

Dress Code for Clinical Settings

Policy Code:	MS-CUR-015-022026
Policy owner:	University of Buckingham Medical School Phase Leads
Implementation date:	February 2026
Review date:	May 2026
Next Review due:	May 2027
Related policies:	n/a
Related procedures:	n/a

Contents

1. Legislative context.....	2
2. Policy statement	2
3. Definitions.....	2
4. Purpose.....	2
5. Scope	2
6. Responsibility.....	3
7. Relationship with other policies/procedures	3
8. Policy Details.....	3
8.1 General Requirements.....	3
8.2 Dress Requirements	4
8.3 Managing non-compliance	6
8.4 Informal Stage	6
8.5 Formal Stage.....	6
8.6 Exceptions to Policy.....	6

Version History

Version	Approved by	Revisions made	Date
V1	SLT		23 rd August 2022
V2	SLT	The introduction of scrubs in Phase 2.	3 rd February 2026

1. Legislative context

This policy ensures that students adhere to the requirement to wear appropriate clothing in clinical settings to comply with professional values and minimise the risk of infection transfer. This forms a key part of ensuring patient, employee and students' safety, and maintains trust in the profession for patients, carers/relatives and visitors. It is also essential to ensure that the students and the Medical School fully comply with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (DH2015).

2. Policy statement

This policy provides guidance to medical students in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the course on the minimum standards of dress and hygiene required at all times in clinical settings.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, clinical settings are defined as any location where service users receive direct or physical care or where patients may be present.

In Phase 2 this refers to all parts of the hospital Trust or general practice and includes educational settings. In Phase 1 this refers to Clinical Skills Foundation Course (CSFC) sessions and any other sessions where patients may be present.

4. Purpose

This policy has been developed to ensure students understand their responsibilities in relation to the standards of dress and hygiene required to portray a professional image, at all times, and the requirements under Infection Prevention and Control and Health and Safety Legislation.

The dress code includes:

- Acceptable dress & hygiene standards for medical students in clinical areas.
- Correct and professional image for all medical students.

5. Scope

The Dress Code Policy is mandatory and applies to all UBMS medical students, ensuring that high standards of personal presentation and professional image are maintained at all times.

6. Responsibility

- a. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with the provisions of this policy and procedure. Further to this, students are responsible for ensuring that they present themselves in a manner that is professional, preserves the health and safety of patients and colleagues, and is in line with the Medical School's values.

7. Relationship with other policies/procedures

- a. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the appropriate Trust infection control policy. Most Trusts have strict 'bare below the elbow' infection control policies and rules about personal protective equipment (PPE). Students are expected to adhere to both Trust and University regulations. If conflict arises between these regulations, they can be discussed and clarified with the Undergraduate Education Lead.
- b. Students must ensure compliance with relevant clinical policies e.g. Bare Below the Elbows; Standard Infection Control Precautions and Zero Tolerance Hand Hygiene.

8. Policy Details

8.1 General Requirements

Item	Policy requirement
Identity	All Students must wear a visible Medical School approved name badge which states their name and designation. Students working with children and young people may wear an additional name badge suitable for the age group being cared for. Photographic identification badges must be carried/ worn at all times in addition to the name badge and be presented as required. When scrubs are appropriate attire, the label identifying the wearer as a medical student from the University of Buckingham must be visible.
Lanyards	All students should wear a lanyard that identifies them as a medical student. Badges/pins (magnetic or stick) must not be attached to the lanyards. Lanyards must be kept clean and replaced if visibly soiled. If undertaking clinical care, then the lanyard should be placed out of the way, ideally in a pocket.
Personal Hygiene	All students should maintain a high level of personal hygiene and appearance. Clothing should be clean and tidy and in a good state of repair.

Headwear	Turbans and kippots, veils (Christian or nikab) and headscarves (hijabs and jilbabs) are supported on religious grounds. The latter should be shoulder length, scarves must not drape freely when providing direct clinical care. Full face veils are not permitted. If working clinically, these must be laundered on a daily basis and changed if they become contaminated as per IPC Standard Precautions Policy.
Tattoos	Tattoos that could be deemed inappropriate or offensive to any patient, employee or student must be covered.
Jewellery	Students should ensure that their jewellery does not pose a risk to themselves or others. If worn, jewellery must be discreet and body piercings should be discreet and kept to a minimum. Wrist watches are not permitted to be worn in clinical areas. Rings, if worn must be limited to a wedding band. If a tie/necklace is worn it must be tucked in to avoid it coming into contact with a patient during direct patient care. Medic - alert jewellery can be worn; however, those who may have clinical or direct patient contact should not wear a bracelet.

8.2 Dress Requirements

Students should ensure that their clothes are suitable for work purposes, are always clean and in a good state of repair, maintaining a standard of professionalism. They should be free from smells associated with cigarettes and vapes and/or body odour. Strong perfume should not be worn.

Medical school designed scrubs can be worn by students in secondary care locations as an authorized medical student uniform, but this must be in accordance with local guidelines. No scrubs should be worn in primary care or mental health provision settings.

All students must dress in a manner that is sensitive to the social, cultural, diversity and equality needs of other staff, patients and carers/visitors.

Item	Policy Requirement
Footwear	Footwear should be appropriate for the environment. Closed toe shoes and low heels should be worn to afford protection for the student. Soft soled shoes should be worn by the student in ward areas to reduce noise.
Stethoscopes	Stethoscopes must not be worn around the neck unless used for patient assessment.
Hair	Long hair (below collar level) must be tied back and put about the collar when working in a clinical setting. Hair fastenings should be minimal (size and type). Tied hair should not “swing” as this presents a safety hazard.
Facial hair, nails	Facial hair should be neatly trimmed. Fingernails should be cut short and only neutral nail polish is to be worn.
Religious/ Cultural beliefs allowances	The wearing of items for religious/ cultural reasons is, in most circumstances, welcomed by the Medical School providing Health and Safety is not compromised. When working clinically, students who wear facial coverings for religious reasons are required to remove them whilst on duty. This is to ensure that students are identifiable and to enhance engagement and communication with patients, visitors and colleagues.

Item	Policy Requirement
Examples of acceptable clothing for students	Collared tucked in shirt, polo shirt, sweater, tie (optional), jacket, formal style trousers. Skirt (not mini, should be to the knee). Dress (not mini). Tailored trousers. Jacket or smart cardigan. Clothing to fulfil religious, cultural and ethnic needs. Formal style enclosed boots/shoes. Black/navy trainers may be worn, if smart in appearance. Heels should not be more than 6 cm high. Medical school designed scrubs can be worn by students in secondary care locations as an authorized medical student uniform, but this must be in accordance with local guidelines.
Examples of unacceptable clothing for students	Jeans/cargo trousers, T-shirt (unless under a shirt and as an agreed promotional activity), sweatshirts, hoodies, sports clothing, shorts, camouflage, miniskirts/dresses. Sun, beach or spaghetti strap dresses/tops. Halter tops or tops with bare shoulders. Any clothing that is overly revealing of the cleavage, stomach, midriff or thighs is unacceptable. Any clothing that has large logos or branding. No scrubs should be worn in primary care or mental health provision settings. Flip-flops, stiletto heels, sport shoes. Open-toed shoes, sandals.
Personal Protective Equipment	If direct patient care is required, then personal protective equipment must be used as per the Standard Precaution Policy. In addition, “bare below the elbows” rule must be adhered to when entering clinical areas

8.3 Managing non-compliance

Students that are deemed to be contravening the provisions of this policy will be asked to adhere to the recommendations as soon as practicably possible.

Failure to comply with this policy is classed as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action. Any disciplinary issues shall be investigated and managed in line with the Medical School's Policy & Procedures. There are two stages of managing non-compliance in respect of this policy.

8.4 Informal Stage

On the first occasion, the non-compliant student will be instructed to return home and re-present in more appropriate clothing. The University will write to the students to confirm the expected standards in terms of their dress and to inform them that further instances of non-compliance may lead to a formal proceeding in line with the Medical School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

8.5 Formal Stage

On any subsequent occasion of non-compliance, the student will again be instructed to return home and represent for work in more appropriate clothing.

Further to this, the failure to comply will be formally investigated in line with the Medical School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and the student may be subject to a formal sanction via the professionalism concerns process.

8.6 Exceptions to Policy

The University of Buckingham welcomes the diversity of appearance that people from different religious and belief backgrounds can bring. However, there may be health and safety or professional considerations that would restrict certain modes of dress in particular contexts, for example when working on placement. In such cases, it will be necessary for the university to consult with staff/students and placement providers who may be affected by a restriction.

Any student who wishes to wear a particular type of clothing or jewellery for cultural or religious reasons should discuss their requirements with Professional Development Team.

There will be occasions and exceptions within this policy for those with disability, either permanent or following injury. Should there be an additional need or requirement, such exceptions will be agreed in discussion with the Professional Development Team.