

Occupational Therapy Student Working Hours in Practice Guidance

The following guide has been produced for Students, Academics, Placement Co-ordinators, and Placement Educators to enable all parties to work closely together to ensure that the same information is given to students and placement partners.

Principles of The European Working Time Directive [EWTD] (1998)

Students will not normally be in clinical placement for any period longer than 14 weeks therefore the EWTD rule is not legally binding. However, students and mentors must be aware of the requirements of the Placement Provider's Working Time Regulations Policy for protecting the Health and Safety of Staff from the risks of working excessive hours.

Student Working Hours in Practice

- Students will undertake shifts which reflect the hours of the placement provider from the outset of their programme.
- Students may work weekends from commencement of the programme as appropriate to the practice setting.
- **The shifts that students work will be identified by the practice area.**
- There may be an opportunity for a student to work flexibly. Students should not expect flexible working, as it may not be appropriate and this can only be arranged with the agreement of the placement educator.
- Students should normally work 37.5 hours per week in practice. **This includes half a day study leave for a full week of placement which is counted in the placement hours.**
- If occupational therapy students are absent from placement for any reason, they should follow the procedures set out by Sheffield Hallam University and the placement setting. Students are required to complete a minimum of 80% of the placement in order to pass a placement. **It should be noted that if a student completes the minimum possible hours on each placement, they will not achieve the 1000 hours required for professional registration.**
- The hours worked, excluding breaks but including study, must be recorded in the student's assessment documentation and signed by the placement educator. The record of placement attendance spreadsheet should also be completed and signed off.

Students' shift hours and breaks

In order to provide clarity on breaks the University is proposing the following:

- **During an 8 hour shift, a rest period of at least 30 minutes should be taken.** Again, the time allocated for this break should not be claimed for in the hours worked. So, if a student works 8 hours, with a 30 minute break, they will record 7.5 hours worked in their attendance record. In addition, a concessionary 15 minutes break during the shift may be taken which can be included in the hours worked.
- Flexibility about when breaks are taken must be negotiated within the placement area. In certain circumstances timing of breaks may be delayed. However, it is important that students recognise the effects of fatigue on performance and concentration. If a student expresses personal problems the mentor should encourage the student to contact their Student Support Officer.

Bank Holidays

- Whilst on placement, occupational therapy students will only be required to attend placements on bank holidays if this reflects the working pattern of the placement. This should be negotiated with the placement educator and where relevant alternative day off should be arranged.
- These specific days off are recorded in the Attendance record as a Bank Holiday [BH] by practice staff and/or student and **these hours are NOT included** in the weekly total.
- **Student occupational therapists may be concerned that due to the Bank Holidays, the total number of hours worked on placement will be less, but this is accounted for in the training plan and they are not required to make up these hours.**

Attendance Monitoring

- The ideal is that students completing the programme attend for 100% of both the Theory and Practice requirements of the programme.
- However, it is recognised that students may face a number of challenges during the programme which require a period of sickness or special/compassionate leave.
- It is important for the student to recognise they should keep sickness and absence to a minimum as future employers are often interested in the number of days and the number occasions when sickness and/or absences have occurred.
- The University will monitor closely sickness and absence to ensure students are eligible for registration as qualified practitioners.

Reporting Sickness and Special/Compassionate Leave whilst on Placement

- It is the **responsibility of the student** to notify their Placement if they are not able to attend.
- Students must ensure that they formally notify the placement area, **using the correct local procedures**, if they unable to attend placement for any reason.
- Good practice is to call before the shift is due to start and students should ensure that a clear message is left and that a record is kept of the name of the person spoken with and the date/time of the phone call.
- Students must call on each day they are not attending placement, unless they have a medical certificate which indicates they will be off sick for a period of time.

Reporting Sickness and Special/Compassionate Leave whilst on Placement

- In addition, students should report sickness on the first day following the guidance below:

Please note that students should report both '**Practice Placement Absence**' and **Taught Session Absence**' by completing the [Student Absence Form](#). If not currently logged in to Google Drive, clicking on the link will require the student to log in using their university email address as per the below example (**username@my.shu.ac.uk**). This will then take the student to the Sheffield Hallam University login page where they would login using their single sign on Sheffield Hallam University login details. The HWB Student Absence Google Form for will then open for completion.

New Google Form [Student Absence Form](#)
Example Email Login username@my.shu.ac.uk

The image shows two overlapping login forms. On the left is a Google 'Sign in' form with the text 'to continue to Forms'. The email field contains 'b2058763@my.shu.ac.uk' and is circled in red. Below it are links for 'Forgot email?' and 'Not your computer? Use InPrivate windows to sign in. Learn more'. At the bottom left is a 'Create account' link and a blue 'NEXT' button. On the right is the Sheffield Hallam University login page. It features the university logo and a text box asking for a username and password. The text says: 'Please enter your username and password to access the SHU systems relevant to your area of work or study. Your username and password should be the same as those you currently use to log into SHU applications.' Below this is a link for 'Forgotten your password?'. The 'Username' field contains 'b2058763' and is circled in red. The 'Password' field contains a series of dots. A 'Logon' button is at the bottom.

- The student will be prompted to complete all details required to record their sickness absence.
- If the student has been sick and this has been reported correctly, according to local and SHU policies, then this should be recorded as 'sick' [S] in the attendance record and verified by the mentor.
- If the student does not follow the correct procedures for reporting sickness to the placement, then this must be documented as 'Absent' [A] in their attendance record and verified by the mentor.
- **When returning from sickness/leave, it is important that students notify the University and the Placement Area.**
- If sickness exceeds 5 days, the student is required to submit a medical certificate to the Student Support Officer.
- **Any unauthorised absence** should be documented as a cause for concern by the mentor in the Student's Assessment documents and the link lecturer notified.
- If a student is **off sick for longer than a week** or more than once in a placement, the link lecturer must be notified.
- Link lecturers should follow SHU **Process for dealing with Absence from the Course**, completing the required proforma [see section about consistent poor attendance].
- **Special Leave/Compassionate Leave** can only be agreed by the Student Support Officer/Course Leader or appropriate Level Manager. Students should report their absence to the placement area as described above and on the first day of absence, contact the Student Support Officer/Level manager to discuss their needs.
- **If a student is referred to the Occupational Health Department or A&E whilst on duty, please inform the Student Support Officer (0114 225 5442, 0114 225 2223 or 0114 225 2561).**

Consistently poor attendance

- Students need to meet the HCPC requirements for number of clinical hours and consistently poor attendance may mean they fail to do this.
- In addition, poor attendance may impact upon achievement of competence.
- Students with poor attendance on placement will be seen by their academic advisor, course lead and may be referred to the Fitness to Practice panel.

- The aim of this process is to ensure that the student receives the support they require as well as to ensure that they understand the long term implications of consistently poor attendance.
- **It is important to note that if attendance continues to be poor, the student may need to temporarily withdraw from the programme and join a later cohort.**
- **Or, the student can be asked to leave the course.**