

Tips for getting prepared for the arrival of PA students in your department

• Notify your colleagues, including those that are likely to be working with the students ie junior doctors, consultants, ACPs, PAs when they are due to arrive, for how long and what the overall goal is for them while on placement. Consider including a point about safety – that they are students and the team is ultimately responsible for the patients. Encourage them to provide feedback good or bad to the supervisor for the students that is most useful for their learning.

• Contact the students directly before the beginning of the placement to welcome them and provide details of where to arrive on the first day, you can also include any induction material, mandatory training links or schedules at this time.

• Provide an induction to your department – explaining how the service functions, what kind of patients they may see and what sort of interactions they may be able to have with patients (clerking, clinics, theatre etc).

• Given them a tour of the department including non-clinical facilities like staff toilets, changing rooms, kitchen, break room etc.

• Make sure they know who they should be reporting to on a daily basis (this could vary or be a place rather than a specific person), who to contact if there are issues including absence .

• Make sure they have access to the appropriate IT software appropriate to your area. In addition they should have student badges with security access as needed.

• Ask what their goals are for the placement – do they have specific clinical skills or assessments that they need to complete? Also use this time to offer what you think the department can offer them – observe specific procedures, chronic disease management, history and physical examination practice etc.

• Notify them of departmental and hospital teaching or training that they can/should attend.

• Make sure they are up to date on the current COVID policies and have completed any required training. In addition who to contact if they are exposed or develop symptoms. A reminder that at lunch time when masks are off they must keep a 2m distance from any colleague to avoid exposure risk and potentially self-isolation (which will affect their total number of clinical hours needed).

• Lastly encourage them to be enthusiastic, get involved and work with all members of the team for the best experience. Some ideas to consider: follow the patient's journey – observe a scheduled CT/MRI/US, invasive investigation ie endoscopy/angiogram; look up any medications that they aren't familiar with; talk to patients about how they are doing and their experiences with their illness; practice physical examinations with patients who have findings – this could be done with another student so one person finds a patient and tells the other which system to examine and acts as a mini OSCE.

