



Student clinical placements COVID-19 guidance - 7 September 2021

OFFICIAL

Updates

Version/Date	Changes
26 July 2021	This guidance is applicable to student clinical placements undertaken across all health and aged care settings. This guidance has been reviewed to ensure content is applicable to all risk rating levels and scenarios. New versions will be re-issued as required according to changes in public health policy.
18 August 2021	This guidance has been updated to include content related to authorised worker travel permits applicable to students undertaking clinical placements. Minor amendments have also been made to attestation/declaration requirements, and the management of potential student exposure to a confirmed positive case.
30 August 2021	This guidance has been updated in line with minor changes to the Victorian Health Services Guidance and Response to COVID-19 Risks (VHSGR) guidance – COVID Peak (Black) risk rating.
7 September 2021	This guidance has been updated to clarify public health guidance regarding continuation of clinical placements within COVID streaming hospitals versus non COVID streaming hospitals.

In the changing COVID-19 environment, content is often being updated. To ensure you are aware of the most recent changes, all content updates and the date the document was last updated will be highlighted in **yellow** text.

Purpose

This guidance provides specific advice to education providers, students, Victorian health sector entities and aged care providers on student clinical placements in line with the COVID-19 risk ratings across Victoria. For further information on current risk ratings go to: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks>

This guidance applies to all students who undertake clinical placements in Victoria as part of their health course, and across health and aged care practice settings. The full list of disciplines is listed in **Appendix A**.

For the most up to date advice regarding COVID-19, please visit the [Department of Health's \(the department\) coronavirus website](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) <<http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>>.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with [Victorian health service guidance and response to COVID-19 risks](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks>>.

This guidance note can be read in conjunction with [Movement of healthcare workers and health service employees during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic factsheet](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/guidance-movement-workers-during-covid-19) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/guidance-movement-workers-during-covid-19>>

General recommendation on student clinical placements during the current risk ratings

Clinical placements of health students¹ are permitted to continue under all risk ratings, with changes in guidance aligned to increasing risk profile.

Risk Rating		Corresponding Health Service guidance for student clinical placements
COVID Ready		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student clinical placements permitted in all settings but restricted from providing care/being exposed to high-risk SCOVID and confirmed COVID patients.
COVID Alert		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student clinical placements permitted in all settings but restricted from providing care/being exposed to high-risk SCOVID and confirmed COVID patients. Students restricted to one campus/site only.
COVID Active		
COVID Peak		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student clinical placements can continue in non-COVID streaming hospitals, with the requirement that students should not provide care/be exposed to high-risk SCOVID/confirmed COVID patients. Student clinical placements can continue in COVID streaming hospitals, with the requirement that students should not provide care/be exposed to high-risk SCOVID/confirmed COVID patients or be placed in designated COVID streaming areas. To facilitate this, COVID streaming hospitals are able to designate specified areas of the ED and/or ICU where student placements may proceed - see detail in section below.

Students are recognised as a healthcare workforce and are permitted to continue clinical placements with contingencies in place dependent on the current status of risk rating.

Students should not care for patients who are suspected, high-risk suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 at any time. If students are placed on a ward where a patient tests positive for COVID-19, **the student should be redeployed to an alternative ward** until there are no longer any active cases of COVID-19 and appropriate cleaning and disinfection of affected areas has been completed.

Where a student has been on a ward with a confirmed positive case and has been potentially exposed, they should follow any advice given to them by the Department of Health. If they are not deemed a close contact and advised they can safely continue their placement, surveillance testing of the student should continue for 14 days since the potential exposure. **For more information, refer to testing requirements for hospitals on the Surveillance Testing Industry List** <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/surveillance-testing-industry-list-covid-19>

To ensure there is not a detrimental flow-on effect on students being able to enter our healthcare workforce, preference should be given to those clinical placements that are critical for students to progress in their training and achieve graduation.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge the health and education sectors and it is strongly recommended that placement cancellation fees be waived during this time.

¹ Refer to Appendix A for full list of disciplines

Vaccination

All those aged 16 and above are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccination in Victoria. It is strongly recommended that any health students on clinical placement be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to commencing placement. This is to protect students, the patients they interact with, and health services.

More information can be found here <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine>

For any students on placement in Residential Aged Care Facilities, COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory from 17 September 2021 for all residential aged care workers, including students on placement. Students must have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by this time, or have evidence of a booking to receive a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine by 1 October 2021.

Student clinical placements within health services

Student movement between sites (for example, back and forth between Box Hill Hospital and Maroondah Hospital) during a clinical placement at a health service should be restricted for individual clinical placements during **COVID Ready (Green)** settings. If a placement is to be completed in two separate parts, and shared between two health services or sites (for example, the student first completes three weeks of placement at Box Hill Hospital, and then completes three weeks of placement at Maroondah Hospital), then this is permissible under **COVID Ready (Green)** settings.

During **COVID Alert (Amber)**, **COVID Active (Red)** and **COVID Peak (Black)** settings, student placements are restricted to a single campus/site.

During the **COVID Peak (Black)** setting, student clinical placements can continue in COVID streaming and non-streaming hospitals, including wards (acute, subacute, maternity and mental health), community settings, and public service residential aged care facilities (PSRACs):

- In **non-streaming hospitals**, students should not provide care/be exposed to high-risk SCOVID / confirmed COVID patients
- In **COVID streaming hospitals**, students should not provide care/be exposed to high-risk SCOVID / confirmed COVID patients or be placed in designated **COVID streaming areas**. To facilitate this, COVID streaming hospitals are able to designate specified areas of the ED and/or ICU where student placements may safely proceed.

Placements in ED/ICU at COVID streaming hospitals should only be considered for students who:

- are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and
- have been fit-tested for N95/P2 PPE by a public health service – Respiratory Protection Program prior to the commencement of their placement, and
- have/will receive training in correct donning/doffing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (i.e. either prior to commencement of their placement or upon orientation).

Student clinical placements in residential aged care settings

Student clinical placements in residential care facilities can continue, with controls in place as detailed below.

For any students on placement in Residential Aged Care Facilities, COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory from 17 September 2021 for all residential aged care workers, including students on placement. Students must have received at least your first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by this time, or have evidence of a booking to receive a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine by 1 October 2021.

Student movement between two or more residential care facilities (or a residential care facility and a health service) should be limited where possible for individual clinical placements during **COVID Ready (Green)** settings.

During **COVID Alert (Amber)**, **COVID Active (Red)** and **COVID Peak (Black)** settings, student placements in residential aged care **are restricted to a single site/facility**.

During COVID Alert (Black) student clinical placements are able to continue in public and private residential aged care facilities except if the facility has been exposed to a confirmed COVID case or high-risk suspected COVID cases.

Student clinical placements in aged care settings must be conducted with strict health and safety measures in place. These measures include screening prior to each shift, surveillance testing in line with care facility workers, and optimal supervision and educational support of students provided in order to protect both students and residents. The full list of requirements is listed in **Appendix B**.

Testing for COVID-19 prior to clinical placements

Students are not required to be routinely tested for COVID-19 prior to commencing a new clinical placement at a health service, unless required to do so under asymptomatic testing guidance, including if they have visited any named community [exposure sites](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/exposure-sites). <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/exposure-sites>. If students have visited a public exposure site, they should isolate and seek testing, and contact the Department of Health for further advice.

Students are required to participate in daily staff attestations and temperature checks in place within health services. As noted above, students on placements in residential aged care facilities will be required to undergo surveillance testing in line with the requirements for workers in those facilities. **For additional requirements please see Appendix B.**

If a student is undertaking a clinical placement within a health service that is experiencing an active outbreak, the student should be advised to follow the public health advice and health service advice about whether they need to go into quarantine or be tested for COVID-19.

Students **must get tested if they feel unwell**, even if there is no current outbreak at their health service or aged care facility. Students should be encouraged to be vigilant for symptoms and to report even the mildest symptoms to their supervisor. Students will need to isolate whilst awaiting test results. Students will not be permitted to continue their clinical placements during this period.

Movement of students at a state level

Students **are permitted to travel within Victoria** in order to undertake clinical placements, however education providers should **allocate new placements within the same 'risk rating zone' where the student resides wherever possible**. For further information on the current restrictions go to:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks>

An 'Authorised Worker' permit will be required for students attending clinical placements on-site in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. The permit should be issued by the higher education provider. For further information on work travel permits go to: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/authorised-provider-and-authorised-worker-permit>.

Student employment in settings external to their clinical placement

Many students undertake part-time employment during their studies. If a student is employed within a facility or healthcare service which is experiencing an active outbreak, and/or their other workplace is listed as a community exposure site, the student may be advised to get tested, quarantine and seek further advice from the Department of Health. Students will not be permitted to undertake clinical placements during this period of quarantine.

Students should not undertake a clinical placement at a health service or residential aged care facility if they have worked or volunteered at a hotel quarantine site and/or port of entry within the last 14 days.

Please note that workplaces and employees have specific obligations in relation to COVID-19 under the Chief Health Officer's Workplace Directions **and Workplace (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions**. Employers and

employees must refer to these directions for full detail of the [legal requirements](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>>.

Where a student is employed in a particular health service or aged care facility, where possible, education providers are requested to consider clinical placements within the same health service to reduce the movement of students across multiple sites.

Reducing risk during a placement

In addition to limiting student movement within health services, placement providers and education providers should implement the following to further reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on student clinical placements:

- Ensure students are aware not to attend placement if unwell.
- Strongly encourage COVID-19 vaccination for all students on clinical placement.
- Minimise student exposure to aerosol inducing procedures.
- Limit students moving between general wards and wards where vulnerable groups are being cared for.
- Prior to each shift/placement, students must complete a declaration that they:
 - are free from symptoms related to COVID-19²
 - have not had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the previous 14 days
 - are not currently required to self-isolate or self-quarantine in accordance with the current [Diagnosed persons and Close Contacts Direction](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>>.
 - have not worked in or volunteered at a hotel quarantine site and/or port of entry in the last 14 days
 - have not attended any exposure site at the specified times in Victoria or interstate. The updated list of exposure sites in Victoria can be found here: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/exposure-sites>
 - [are not currently required to self-isolate or self-quarantine as a condition of an orange or red zone border permit.](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19)
 - have not been released from hotel quarantine in the last 14 days.
- Students who fail the attestation/declaration should be prohibited from entering the health service.
- Ensure students are adequately trained in the safe use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and local infection prevention protocols prior to commencing placement (including hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette). Education providers and health services are encouraged to establish processes to observe students whilst donning/doffing PPE to support students as they familiarise themselves with local prevention protocols.
- Ensure students are fit-tested for N95/P2 PPE where this is deemed to be a requirement for the placement setting (chiefly ICU and ED settings).
- Ensure students know who to report to if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Ensure physical distancing, hand hygiene, and frequent cleaning and disinfection are supported in non-clinical as well as clinical areas where staff or students may congregate (e.g. lunch areas).
- Ensure students are cohorted to limit the number of students who come into contact with a given patient.
- Ensure the number of students and staff in a patient's room complies with physical distancing recommendations and is kept to the minimum to achieve proper care of the patient.
- Limit the number of people at handover and on ward rounds to the minimum number required.
- Preference the use of video conferencing or other virtual means for meetings, assessments, performance reviews, where practicable.

More information about [reducing the risk of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in healthcare settings](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19)

<<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19>> is available.

²Further information on the symptoms of COVID-19 can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#what-are-the-symptoms-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

Appendix A

List of disciplines

1. Medicine (including undergraduate and postgraduate courses);
2. Nursing, including registered nursing and enrolled nursing and Initial Registration for Overseas Nurses (IRON);
3. Midwifery;
4. Paramedicine;
5. Art therapy;
6. Audiology;
7. Biomedical science;
8. Chiropractic;
9. Dentistry;
10. Diagnostic imaging medical physics;
11. Dietetics and nutrition;
12. Exercise physiology;
13. Genetic counselling
14. Medical laboratory science;
15. Medical imaging;
16. Music therapy;
17. Nuclear medicine;
18. Occupational therapy;
19. Optometry;
20. Oral health (not dentistry);
21. Orthoptics;
22. Osteopathy;
23. Pharmacy;
24. Physiotherapy;
25. Podiatry;
26. Prosthetics and orthotics;
27. Radiation oncology medical physics;
28. Radiation therapy;
29. Radiography;
30. Psychology (all streams);
31. Social work;
32. Sonography;
33. Speech pathology;
34. Health assistant (nursing);
35. Allied health assistant;
36. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner;
37. Individual support workers;
38. Allied health interns (medical radiations, medical laboratory science and medical physics); and
39. Personal services/care assistant.

Appendix B

Requirements for providers of clinical placements in residential care facilities

- Student clinical placements in residential aged care facilities (RACFs) should be conducted with strict health and safety measures in place with optimal supervision and educational support of students provided in order to protect both students and residents.
- COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory from 17 September 2021 for all residential aged care workers, including students on placement. Students must have received at least your first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by this time, or have evidence of a booking to receive a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine by 1 October 2021.
- RACFs should engage with education providers to facilitate clinical placements that prioritise students nearing completion of their program of study.
- An education provider and RACF may only commence clinical placement if:
 - all clinical placements have a dedicated placement supervisor who can be contacted either in person or by phone/email at any time during the placements (employed by facility or the education provider).
 - all students are buddied with a facility employee who is responsible for supervision of the student during each shift while on placement. This may be a different person on each shift. This must be on a 1:1 ratio.
- Public health guidance and directions applying to RACFs and healthcare workers must be applied to students undertaking clinical placements. This includes requirements for students to participate in COVID-19 symptom screening and declaration processes prior to each shift. As per requirements for workers, students are required to make daily declarations that the student:
 - is free of SARS-CoV-2 Symptoms
 - has, in the preceding 14 days, not been in contact with a confirmed case is not currently required to self-isolate or self-quarantine under the Diagnosed Persons and Close Contacts Directions.
 - have not attended any exposure site at the specified times in Victoria. The updated list of exposure sites in Victoria can be found here: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/case-locations-and-outbreaks-covid-19>
 - have not worked in or volunteered at a hotel quarantine site and/or port of entry in the last 14 days
 - have not been released from hotel quarantine in the last 14 days
- Consistent with public health guidance and directions, students are required to participate in the COVID-19 asymptomatic testing in accordance with the surveillance testing regimen in place in the RACF for care facility workers.
- Prior to commencing the clinical placement, all students and their supervisors are required to successfully complete face-to-face infection control training, including training in PPE and hand hygiene. This is in addition to the pre-existing requirements including not attending if unwell, influenza vaccine and police clearance.
- In the event of a staff member, resident or student testing positive for COVID-19 during the clinical placement, the clinical placement at the facility must immediately cease for all students and no further clinical placements can occur until approved by the Department of Health. Facilities must have a plan for ceasing or suspending placements in the event of local community transmission.

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email the Department of Health <covid-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au>](mailto:covid-19@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

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