**4th-Year Pharmacy Experiential Learning Placements 2021**

**Preceptor FAQ on operational changes and considerations due to COVID-19**

APPEL is cognisant that COVID-19 will continue to impact the four-month experiential learning placements due to take place later this year**.** In acknowledgement of the effect that COVID-19 may have on the student, on their Preceptor and the Training Establishment, APPEL and the three Schools of Pharmacy have maintained the changes that were made to the operation of the placements in 2020. The details of these operational changes are listed below.

**Q. What are the dates of the 4th-year experiential learning placements for 2021?**

A. Students will be on their experiential learning placements from **30th August – 17th December 2021.**

**\***Please note that any students returning to Ireland from other countries or engaging in foreign travel have been informed of the potential need for a quarantine period before the commencement of their placement.

**Q. My student was abroad prior to their placement commencing. What are the requirements for these students before they begin their experiential learning placement?**

A. Most students, with limited exceptions, will be required to restrict their movements for two weeks following their return to Ireland from abroad.

All students are advised to be in Ireland no later than the **16th August, 2021.** If the Training Establishment has any particular requirements concerning restriction of movement, APPEL requests that you please inform the student.

**Q. Has the student timetable changed for the placement period?**

A. The student timetable is flexible and adaptable to accommodate the Preceptor, the Training Establishment, and the student. The educational experience for students should be promoted at all times.

* + The student is required to complete 30 hrs of placement time each week.
  + This time on placement can be completed between Monday and Friday from 8 am – 6 pm.
  + The student must be provided with at least one-half day each week between Monday and Friday comprising no less than 4 hrs to allow them to complete their online academic modules (please be mindful that the student may need to travel to/from their placement to complete these modules and that they should be able to finish their day at 6 pm).
  + There is no requirement for the student to be off-placement on a Wednesday (as was the case previously).
  + The placement timetable should be agreed upon between the Preceptor and the student.
    - Their hours of attendance should be similar to a university timetable between 8 am and 6 pm on **weekdays only**.
    - Ideally, the student would be given the same timetable each week; however, we acknowledge that this may not always be possible.
    - The student must be given adequate notice of their timetabled placement hours.
    - The student’s placement hours must occur over one continuous period on any given day.
    - Students must be provided with appropriate breaks in accordance with legislation.

**Q. Due to physical and operational changes in our work environment, we cannot accommodate a student on placement on-site in the Training Establishment for 30 hours a week. Can the placement proceed?**

A. APPEL is cognisant that government advice remains that, where possible, working from home should continue. In such circumstances, where a student cannot be on placement at the Training Establishment, APPEL can confirm that **remote experiential learning placements** can be accommodated for the 4th-year placement for 2021.

**Q. Does a remote experiential placement meet the statutory requirements?**

A. Rule 14(1) (a) of SI 377 of 2014 states that a student completes their in-service practical training for “*at least four months in one of the establishments referred to in rule 15(1)*”. APPEL engaged with the PSI concerning the question as to whether a student can be considered to be partaking of their “*in-service practical training*” while on placement remotely.

The four-month placement differs from the eight-month placement undertaken in the fifth year, where the rules prescribe that the placement must take place "*at the premises*".

The PSI Council have approved *“Guidelines for Remote Experiential Placements in the 4th year of the Pharmacy degree”,* which encompass the parameters of remote experiential learning.

**Q. Are there requirements as to the amount of time a student can be on placement remotely vs on-site at the Training Establishment?**

A. No. APPEL is cognisant that government advice remains that, where possible, working from home should continue. Therefore, there may be circumstances where a student is on placement remotely for the duration of their four-month placement.

Where possible, where a student’s Preceptor or On-Site Supervisor is on-site at the Training Establishment, we recommend that the student is on-site at the same time and on the same days. However, we appreciate that this may not be possible due to social distancing requirements within the Training Establishment.

**Q. Are there additional requirements that I need to consider as a Preceptor or On-Site Supervisor if my student is on placement remotely?**

A. This will likely be the first time the student will experience completing a placement remotely. APPEL has attached a *“Preceptor guide for supporting a remote experiential placement”* as an appendix to this document (Appendix I). It is important to read this document to ensure you have considered and fulfil all additional considerations for remote experiential learning. Examples of some of the additional requirements are:

* Appropriate student support systems
* Consideration given to induction and ongoing communication between the student and the Preceptor/On-site Supervisor
* Appropriate remote learning environment for the student experiential learning placement

**Q. Is there additional information that I should add to my induction and training plan due to the impact of COVID-19 on the experiential learning placement?**

A. It is important, at the outset of the placement, to provide your student with an induction programme, which familiarises them with the practicalities of their new learning environment. Time and effort invested in induction assists with faster integration and a more effective learning environment for the student. COVID-19 has introduced many changes to the workplace environment, which the student will be unfamiliar with and which should be included in the induction plan, for example:

* Training Establishment policies and procedures on social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, the wearing of face masks, PPE, etc.
* Consider providing students with the below documentation, where applicable, for their review:
  + - * SOPs
      * Health and Safety documentation
      * COVID -19 Protocols
      * Training Manual
      * Any other placement related paperwork
* Ways of working, e.g. how handover occurs between teams if social distancing requires split teams.
* Practices implemented for COVID-19 but are not standard practices, e.g. the student may not be aware of the changes to prescription legislation, methods introduced to minimise patient contact.
* Cultural and linguistic issues need to be considered part of the new ways of working, e.g. implications on face-to-face communication while maintaining social distancing and wearing PPE such as facemasks.
* Hints and tips on how the student can fit into a new team.
* Outline of the activities/projects that students will be completing

More details on items to include in the student induction programme can be found in the Preceptor Handbook, and the sample Induction and Training Plan provided on the resources page of the APPEL website.

**Q. Will the assessment of placement be the same as usual?**

A. Yes, there is no change to the assessment of the placement. At the end of the 4th-year placement, it is intended that students will be able to demonstrate a required level of competency in the relevant behaviours in the PSI’s Core Competency Framework aligned to the three domains listed below:

* Professional Practice
* Personal Skills
* Organisation and Management Skills

**Q. Do I need to complete any additional documentation considering the impact of COVID-19 on the placement?**

A. No, there is no additional paperwork required to be completed by the Training Establishment or the Preceptor/On-Site Supervisor. No changes have been made to the Placement Agreement or the Accreditation documentation.

Where a student is on placement remotely, the Preceptor and On-Site Supervisor will need to read the *“APPEL Guidance for Supporting a Remote Experiential Learning Placement”* (Appendix I).

**Q. What additional pre-placement preparation has my student completed in consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on the placement?**

A. Students are required to complete the following additional activities in advance of starting their experiential learning placement.

1. Students must complete the following online courses available at [https://www.hseland.ie](https://lms.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login). A temporary version of the site is available [here](https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/training-development/training/temporary-version-of-hseland.html)

* AMRIC Introduction to Infection Prevention and Control
* AMRIC Basics of Infection Prevention and Control
* AMRIC Standard and Transmission Based Precautions
* AMRIC Hand Hygiene
* Putting on and Taking off PPE in Acute Healthcare Settings
* Putting on and Taking off PPE in Community Healthcare Settings

1. Students must review the following videos on the HPSC website in advance of commencing their placement.

* Correct donning and doffing of PPE on the HPSC website <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/ppe/>
* Review of the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Guidance, including IPC COVID-19 Guidance and educational videos on <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/videoresourcesforipc/>

1. Additionally, students must read and understand the following documents and consult the following web pages:

* Guidance to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection in pharmacies [https://www.hpsc.ie/a- z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/pharmacyguidance/](https://www.hpsc.ie/a-%20z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/pharmacyguidance/)
* The information provided by their University on COVID-19
  + - * <https://www.ucc.ie/en/studenthealth/flu/>
    - <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/coronavirus/students>, or
    - <https://www.tcd.ie/about/coronavirus/>

1. Students will be obliged to download the “COVID Tracker Ireland” and to log in and update this tracker daily.
2. Students will also be required to log into the APPEL Virtual Learning Environment/HEI COVID-19 Tracker daily and record the following information:

* Record that they have no symptoms of COVID-19 before they go on placement
* Depending on their Training Establishment, they may need to record where they were on-site throughout the placement day: e.g. Dispensary, Ward X, etc. This may be required in the event of an IPC incident such as an outbreak.
  + Students can only be on placement at the appointed APPEL accredited Training Establishment. Please inform APPEL where a student needs to change their Training Establishment in advance of that change occurring.

**Q. What is the process to be followed if a student develops signs of COVID-19 during placement?**

A. If a student is at home when they develop [symptoms](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html), they must not go into placement and must not leave home.  They must self-isolate and phone their GP or Student Health Services (info below). Students must also contact their Preceptor and Practice Educator.

If a student develops symptoms at the Training Establishment, they must inform their Preceptor or On-Site Supervisor and leave the site immediately. They should self-isolate in their home and contact their GP or Student Health Services from home.

Where a student is required to restrict their movements or self-isolate and are well, and where the Training Establishment cannot accommodate a remote experiential learning placement, the student is required to study remotely at home during this time.

Students will need to complete additional placement time (60 hrs. = two weeks of restricted movement) over the remaining weeks of the placement. How this additional placement time is completed is to be agreed upon between the student and their Preceptor. Students will need to keep their Practice Educator informed about how and when this additional time is completed.

Where a student is unwell, the student’s college/HEI sick policies apply in these circumstances. Students must inform their Practice Educators when they are unwell.

**Q. What support will Preceptors and On-Site Supervisors receive from APPEL during the 4th-year placements?**

A. Practice Educators and the APPEL office will be available to respond to any questions or queries that you may have regarding the placement. The APPEL website has relevant information and resources, and APPEL will email important updates and information as it arises.

**Appendix 1: APPEL Guidance for Supporting a Remote Experiential Learning Placement**

This will likely be the first time the student will experience completing a placement remotely. While some students will adapt quickly and have no concerns using different communication forms and learning in a remote environment, others may find it more challenging and require additional support. This guide will help you plan and consider aspects of the placements to maximise learning opportunities and support for the student.

It is broken down into two parts:

1. Considerations prior to placement
2. Considerations during placement

**Part 1: Considerations prior to placement**

1. You may wish to consider some of the **practical requirements** if the student is completing the placement remotely:

The student’s home workstation and requirements – does your Training Establishment have guidance to support your employees that you can share with students?

* + - Has the student access to an appropriate environment to facilitate a remote experiential learning placement? E.g. light, heating, quiet environment.
    - Has the student an appropriate chair and table/desk?
    - Is there a Health & Safety Officer that can support the student in setting up an appropriate workstation and placement environment?

IT requirements – does the student have access to all the technology they require?

* + - Does the student have access to a company laptop or, if necessary, use of a personal laptop?
    - Does the student have access to a reliable and secure internet connection?
    - Does the student have remote access to the Training Establishment network?
    - Does training need to be completed prior to accessing the Training Establishment systems, and can training be done remotely?
    - Does the student know who to contact for IT support?

1. You may wish to consider the **supervision and support requirements** when preparing a student for a remote experiential learning placement:

Supervision of students on placement remotely

* + - Consider how you will dedicate time to the student under challenging circumstances (daily check-in if on placement remotely, handover if splitting time between the office and home).
    - Consider setting daily/weekly/monthly deliverables for students to ensure they are on track – if not, check-in with them to see if they understand what they are doing.
    - How will the student be introduced to the other team members? Consider including the student in team chats/group emails so that they feel a part of the team.
    - Clear communication - speaking in person gives us visual and audio cues, which helps us communicate. Conversing remotely removes a lot of that extra information, so consider how you can make your communications extra clear and concise. Emails are more likely to be wrongly interpreted than in-person conversation, so we recommend that you consider proofreading your communications even more carefully; this will be particularly important for students who are new to the team.
    - A student on placement remotely may require more support than if they were in the Training Establishment. Does the student know who to contact for support, further assistance or training? Aside from the Preceptor or On-Site Supervisor, is there a team member that the student can “buddy-up” with for support over the placement period?

1. You may need to consider how the **induction programme** planned at the outset of the placement may be impacted by the student being on placement remotely.

Induction and training plan considerations where a student is on placement remotely

* + - Have you considered in advance an outline of the activities/projects that students will be completing? Can these activities be completed remotely? Do these activities allow students to meet the learning outcomes and develop and practise the required skills and behaviours?
    - Are there online resources that students could complete as part of their induction, and can these be accessed remotely?
    - Plan the time and date to complete the induction and consider other staff who may support you.
    - Do you have a dress code that the student must adhere to when on placement remotely?
    - Please refer to the 4th-Year Preceptor Handbook for further information on induction.

**Part 2: Considerations during placement**

1. **Induction**

At the outset of the placement, it is important to provide your student with an induction programme, which familiarises them with the practicalities of their new learning environment. Time and effort invested in induction assists with faster integration and a more effective learning environment for the student. Along with the usual requirements for induction which are discussed in the Preceptor training and handbook, additional items which you may wish to consider for remote experiential learning placements are:

* + Health and Safety Training – in addition to your Training Establishment’s normal health and safety training, there may be additional health and safety requirements for remote working, which are relevant for students on placement remotely.
  + Training Establishment policies and procedures on social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, the wearing of face masks, PPE, etc. If the student is completing some placement time remotely and some on-site at the Training Establishment, they will need to be familiar with all policies and procedures.
  + Consider providing students with the below documentation, where applicable, for their review:
    - SOPs
    - Covid-19 Protocols
    - Training Manual
    - Any other placement related paperwork
  + Ways of working: Are there new practices that you need to advise the student on, e.g. if social distancing requires split teams, you may need to advise the student on how handover occurs between the teams?
  + How would you like the student to communicate with you and other members of the team - email, phone call, virtual meetings? For some students, this will be their first experience in this type of communication, so consider providing them with some hints and tips on what you find works well.
  + How can you encourage students to contribute regularly to team emails, virtual team meetings, chats and social events such as team quiz nights, remote team tea breaks, etc.? For some students, this will be their first experience using this type of communication; you may be able to give them some hints and tips on what you find works well.
  + Practices that have been implemented for COVID-19 but are not standard practices.
  + Are there any cultural and linguistic issues that need to be considered as part of the new ways of working, e.g. implications on face-to-face communication while maintaining social distancing and wearing PPE such as facemasks?
  + Fitting into a new team will be easy for some students but may be more difficult for others. This adjustment may be more challenging due to amended work practices in place due to COVID-19. Have you any hints and tips for your student on how they can fit into the team and maximise team-based activities in this environment?
  + Some people have found working remotely can lead to challenges in staying motivated and keeping on track with tasks and activities. Have you considered how you can support your student with this, e.g. setting daily/weekly/monthly deliverables for students to ensure they are on track?
  + Unexpected staff changes due to COVID-19 - have you considered an extra pharmacist (if available) to do the Preceptor training if they need to take over from the Preceptor?

If you would like to discuss any questions or concerns relating to remote experiential learning placements, please contact a Practice Educator or any member of the APPEL team. We would also be delighted to receive any feedback you may have on what has worked well and any advice that we may improve upon, based on your experience.