



25 March 2020

IBMS accredited Biomedical Science degrees

Advice to programme leaders, students and placement providers/trainers

In response to the unusual circumstances caused by the COVID-19 virus the Institute is offering the following temporary advice to universities, students and employers.

We recognise the extraordinary nature of this public health matter, and that we must be supportive and proportionate in our requirements and expectations. We understand that measures may need to be put in place quickly, and reviewed and changed regularly, depending on the challenges posed in both academic and practice-based settings.

As your professional body we know our members are highly trained professionals and we trust them to use their professional expertise to inform the implementation of changes to manage COVID-19 risks and judge whether a candidate for the IBMS Certificate of Competence has met the necessary standards of proficiency to be eligible for registration with the HCPC, including the voluntary register for final year students who have completed their clinical placement.

Universities

Our priority is the welfare of students, staff and employers involved in the delivery of the programme. We recognise that in highly challenging circumstances, education providers may need to depart from established procedures to continue with education and training but are concerned this may affect their IBMS accreditation status.

In managing the risks associated with COVID-19, the IBMS will support adaptations so that students can continue to undertake programmes and meet the learning outcomes required for the programme. Adaptations should be in line with your own university regulations, as these may provide flexibility around awarding final qualifications. **You do not require IBMS approval to implement these changes, but we regard these as temporary measures in response to the ongoing situation.** However, please ensure you are clear on the reasons for doing so, and also ensure you can evidence this as only those learners who have demonstrated the achievement of the relevant IBMS (and where relevant HCPC) standards should be eligible to receive the final accredited award.

Where students can gain work-experience through their placement this could be used to inform changes to assessment methods. You would need to consider the nature of the learner's role in service, the type of experience they gained, and how this might be to relevant the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes.

Where some students may not be able to complete their exams, your own academic regulations may provide flexibility around awarding final qualifications under circumstances such as COVID-19.

Those who have students completing the end stages of their placement may experience problems for students completing some of the competences in their IBMS Registration Training Portfolio due to shortage of laboratory staff or restrictions on accessing laboratory time due to the current COVID-19 crisis. A flexible approach can be taken to complete the portfolio, but you should consider what is necessary to ensure learners have met the relevant learning outcomes through any practice-based learning. On this basis it may be possible to adjust the minimum practice-based learning hours you set.

The HCPC has been asked by the UK Government to prepare for the temporary registration of health and care professionals, allowing final year students who have successfully completed their final clinical placement to practice as registered professionals. This supports the public health response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. Students on the temporary register will be able to practise using one of the HCPC protected titles. If a student decides to go into practice they will need to meet their Standards of conduct, performance and ethics and the Standards of proficiency for their profession (as far as they relate to their scope of practice). More detailed information can be obtained from the HCPC website. By visiting [Advice for education providers](#).

Universities might find it helpful to get a feel for how everyone is doing their exams, so that we can share good ideas and best practice in assessing the core clinical subjects. If you wish to submit details of actions you are taking in order to share these please let me know alanwainwright@ibm.org

Students

We expect students to follow local guidance and policies put in place by their university / education provider and placement provider. If you have any concerns, you should speak to your supervisor, course leader/tutor or laboratory trainer to understand what measures they are putting in place and what impact that may have on your studies.

Placement Providers/Trainers

For students completing placements we suggest as a preferred option that where the knowledge base of the standard is completed, but the student is unable to complete the competence in practice sections, the student completes a virtual scenario report, or witness statement following a scenario discussion with the trainer, to evidence what they would do in practice.

An alternative could be to consider extending the placement, but this also has on-going implications for the student and laboratory and if not achievable, cause additional concern. At present it is hoped that those in employment will be able to extend their training period and not require this approach.

It may also be worth requesting that the university allows a deferral on all the assessments until September if you feel this appropriate to your circumstances.

We expect training laboratory staff and universities staff to ensure that any measures put in place continue to provide the quality of teaching, learning and training required to meet relevant proficiency standards on completion of the award.

You are not required to inform the IBMS for approval to implement these changes as we regard these as temporary measures in response to the ongoing situation. Once this is over we will seek to identify innovative measures that could be more widely used. Your cooperation to do this will be welcomed.

Impact on registration

The HCPC in their March 3rd statement on the COVID-19 situation have emphasised that their standards of proficiency are designed to be flexible and provide a framework for decision-making in a wide range of situations. They also support professionals by highlighting the key principles which should be followed, including working collaboratively to keep people safe and recognising limits of competence.

As your professional body we know our members are highly trained professionals and we trust them to use their professional expertise to judge whether a candidate for the IBMS Certificate of Competence is eligible for registration with the HCPC.

The HCPC website has guidance that emphasises the flexibility of the standards and the expectation that registrants will use professional judgement and experience to inform the implementation of changes to manage COVID-19 risks.

Please note this statement will be reviewed in line with published advice from the HCPC and changing circumstances.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/covid-19/advice/advice-for-education-providers/>

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/covid-19/advice/advice-for-students/>

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/covid-19/advice/registrants/>