



Joint Statement on COVID-19

Dear All,

As you can imagine, the COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in a lot of confusion between students and the requirements regarding clinical placement and attending class. The below information is the most up-to-date information that has been provided from the faculty and from ongoing discussions.

Travel and Overseas Placements

The JMP has suspended "all university related international travel by enrolled medical students" and that **"approval for travel has been revoked"**. It has been **heavily encouraged that students do not travel for personal use**, as they will require a 2 week self-isolation period on their return. Faculty have determined that **students overseas are able to return home without risk of failing their placement in the interest of safety**.

As this travel suspension has come from the University and not the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), both universities' travel insurance policies are **not** covering losses due to cancellation. Students who have organised their own travel insurance for placement may be able to recover funds with a letter of support from the university. Both universities are currently investigating potential recovery of costs. Some placement providers refuse to provide refunds on placements, however we are looking into this.

The New Colombo Plan program, administered by DFAT, is also seeking returns on all grants for cancelled placements. We understand that some students have spent part or all of this grant already. **Please contact faculty about this - if you have only spent part of your grant, it is recommended that you return all remaining funds.**

Pre-Clinical/Campus Teaching

The JMP is **investigating alternative teaching methods** for on-campus classes to prevent transmission and spread of COVID-19. This potentially may include zoom classes, recorded lectures and cancellation of some non-essential classes. Further information should be provided soon regarding this.

Students who are self-isolating will be able to participate in classes via teleconference or videoconference and have this marked as valid attendance, even without a medical certificate.

Clinical Placements

At this stage, **students will remain in clinical settings** however, **risk avoidance strategies will be put in place to limit the risk to students**. GPs have been asked to triage potential COVID-19 cases and avoid exposing medical students. The faculty are considering **alternate pathways** to supplement any placements lost.

There may be a situation where **final year students** may **voluntarily** be asked to help with the increased in demand for health services - we are expecting more information on this soon.

Students who are at risk of severe COVID-19 infection (i.e. immunocompromised and pregnant students, and students with respiratory conditions) and those living with those at risk of severe infection (i.e. students living with or caring for elderly, immunocompromised or pregnant relatives or friends) should contact faculty regarding alternative options to placement.

Self-Isolation, Quarantine, and Attendance

In addition to student concerns regarding returning to clinical practice or presenting with symptoms:

- 1) Any student who **has returned from international travel** should not attend their general practice placement until 2 weeks has passed from their return date.
- 2) Any student who **develops symptoms suggestive of COVID-19** (e.g. fever, sore throat, cough) after **a recent return from international travel** should follow the directive to call the health direct helpline 1800 022 222 for advice or call their GP or Emergency Department and follow advice; do not attend clinical practice before calling.
- 3) **If any student develops such symptoms, even if they haven't travelled recently, they should seek advice from their GP before attending their clinical placement.**

If you are unable to seek a GP due to Upper Respiratory Tract Symptoms, students should self-isolate until symptoms resolve. If you are unable to get a medical certificate due to illness or long GP waiting times, the JMP will accept a Statutory Declaration as evidence of illness and self-isolation.

Overall, the University remains **committed to students progressing through the course** and meeting requirements, including graduation requirements for 5th Years, and to **encourage students to self isolate if it's indicated.**

The Australian Medical Students' Association is working on a national level to advocate for student concerns during this outbreak. You can read their statement here: <http://bit.ly/2wScsMx>

Please say safe. If you are concerned, please contact your Course Coordinator for further advice.

- **B.Med:** Dr Charles Douglas (charles.douglas@newcastle.edu.au)
- **Teachout:** Professor Jodie Simpson (jodie.simpson@newcastle.edu.au)
- **M.D.:** Associate Professor Lisa Lampe (lisa.lampe@newcastle.edu.au)

UNMS and UNEMSA will continue to advocate for students that are affected by this pandemic, fighting for flexibility, safety, and wellbeing for all our members. If you have any concerns or suggestions you wish to raise with us, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

**Yours in Advocacy,
Ashley and Isaac**

Keep Up-to-Date with COVID-19 developments

Department of Health: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) health alert](#)

NSW Health: [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - Diseases](#)

University of Newcastle: [COVID-19 page](#)

University of New England: [Coronavirus Information - University of New England](#)

Central Coast Flow Diagram: <http://bit.ly/33hhePv>

Novel Coronavirus



Health
Central Coast
Local Health District

Manager's Screening Guide v6 (published 04/03/20)

Are you a CCLHD staff member (including contractors, students and volunteers) who has;

Q1. Travelled or transited through **Mainland China** or **Iran** in the last 14 days?

Yes

Until 14 days have lapsed since leaving **you must;**

- **Not attend work**
- Self-isolate at home other than for seeking individual medical care

No

Q2. Been in contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days ?

Yes

Until 14 days have lapsed since your last contact **you must;**

- **Not attend work**
- Self-isolate at home other than for seeking individual medical care

No

Q3. Travelled or transited through **Italy** or **South Korea** in the last 14 days?

Yes

Until 14 days have lapsed since leaving **you must;**

- **Not attend work**
- Practice social distancing when out in public/avoid crowds

No

Q4. Travelled or transited to any **higher** or **moderate** risk country* for COVID-19

Yes

- **Check country list*** on Department of Health website; <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-covid-19-countries.htm>
- Monitor symptoms for 14 days since leaving that country
- If fever/respiratory illness occur (**even if mild**), isolate immediately and seek medical attention as soon as possible

Tips for Managers

- For staff who **must not attend work**, line manager to make arrangements to release from roster immediately
- Line manager to escalate to their direct reporting manager for consultation and review
- Contact Workforce Customer Service/HR Business Partner for advice on rostering and leave entitlements
- Potential options for otherwise well staff requiring 14 days of home isolation may include;
 - Manager may consider whether it is possible for the employee to work from home
 - Perform those of their functions that can be achieved remotely
 - Undertake mandatory training and/or professional development via remote means (e.g MHL)
 - If staff cannot perform any work from home they should be directed not to attend work and be placed on Special Leave for any rostered time during the 14 days or balance thereof
 - Any other tasks (auditing, document review, etc)

Where all options have been exhausted and where the above is not possible, staff should be directed to be on Special Leave for any rostered time during the 14 days or balance thereof