



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

MH 34:24/8

MOH Circular No. 88/2020

31 MAR 2020

Please refer to Distribution List

UPDATED GUIDANCE ON CLINICAL TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT OF HEALTHCARE STUDENTS

This Circular sets the guiding principles for the safe resumption of essential clinical training and assessment for healthcare students (“Students”) from the Institute of Technical Education, Polytechnics, Colleges and Universities (“Schools”).

BACKGROUND AND INTENT

2. The Ministry of Health (“Ministry”) had previously issued Circular 41/2020: “Conduct of final examinations and clinical training of healthcare students” to healthcare institutions for clinical rotations to cease during DORSCON Orange and for lessons and training to continue within the Schools.

3. With the likelihood of a prolonged DORSCON Orange in the current COVID-19 outbreak, there is a need to cautiously reinstate modified clinical training – with the necessary precautionary measures in place – and thereby ensure that Students continue to be trained as part of a sustainable, safe and competent healthcare workforce.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CLINICAL TRAINING

4. Schools and healthcare institutions (HCIs) should ensure the following measures for the safe resumption of clinical training of their Students. As this circular only sets out the guiding principles, respective Schools should follow-up with the details thereafter.



Ministry of Health, Singapore
College of Medicine Building
16 College Road
Singapore 169854
TEL (65) 6325 9220
FAX (65) 6224 1677
WEB www.moh.gov.sg

A. General measures

- i. Schools and HCIs are to ensure that Students comply with prevailing travel advisories and movement restrictions for Healthcare Workers (HCWs)¹.
- ii. Schools and HCIs are to ensure that Students comply with respective HCI's policies and guidelines for health and self-monitoring, including temperature-taking, segregation plans and response to illness.
- iii. Schools are to develop and implement plans for surveillance of Students during clinical postings and inter-sessional periods.
- iv. Schools are to ensure Students download and activate the TraceTogether app.

B. Infection Control and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- i. Schools are to ensure that Students are taught and assessed to be proficient in the basics of infection control and use of PPE. Schools are to conduct mask-fitting where possible or ensure it is done.
- ii. HCIs are to provide mask-fitting if the Students had not already been mask-fitted according to the brands of masks they use. They are to also verify that all Students are competent in the practical aspects of infection control and use of PPE specific to the respective HCIs before they are allowed to resume clinical training.
- iii. Students must adhere to Ministry's guidance on PPE use for HCWs as set out in Circulars No. 35/2020 to 39/2020 when in the HCIs.
- iv. Students are to strictly comply with the local PPE requirements and any other measures put in place by the HCIs for infection control and to limit disease transmission.
- v. Schools and HCIs may approach the Ministry for assistance in PPE procurement for the purpose of PPE training and assessment.
- vi. Students are required to maintain a log of all the patients they see, should contact tracing be required.
- vii. Students who are unwell when undergoing training in the HCIs should be managed as per HCIs' staff procedures (e.g. be managed at staff

¹ As at the date of issuance of this circular, the prevailing movement restrictions for HCWs are detailed in MOH Circular No. 60/2020.

clinic). In the event of any exposure to COVID-19 cases, Students must be assessed according to Circular 62 and 63/2020: “Standardised workflow for risk assessment of healthcare workers following exposure to confirmed COVID-19 cases”. Payment for treatment provided to students should be arranged between the Schools and HCIs.

- viii. Schools are to ensure that all Students are adequately covered by medical insurance.

C. Phased approach to resumption of clinical training

- i. Resumption of training shall be carried out in stages. Clinical training for final year Students should be resumed first, followed by Students in penultimate year and subsequently the other phases. Specific approval from the Ministry must be sought before the commencement of each phase.
- ii. Schools are to work with the Ministry and the corresponding Professional Boards/Councils, where relevant, to review their curriculum and determine critical areas for training in the HCIs. All other training should be conducted in Schools, with use of technology, simulation, simulated patients etc.

D. Risk management

- i. To mitigate the risks of infection, Students will only be trained in smaller groups, in selected wards and procedures, and attend to selected patients relevant for their core training. These are to be determined before the training, between the Ministry, and the respective Schools and HCIs. Students must stay within the assigned training areas and not move between the ward areas.
- ii. Schools are to work with HCIs to customise a risk-assessed approach for each clinical posting.

E. Communications with students

- i. To adequately prepare the Students for resumption of clinical training, Schools are to provide an information package to each Student with details on the postings and measures in place to ensure their safety. Schools and Education Offices are to work with the Ministry on the details of this information package for their programmes.

ASSESSMENTS

5. The following measures related to the conduct of examinations are for compliance:

A. Infection Control

- i. To ensure all examination personnel involved (candidates, subjects, examiners, administrators) comply with travel advisories and are screened for fever and other respiratory symptoms.
- ii. Venue for examinations should be outside HCIs. Proper segregation (by groupings, venue, time) must be observed, in compliance with Circular 60/2020: “Updated guidance on the movement of Healthcare Workers, Patients and Visitors in Healthcare Institutions at DORSCON Orange” and respective HCI’s rules, should HCI educators/examiners be involved.
- iii. PPE use during examinations should comply with Circulars 35/2020 to 39/2020.
- iv. Technology should be leveraged upon to avoid physical contact. Where exams are held in a physical venue(s), adequate distance must be maintained between all examination personnel at all times.

B. Validity of exams

- i. As per normal practice, all examinations should remain valid and robust while maintaining infection control.

6. This Circular is for compliance with immediate effect and supersedes the Ministry’s Circular 41/2020: “Conduct of final examinations and clinical training of healthcare students”.

7. Please refer to Annex A for the Points of Contact, Annex B for the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the measures covered in this circular, Annex C for Ministry’s Circulars cited in this circular and Annex D for cross HCI deployment request template.

8. Thank you for your support in ensuring the safe resumption of clinical training for all healthcare students.



A/PROF KENNETH MAK
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Annex A

Points of Contact	
For matters relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of clinical training curriculum to determine critical areas of training in HCIs• List of high-risk procedures to be avoided during clinical training• PPE procurement for training and demonstration• Preparation of information package for students• Approval for resumption of training for different phases• Approval for changes to the agreed plan of training• Any other matters related to resumption of clinical training	
Allied health students	Ms Goh Suzanne (suzanne_goh@moh.gov.sg)
Dentistry and Oral Health Therapy students	Dr Carolina Un Lam (carolina_un_lam@moh.gov.sg)
Medical students	Ms Wendy Chan (wendy_chan@moh.gov.sg)
Nursing students	Ms Chan Huay Lian (chan_huay_lian@moh.gov.sg)
Pharmacy students	Dr Stephanie Tay (stephanie_tay@moh.gov.sg)
Use of Pre-Employment Clinical Training (PECT) funding	Ms Zanda Siew (zanda_siew@moh.gov.sg)
<i>For clusters and HCIs' reference:</i>	
PPE procurement for training and assessment for HCI	HCI to contact respective Material Management Department (MMD) as per usual practice.
Education Office (EDO) administrative support and funding matters	Ms Zanda Siew (zanda_siew@moh.gov.sg)

Frequently asked questions on Ministry’s updated guidance on clinical training and assessment for healthcare students.

1. Is a ‘washout’ period in between postings required by students who are posted to different HCIs for each period of clinical training?

As per Ministry Circular 60/2020: “Updated guidance on the movement of Healthcare Workers, Patients and Visitors in Healthcare Institutions at DORSCON Orange”, the movement of HCWs should be limited to the same campus and any deviation must be first approved by CEO / CMB / Medical Director or equivalent of all institutions involved and surfaced to the Ministry for evaluation on a case-by-case basis. With the risk-assessment and approval process in place, a ‘washout’ period is no longer required for healthcare workers.

In the context of students, Schools/HCIs will need to similarly exercise discretion and accountability.

- a. If the student is going to be deployed for a posting that will result in a cross-movement deviation from the current movement restrictions, these need to be approved by CEO / CMB / Medical Director or equivalent, in line with the stipulated guidelines before surfacing these to the Ministry – for cross-movement of students, please surface the proposed movements to the relevant Points of Contacts listed in Annex A, using the template provided in Annex D. Please ensure proper documentation and record-keeping of all approvals and agreements.
- b. Alternatively, Schools may consider scheduling sessions back in Schools in between student postings for at least 14 days before the next HCI posting on a different campus, with segregation of students who have been at different HCIs, and/or conduct of online teaching.

2. What should be done if a student falls sick while posted to an HCI without staff clinic?

Students who are unwell when undergoing training in the HCIs should be managed as per HCIs’ staff. If the HCI do not have a dedicated staff clinic, they should follow the HCI’s policy on managing unwell staff and receive treatment accordingly.

3. What if students come into contact with COVID-19 cases despite all precautions?

Please refer to Ministry Circular 62/2020 and 63/2020: “Standardised workflow for Risk Assessment of Healthcare workers following exposure to confirmed COVID-19 cases” if necessary. Depending on the extent of exposure and whether there was a PPE breach, follow-ups such as quarantine or phone surveillance may be required. Phone surveillance for such cases should be conducted by respective Schools.

4. The number of students expected to be trained remains unchanged, how should the clinical training be conducted with smaller group size?

Resumption of training should be carried out in stages. Clinical training for final year Students should take priority followed by those in their penultimate year and so on. Furthermore, unlike clinical training and assessment during DORSCON Green or Yellow, clinical training in HCIs during DORSCON Orange will only cover critical areas that needs to be conducted within the HCI setting. The training period in HCIs would therefore be compressed. All other training should be conducted in the Schools as far as possible, with use of technology, simulation, simulated patients etc. Therefore, it would be possible to plan and conduct the training per the Circular.

5. How are high-risk clinical areas/ procedures determined?

High risk clinical areas would be areas in hospital where the Students would come in contact with potential COVID-19 patients. The list for each category of Students will be decided jointly by the Schools, HCIs and the Ministry.

6. Why are Schools expected to teach and assess the students on infection control and the use of PPE?

Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, the demands on HCIs’ manpower have increased drastically. Therefore, ensuring the Students are trained in infection control, PPE usage and mask-fitting would help reduce the burden on HCIs. HCIs will undertake mask-fitting (if the students were not already mask-fitted according to the model/brand of masks used in the HCIs) and to ensure that the level of competency meets the HCIs’ standards. For Schools that conduct mask-fitting, the details of the mask-fitted should be communicated to the Students and HCIs.

7. Where can I seek help to procure additional PPE to cater for training?

We acknowledge that additional PPE may still be needed for Schools to teach and assess the basics of infection control and use of PPE and conduct mask-fitting. Please liaise with respective Points of Contact listed in Annex A for the additional PPE required.

When the students are in the HCIs, they should use the HCI's supply of PPE. Should the stock be insufficient, HCIs are to contact their respective Material Management Department (MMD) as per usual practice.










Schools should familiarise their healthcare students with the use of PPE in accordance to Circulars 35/2020 to 39/2020 to ensure prudent usage while protecting themselves from being infected by COVID-19.

8. What is the role of the Education Office (EDO) during this period?

EDOs were set up in the healthcare clusters and public HCIs to oversee, drive, and centrally coordinate clinical training. Cluster-level and institution-level EDOs should provide the administrative support to ensure that the new guidance for safe resumption of clinical training of healthcare students are being adhered to.

EDO funding from Ministry are ring-fenced for the support of pre-professional clinical training. Clusters and HCIs have flexibility in deploying the funds to cater to the prevailing education administration needs, including in adhering to the new guidance.

Related Circulars previously issued by the Ministry

S/n	Date Issued	Title of Circular, Guidance and Advisory	Document
1	7 FEB 2020	GUIDANCE ON PPE USE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING DORSCON ORANGE	 MOH Cir No 35_2020_7Feb20_PHI
2	7 FEB 2020	GUIDANCE ON PPE USE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING DORSCON ORANGE	 MOH Cir No 36_2020_7Feb20_Pol
3	7 FEB 2020	GUIDANCE ON PPE USE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING DORSCON ORANGE	 MOH Cir No 37_2020_7Feb20_Cor
4	7 FEB 2020	GUIDANCE ON PPE USE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING DORSCON ORANGE	 MOH Cir No 38_2020_7Feb20_GPI
5	7 FEB 2020	GUIDANCE ON PPE USE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS DURING DORSCON ORANGE	 MOH Cir No 39_2020_7Feb20_Pte.
6	7 FEB 2020	CONDUCT OF FINAL EXAMINATIONS AND CLINICAL TRAINING OF HEALTHCARE STUDENTS	 MOH Cir No 41_2020_7Feb20_Trn
7	27 FEB 2020	UPDATED GUIDANCE ON THE MOVEMENT OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS, PATIENTS AND VISITORS IN HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS AT DORSCON ORANGE	 MOH Cir No 60_2020_Updated Gu
8	3 MAR 2020	STANDARDISED WORKFLOW FOR RISK ASSESSMENT OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS FOLLOWING EXPOSURE TO CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES	 MOH Cir No 62_2020_3Mar20_CO
9	3 MAR 2020	STANDARDISED WORKFLOW FOR RISK ASSESSMENT OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS FOLLOWING EXPOSURE TO CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES	 MOH Cir No 63_2020_3Mar20_CO

ANNEX D

Table D-1: Cross deployment template for students whose postings deviate from prevailing movement restrictions (less than 14 days in between postings)

No.	Name of student	School	Programme of Study	Current place of posting and work setting	Next place of posting and work setting	Risk Assessment (Based on MOH Circular 62/2020)
1	e.g. John Lee			e.g. ABC Hospital / General Cardiology Wards		Low/Moderate/High In the event of COVID-19 exposure, please declare if there was appropriate PPE or if there was breach, whether post-exposure follow-up (QO or phone surveillance) has completed

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CEO, Parkway College of Nursing and Allied Health

Executive Director, HMI Institute of Health Sciences

Director, School of Health & Social Sciences (Allied Health), NYP

Manager, Dental Health Therapy Programme, NYP

Programme Director, School of Health & Social Sciences (Nursing), NYP

Director, School of Chemical & Life Sciences, NYP

Director, Centre for Industry & Lifelong Learning, NYP

Course Manager, Pharmaceutical Science, NYP

Director, School of Health Sciences, NP

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Course Chair, Pharmacy, NP

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Director, School of Applied Science, TP

Course Manager, Pharmaceutical Science, TP

Director, School of Applied Science, RP

Programme Chair, Diploma in Pharmaceutical Science, RP

Director, School of Applied & Health Sciences, ITE College East

Deputy Director, Health Sciences & Course Manager, Health Sciences (Allied Health Nursing), ITE College East