

Medical Student FAQs

I am worried that, because of personal exposure or travel or illness, I may be placing patients at risk. What should I do?

Firstly, all such students should call NHS 111 and follow their advice. Do not attend the GP or A&E without phoning NHS 111. If advised to self-isolate you should inform the Centre for Medical Education (CME) Student Support Officer (p.lewis@qub.ac.uk), your clinical supervisor and module lead. Also copy in coronavirus-guidance@qub.ac.uk. If advised that you do not need to be tested or to self-isolate, you should return to the course as soon as you are well and complete the normal self-certification process.

If I am on clinical placement and need to self-isolate because of (a) coming into contact with someone who is suspected of having COVID-19 (b) recent travel to a [Category 1](#) country (c) illness following return from a [Category 2](#) country, who do I need to contact?

Firstly, all such students should call NHS 111 and follow their advice. Do not attend the GP or A&E without phoning NHS 111. If advised to self-isolate you should inform the CME Student Support Officer (p.lewis@qub.ac.uk), your clinical supervisor and module lead. Also copy in coronavirus-guidance@qub.ac.uk

Will students with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or who are immunocompromised be exposed to patients with COVID-19 on the ward?

All students, including those with any of these conditions, will not be directly involved in the care of someone with suspected or proven COVID-19.

Will I receive face fit testing for masks and training to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

Students will not be directly involved in the care of someone with suspected or proven COVID-19, and will not be required to work in an area where they need to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or a mask. As part of the normal Assistantship programme, final year students are normally fit tested for masks. However, given the pressure on the Trusts to fit test all staff, this may not occur this year.

Will “clinical” medical students be drafted in to help deliver care and support trusts? Do I have to be involved in the care of someone with suspected COVID-19?

The nature of the medical course is that students are increasingly involved in patient care, under supervision, as the course progresses. For example, final year Assistantship students will, under supervision, clerk patients, take blood, and check results. The medical school will continue to closely monitor the impact of COVID-19 on clinical placement sites, and ensure that students will only be placed where they are adequately supervised. Students will not be directly involved in the care of someone with suspected or proven COVID-19.

Will medical students be withdrawn from placement areas where there are positive COVID-19 cases?

Students should remain on their programme whenever possible. Students will not be directly involved in the care of someone with suspected or proven COVID-19. Where the situation is judged to be safe and appropriate, students may participate in the giving of care as long as an appropriate level of supervision of training is maintained. Should a clinical placement be considered unsuitable

or unsafe, students will be removed from placement or reallocated to another area until it is considered safe for them to return.

If medical students need to self-isolate or are quarantined, will they be able to meet the attendance requirements of the course? What happens if they have to miss an exam?

The medical school will apply the normal attendance procedures in the first instance for a 2 week absence. The 75% attendance rule normally applies to clinical placements. Students should apply for exceptional circumstances if they need to miss examinations. There is remedial time and repeat examinations available for students in all years to make up for time they have missed through no fault of their own. For example (a) for final years, this is after the Assistantship period and before the final Pathway Review Examination Board in June (b) if a 4th year missed the OSCE, they would take it in August. The medical school will ensure that no student is academically disadvantaged as a result of self-isolation.

In some jurisdictions, medical students have been withdrawn from clinical placement all together. Is QUB considering such action? Will students be able to progress?

As it stands, there are no plans to withdraw medical students from clinical placement in Northern Ireland or anywhere else in the UK. The medical school is liaising with colleagues in the Public Health Agency and Medical Schools Council and will continue to monitor the situation closely. If, in the (unlikely) event that students were withdrawn from clinical placement for an extensive period of time, the medical school will, through amendment to regulations or alternative means, work to ensure that no student is academically disadvantaged.

Some medical schools have altered clinical examinations and OSCEs (bringing them forward, removing real patients, cancelling or postponing them) because of concerns about transmission of COVID-19 or difficulty in recruiting simulated patients or examiners. Is QUB planning such action? What will happen if year 1-4 OSCEs cannot go ahead in May and June? What about final year students resitting their OSCE?

As it stands, QUB is not planning to introduce such measures. We will continue to monitor the clinical situation carefully and take advice from colleagues in the Public Health Agency and elsewhere. If required to make changes to exam timetables or format, students will be informed as soon as possible. We will ensure that any modified exams are fair. All year 1-4 students are normally provided with two attempts at an OSCE in an academic year. Please note that this may require the use of the timetabled remedial period in August. We will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that final year students sitting the second diet of clinical assessments are provided with appropriate examinations in time to graduate, register with the GMC and begin work as a Foundation doctor in August 2020.

What about elective students? Should they change their plans?

Based on Foreign & Commonwealth Office guidance, students are not permitted to complete electives in [Category 1](#) countries. Students affected by this should contact electivesmed@qub.ac.uk for advice on arranging alternative electives and travel insurance. As the list of category 1 and 2 countries is changing rapidly, elective students are advised to review the FCO advice frequently. Students currently booked for an elective in a category 2 country may wish to consider changing their plans to avoid last-minute disruption.

Public Health England has mandated that any healthcare worker (including students) that has been *in any type of healthcare setting* in one of the listed [category 2](#) countries should be excluded from

the clinical workplace for a minimum of 14 days even if asymptomatic. Whilst this advice does not yet apply to Northern Ireland, it is likely that it will do soon. Therefore, students should ensure that their clinical placement in an elective period in a category 2 country is completed more than 2 weeks before the beginning of final year in September.

Should I change my upcoming travel plans over the next few months?

Travel to a category 1 country is not permitted. We currently advise that you do not plan to travel to category 2 areas over the next few months or Easter break as this may impact on your ability to attend the programme on return to Northern Ireland. This is a personal decision; please consider the potential disruption to your learning through becoming unwell or being required to be quarantined or to self-isolate.

Students with significant pre-existing medical conditions or taking medications that may impair their immune function should seek medical advice to determine whether they would be at significantly increased risk of a more severe illness were they to encounter COVID-19 and factor this in their decision about travel.