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From: Medical Director of Teaching
Sent: 07 April 2020 12:09
Subject: Info for staff: Medical students volunteering or working during COVID-19
Attachments: Medical Students Guidance for Volunteering During COVID 07_4_20.pdf

Dear all staff,

We are aware some medical students may wish to volunteer or undertake paid work during the COVID-19 situation, and that our students may have access to some opportunities that other students would not be qualified for: The attached guidance is for medical students to provide them with advice and outline any requirements for what they may need to do before beginning certain types of work. It has been communicated to all medical students via Galen and Solas.

I am sending this to all staff for their awareness, but please note the following:

- You may be aware of some students (personal tutees, perhaps) that are currently doing such volunteering or other work, and if so could you please ask that they pay attention to this information as there are actions they may need to take immediately.
- Some students may approach you for references to do work, and note this guidance also provides instruction on how students can get letters of support from the School if students are appropriately placed to receive one. If you receive such requests, please direct them to this guidance or medicine@st-andrews.ac.uk

Many thanks for your help.

Best wishes and stay safe,
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Volunteering guidance to Medical Students for Academic Year 19/20

School of Medicine, University of St Andrews

02/04/2020

The School recognises that students may wish to volunteer to help within the context of the current COVID-19 situation and that a decision to do so is personal to each student. The School does not expect nor require students to volunteer. As the Dean expressed in his letter on 31 March 2020:

“The School does not discourage volunteering during this period however we encourage all students to consider their time-management carefully to ensure they do not over-commit at the cost of their studies. We also request students consider what is an appropriate way to volunteer if or when they do.”

This document provides guidance to students on the BSc (Hons) and ScotGEM programmes who may wish to volunteer to ensure they can do so in an appropriate and considered way. It is in line with the current position expressed by the Medical Schools Council (MSC), available here:

<https://www.medschools.ac.uk/media/2627/updated-volunteering-guidance-020420.pdf> (dated 02/04/20)

We recommend you read the guidance below and refer to the example scenarios at the end to better understand the School's guidance what action you may need to take.

Scope of this guidance:

This guidance covers any paid or unpaid volunteer or other work that you may wish to undertake during the period impacted by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst this guidance is predominately based on our current processes, there are some additional requirements you **must** comply with, so please ensure you read this document carefully. We will review this guidance in September 2020, and all students must follow item 2 (“**Volunteering within the NHS or other healthcare environment**”) until their institute of primary matriculation changes (i.e. until ScotGEM students commence Year 3 of study or BSc (Hons) students matriculate with their partner Medical School).

General guidance for volunteering or additional work in any capacity:

The MSC is clear on what your priority should be: “Medical students’ first responsibility is to their continuing education. They must not jeopardise their readiness to qualify in the future by taking on too many additional responsibilities.”

Being a medical student is very demanding and, as always, it is your own responsibility to manage your workload and any additional volunteering responsibilities appropriately. As you are full time students (with a notional 40 hours of effort every week) we suggest that you limit any additional paid or unpaid work or volunteering to a maximum of 10 hours per week during semester time. We intend that this will support you in being able to manage your studies, other work and enable you to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

As well as considering your studies, please consider your own personal situation carefully before undertaking any volunteering or paid work during the COVID19 pandemic. Consider how volunteering commitments outside your home will impact on your ability to perform social distancing. This may increase the likelihood of needing to self-isolate. We advise that you consider whether you have any caring responsibilities for anyone you cohabit with: What would be the implications if you became infected with COVID 19? Do you, or anyone you cohabit with, have any underlying health conditions that may put you or them at greater risk if they are exposed to the corona virus?

If your health is compromised or you are in a high-risk category for you should **not** volunteer. If you are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus then you **must** follow appropriate local guidelines for self-isolation.

You should volunteer as close to your residence as possible, to minimise any travel requirements and reduce the burden on these services.

How to use this guidance:

If you do wish to volunteer, there are several different scenarios: Some you will **need** to request permission from the School first. For some the School **may** be able to provide you a generic reference for. We anticipate that, given your stage of training, the vast majority will require you just to consider the advice we provide in this document. Please read the categories below and consult the scenarios provided at the end of this document to understand what actions you may need to take:

1. Volunteering outside of the NHS or healthcare environment:

We **do not** require you to inform the School if you are participating in any volunteer or paid work that is outside of the NHS or healthcare environment, but you should follow the advice for volunteering in any capacity provided above (including the guidance from the [MSC](#)).

You **must** request a risk assessment from the host organisation (or complete your own) for any role you are interested in accepting. This risk assessment must take into consideration any relevant infection prevention and control (IPC) measures (including the use of personal protective equipment, if appropriate). Up to date IPC measures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control> and you can contact medsupport@st-andrews.ac.uk if you need any additional support or advice.

Similarly, we recommend you perform your own risk assessment of your own personal situation prior to accepting any role. We also recommend you enquire about any indemnity/insurance issues to protect you during any volunteer or paid work.

If you require a reference, then the School may be able to provide a generic letter of support indicating you are in good standing with the University. You can request such a reference via medicine@st-andrews.ac.uk who will supply you with the reference providing:

1. You are not subject to any ongoing Fitness to Practice concerns;
2. There are no contra-indicatory recommendations from Occupational Health;
3. You have no outstanding requirements for reassessment this summer, and your performance at either your semester 2 MSA (for BSc students) or your mid-year assessment (for ScotGEM Year 1 students) was above the indicated cut-point.

2. Volunteering within the NHS or other healthcare environment:

- (i) Students who are responding to the general national call for unpaid volunteers to assist the NHS or are volunteering for similar roles in other healthcare environments (i.e. roles which **do not** utilise your knowledge and skills above and beyond those that may be offered by non-medical student volunteers) **do not** need to request permission and approval from the School: You should follow the advice provided in “**General guidance for volunteering or additional work in any capacity**” and from the [MSC](#) before volunteering.
- (ii) **Students who are responding to volunteering calls that utilise knowledge and skills above and beyond those that may be offered by non-medical student volunteers. In this case, you must** request permission and approval from School **before** participating in any volunteer work within the NHS or healthcare environment **if it will utilise your knowledge and skills above and beyond those that may be offered by non-medical student volunteers**, as per the guidance from the [MSC](#). Students with prior professional qualifications should refer to the additional guidance under item 3 (“**Students with prior professional qualifications**”) of this document.

To request permission and approval to volunteer, you **must** contact medicine@st-andrews.ac.uk with the following information:

1. Your name, matriculation number, programme and year of study;
2. Details of the location (e.g. NHS Health Board and name of hospital or practice) and role for which you are volunteering;

3. Name and contact information (email and/or telephone number) for who is responsible for your wellbeing (e.g. line manager, supervisor) within the host organisation;
4. A general risk assessment for the proposed role from the host organisation

You should ensure the risk assessment provided takes into consideration any relevant infection prevention and control (IPC) measures (including the use of personal protective equipment, if appropriate). Up to date IPC measures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

The School will **only** provide a letter of approval for the host organisation if:

1. You have provided medicine@st-andrews.ac.uk with the information requested above;
2. You are not subject to any ongoing Fitness to Practice concerns;
3. There are no contra-indicatory recommendations from Occupational Health;
4. You have no outstanding requirements for reassessment this summer, and your performance at either your semester 2 MSA (for BSc students) or your mid-year assessment (for ScotGEM Year 1 students) was above the indicated cut-point.

The letter of support provided by the School will briefly outline your stage of training towards a Primary Medical Qualification and indicate that you are in good standing with the University. We cannot provide certificates or any other evidence of attainment of any specific skills (e.g. BLS) or clinical competence

It is the host organisation's responsibility to ensure you are not asked to undertake any activity beyond your level of competence. You should ensure the host organisation provides you with a clear way to raise any concerns you may have.

If you are currently working as a volunteer -paid or unpaid- that would, based on the criteria above, require permission from the School then you **must** immediately apply for retrospective permission following the process described above. Students with prior professional qualifications should refer to the additional guidance under item 3 ("**Students with prior professional qualifications**") below.

3. Students with prior professional qualifications:

Some students may have additional qualifications that may make them skilled for additional professional healthcare responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the organisation employing such students to ensure the qualification is appropriate for any intended role and is not the responsibility of the University of St Andrews to validate suitability or endorse capability or competence based on prior qualifications, skills or work experience.

In the case of students with prior professional qualifications there is no requirement to seek approval from the School to undertake work related to your professional qualification, but we would advise all such students to consider the general advice provided at the start of this document. You should also ensure your registration with any professional accrediting body and insurance are up to date and valid for the work being undertaken.

Example Scenarios:

In all situations below, all students should consider the general advice provided at the start of this document and refer to the MSC guidance.

- a. I am applying to be a healthcare assistant in a nursing home or equivalent hospice. Do I need to request permission via the School?
- You would **not** need to apply for permission from the School providing the role you are applying for could be fulfilled by someone without training you have received as part of your medical studies. For example, would a student in any another subject (e.g. physics, chemistry, film studies, history) be qualified to perform this role? If so, you do not need to apply for permission. The School may be able to provide you with a reference, if required.

- b. I am applying to be an NHS Volunteer Responder (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/get-involved/volunteering/nhs-volunteer-responders/>). Do I need to request permission via the School?
 - You would **not** need to apply for permission from the School as a student in any other subject (e.g. physics, chemistry, film studies, history) would also be qualified to perform this role.
- c. I am applying to be a volunteer in a foodbank. Do I need to request permission via the School?
 - You would **not** need to apply for permission from the School as a student in any other subject (e.g. physics, chemistry, film studies, history) would also be qualified to perform this role and you would not be working in a healthcare environment.
- d. I have a previous qualification as a pharmacist/nurse/etc, and I am working in this capacity within the NHS. Do I need to request permission from the School?
 - **No**, but it is your responsibility to ensure that any required registration and insurance are up to date.
- e. I have applied for a volunteer job within the NHS or other healthcare environment which specifically utilises skills I have gained as part of my medical studies. Do I need to request permission from the School?
 - Yes, you **would** need to request permission from the School if you are **only** qualified for the role by virtue of your current programme of studies. In other words, if a student in any other subject (e.g. physics, chemistry, film studies, history) could **not** apply for this role but you as a medical student can, then you **must** request permission as outlined in this document.
- f. I am already undertaking a volunteer role that explicitly utilises skills I have only obtained as a medical student. What should I do?
 - You **must** immediately apply for School approval so we can ensure we have the relevant details to support you, as per the MSC guidance. Please follow the process within this document for requesting approval.
- g. I started a volunteer role that any non-medical student could do but am now being asked to do additional duties based on skills and knowledge gained during my medical studies. What should I do?
 - You should **not** complete these additional duties until you have received support from the School via the process outlined above, including obtaining a risk assessment from your host organisation. You should **not** perform any duties that are outside of your stage of studies, and you should consult with medsupport@st-andrews.ac.uk if you feel you have been placed in a situation that you feel uncomfortable with.

Any further queries:

We know that this is a time of uncertainty and that many students will have additional responsibilities they are already struggling to balance with their studies: Support continues to be available from your personal tutor, via medsupport@st-andrews.ac.uk and from the central university team at ASC (email address) If you have any queries on the above, or any additional questions, please send them via medicine@st-andrews.ac.uk. Please do keep in touch.

Data protection Statement:

The information we receive from you will be used to ensure the School is aware of any activities that may require support or liaison with specific Health Boards or other providers. We will store your information until the 1st of January 2021, unless there is further development in the coronavirus situation that requires us to store this information for longer. If so, we will contact you to inform you of any change. We will pass on the information you have provided us to your partner Medical School upon graduation, or on change of your institute of primary matriculation.