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# School of Nursing and Allied Health Student Uniform Policy:(2024): Paramedic Science Students

1. **Introduction**

This policy outlines the standards which must be adhered to by all students when in practice settings in order to ensure risk is minimised to all services users, students and staff. Please note that these are the minimum standards which you are to adhere to, and you should always comply with Trust/organisational policies when on placement which may differ materially from this policy. For the purpose of clarity, whenever “clinical practice” is mentioned this also includes simulated practice activities (both on University premises and elsewhere) and activities in the clinical skills environment, unless otherwise advised by University staff. It is the student’s responsibility to check uniform requirements for each placement prior to attendance and ensure compliance at all times. This policy is based upon existing evidence and is based upon the principles contained within the NHSE/I Uniforms and workwear guidance which can be accessed here: [Uniforms and workwear: guidance for NHS employers (england.nhs.uk)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/documents/uniforms-and-workwear-guidance-for-nhs-employers/)

1. **Why should healthcare professionals wear a uniform?**

**Patient safety**

It is every healthcare professional’s duty to do their utmost to prevent infection transmission wherever possible. Hand hygiene is obviously a significant factor in this, but it is also considered that uniforms and workwear play a direct role in this too. A uniform should not impede a healthcare professionals’ ability to perform effective hand hygiene, nor should it provide a possible vector for the transmission of infection. Nothing that a healthcare professional wears which could compromise a patient/service users safety during care, for example rings, earrings, necklaces, wristwatches, nails (and nail products) and studs.

**Public confidence**

The way a healthcare professional dresses can have a positive impact upon the public’s perception of the standards of care they experience. The public rightfully have the expectation that healthcare professionals are upholding standards of care and reducing the risk of infection, and the wearing of a clean, well -presented uniform can help to fulfil this expectation. Uniforms (including name badges) can help members of the public to identify staff in the care environment.

**Staff comfort** **and environmental suitability**

Dressing comfortably in a uniform which allows the healthcare professional to move freely can enhance the workplace experience, reduce fatigue and the potential risk of injury. There needs to be a healthy balance between being able to dress in accordance with a person’s cultural and religious practice and maintaining the need to perform effective hand hygiene whilst upholding the duty of care as per NMC/HCPC standards. This includes the need to be “bare below the elbow” when performing direct patient care.

1. **Who does this apply to?**

This policy applies to paramedic science students from the School of Nursing and Allied Health when engaged in placements (this included simulated placements) and when engaged in clinical skills labs activity (unless otherwise advised by University staff).

1. **Uniform issue**

You will be provided with sufficient uniform on commencement of your chosen programme of study and this intended to last for the duration of the course. If uniform is required to be replaced during your programme of study, then you will be responsible for acquiring this. You may only wear the approved uniform provided and must not substitute any of the items provided for your own clothing. If replacements are required, then you must only use the University’s approved uniform supplier. At the end of your studies, you should cut out and destroy the University logo and text and recycle the garments at an appropriate facility.

Any items which were issued as loan, e.g. paramedic helmets should be returned to the Faculty office otherwise you may be charged.

1. **Modifications to uniform**

Wearing of head scarves (e.g. Hijab) is permitted. Scarf must be changed daily. Scarf must be plain and either black or in a colour matching the uniform. Scarfs must not hang under the shoulder and must be tucked in under the uniform. The wearing of full-face veils (e.g. Niqab) is not permitted in clinical practice as this may impede effective communication with patients and therefore presents a clinical risk.

1. **Bare below the elbow (BBE)**

This is required for all students within clinical areas or care setting such as the patient’s home. When involved in patient contact students must be bare below the elbow to enable effective hand hygiene.

Prior to commencing shift, in WMAS you are required to be compliant with the principles of bare below the elbows. BBE should be adopted at any given time you may be called upon to enter clinical areas and or provide treatment to patients.

There are some exemptions to BBE in the Pre-Hospital Setting. It is acknowledged that long sleeves are required as part of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as wearing high visibility jackets or soft shell jackets. WMAS offers PPE such as single use sleeve protectors which should be worn during patient contact. Shell//jacket sleeves will easily become contaminated and must not be worn when carrying out patient care activities unless adverse weather conditions dictate otherwise, in this instance sleeves should be rolled up above the elbow or sleeve protectors must be worn. Exceptions apply for cultural/religious artefacts including one plain wedding band. If religious/ cultural artefacts are worn, these must be covered by the donning of gloves and sleeve protectors for all patient contact. When entering healthcare premises staff are expected to comply with bare below the elbows and ensure sleeves are rolled up or long sleeve coats/jackets are removed, unless transferring a patient whose condition presents an immediate threat to life

In certain circumstances it may that a placement provider requires that you do not wear a uniform and you should be guided by that providers guidance and policy in those circumstances.

Unless otherwise requested to do so by a placement provider, you should wear your university supplied uniform to all placement experiences. Due to the nature of of the pre-hospital environment, on occasions, uniforms may become soiled or contaminated. Staff must change as soon as practicably possible if uniform or clothes become visibly soiled or contaminated. You should always have a set of spare clean uniform with you at all times to ensure that you can change and continue your shift, if you are unable to change in the duration of a shift this may result in you being unable to continue that shift and placement hours may be lost.

1. **Non-uniform placements**

In those exceptional circumstances where you may not be require to wear uniform then the following dress code applies: no denim, no revealing clothing which exposes underwear or abdomen/lower back, no dirty, ripped or frayed clothing, no excessively short skirts or dresses, leggings should only be worn under skirts or dresses, no high heels, no clothing which portrays an unprofessional image.

1. **Footwear**

Footwear is to be provided by the student and should be boots or shoes in BLACK and MUST BE Safety Footwear (protective toe caps) – these form part of your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is requirement for emergency ambulance environments and no substitute footwear can be worn in these practice areas. **Guidance on the appropriate approved footwear will be given on commencement of the course**.

In non-ambulance placement areas you may still wear your PPE boots or shoes. If these are not worn you should wear other suitable footwear which must be dark in colour without visible logos, pictures or words and be of supportive non-slip and wipe-able closed over the foot, heel and toes. Trainers, shoes with a raised heel, sandals and CROCS™ are not permitted.

Socks must be of a dark colour, plain, inconspicuous and not patterned.

1. **Washing of uniforms**

It is the student’s responsibility to keep their uniform clean, ironed and in good order. Clothing must be clean and needs to be washed at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric after each wearing. Uniforms should routinely be washed at 60°c. Uniforms and workwear should be washed separate to other items.

1. **ID badges**

University ID badges (and Trust or organisation ID badges if supplied) should worn at all times when on placement. This must be worn on a clip, students in clinical areas must not use a lanyard for safety purposes. Name badges should be clearly worn if supplied. No other badges should worn with uniform.

1. **Jewellery/adornments**

Wearing of rings is limited to one smooth band – no ridges or stones.

Wrist watches not to be worn in clinical areas at any time and this includes other items worn on the wrist including Fitbits/Smart watches etc.

One pair of plain ear studs only.

Small discreet facial piercings are permitted but these must consist of a small plain hoop or stud and should not be excessive. All other piercings must be removed. If students have other piercings that cannot be removed these must be covered with a waterproof plaster and changed as required.

Wearing of necklaces is not permitted for the same reasons as ID lanyards for personal safety.

Bangles should not be worn, though if a bangle is worn for religious reasons then it must be pushed up the wrist and taped out of the way to ensure effective hand hygiene can be performed and reduce risk of injury to patients when performing clinical care.

No nail varnish/polish is allowed and nails are to be kept clean and short. No nail extensions or false nails allowed. This includes gel or acrylic polish.

Fake eyelashes are not be worn.

Where there are visible tattoos or piercings these should not cause offense to others. Body art (e.g. tattoos) need to be sensitive towards other people’s perceptions and/or feelings and, if appropriate, should be covered. Offensive tattoos (visible tattoos which are inflammatory, rude, lewd, racist, sexist, sectarian, homophobic, violent or intimidating will not be permitted).

1. **Hair**

Hair is to be tied back securely off the collar. Where long hair is likely to fall forwards when kneeling/leaning, it should be secured fully to avoid contamination. Facial hair must be clean and well groomed. Long beards must be contained within a cover/net. Turbans/Hijabs/hair coverings for religious reasons are permitted and these must be changed and washed regularly. Scarfs must not hang under the shoulder and must be tucked in under the uniform.

1. **Wearing of uniform outside of placement**

Uniform should not be worn outside of placement areas for infection control and safety purposes, unless on business for that placement provider, e.g. travelling to a patient’s home to deliver treatment or to a Trust meeting at different premises. Where there are no on-site changing facilities, students may wear uniform to travel to and from work, but it must be covered as much as is practically possible.

1. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

PPE is a key aspect of paramedic uniform in the emergency ambulance environment.

Where safety helmets and high visibility jackets are issued as part of PPE, they must be worn at all times where there is a risk of injury to staff. This is especially important for safety reasons e.g. at scene of the incident or in confined spaces, to help avoid staff sustaining injury in the course of their duty.

You will be supplied with:

High Visibility Jacket – To be worn in low visibility environments where there is a risk to safety. Jackets should be zipped up at all times when worn.

Protective Helmet – This will be a loan item for the duration of placement. This is to be worn in environments where there is personal risk e.g Road Traffic Collisions, Building sites etc. A dynamic risk assessment of the circumstances will determine the need for helmets and they should be adjusted to fit securely and strapped up at all times when worn.

Any patient related PPE required for the requirements of clinical practice will be supplied by your placement organisation. Single use protective clothing – aprons and gloves, masks etc, must be worn for individual patient care where appropriate, then removed and disposed of safely once that care has been completed. Always refer and adhere to the placement providers PPE policy when on placement experiences.

**References and Bibliography**

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The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992.

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The Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice for health and adult social care on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance revised 2015

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