

When COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were imposed in March 2020 many student placements were suspended across Scotland.

The SSSC, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Scottish Government and College Development Network have worked closely together to support the safe return of students to placement.

A [placement update](#) in June 2021 provides information for centres, placement providers and students regarding the current situation. The landscape is continuously changing and we will continue to update information.

This document provides links to current guidance, resource documents and frequently asked questions.



Health and safety

The health and safety of students, the people they support and placement providers is paramount. The Scottish Government have accessible risk assessment tools which students, centres and placement providers may find useful. You can access these tools [here](#).

Organisations providing student placements can continue using their own internal policies and procedures for a safe induction.

Guidance

There is a range of guidance available to support centres, placement providers and students. The following guidance documents will help when considering a number of factors including placements, SVQ assessment and safety during COVID-19. The Care Inspectorate compendium gives access to all national guidance.

[SQA guidance regarding placements for HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice.](#)

[SVQ supplementary guidance for assessment centres includes information on supporting candidates, a guide to using video for assessment and assessment examples.](#)

[Guidance to support the continued safe operation of Early Learning and Childcare settings.](#)

[Care Inspectorate compendium of COVID-19 Guidance.](#)

Frequently asked questions

Can students carry out their placement in their place of work?

Yes, if students are in a relevant setting and working at an appropriate level and can evidence the practice requirements for the HNC. This can be negotiated between centres, students and employers and a contract (see template below) should be used.

Placements have not yet commenced, what will happen if there is no opportunity for a placement?

Partners will continue to work together into the next academic year to support students into placements and meet programme requirements. Centres are working to make sure students have availability in their timetable to attend a block placement if required. Centres, SQA, the SSSC, the Care Inspectorate, Scottish Government and placement providers are continuing to work together to develop a range of options to make sure students get the opportunity to complete the course they are studying.

Centres are continuing to work closely with SQA on contingency plans as an alternative to placement to make sure the requirements of the programme are still met without compromising the integrity of the award.

If placements are further restricted into the next academic year there are other options available and will be discussed at the appropriate time. For now, students should continue with their studies and not hesitate in raising any concerns or anxieties. Be assured we are continuing to meet regularly with all the decision making organisations and will keep everyone updated.

Are SVQ assessors allowed into the workplace for direct observations?

Some workplace settings will have their own assessors inhouse and observations can be carried out in the usual way. Our SVQ guidance contains useful information about observed practice. Where it is difficult for assessors to observe practice in person there is information in the guidance supporting the use of video/online evidence and/or expert witnesses. There is an additional guide to using video conferencing and video recordings for SVQ assessment.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

The Scottish Government NHS indemnity cover has been extended to cover students working in a registered care service as well as those in NHS settings which includes students undertaking their HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice. COSLA has confirmed that any student on placement in a local authority setting will be covered by the local authority's insurance.

Can students start a placement when services have been asked to restrict the number of people coming into establishments?

The Care Inspectorate has confirmed that registered care services can have students on placement. Students should be considered part of the workforce. They recommend employers follow national guidance in relation to having temporary staff or volunteers within the service which for each setting type can be found in their compendium for example the COVID-19 clinical and practice guidance for adult care homes in relation to agency staff, temporary staff and volunteers. You can read the full guidance [here](#).

Key considerations:

- Placements should be restricted to one care service as the movement of staff between services can increase transmission.
- Placement providers must ensure strict compliance with infection control and prevention measures for all staff unfamiliar with the service. Students should be included in any testing regime and have the same access to personal protective equipment as staff.
- While decisions regarding deployment will vary according to the circumstances of each service, providers should try to make informed assessments about who to accept on placement and how they should be deployed in order to minimise the risk of infection for everyone involved. This may involve asking students about the different care services they have recently worked in and making deployment decisions accordingly.

Will my employment impact on where I can go on placement?

- Students employed in roles out with health and care settings should discuss their employment with their placement provider to be sure they are following correct procedures in both workplaces.

Additional information and resources

Centres, placement providers and students are encouraged to keep up to date with government guidance and can refer to [SSSC COVID-19 resources](#).

Example contract

HNC Social Services and Childhood Practice

STUDENTS IN EXISTING RELEVANT EMPLOYMENT

As part of the HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice programmes, students must complete 60 days observed and assessed practice in a relevant setting. Students are permitted to use 60 days of their employment to gain evidence for their qualification where this is agreeable with both the centre and employer.

The benefits of this approach include:

- continuity of care for the individual
- the potential for enhanced job satisfaction, personal and professional development for the employee
- opportunities for the personal and professional development of the supervising member of staff
- reinforcing a culture of lifelong learning and development in the workplace.

There is an expectation that the employee (student) would continue to do the job they are employed to do and should continue to receive their normal salary for that post. If there are occasions when the employee needs to have additional experiences or responsibilities in order to meet the evidence requirements of the HNC programme the employer has two options.

1. Facilitate additional experiences or responsibilities within their employee's existing role and contractual hours and with no detriment to their salary.
2. Maintain their employee's existing role and contractual hours while providing opportunities for their employee to gain the additional experiences or responsibilities out with their normal work hours. This would normally amount to no more than a few hours on an occasional basis and for the sole purpose of achieving the evidence required. Additional payments for this would be optional and at the discretion of the employer.

By signing this form, you agree with the expectations described above, and that the employee/student named below will be given support to complete the practical component of their HNC in Social Services within your setting.

Student _____

Setting _____

**Manager's name (please
print)** _____

Manager's signature _____

Date _____