

## **Policy: Students completing training placements or face-to-face training assessments under the COVID-19 Protection Framework**

### **Scope**

This policy applies to students from all health professions who are completing training placements or undergoing face-to-face training assessments in any environment (ie, DHB or non-DHB) under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Protection Framework) Order 2021.

Current Protection Framework (“traffic light”) settings that may impact health and disability services in each region can be viewed here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>.

### **Definitions**

*Assessment* means examination of a student's knowledge or proficiency.

*Placement* includes any placement in an environment where healthcare or related services are provided to patients or the public.

*Student* includes all students who have *not* completed all requirements for professional qualification and – only if applicable – are registered with the relevant [Responsible Authority](#) as a health practitioner under the [Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003](#). *Student* includes assessment candidates.

*Senior student* is defined per professional training organisation, but generally refers to a student in their final year prior to completing all requirements for professional qualification.

### **Policy statement - Placements**

1. Although the importance of academic progression, economic consequences, and impacts on the health workforce pipeline should all be considered, the first priority guiding placement decisions is that all reasonable efforts must be made to ensure that students and patients are kept safe.
2. Students undertaking a placement as part of completing their academic programme may start or continue in that placement only in accordance with any current Protection Framework settings and/or conditions that apply to the environment where the student is placed. It is for the training institution and the placement provider to ensure that each student’s placement(s) meet this requirement at all times.
3. It is understood that students might be asked to provide clinical care in Health Care Assistant (or similar) roles when, due to Protection Framework setting requirements, they are not able to carry on in their assigned training placement. Any such service must not be compulsory and it is for training institutions and Responsible Authorities to determine if that service (or a portion of that service) will be recognised as clinical experience toward the student’s qualification. (See also the “Employment of students” information below.)

4. Students must inform their supervisor(s) and supervisors must ask students about employment, placement, or any attendance at other settings where COVID-19 Protection Framework restrictions are operating. Movement between health or disability settings should only occur if carefully managed and where approved by the relevant organisation(s).
5. All students on placements must have appropriate supervision (as determined by the training institution and placement provider) to help mitigate the enhanced risks inherent in working in the COVID-19 environment. It should be noted that supervisors must prioritise providing services to patients over providing supervision. This may require that the student(s) involved cease working with patients until appropriate supervision can be resumed, and should be clearly communicated by the supervisor to the student(s).
6. Senior students' roles may be extended under supervision to support [critical health services](#), either directly or by releasing paid health care workers to perform critical health services. In such situations senior students will be regarded as [critical workers](#) in respect to stand down requirements as per the Protection Framework.
7. Students may decide that they do not want to practise during this time and should not be penalised for that decision. Students should realise, however, that an extended absence from their training programme may delay completion of their training.

### **Policy statement – Employment of students**

It is anticipated that if Aotearoa New Zealand moves to Phase Three – Manage it (high volumes) under the revised COVID-19 Framework, managing supervision requirements for clinical placements may be impractical and unreasonable given the clinical burden on registered professionals during this peak time. Under these circumstances, students (of any discipline) may be asked to provide clinical care in a Health Care Assistant or other role.

The role must be well defined/circumscribed.

The student is under no compulsion to accept such a role.

Students must be employed under a contractual agreement in all roles involving patient contact, including telehealth roles.

Indemnity provisions in these circumstances apply as per the Accident Compensation Act 2001 and Health & Safety at Work Act 2015. Students must comply to the code of conduct defined by their education provider, relevant Responsible Authority, and the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code).

Students may still only undertake restricted activities under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 in an emergency or in the course of training or instruction and under the control of a permitted health practitioner, and health providers must still comply with the Rights under the Code.

Consideration needs to be given to student wellbeing under these circumstances and as such an induction programme will be provided.

Employed students will be regarded as critical workers in respect to stand down requirements as per the Protection Framework.

### **Policy statement - Face-to-Face Training Assessments**

Under the Covid Protection Framework (CPF) student assessment involving face-to-face patient contact will be enabled where at all possible in order to maintain the health workforce pipeline.

Every effort will be made to ensure the safety of all participants.

Students and their assessors will comply with infection prevention measures mandated by the health facility under the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

If at all possible, assessments shall take place using 'green stream' (no or low risk) patients.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed and revised as and when necessary.

### **Note**

In order to minimise the spread of COVID-19, serious restrictions on workers and workplaces may be put in place. Many health and disability services will, however, be expected to remain up and running. Employers must continue to meet their health and safety obligations in these circumstances.

These same restrictions and responsibilities apply to students and to those who are responsible for them.

The Ministry recognises and acknowledges that other organisations also have authority and responsibilities in regard to students;

- Training institutions have the ultimate responsibility for their students' welfare.
- Placement providers determine whether or not they continue to provide placements to students.
- Responsible Authorities make decisions regarding accreditation of training programmes, registration (where required), and practising status (including conditions on scopes of practice).

Placements can therefore be altered or discontinued (directly or indirectly) by these other organisations, even where a student's placement is in a service that continues to operate.