

Occupational Therapy Student Working Hours in Practice-Based Learning 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 on practice-based learning 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 practice-based learning provider from the outset of their programme.
- Students may work weekends from commencement of the programme as appropriate to the practice-based learning setting.
- **The shifts that students work will be identified by the practice-based learning 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 in consultation with the university (if required).
- Students should normally work 37.5 hours per week in practice-based learning. **This includes half a day study leave (3.5 hours) for a full week of practice-based learning which is counted in the total hours.**
- If occupational therapy students are absent from practice-based learning for any reason, they should follow the procedures set out by Sheffield Hallam University and the practice-based learning setting. Students are required to complete a minimum of 80% of the practice-based learning experience in order to pass. **It should be noted that if a student completes the minimum possible hours on each practice-based learning experience, 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 practice-based learning 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 minute 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 practice-based learning 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 educator should encourage the student to contact their Academic Advisor/Student Support Officer.

Bank Holidays

- Whilst on placement, occupational therapy students will only be required to attend practice-based learning on bank holidays if this reflects the working pattern of the practice-based learning experience. This should be negotiated with the 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 the educator 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 practice-based learning 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.

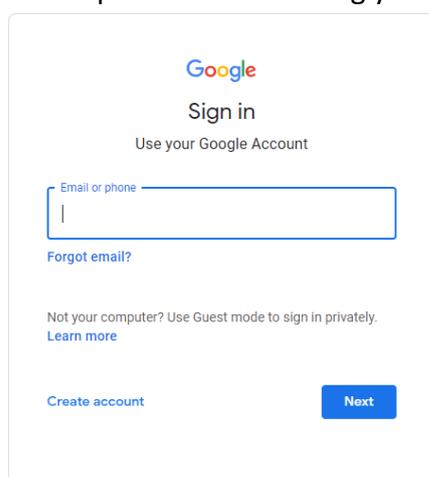
Reporting Sickness and Special/Compassionate Leave whilst on Placement

- It is the **responsibility of the student** to notify their educator if they are not able to attend.
- Students must ensure that they formally notify the practice-based learning area, **using the correct local procedures**, if they unable to attend 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 practice-based learning, 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 Practice-Based Learning

- 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 [Sickness and Absence Reporting Form](#). You must sign in to complete this form using your university username and password.



- 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.**
- The university practice liaison tutors should be informed as soon as possible when a student feels their illness is likely to make them absent from placement for more than 5 days.
- After a lengthy period of absence due to illness, the university has the right to require the student to obtain Occupational Health clearance stating that they are fit to return to placement. Placement providers, similarly, if they have concerns about a student's health may require a student to attend their Occupational Health departments to confirm their fitness to return to placement.
- Students who have a period of absence due to illness prior to their placement may also be required to obtain occupational health clearance stating that they are fit to start their placement.
- **Any unauthorised absence** should be documented as a cause for concern by the educator in the assessment documents and the link lecturer notified.
- **Special Leave/Compassionate Leave** can only be agreed by the Student Support Officer/Course Leader or Placement Lead/Coordinator. Students should report their absence to the placement area as described above and on the first day of absence, contact the university 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 2222) and the academic team (s.lacey@shu.ac.uk)**

Consistently poor attendance

- Students need to meet the HCPC requirements for number of practice-based learning 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 practice-based learning will be seen by their academic advisor, placement coordinator and/or 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.**