Practice Based Learning Guidance for Higher Education Institutions (Updated April 2022)

The CSP has drawn together advice for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that will help teams manage the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Our intention is to create clear guidance that complements that issued by Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) but that also seeks to address issues specific to professional body expectations of accredited programmes.

The advice and guidance we give below should work for most programmes. However, given the differences in delivery that exists across programmes, each team will need to consider the implications for themselves locally for whatever plans they choose to implement. In some instances, this will mean thinking through plans for individual student circumstances.

We will continue to communicate and offer bespoke advice directly with teams via email– specifically, we will help teams think through and implement their contingency plans, which will need to cover university teaching and placements.

Programme teams are advised to check here for updates, or alternatively speak directly with the *Workforce & Education team* at *education@csp.org.uk*.

The issues that we are all grappling with are complex and often inter-linked. The guidance has therefore needed to be necessarily detailed.

However, the key issues discussed within the guidance can be summarised as follows:
1. Teams will need to continue to be pragmatic and think creatively
2. CSP continues to support the move to online learning where possible using robust and engaging teaching and learning strategies and inclusive assessment.
3. CSP continue to support teams to continue to take a flexible approach to programme management delivery during COVID 19 pandemic to ensure students have met SOPs and adequate practice based learning, ensuring that students are not disadvantaged long-term by the need to manage the current pandemic.
4. Placements – CSP continues to support an outcomes based approach. Teams will need to be pragmatic but they must ensure appropriate measures are in place should students not be able to complete their normal placement profile.
5. CSP continues to take a flexible approach to programme management delivery as we come out of the COVID 19 pandemic also. We would particularly encourage teams to work regionally with regards to placements, considering innovative models including multiples supervision models, non-patient facing placements and role –emerging placements.

Key guidance
Creative thinking
Our key advice is for teams to use their professional judgment on what will work locally to balance student welfare and patient safety, while making sure final year students are able to graduate as close to their normal exit point as possible.

HCPC guidance makes a similar point. Like them, we are not requiring teams to formally request changes to their programme. We are however, offering teams the opportunity to discuss their plans either with the Workforce and Education team here at the CSP or with their CSP education rep should they wish to problem solve.

Placement hours – all students

In order for students to progress through their programmes, the CSP recommends that programme teams adopt an outcomes-based approach to the expectation that a minimum of 1000 hours of practice is achieved.

However, it is also important to recognise that placements maybe withdrawn by Trusts and services due to clinicians and managers deciding to reduce pressure. This is placing universities in an impossible situation if there is no flexibility around this normal requirement.

For programmes where students have almost completed their placement profile

Most teams have a contingency built into their hours, operating at around 1050 hours. Because this buffer exists, it would be reasonable for these programmes to allow students to graduate if they fall short by two to three weeks (a week normally equating to 37.5 hours) without the need for much adjustment to your programmes.

In these circumstances, we encourage teams to take a pragmatic approach and consider including hours accrued from clinical activity that might not normally be included. This could include earlier volunteering, earlier observational placements and other activities (including simulation). Please do use these experiences only if they give you confidence in your students' abilities and if it could legitimately help, you make a case for your students being assessed and deemed to have met the Standards of Proficiency, be safe and employment-ready.

Teams will need to exercise sound professional judgement that is in the best interest of the students, and the service users that will be treated by your graduates. Those who graduate from your programmes should not be disadvantaged in the long-term by decisions that are made in response to the short-term needs.

For programmes where students will fall significantly, short of the 1000 hours.

We recognise that the decision whether students are competent will to be harder to make if they have a significant number of hours yet to complete.

Your programme is designed as a whole and you will need to determine whether students have met the learning objectives for all modules as well as the programme learning outcomes. This is unlikely to be an issue for university-taught modules if you are switching to online delivery and assessment, however, we do foresee that there are implications for placements.

As each HEI operates with autonomy and sets its own regulations, it is your own institution's regulations, which will need to be considered carefully.

You should ensure that you have identified and put in place contingencies, including alternative assessments, so that you can assure yourselves, your students, their employers and ultimately service users that students have met the HCPC Standards of Proficiency.

You may be able to apply across cohorts, but in most circumstances, you will need to consider this on an individual student basis. As teams, you are best placed to do so as only you are aware of your students' profiles.

You will need to consider the following:

- For final year students, have they had placements at level 6 and whether that feedback given by practice educators indicates whether students are operating as close to a newly qualified physiotherapist as possible by this stage in their programmes
- Placement profiles including range and breadth of placements
- How capable you have judged students to be through university practice and assessments including OSCEs, clinical vivas etc. It will be important to consider any areas where you feel they might not have had the opportunity thus far to demonstrate these skills in a practice-setting.
- How much opportunity you will have to deliver and support students between now and normal graduation point to refresh, consolidate, and assure yourselves of their ability in areas where they cannot demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes. If you have mechanisms, to support and assess students further in cases where you may have concerns, we encourage you to put these in place.

However, even with these measures, there will still be some students who are unable to graduate at the normal point of graduation. **Teams should feel empowered to make the difficult decision that a student is not ready to graduate and put in place action plans to support them to graduate as soon as in possible.**

The pandemic has provided an opportunity for practise based learning innovation we actively encourage you to continue drawing your placements from all sectors and settings. There is an urgent need for physiotherapists and we need to increase quality placement capacity to support this demand during and beyond COVID-19. Look for opportunities to place students wherever a physiotherapist could work, including making greater use of 'role-emerging' style placements and multiple supervision models. The CSP [practice-based learning website](#) illustrates innovation and creativity in placement provision and supervision and is designed to support educators and programme leads in this aim. If you have examples of innovative placements that you would like to add to the website as a case study please email education@csp.org.uk