

University of Bristol

MBChB Programme Policies and Procedures

DRESS CODE FOR CLINICAL AND ACADEMY AREAS

Policy and guidelines for students whilst in clinical and academy areas.

INTRODUCTION

The Dress code applies to all clinical and academy environments in both primary and secondary care.

In 2007 the Department of Health published Uniforms and Workwear: An evidence base for developing local policy. This publication supports the specific requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 Code of Practice relating to uniform and workwear policies, and the need to ensure that they support effective hand hygiene. This was updated in 2010 to include key equality and diversity measures to accommodate faith groups. Amendments were also made to reflect proposals from the Medical Schools Council guidance seeks to support medical and dental students from a faith background May 2023.

Ref: [Uniforms and workwear: guidance for NHS employers](#)

FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DRESS CODE

1. Patients should feel confident that they are being treated by a team of professionals. Students' appearance is one part of ensuring patients have confidence in their clinical care.
2. All patients should have their beliefs respected. Ethnic origin, religious conviction, and age group, amongst other factors, can influence patients' views on appropriate dress. Patients should be made to feel as comfortable as possible in a clinical setting; inappropriate dress, facial piercings or extensive body art can create a barrier between student and patient.
3. Dress must conform to health and safety requirements for the protection of patients, members of staff and the students themselves.
4. Students should be allowed to dress in accordance with their religious practice providing that health and safety is not compromised.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Scrubs

To ensure students are easily identifiable as Bristol medical students, we have supplied Bristol Medical School scrubs to all students since academic year 2023/24. These scrubs are grey and embroidered with the words Medical Student and Bristol Medical School. In addition to visibility, scrubs decrease the need for students to buy smart clothes for the wards and thus will help with student financial hardship.

Students are given one set of scrubs in Year 1, another set of scrubs in Year 2, and a further set of scrubs in Year 3. Students can purchase additional scrubs [online](#) from the provider. Graduating students are encouraged to donate good condition scrubs back to the programme so students can access additional scrubs. We are currently setting up this recycling scheme.

Scrubs are to be worn in the clinical environment. Students are also encouraged to wear scrubs for clinical assessments (Year 2 CAPA, Year 3 OSCE, Year 4 CPSA). Academies/placement providers (including General Practice and community placements) will make clear to students when they should wear scrubs during academy teaching. Students will be informed whether they should wear scrubs in both educational and clinical environments, or in clinical environments only. For example, within some academies students may be asked to wear scrubs for clinical and simulation teaching, but not for tutorials or classroom teaching, whereas other academies may ask students to wear scrubs in all areas of the academy for all teaching activities. Year 1 and 2 students should not wear scrubs for campus-based teaching, unless specifically instructed to do so, but are expected to wear scrubs when on clinical placement in academies. Specific guidance about wearing scrubs for clinical experience weeks, including Health Care Assistant shifts, and General practice placements will be provided by each placement provider.

Placement providers may also have regulations on students wearing scrubs to and from placements. This should be stated in introductory sessions/communications. Where students are permitted by their Academy to wear scrubs when travelling to and from placements, they should travel directly to their placement and cover their scrubs, for example with a coat or jumper, whilst in transit. Scrubs should not be worn to undertake personal or social activities outside of placements (such as shopping, socialising or for any other purpose). Further guidance on scrubs is given in *section (l)* below.

Academy teaching spaces

If students are not wearing scrubs in teaching settings, they should wear clean, smart-casual clothing, for example, a shirt with smart trousers, blouse/smart top with smart-casual trousers or skirt, or a smart dress and smart shoes.

INFECTION CONTROL AND SAFETY IN THE CLINICAL ENVIRONMENT:

- All health care professionals are expected to be bare below the elbows in clinical environments, further details are provided in section (o) below.
- Dangling jewellery or loose scarves or headscarves should not be worn
- No watches or jewellery may be worn below the elbow, apart from the approved exceptions in *section (g)* below.
- Clothing/scrubs should be clean and washed in the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric
- Fingernails should be kept short and clean with no nail varnish, false or gel nails

In addition, students should:

- Wear clothing which covers the body from the neck to the knee as a minimum
- Wear clothing which does not restrict movement
- Tie back long hair
- Wear simple and minimal jewellery if it is worn
- Wear shoes which are neat, clean, and comfortable. Shoes should have closed toes and soft soles. Clean, smart, black trainers may now be regarded as acceptable footwear in certain clinical environments as well as smart shoes
- Wear specific clinical attire (e.g. specific scrubs or smart clothes) as required by the Trust/ward/placement

Students should **not** wear:

- Torn/soiled jeans
- Sports clothing, casual clothing or combat clothing
- Clothing with prominent logos or pictures
- Clothing which exposes bare midriffs, short shorts/skirts/dresses, low tops, vests
- Nail varnish, gel or false nails

POLICY STATEMENT

(a) Clothes

Students must appear clean, tidy and smart at work, whether wearing their own clothes or scrubs. Examples of unacceptable or unsuitable clothing include casual trousers such as denim jeans and track suit bottoms, leggings, crop tops, low cut tops, miniskirts, denim skirts or skirts with high splits, tight fitting clothing, revealing fabrics, and items of clothing containing logos, slogans or graphics which may reasonably be perceived to cause offence. This list is not exhaustive, items should be appropriate for the individual's role and for the duties being undertaken. Any student unsure about the suitability of their clothing is encouraged to discuss with a member of staff. We want students to feel confident and comfortable and wear clothing that meets their individual needs, whilst meeting the requirements of a professional workplace.

Students must ensure that clothing keeps underwear, breasts, buttocks, thighs and midriff covered.

Students are discouraged from wearing neck ties, long scarves or non-safety approved lanyards in clinical or teaching environments. Where such garments are worn, they should be tucked away to ensure they do not pose a risk with possible violence or aggression, infection prevention and control, or health and safety.

All students may wear smart knee length shorts during periods of warm weather or where appropriate for medical reasons. These must be plain.

Pregnant students, and those with equivalent health needs, will be supported in appropriate adjustment requests to their dress including access to additional scrubs as required. This will be discussed and agreed locally with considerations given to health and safety and hygiene/infection control.

(b) Badges and lanyards

Students on clinical placement must wear a University of Bristol or NHS Trust photo identity badge that is clearly visible to patients, members of the public, staff and fellow students. Students must also wear a yellow name badge.

Students may choose to wear up to two professional badges as part of their professional identity. Where students wish to wear additional badges, they should make an informed decision that takes account of relevant local NHS Trust and placement-provider policies, as well as the General Medical Council (GMC) guidance *Personal beliefs and medical practice*. This guidance emphasises that healthcare professionals must not impose their personal beliefs or values on patients, should maintain professional boundaries, and should consider how the expression of personal beliefs may affect patient care, patient confidence, and working relationships with colleagues. The current GMC guidance is available [here](#). The GMC is currently undertaking a major review of this guidance, with an updated version expected to be published following the 2026 consultation process.

Dress code for clinical areas policy and guidelines

Students should therefore carefully consider the potential impact of any badges they choose to wear on patients, colleagues and the wider clinical environment, and ensure that their choices are consistent with professional standards, inclusivity, and the expectations of their placement provider.

Students in Years 1- 4 should wear yellow/red University of Bristol 'medical student' lanyards with triple-break clasps whilst on placement. These are provided in Year 1. Final year students should wear red 'Final Year student' lanyards, these are provided at the beginning of Year 5. Other lanyards (NHS or other organisations) should not be worn. Students can purchase replacement lanyards and badges from the online shop. University of Bristol rainbow/black lanyards should be worn on university campus premises.

(c) Hair

Student hair should be clean, well-groomed, and tidy. In clinical environments, long ponytails and dreadlocks must be fastened so that all hair is above the collar using a plain secure fastener. Head covers for religious or medical reasons are acceptable; examples are shown at the end of this document in *Appendix 2*. Consideration should be given to the fabric and the fastening to meet infection prevention and control and health and safety guidelines.

When in theatre students must have their hair covered with an appropriate head covering. Students who own their own head covering, such as a hijab, must ensure this is washed daily. Alternative disposable head coverings, such as those provided in theatres and on maternity wards, are available for students with hair that cannot be covered by surgical caps. Please contact the academy administrator for further guidance.

Facial hair and beards should be neat and trimmed, except where this reflects the individual's religion, where it must be tidy. Beards should be fully covered within specialist areas such as theatre and catering.

(d) Aromatic products

Aromatic products including perfume, aftershave, and tobacco should be kept to a minimum as these can offend and may induce nausea.

(e) Personal Hygiene

All students are expected to maintain good personal hygiene whilst they are seeing patients. The Academy Deans will be expected to address any particular issues with individual students.

(f) Tattoos

Any visible tattoos that may be deemed inappropriate or offensive to any member of the public, patient or employee should be covered where possible. Visible tattoos which may be considered inappropriate or offensive and cannot be covered will require further discussion with the Academy Dean to consider if they are compliant with the Trust's Code of Conduct.

(g) Jewellery/adornments

Jewellery/adornments should not be worn to work with the exception of:

- i. Medical alert jewellery
- ii. One plain symbolic band ring
- iii. One plain bracelet or Kara may be allowed for religious reasons provided this is washable and compliant with the Bare Below the Elbow guidance. In general, the Kara should be pushed as high up the arm away from the wrist as practically possible (while still allowing comfort for the wearer) and secured in place to enable effective hand hygiene/surgical scrubbing which includes the wrists. Students should discuss this with their Academy Dean.
- iv. Badges see guidance in *section (b)*.

In addition:

- v. Visible facial/ear piercings should be discreet and kept to a minimum; plain studs or small sleeper hoops may be allowed
- vi. Wrist watches must not be worn by students working clinically though a fob watch may be worn in clinical areas
- vii. If students have visible facial piercings, they may be asked to cover them up or remove where possible.

Any student who wishes to wear particular types of clothes or jewellery, markings or other accoutrements for religious, cultural or health reasons that may mean a deviation from this policy must discuss this issue formally with their Clinical Tutor or Academy Dean who will not unreasonably withhold approval, providing the request does not impact on patient and student's safety.

(h) Eyes

False eyelashes and eyelash extensions may fall off and out and therefore pose health and safety and infection prevention and control risks. They must not be worn by any student undertaking direct patient care.

(i) Facial coverings

Students who wear a niqab (facial covering) for religious reasons are expected to remove their niqab whilst they are on Trust premises. This will ensure that the student is identifiable, and ensures communication is effective with patients, members of the public and/or colleagues. This also ensures the Trust is compliant with the general health and safety and infection prevention and control guidance.

(k) Shoes

Footwear must be safe, sensible, smart and clean and have regard to health and safety considerations. Students are not permitted to wear Uggs, stilettos, flip flops, 'croc's' or canvas shoes. Shoes should be leather or leather type with a rubber nonslip sole and low heel; provide adequate support, a stable base and should be of full shoe design with no open toes. Clean, smart, black trainers may also be regarded as acceptable footwear in some environments; please check with your placement provider whether trainers are acceptable. Students should be sensitive to the noise footwear makes, especially at night.

(l) Scrubs

All students will be supplied with scrubs for clinical +/- teaching settings. Please see *General guidance on page 1 and 2* for more details.

Students will be asked to comply with the scrubs policy within the academy/placement provider where they are on placement. These policies may differ slightly but are likely to include:

- Not wearing scrubs travelling to and from the academy
- Changing into scrubs on arrival within the academy
- Scrubs being washed after each use according to the manufacturer's washing instructions
- Applying for a new set of scrubs should an item remain stained after washing or be damaged
- Students wearing scrubs in a closed ward must change before leaving the area.

Students must not wear grey University of Bristol scrubs in theatre. Students must change into theatre scrubs as supplied by the individual trust and must always wear their University of Bristol medical school lanyard in theatre.

Similarly, University of Bristol scrubs should not be worn for any other sterile procedure attendance (e.g. interventional radiology) where theatre scrubs are being worn by other doctors and clinical staff.

(m) Laundry

Students are required to wash their own clothes and scrubs. Clothes worn in clinical and teaching areas should be washed at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric. Clean scrubs should be stored and transported in a way that protects them from contamination e.g. clean plastic bag.

(n) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Trust is responsible for the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). All managers must ensure that PPE is available to the employee in accordance with The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) and local/statutory recommendations such as Trust and Divisional Health and Safety notices.

Students in roles that require PPE e.g. disposable plastic aprons, disposable gloves, eye protection, surgical masks, FFP3 respirators are required to wear/use them whilst carrying out their duties in accordance with health and safety or infection prevention and control requirements.

(o) Bare Below the Elbows

Infection control policies require staff to be bare below the elbows in clinical areas to ensure adequate hand hygiene for patient and staff safety. Not all medical students can adhere to this policy because of their faith.

Muslim Spiritual Care Provision (MSCP) in the NHS outlines recommendations to ensure that local dress code policies are sensitive to the obligations of Muslims and other faith groups whilst maintaining equivalent standards of hygiene. These changes must be agreed with local infection prevention and control teams and equality and diversity steering groups and implemented into local trust policies.

- Uniforms/dress may include provision for sleeves that can be full length when staff are not engaged in direct patient care activity
- Uniforms/dress can have three-quarter length sleeves
- Any full or three-quarter length sleeves must not be loose or dangling. They must be able to be rolled or pulled back and kept securely in place during hand-washing and direct patient care activity
- Disposable over-sleeves, elasticated at the elbow and wrist, may be used but must be put on and discarded in exactly the same way as disposable gloves. Strict procedures for washing hands and wrists must still be observed. Further guidance for donning and doffing disposable oversleeves is provided in *Appendix 1* below
- Liaison with the academy infection control team will be necessary to ensure that use of such oversleeves is approved.

APPENDIX 1

Guide to donning and doffing Personal Protective Equipment for non-aerosol generating procedures – modification when wearing protective oversleeves

The following guidance about putting on and taking off personal protective equipment (PPE) for non-aerosol generating procedures is adapted from the NHS 'Guide to donning and doffing PPE (non-AGP) in adult social care settings' (11 October 2022). This adaptation is for Bristol Medical School students who are unable to be bare below the elbows because of their faith, and therefore require oversleeves for clinical contact.

When to wear oversleeves

Students will need to wear oversleeves in any clinical area where they are required otherwise to be bare below the elbow. Sleeves will need to be changed between patients, and at any time that PPE is changed.

Putting on PPE, including oversleeves

Before putting on your PPE, make sure you:

- Have drunk some fluids if you need to
- Tie hair back or ensure hijab/head covering is secure
- remove any hand or wrist jewellery (one plain ring is permitted, but be sure it can be moved so that you can wash underneath it)
- check PPE in the correct size, and oversleeves, are available. (The student should have oversleeves with them).

To put on your PPE safely and correctly:

- 1) Clean your hands and wrists using alcohol-based hand rub or gel, or use soap and water
- 2) Put on apron and tie behind your back at the waist
- 3) Put on facemask
- 4) Fit mask around nose – cover mouth and chin
- 5) Put on eye protection, if needed
- 6) Put on oversleeves
- 7) Put on gloves so that the wrists of the gloves go over the bottom of the oversleeves

Taking off PPE

To take off your PPE safely and correctly:

- 1) Using gloves and handling only the outside of the oversleeves, take the oversleeves off by pulling them down from the top, turning them inside out over the gloves, taking care not to touch and potentially contaminate underlying clothing
- 2) Discard the oversleeves

- 3) Remove gloves
 - i) Using the left hand take off the right glove by pulling it from the wrist over the right hand, turning it inside out. Only the outside of the glove should be touched
 - ii) Slide the index figure of the right hand inside the glove at the left wrist
 - iii) Use this finger to turn the glove inside out
 - iv) Discard gloves
- 4) Clean hands and wrists (and forearms if necessary) with alcohol-based hand rub or gel, or use soap and water
- 5) Remove apron – do not touch the outside front of the apron, this will be contaminated
 - i) Untie or break the apron behind the head
 - ii) Let the front of the apron drop down from the waist
 - iii) Untie the apron behind the back
 - iv) Bundle or roll the apron to discard it, handling only the inside of the apron
- 6) Clean hands and wrists (and forearms if necessary) again with alcohol-based hand rub or gel, or use soap and water
- 7) When 2 metres from the patient, carefully remove eye protection by the sidearms or side straps, if using. Discard or disinfect for next use
- 8) Clean hands and wrists (and forearms if necessary) again with alcohol-based hand rub or gel, or use soap and water
- 9) Remove mask – do not touch the front of the mask, remove by the ear loops or ties
- 10) Clean hands and wrists (and forearms if necessary) again with alcohol-based hand rub or gel, or use soap and water
- 11) Put on a clean facemask if having contact with others in a care setting or service

Ref: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppe-guide-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures/guide-to-donning-putting-on-and-doffing-removing-ppe-non-agp-in-adult-social-care-settings-text-only-version>

APPENDIX 2

Examples of acceptable styles of head covering: (adapted from the “Uniform and Dress Code Policy” Version 6 from North Bristol NHS Trust)



Additional images of acceptable head coverings:



N.B: All images are for guidance only. They may not include all religious or cultural garments. If you are unsure of whether your headwear meets hospital policy, you should seek guidance from the academy.