

Dear Phase 2 students

I hope you and your families are well wherever you have been spending the lockdown.

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your engagement and involvement with the phase 2 online teaching we have delivered so far. Your comments and feedback have been truly useful, and we have acted on your ideas where we can. Whilst the situation is not ideal, many of you have praised aspects of our online teaching particularly the input from the Clinical Educators, which has been outstanding.

Return to clinical placements

However we do now need to consider your return to clinical placements and many of you will have seen the attached document from the Medical Schools Council (MSC) that states students will need to return to the clinical environment in order to meet the GMC Outcomes for Graduates (2018) and to progress in the 2020/21 academic year.

We have been in discussion with our placement providers, sought national advice and kept a close eye on the Government plans to end the lockdown. Our current thinking is that Phase 2 students will return to clinical placements on **Monday 17th August**, starting with a Trust induction, with information on how to manage in a Covid-19 clinical environment and importantly training in use of PPE. Your clinical teaching will commence from the start of the junior or senior rotation on **Monday 24th August** with a series of six, four-week blocks and we will produce a timetable as soon as possible including your proposed holiday dates.

Concerns about return to teaching

In order to ensure that you can work in a way that minimises risk to yourself and patients we will be asking you all to complete an individual risk assessment before your return to clinical placements. We are aware that for many of you there will be concerns about returning to the clinical environment either due to your underlying health condition or because of a relative who is shielding. Please speak as soon as possible about this to Claire Stocker Claire.stocker@buckingham.ac.uk who will refer you to our Occupational Health Department.

Others of you maybe unsure if you will be able to return from abroad by this date to attend your clinical placements and we are aware the international travel situation is changing on a daily basis. As I write, we are uncertain whether the government will impose a 14-day quarantine on travellers returning to the UK and this needs to be factored into any travel arrangements that you make. Again, speak to Claire Stocker if you have any concerns about this.

Content of the Blocks

Some of you have expressed concern about a loss of clinical teaching in this time away from your placement and how you will be able to catch up what has been missed in shortened blocks.

We are currently working with your placement providers so that they are aware of the content of online teaching and can plan for what is required in the clinical workplace in order for you to meet GMC Outcomes. We want to ensure that the reconstructed four-week blocks focus as much as possible on experiential learning. You have already received a large amount of the knowledge base of the Block via the online teaching and we intend to signpost to that but not repeat it in the Block. All the Block Leads are confident that they will be able to deliver the vast majority of teaching in this way.

Changes to teaching

As suggested in the MSC document, we cannot expect clinical teaching to remain the same in the post Covid-19 world. There has been alteration to some NHS services in our Trusts such as delivery of elective surgery being moved to different sites. Many clinics are now run via telephone or video

consultations and it is likely that this will continue to some extent. As doctors are getting used to consult with patients in this way, we will also need to adapt our teaching style to these new methods of clinical practice and ensure you experience this new way of practising medicine for the future.

Elective and SSC

All medical schools have uncertainty about electives and specialty choice components (SSC) at this time, and this is the same for UBMS. These are mentioned specifically in the MSC document. I know many of you are keen to make plans and secure your preferred elective, but we must be cautious on two counts:

- A movement of students into healthcare provision settings around the world may not be permitted in March 2021 – at the moment this is looking unlikely.
- We have been asked to keep some flexibility in our four-week block system for unforeseen events including the possibility of a second wave and subsequent lockdowns.

If we are unable to teach all the clinical competencies or if students become unwell then we may need to use the elective and SSC time to ensure that we can deliver the core teaching so that you are able to graduate.

Assessments

I know many of you are concerned about assessment and how this will be affected by Covid-19 and I want to address content, dates and the means of assessment delivery. Further detail on assessment will be provided separately.

- **Content:** For the *junior rotation*, the IPE assessment will consist of what you have been able to cover in the 20/21 academic year. Any significant shortfalls in what should have been covered in the junior rotation will need to be covered in the senior year. For the *senior rotation* we do not have that option as the GMC have told us that students must still fulfil all of the Outcomes for Graduates in 2021. This is why we want to keep the option of using the elective and SSC time to cover any additional teaching required.
- **Dates:** Currently the assessment dates are remaining as advertised on Moodle. However, with the changes to teaching and working practices it is possible the assessment dates may need to change. In particular the date for FPE may need to be delayed by one or two weeks in order to complete all the teaching. We will of course give you full notice of any date changes as soon as they are decided.
- **Assessment delivery:** Our priority is holding robust and appropriate assessments that allow you to graduate and progress on time. As with other medical schools, UBMS has been forced to change the way your assessments are delivered at short notice. We have run online written exams with remote proctoring software and have successfully run a remote OSCE for a small number of students. It is likely with whatever social distancing rules are in place in 2021, we will need to run part or all of these assessments remotely. We will ensure that you have ample notice and are given a chance to have a mock on any new assessment platform.

I hope this letter has answered some of your questions and we are all happy to answer other questions as far as we are able. We are keen to continue to work together with you to address other issues as they arise. We are aiming to be as dynamic as possible to respond to a changing national situation and ensure your learning trajectories are minimally affected.

Returning to clinical placements will have its challenges, but we are working through the uncertainties the current crisis presents. As a student body, I feel confident in your resilience and flexibility, which will continue to be essential traits in our profession even when normality resumes.

Stay safe

Best wishes

Jo

Professor Joanne Harris MRCP MRCGP MA (Med Ed) PFHEA

Dean and Director of Medical Education