

From: Peter J Little, President  
Re: **Guiding principles for pharmacy student clinical education during a global health emergency**  
Date: 24 April 2020



## **Open letter to Stakeholders**

### **Council of Pharmacy Schools: Australia and New Zealand Guiding principles for pharmacy student clinical education during a global health emergency**

The COVID-19 global pandemic has necessitated rapid changes in both the health education and practice arenas. This has amplified the need to collaborate across the profession of pharmacy and along with other health professions to ensure that pharmacy graduates demonstrate the skills required to provide safe, high quality, and socially accountable access to, and use of, medicines and other health technologies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already resulted in an enhanced need for medicines management expertise. This requirement is likely to increase as the situation evolves. The Council of Pharmacy Schools Australia and New Zealand (CPS), comprising leaders from all the pharmacy education programs in Australia & New Zealand, offers the following principles associated with pharmacy student clinical education to support the COVID-19 pandemic workforce as part of and in parallel to their academic studies.

- Work-integrated learning, also known as experiential placements or practice placements, is a critical part of pharmacy education. These placements occur in practice sites such as community pharmacies, hospitals, and other health settings where medication management is required. Pharmacy schools manage their placement programs within the guidance of their university, their professional accreditation, and in collaboration with preceptors and clinical education providers.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that experiential learning and education for pharmacy students continue. This is important not only to support the next generation of practitioners in the fundamental tenets of quality use of medicines, medication safety and public health, especially for our most vulnerable populations, but also to prepare future pharmacists for the next pandemic response. The methods for achieving this experiential pandemic learning may vary across nations, states, Pharmacy schools, and practice sites.
- In the case that practice sites have the capacity to supervise pharmacy students on-site for experiential placements as part of their program of study, they should (per usual practice) ensure student safety, clarify the roles of the student, provide adequate supervision for their learning, and provide formal feedback on/assessment of performance.
- Some of the on-site placement activities performed during the COVID-19 pandemic may require amendment of the original placement learning objectives. When this is the case, Pharmacy schools, external providers and preceptors should work together to define these emerging roles and expectations. We acknowledge that some flexibility may be required.
- When practice sites can support student safety but cannot support the experiential placement as part of a program of study, they may choose to employ pharmacy students as part of their “surge workforce.” CPS supports pharmacy students (if the role is consistent with their personal goals) to choose to take part in paid and/or volunteer surge workforce opportunities in community, hospital, and other public health settings to cope with the increasing demands on the health system during this time of crisis. These activities should complement, but not compete with, their academic requirements.

These principles are in accord with recent recommendations made by the [Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand](#), [Nursing and Midwifery Board](#) and the AHPRA & National Boards, HPAC and Australian Department of Health and Department of Education, Skills and Development.

The increased stress on the healthcare system and the pharmacy profession during this pandemic period requires contributions from all levels of the profession, from students through to registered professionals and academics. The CPS is dedicated to working through its university leaders in collaboration with placement sites/employers, accreditation and regulatory authorities, and professional bodies to ensure pharmacy students not only successfully complete their studies but also meaningfully contribute to the health workforce during this time of great demand.

**Signed for and on behalf of the following CPS Councillors (Member Representatives).**

<http://pharmacyschoolsanz.org/>



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