

Advice and Guidance to Student Paramedics – Covid-19

One of the key aims of the College of Paramedics is to provide advice to members and student members alike, and be a source of information and guidance. Currently, life is changing daily, even hourly and at times it feels like it is difficult to know where to turn to get accurate, timely advice.

The 'Joint statement on how we will support and enable the student allied health professional workforce to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak', issued on the 3rd April has guided our message and advice to you now.

<https://councilofdeans.org.uk/2020/04/joint-statement-on-how-we-will-support-and-enable-the-student-allied-health-professional-workforce-to-respond-to-covid-19/>

The College is working hard, releasing statements, engaging with stakeholders and lobbying Government to improve the level and adequacy of Personal Protective Equipment for all healthcare staff. The College is also supporting members' wellbeing through publishing guidance and signposting to a range of online resources.

This is an incredibly difficult time for the NHS and those amazing people working within it, to save the lives of those infected with the corona virus, and to protect and care for all those that aren't suffering the disease.

Student paramedics now have a choice to make. Do you wish to volunteer to undertake work in an appropriate role (related to your current capability/scope of practice) or would you prefer to stay home and complete your studies?

- It is important that you weigh up all the risks involved with working on the frontline.
- You do not have to explain your choice or justify your decision.
- Do not bow to peer pressure.
- This is a personal decision unique to you and your circumstances.
- Try not to feel like you are letting people down.
- These are not normal circumstances.
- You can change your mind.

Your role during Covid-19

As clinical placements have been paused, 1st year students should be continuing with their university programme online. This means you will focus on the academic and theoretical part of your education and provision will be made to enable clinical hours to be achieved during year two and year three. If you have the spare time you could put yourself forward to support the NHS in a suitable non-clinical non-patient facing role.

Students who are in their second year of their BSc (3rd year in Scotland), first year of an MSc, or students who are in their final year and have not yet completed their clinical placements will be invited to opt into a revised programme structure where they work in a paid support worker role which will be remunerated (indicative Agenda for Change (AfC) band 3). These roles may be able to be used to support achievement of required clinical placement time or at least a percentage of this; Universities will determine if this is the case. This is intended to maintain learning and progression whilst recognising the reduced capacity currently within the health and care system to support and facilitate clinical placements.

All final year student paramedics who have completed their clinical placements and been approved by their Higher Education Institution (HEI) as ready for practice have been automatically registered on a new Temporary Register by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). These temporary registered students are invited to join the workforce as paramedics (indicative AfC band 5).

It is worth pointing out that you will still be a student and you should endeavour to maintain studies in between employed work so that you are in the best situation to finish any assessments and apply to the permanent HCPC register once the imminent threat of COVID-19 has subsided and/or the temporary register is disbanded.

The HCPC and the Temporary Register

The HCPC have recently released a draft document 'Statement of Approach to Fitness to Practise During Covid-19', stating *"Any concern we receive about a registrant on the COVID-19 temporary or student registers may be taken into account should that registrant apply for permanent registration with the HCPC in future"*. This is something to seriously consider before you take on the role and responsibilities of a temporary registered paramedic. It is also worth pointing out that the level of clinical supervision or supportive practice education may vary considerably dependent upon employer. This, in the context of potentially difficult clinical and ethical decisions could be very challenging for some.

Student membership

Student paramedics who are members of the College have the benefit of Fitness to Practise advice and representation should they encounter any difficulty in obtaining permanent registration, on the basis of any fitness to practise concerns raised whilst they were a student.

Student paramedics who are members of the College also receive the regular Paramedic INSIGHT magazine and have access to over 150 presentations on the CPD Hub to help with ongoing learning and continual professional development.

Your ongoing studies

It is vital that you continue your studies. The College of Paramedics is of the opinion that no student should undertake a full-time contract of employment at this challenging time.

The student nurses are undertaking a clinical/academic split, and so should student paramedics. We advise that it should be no more than 60% of your time in a clinical or support role and at least 40% of your time with paramedic science studies. This should include support for your wellbeing by your University, including access to counselling or psychological support. This is fully in line with other AHPs and agreed with Health Education England and the Department of Health.

This journey will be challenging, and we should consider the long haul and the need for resilience. Please do not be pressurised into full-time clinical work and stopping your studies. We need you safe and well to progress to the next academic year and/or progress to graduation and the full paramedic register.

If you are not a member of the College of Paramedics, now is the time for you to consider the worth of that. If you need any further help, advice or guidance, we are ready to assist you. The College fully supports all its members and is happy to talk to you one to one on the telephone or by email.

The College of Paramedics

6th April 2020

For membership and general enquiries please call 07852 371197