Student Practice Education Guideline for Health-Care Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic

JANUARY 25, 2023 REVISION
# Table of Contents

Strategic Context ............................................................................................................................................. 3

Student Practice Education .................................................................................................................................. 3

Goal and Objectives ........................................................................................................................................... 4

Scope and COVID-19 Assumptions .................................................................................................................. 4

COVID-19 Requirements: Student Practice Education ....................................................................................... 5

Resources and Supports ...................................................................................................................................... 8

Transition to Practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic ...................................................................................... 8

Appendix 1: Principles for SPE Planning and Coordination ............................................................................. 9

Appendix 2: Summary of Roles and Responsibilities ......................................................................................... 10

Appendix 3: Decision-Making Process: Significant Delays or Placement Suspensions ................................. 11

Appendix 4: Post-Secondary Institution Health Program Delay Management Process ................................. 12

Appendix 5: Summary for Responsibilities and Related Resources for Student Supervision in a Placement Site during COVID-19 ........................................................................................................... 13

Guideline Contributors, Reviewers and Amendments ....................................................................................... 14
Strategic Context

The Planning Board for Health and Medical Education (PBHME), representing the Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) and Ministry of Health, recognizes the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on B.C.’s health and education systems.

Student practice education (SPE) is a critical component of student training across allied health, nursing, and medical programs. It is essential to ensure high-quality student placements are available within B.C. to meet both current and future health labour market needs.

This guideline facilitates student practice education to continue to be delivered in a safe effective way to prepare B.C.’s future health workforce.

Health-care organizations (HCOs) and post-secondary institutions (PSIs) are required to meet all public health requirements for health-care settings, COVID-19 clinical care guidelines and infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance. Enhanced coordination among the health-care and PSI sectors is essential in order to serve British Columbians now and in the future. PBHME is committed to shared decision-making and regular updates to both sectors.

This guideline is intended to complement, not replace any orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer (PHO) or Ministry of Health policies. This document is intended to guide practice at all HCOs where student practice education occurs and all PSIs that deliver health programming with a required practice education component.

Provincial Student Practice Education Policy
This guideline is informed by the provincial student practice education policy (Ministry of PSFS and the Ministry of Health, July 29, 2022). The provincial policy includes a more fulsome description of partners with a role in student practice education.

It is recommended that all partners who have a role in student practice education review the provincial student practice education policy.

Student Practice Education

Definition
Student Practice Education: The collection of activities coordinated between PSIs and HCOs that support the experiential learning experiences of students that align with the program curriculum requirements.

Student Practice Education is a key component in program design to support Students to acquire the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge required to practice safely and effectively in their field and discipline. Student Practice Education may occur in a variety of settings that deliver health services, including but not limited to, hospitals, long term care settings, public health clinics, primary care sites, collaborative learning units, or virtually.

---

The terms clinical placements, placements, student practice education and/or practice education are used interchangeably throughout the document. The terms in use to denote student practice education varies amongst health education programs.

**Goal and Objectives**

**Goal**
To provide guidance to the HCO and PSI sectors to promote student practice education/clinical placement continuity for all health-care disciplines in B.C. The desired outcome of student practice education activities is supporting the development of a competent, skilled health workforce in B.C., ultimately leading to improved health outcomes in the population.

**Objectives**
1. Create an integrated, flexible approach to support HCOs and PSIs in delivering student practice education and promoting practice education continuity. This principled approach (see Appendix 1: Principles for Practice Education Coordination and Planning) is adaptable in response to changes in COVID-19 transmission in the placement settings and regions, PHO orders, Ministry of Health/PSFS policies and relevant HCO and PSI policies/guidelines.
2. Outline roles and responsibilities of the health and education sectors for student practice education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Appendix 2: Summary of Roles and Responsibilities).
3. Outline a decision-making process to manage significant delays or student practice education placement suspensions (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 PSI Health Program Delay Process).
4. Ensure students are prepared and supported to practice safely according to the most up-to-date PHO orders, BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), Ministry of Health COVID-19 clinical care guidelines, policies and IPC guidance, including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
5. Ensure HCOs and PSIs follow existing provincial Practice Education Guidelines, and all legislated and regulatory standards currently applicable to practice education HCO settings (e.g., WorkSafeBC).
6. Support HCOs and PSIs with updated information as B.C. continues through the pandemic.
7. Ensure HCOs and PSIs follow the provincial Ministries of PSFS and Health’s Student Practice Education Policy directive.

**Scope and COVID-19 Assumptions**

**Scope**
This document provides guidance for HCOs and PSIs to collaboratively plan and manage student practice education during the pandemic for all health-care disciplines in B.C.

This guidance document provides the framework for practice education and promotes:

- Quality and safety of students’ practice education experience.
- Evidence-based practice for HCO settings per BCCDC/Ministry of Health clinical practice guidelines on BCCDC’s COVID-19 webpage for health professionals. Alignment with current regulations, standards and legislation for HCO settings.
- Ongoing clarification of roles and responsibilities for all practice education partnerships.
- Common, inclusive language for a broad range of health disciplines (regulated/unregulated).
- Clarity, consistency and equitableness for planning and practice education placement processes.
• Collaborative planning to minimally disrupt learning continuity for students in health programs. Should significant changes be considered, partners will follow the joint decision-making process (Appendix 3: Decision-making process for significant delays or suspensions).

COVID-19 Assumptions
• COVID-19 is likely going to continue to circulate in B.C., throughout Canada and the world. Transmission is likely to affect different communities in B.C. at different times and to varying degrees.
• While elimination of the COVID-19 virus will not likely occur in the near future, immunization and IPC measures are important practices that health-care workers, including students on clinical placements, must follow to reduce transmission risks for themselves, their patients, other staff students, volunteers, and visitors.

COVID-19 Requirements: Student Practice Education

PHO orders and notices and guidance[^3]: All students and faculty participating in student practice education placements in HCO settings must meet all applicable provincial legislation, PHO orders and notices, and any other Ministry of Health guidance relevant for their profession and clinical care setting.

**Practice Education Guidelines**: Student practice education in B.C. is guided by 22 [Practice Education Guidelines](#) (PEGs). These PEGs support the safety of patients, staff, faculty and students. All of the existing PEGs continue to be applicable with specifications for COVID-19 outlined below.

**Hierarchy of Infection Prevention and Control and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Diseases, Specifically COVID-19 and Student Practice Education**

1. **Public health measures (PHO orders and provincial policies that provide direction to HCOs/PSIs)**

   **Proof of COVID-19 vaccination status information**: Requirements for providing proof of vaccination status information at care locations and preventive measures are provided in three PHO orders below.
   1. [Health Professionals COVID-19 Vaccination Status Information – June 10, 2022](#) (PDF, 477KB)
   2. [Hospital and Community (Health Care and Other Services) COVID-19 Vaccination Status Information and Preventive Measures – September 12, 2022](#) (PDF, 562KB)
   3. [Residential Care COVID-19 Preventive Measures – September 12, 2022](#) (PDF, 510KB)

   • All on-site faculty in HCOs must provide proof of vaccination status as per the PHO orders.
   • All students enrolled in health programs must provide proof of vaccination status as per PHO orders.
   • For students that must be registered with a regulatory college to undergo their structured practical training (student practice education): all three of the above PHO orders apply.
   • For students who are not required to be registered with a regulatory college to undergo student practice education, and are applying or currently enrolled in post secondary health programs, the above PHO orders 2 and 3 apply.

[^3]: [COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)](#), accessed Dec 8, 2022.
Vaccination status record keeping:
- PSIs and HCOs are to follow the above PHO orders in terms of the collection, management and destruction of proof of vaccination status for students and in accordance with their own policies in terms of privacy and security.
- HSPnet is enabled to support PSIs to indicate that students and faculty meet the requirement for vaccination.

Mask use in health-care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic:
- The Ministry of Health’s mask policy requires that regardless of vaccination status, all persons working or training in care locations must wear a medical mask at all times, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking.
- Please see the Ministry of Health’s policy for more information. The policy states all health care facilities must provide medical masks for health-care workers, non-clinical staff, students, faculty, patients and visitors where indicated in this policy.

Mask use in non healthcare settings including vehicle ride along:
- Please see http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks for more information.
- Face coverings are optional for people in all indoor public settings. People may want to continue wearing a mask based on personal choice. Individual businesses and organizations can choose to continue to require mask wearing on their premises.
- Indoor common area mask requirements for employees as part of the Workplace Safety Order is no longer be required. Employers may choose to continue to require wearing masks for operational reasons or in certain settings. Masks are encouraged, but not required, for example when travelling by air, train, public transit or BC Ferries but are no longer required under public health order.
- Some students may choose to wear a mask when in class, lab or during a vehicle ride along. It’s important that students/faculty and staff respect the choices of people and one another.

2. Administrative measures (e.g., screening for symptoms and risk factors and IPC practices)

Student/faculty daily assessment:
- Students and faculty must complete the COVID-19 Health-Care Worker Self-Check and Safety Checklist prior to each shift as per WorkSafeBC requirements. Local HCO sites may have additional requirements for self-assessment or screening.

Other resources: COVID-19 Entrance Screening Tool for Health Care Facilities

Point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA) prior to patient, client or resident interaction:
- Prior to every patient/client/resident interaction, students/faculty/staff must complete a PCRA to assess any infectious risks posed by a patient, situation or procedure to themselves and others. The PCRA helps students/faculty/staff select the appropriate actions and PPE required to minimize the risk of exposure.

Infection prevention and control:
HLTH policy: Infection Prevention and Control for all Health Authorities - Updated Sept. 1, 2021

---

This policy outlines the Ministry of Health’s guidance for IPC practices to prevent and control COVID-19 in HCO facilities, programs and services, as well as community physician offices and outpatient clinics.

3. **Personal measures**
   - Personal measures are actions individuals can take to protect themselves and prevent spread to others. Examples include: washing hands frequently, respecting personal space in waiting areas and break rooms, coughing into one’s elbow or tissue, staying home from student practice education/work when sick and ensuring immunizations are up-to-date.

   **Illness during a practice education shift and testing for COVID-19:**
   - If students or faculty should develop COVID-19 like symptoms while on-site, they should wear a mask, notify a supervisor/preceptor, and must leave the practice setting immediately and follow the current guidelines for testing, care and follow-up and follow BCCDC’s: [Interim Guidance on Return to Work for Health-Care Workers with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 and Management of Health-Care Worker Exposures to COVID-19](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-guidance/Hierarchy_Infection_Prevention_Controls.pdf).
   - The decision to extend self-isolation for HCWs (including students and on site faculty) beyond the timelines in this document should be made in consultation with an individual’s most responsible medical provider. The decision to discontinue self-isolation earlier than recommended should be made in consultation with MHOs, public health and workplace health and safety based on the potential risk of transmission to others.

   **Personal protective equipment (PPE):**
   - HCOs will provide appropriate PPE for all students and on-site faculty.

4. **Outbreak management and other PHO orders with implications for student practice education**

   **COVID-19 outbreak management protocol for long-term care and connected seniors’ assisted living settings (August 22, 2022):**
   - Based on the consideration of multiple risk factors, including vaccination coverage rate among residents, the severity of illness among cases and the rate of increase in cases, a unit/wing/floor/facility may be placed on outbreak under the direction of the MHO, working with the facility leadership and health authority program and IPC teams.
   - Students may be restricted during outbreaks to reduce the risk of transmission.

   **COVID-19 outbreak management protocol for acute care settings (August 22, 2022):**
   - Acute care facilities/units will ensure all health care workers and staff, including students, contracted staff and volunteers, are familiar with their roles and responsibilities regarding COVID-19 outbreak prevention, detection and management in the facility.

5. **Other student practice education considerations**

---


Student assignment:
- The HCO/PSI may adjust the care area or patient assignment to best match the learning objectives, promote patient, staff and student safety, as well as preserve PPE supplies where appropriate.
- Students may provide care to presumptive-positive patients or patients with confirmed COVID-19, when the required competencies, supervision and IPC practices are in place.

Dress code:
- Students/faculty should plan to have a change of clothes to travel to and from the student practice education placement site and clothes to work in. Students/faculty must wash placement clothes between shifts.

Local policy/guidelines:
- PSIs and HCOs should share any site/program specific guidance related to COVID-19 response with students/faculty prior to the start of the student practice education experience.

Preceptor/clinician supervision:
- Preceptors or clinicians who supervise students should review and provide relevant site or program guidelines with the student and on-site faculty (see Appendix 5).

Resources and Supports

PSI/ HCO resources
- Resources for student practice education in B.C. can be found at: https://spe.healthcarebc.ca/
- Each PSI has resources in place to support students. To learn more, visit the website for each PSI.
- HCOs have developed specific policies, procedures, learning resources and information to support students and faculty returning to clinical settings. Resources are posted on the following websites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19 resources by health authority / HCO</th>
<th>SPE resources by health authority/ HCO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Nations Health Authority</td>
<td>First Nations Health Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser Health</td>
<td>Fraser Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Health</td>
<td>Interior Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island Health</td>
<td>Island Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Health</td>
<td>Northern Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence Health Care</td>
<td>Providence Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Health Services Authority</td>
<td>Provincial Health Services Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Coastal Health</td>
<td>Vancouver Coastal Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition to Practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Students graduating from health programs during the pandemic may have different practice education experiences compared to other students before the pandemic. It is important that both PSIs and HCOs recognize and consider new approaches that may be required to support a successful transition to practice, such as HCOs providing enhanced transition-to-practice support.
Appendix 1: Principles for SPE Planning and Coordination

Infection, Prevention and Control
- HCOs and PSIs continue to prioritize safety, training and support for staff, faculty and students to protect them against the spread of COVID-19 including:
  - Following PHO orders and the Ministry of Health’s policies on COVID-19.
  - Ensuring all staff, faculty and students meet proof of COVID-19 vaccination status requirements.
  - Implementing IPC measures (public health, environmental/administrative, personal measures and PPE) to help create a safe placement and care environment for all.
  - Ensuring faculty and students conduct a daily COVID-19 Health-Care Worker Self-Check and Safety Checklist before each practice education shift.
  - Emphasizing to staff, faculty and students that they must stay home when they are sick.
  - Providing pandemic education and resources to support care (e.g., clinical care/IPC guidelines).
  - Follow the Ministry of Health’s direction as posted on the BCCDC web-site regarding return to work and management of exposures for health care workers (students and faculty).

Continuity of Student Practice Education
- PSIs’ health programs have a social mandate to prepare the health workforce and ensure a continuous supply of competent graduates. HCOs recognize their role in supporting the education and preparation of students through the provision of practice education experiences. HCOs are encouraged to consult with PSI partners, and their leadership team to identify strategies to promote practice education continuity.

Collaboration
- Collaboration between PSFS, HLTH, PSIs, HCOs and regulatory bodies is an essential component for maintaining practice education continuity throughout the pandemic. Collaboration should be facilitated, centrally supported and coordinated on a provincial basis.

Competency-based
- Practice education is delivered within a competency-based approach that allows flexibility in determining the range of experiences, settings and the clinical hours required to achieve competence. Emerging health needs and a surge in services or reduction of services may present alternate opportunities to develop essential competencies.

Integrated preparedness planning
- Education and health services may experience changes and fluctuations based on COVID-19 transmission in the community, province, and country. Both sectors will need to develop integrated preparedness plans and monitoring systems that align with emerging health needs and evolving student practice education requirements.
- Integrated planning can promote the adoption of innovative approaches including new settings and designs that are responsive to meet the evolving needs of the health system during the pandemic.

---

## Appendix 2: Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>PSI action</th>
<th>HCO action</th>
<th>Provincial/government supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Coordination and planning for practice education placements | Enhanced collaborative planning to reduce the impact of COVID-19 transmission on practice education requirements. | Enhanced collaborative planning to reduce the impact of COVID-19 transmission on practice education requirements. | HLTH/PSFS: Develop policy and communication with sectors.  
PHSA HSPnet: Monitor aggregate student activity data.  
Guidance updates based on policy or guidelines changes. |
| Practice education placement status (suspend, modify, resume, proceed) | Consider the student’s level and experience, safety, learning environment and continuity, modifications.  
Consider any prioritization of practice education placements as per COVID-19 guidelines.  
Communicate and collaborate with HCO, PSFS, Ministry of Health, and the local MHO. | Consider the student’s level and experience, safety, learning environment and continuity, modifications.  
Implement Medical Health Officer site-specific orders.  
Collaborate with PSI, PSFS, HLTH, and the local MHO. | HLTH/PSFS: Provide policy direction or guidance to the sectors on practice education placement continuity.  
PHO: PHO orders to restrict placements or permit placements with appropriate precautions/measures. PHO orders for all facilities where practice education occurs (e.g., proof of vaccination). |
| Pre-practice education placement requirements | Ensure students are aware of all PHO orders that have practice education requirements (e.g., proof of COVID vaccination).  
Ensure students and faculty are aware of and will implement ongoing specific guidelines for COVID-19.  
Communicate any issues with delays or barriers in completing requirements. | Collaborate to resolve any issues with delays or barriers in completing requirements.  
Provide orientation topics and resources. | PHO: PHO Orders outline the vaccination requirements for students and on-site faculty at care locations named in the PHO orders, as well as the roles and responsibilities of PSIs, HCOs, staff, faculty and students. |
| Infection, prevention and control (IPC) practices | Ensure students are adhering to personal safety measures, including frequent hand hygiene, use of PPE, respiratory hygiene, staying home when ill, and respecting personal space.  
Teach donning/doffing procedures. | Provide learning resources, policies and protocols and job aids to support IPC practices in clinical settings.  
Follow IPC practices for COVID-19. | HLTH/BCCDC: Provide IPC guidance for various health-care settings for health professionals on BCCDC’s webpage. |
| PPE | Fit testing of N95 respirators for all staff as required.  
https://spe.healthcarebc.ca/Documents/fit-testing-memo-Dec%206%2021.pdf  
Modify placement areas and patient assignments as required. | Provide appropriate PPE to students and faculty for placements.  
Modify practice education placement areas and patient assignments as required. | Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA) |
Appendix 3: Decision-Making Process: Significant Delays or Placement Suspensions

The decision-making process must comply with any direction given by the PHO and/or MHOs. In monitoring the status of COVID-19 in B.C., the PHO may issue specific orders for the health and education sectors or general guidance to the public that also applies to student practice education settings. MHOs may issue additional orders/guidance for their region of responsibility.

Both PSIs and HCOs have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their students, faculty, staff, patients, and volunteers. As the circumstances of the pandemic evolve, either or both sectors (Education and Health) may assess the care and learning environment and decide that practice education rotations need to be suspended, delayed or modified from the original request.

To ensure that the decision is informed by an appropriate assessment of risk, consultation with the local MHO is highly recommended where there could be significant delays or impacts on educational attainment for students and/or quality care for patients.

Any adjustment to the practice education preparation of students will have significant impacts on the future availability of the health system workforce.

Examples of the above terms:
- Suspended: clinical placements that have started and need to be paused part way through.
- Delayed: a placement that does not start when scheduled (see appendix 4).
- Modified: a placement with significant changes in location or duration.

Longer term delays/suspensions of student practice education: requirement of PSIs/ HCOs

PSIs: If PSIs are considering cancelling or significantly modifying a health program cohort or practice education placement, they should work with the Ministry of PSFS and their HCO partners to explore alternatives before a final decision is made. To ensure that the decision is informed by an appropriate assessment of risk, consultation with the local MHO is highly recommended.

HCOs: HCOs considering cancelling or significantly reducing placements should work with their senior leaders, the Ministry of Health, other HCOs and their PSI partners to explore alternatives to mitigate impacts on student progression before a final decision is made. To ensure that the decision is informed by an appropriate assessment of risk, consultation with the local MHO is highly recommended.
Appendix 4: Post-Secondary Institution Health Program Delay Management Process

1. PSI notifies PSFS of potential health program delay
2. PSFS discusses full range of options with PSI
3. Workforce demand information is reviewed
4. PSFS consults with HLTH program lead
5. System capacity in program area is reviewed
6. HLTH/PSFS facilitate discussion with PSI and HCO
7. Ensure communication to all levels
8. Consultation with MHO as appropriate
9. Notify Planning Board for Health and Medical Education (PBHME) – standing information item
10. Further direction from PBHME
11. PSFS/HLTH work with PSI and HCOs
12. Notify other impacted areas as appropriate
Appendix 5: Summary for Responsibilities and Related Resources for Student Supervision in a Placement Site during COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing/Activity</th>
<th>Clinicians/ preceptors, site leadership, PSI faculty responsibilities: actions/resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Before placement begins:**     | 1. Review the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Orders located in this document and other order variances to determine if your discipline and the sites where you provide services are under a PHO Order. If yes, ensure the student placement is in compliance with the Order.  
3. Review the existing provincial Practice Education Guidelines. |
| **During the placement:**        | 1. Provide all site-specific and Ministry of Health infection control COVID-19 guidelines to the student.  
2. Ensure the student follows required processes and protocols:  
   - Complete the COVID-19 HCW Safety Checklist prior to each shift.  
   - Complete a PCRA assessment prior to every patient/client interaction.  
   - Follow the process for what to do if the student becomes symptomatic.  
   - Guide students in accessing resources and supports.  
3. Provide appropriate PPE to students and faculty for placements.  
4. Model/monitor all COVID-19 IPC practices, including the Ministry of Health’s policy on mask use in health care facilities, to prevent transmission of the virus.  
5. Modify placement areas and patient assignments as required in concert with the post-secondary institution.  
6. Determine whether students will be able to provide care to presumptive-positive patients or patients with confirmed COVID-19, ensuring the required competencies, supervision and IPC practices are in place.  
7. Follow the direction of the regional MHO and the outbreak management protocols for long term care and assisted living sites and acute care. |
| **Troubleshooting, should placement continuity issues develop:** | 1. If issues arise during the placement that may affect the successful completion of the placement, clinicians are advised to contact their site leaders and the post-secondary representative as early as possible.  
2. To ensure that the decision is informed by an appropriate assessment of risk, consultation with the local Medical Health Officer is highly recommended.  
   **HCOs**  
   - HCOs considering cancelling student placements should work with their senior leaders, HLTH, other HCOs and PSI partners to explore possible alternatives before a final decision is made. |
Guideline Contributors, Reviewers and Amendments

Contributors

- Ministry of Health, Nursing Policy Secretariat
- Provincial Health Services Authority, Academic Education

Reviewers

- Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- Ministry of Health, Public Health, Prevention and Planning Branch (Communicable Disease)
- Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills, Post Secondary Policy and Programs Division
- Ministry of Health, Allied Health Policy Secretariat
- Provincial Student Practice Education Coordination Committee

Updates

Initial guideline: August 12, 2020
First update: February 1, 2022
Second update: January 24, 2023