volunteer in the NHS, if they're willing and able to do so.

They may be able to help carry out duties that don't require registration. For example acting as healthcare assistants, and supporting others in the workforce, at a time when there could be significant levels of absence.

Such matters should be arranged locally, but these students must be supervised to be safe, act within their competence and **must not undertake any duties of a doctor**. The safety of patients and students must be the first priority.

Our emergency powers

In an emergency the Secretary of State for Health can activate Section 18a of the Medical Act (1983) and ask us to grant temporary registration to certain groups of appropriate people, to supplement doctor numbers, and provide cover in a range of roles.

If this happens, medical students and Foundation year one doctors wouldn't be the first group we'd grant temporary registration to.

Our focus would be on fully qualified and experienced doctors of good standing, who have recently relinquished their registration or licence to practice.

We know that some medical students and trainees may have questions or concerns about the current situation. Please be assured that we will update you if anything changes.

Keeping you up to date

This is a fast changing and uncertain situation for all of us. We'll continue to work with the Medical Schools Council, to provide clear advice for medical schools and students. We're also in touch with colleagues across the postgraduate community to provide information and advice for trainees.

Our website will also be regularly updated with the latest information and guidance at www.gmc-uk.org