

## London Dietetics Placement Allocation Policy for 2019 Placements

### 1. Background Information

- 1.1. Pre-registration dietetics training includes 3 compulsory professional practice placements as follows:

#### London Metropolitan University

| Degree Programme          | Practice Placements  |
|---------------------------|--|
| BSc Dietetics & Nutrition | Practice Based Learning 1 (2 weeks), Practice Based Learning 2 (12 weeks) and Practice Based Learning 3 (14 weeks) |
| BSc Dietetics             |  |
| MSc Dietetics & Nutrition |  |

#### King's College London

| Degree Programme                                  | Practice Placements  |
|---|--|
| BSc Nutrition & Dietetics (2011-12 entry onwards) | Placement 1 (2 weeks), Placement 2 (12 weeks) and Placement 3 (14 weeks) |
| MSc/ PG Dip. Dietetics                            | Placement 1 (2 weeks), Placement 2 (12 weeks) and Placement 3 (14 weeks) |

- 1.2. London Metropolitan University and Kings College London individually work with a subset of placement providers in London. London Metropolitan University works with placement providers within the boundaries of Health Education North Central and East London (HENCEL). Kings College London with Health Education South London (HESL) and Health Education North West London (HENWL) is split between the two universities.
- 1.3. Practice placements are undertaken in approved healthcare settings, the majority of which are funded by the National Health Service (NHS). The capacity of NHS providers to provide dietetic placements is affected by uncertainties in staffing, demand for services from patients, government policies and budgetary allocations. In recent years, students have not always been placed within the London cluster and/ or at the time when they expected to be undertaking placement. Students should be aware that placement supply remains uncertain
- 1.4. Although every effort is made to place students within the London cluster, there is no guarantee of a London placement (or of a placement per se) and some students may need to be placed outside the London area for one or more placements and/or may face a delay in being allocated to one or more placements (whether inside or outside London). This may result in delays to progression and graduation.
- 1.5. Students are notified of this situation at the following stages:
- At the interview stage of the University application process
  - Induction week
  - Pre-placement preparation sessions within the academic setting
  - In the Course Prospectus
  - Via the University websites

## 2. Allocation process

- 2.1. Placement allocation takes place as part of an annual cycle, from January to December. The system of student placement allocation is intended to be:
  - Fair
  - Transparent
  - Practical
- 2.2. To be eligible for a placement in the forthcoming cycle, it is the student's responsibility to submit their placement preferences through their local processes by the date specified. This acts as your application for placement. Applications received after that time may not be accepted. Students need to refer to their local policies and guidance on the application process.
- 2.3. When completing the application for a placement for the current cycle, KCL students will be asked to indicate five location preferences for each placement type, LMET students will be asked to indicate three location preferences for each placement type.
- 2.4. LMET students cannot be given the opportunity to submit preferences for the location of their public health placement. As such, it is important to highlight that the location of the public health component of placement three will be dictated in the first instance by the location of the placement three clinical site. For public health placement sites not linked to a clinical site every effort will be made to avoid students having to travel long distances. However this is not always possible and therefore a student may be placed in any area of London.

KCL students who are applying for placement 3 will also be asked to submit preferences for their public health placement site. KCL students should indicate three preferences. For undergraduate students we will ask you to submit PH placement preferences at the same time as you submit your preferences for your clinical site, for postgraduate students we will contact you later in the year to advise when you can submit your choices.
- 2.5. Students will not normally be allocated placements in dietetic departments where they are currently or have in the past been employees or volunteers, and are advised to indicate alternative preferences if they are connected to placement providers through an employment relationship (past or current).
- 2.6. A list of placement providers (by placement type) likely to be offering placements to London students at their placement cohort time this year will be made available on the Placement Manager database at LMET or on the relevant module KEATS pages at KCL. Detailed information about placement providers (including public health placement providers for P3 students at KCL) is available on the relevant module KEATS pages at KCL or at the London Metropolitan University Placement Database. Please note that placement providers do not provide all types of placement at all times of the year e.g. placement provider X may only provide Placement 2s starting in February and June and so will not appear on the lists for any other placements. Some placement providers offer placements in partnership with other providers. Please note that any partnerships are correct at time of publishing but may be subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.
- 2.7. Where possible, student preferences will be considered by the London Dietetics Placements Team, depending on the placements available at the time the student is selected for allocation. **However, there is no guarantee that a student will be allocated to one of their preferred locations.**
- 2.8. If it is not possible to allocate a student to one of their listed 'preferences' indicated, the London Dietetics Placements Team will endeavour to minimise travel times as much as

possible by allocating to the closest available placement. For LMET students term time addresses currently held on file will be used during this process, it is each individual student's responsibility to ensure contact details are up to date. At KCL we will use the term time postcode you submit via your KEATS allocation form. This will be cross checked against term time data on Student Records. Placement opportunities are dependent on offers made by placement providers.

2.9. Students have the opportunity to indicate on their placement application form any carer responsibilities which may impact their ability to take up specific placements. Students must provide details of their carer responsibilities and provide supporting evidence to their Placement Tutor *prior* to the point of allocation. Students should outline clearly how their carer responsibilities impact on their placement selection and what features are required of the placement. **Providing this information will not guarantee that the student will be allocated to their first choice site but the student's circumstances will be considered at the time the student is selected for allocation.**

2.10. Students who have other requirements which impact on their ability to take up placements in particular locations (due to a health condition or disability defined by the Equality Act (2010)) should register with the appropriate university's disability and dyslexia service as recommendations relating to reasonable adjustments made by this service will also be considered at the time the student is selected for allocation. Placements have experience of managing additional needs and reasonable adjustments will be put in place.

2.11. In the first round allocation cycle, the normal procedure for London Met will be that for each placement type and cohort, LMET will draw their students' names at random and will allocate students to the London placements within their sites in the order in which the names are drawn. For all KCL students, Placement 1 and Placement 2 names will be drawn at random. KCL UG and PG Placement 3 allocations will also be drawn at random but when we allocate any student who had a 'forced allocation' for their Placement 2, we will ensure that those students are allocated to one of their 5 placement preferences. A separate random draw will be made for the allocation of public health placements (for KCL students).

2.12. As students at London Metropolitan University will be allowed to indicate a preference for up to three placement sites and students at Kings College London will be allowed to indicate a preference for up to 5 sites, they will not be permitted to make changes by swapping placements with other students at any time. This is to allow placement providers to be informed of placement allocations at the same time as students, and to streamline administrative processes.

2.13. If students remain unplaced after an allocation cycle, all students will be allocated after those unplaced from the previous cycle, according to the procedure outlined in 2.12 above.

2.14. Subsequent allocation rounds: If any London students remain unallocated after the first allocation round they will be placed on a waiting list (specific to the university). Students will be allocated placements as and when new placements become available. Every effort will be made to secure placements for unallocated students either within the London cluster or elsewhere in the country. Students will be regularly updated on the number of students unallocated until all London students are allocated.

2.15. Every effort will be made to secure placements for unallocated students either within the London cluster or elsewhere in the country. Students will be regularly updated on the number of students unallocated until all London students are allocated. In the event that not all students can be allocated to placements in time to keep them in cohort, those unallocated students will be allocated first for the next occurrence of that placement available to their university.

- 2.16. It is unlikely that it will be possible to consider preferences of students not allocated in the first round, due to the lack of choice available when subsequent placements are offered by providers. However, reasonable adjustments as recommended by university disability and dyslexia services will be taken into consideration and students have the right to refuse an out of cluster placement (See Section 3 for further guidance).
- 2.17. KCL students will be notified by e-mail when first round placement allocations have been confirmed, you do not need to e-mail and accept, we assume you accept your allocation and LMET students can view their allocation through the database. Students offered placements as part of subsequent allocation rounds must confirm acceptance in writing **within 48 hours** of the placement offer..
- 2.18. All students are expected to take up any London cluster placement offered, and it is not possible to guarantee a placement in any particular location.
- 2.19. Although it is strongly discouraged and likely to be against the students' best interests, a student may decide to refuse a placement in the London cluster by submitting the refusal in writing to the placements tutor at their respective university (see Section 3 below). The student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the current placement cycle and will re-enter the placement cycle the following year when a new application for placement will need to be submitted.
- 2.20. Students waiting for repeat placements should refer to the Repeat Placement Panel Policy.
- 2.21. The London Dietetics Placements Team will at all times act to ensure each individual student's educational needs are met, and reserve the right to vary the procedures outlined where necessary to meet these needs.

### 3. Placement Refusal

- 3.1. Students will not be given approval to refuse any London cluster placement offered. Students who refuse a London cluster placement anyway will not be offered an alternative placement in the current allocation cycle.
- 3.2. Students may apply for and receive approval to refuse a placement offered outside of the London cluster. This involves completion of a Request for Placement Refusal form, with accompanying supportive evidence that they are unable to take up a placement outside London. In the case of 'approved refusal' the refused placement will be allocated to a student from the university next to receive a placement for allocation and the student with 'approved refusal' will be offered the next placement available to their university (they will go to top of waiting list).
- 3.3. Once an 'out of cluster' offer which the student deems unacceptable has been made, the process is as follows:
  1. Completion of the Request for Placement Refusal form by student (available from the relevant dietetics administrator at either King's College London or London Metropolitan University).
  2. Form is submitted together with evidence of situation to nominated Link Lecturer or Placement Education Tutor within 48 hours of placement offer.
  3. Student notified whether approval to refuse the placement has been granted within 48 hours of receipt of the form by the lecturer or tutor.
- 3.4. There are two categories under which students may apply to stay in cohort despite refusing an out of cluster placement allocation: a) dependents and b) protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act (2010)).

- 3.5. The decision to approve placement refusal will be made by the London Dietetics Placements Team, taking into consideration the robustness of the evidence supplied and the geographical location of the placement offered in relation to the student's residential address.
- 3.6. Each case is evaluated individually and decisions taken are at the discretion of the London Dietetics Placements Team. This decision is final and will not be open for further discussion. A separate appeals process may be logged by King's College London students via Professor Paul Sharp , Head of Department, Nutrition and Dietetics and London Metropolitan University students should follow the university appeals procedure.
- 3.7. Please note that submitting evidence does not guarantee that the application will be upheld. Having approval to refuse a placement on a previous occasion does not guarantee approval to refuse for future allocations and a separate application will need to be made and considered.
- 3.8. Students are strongly encouraged to accept any placement offered to them to ensure they progress as expected on their enrolled programme. Any student who refuses to accept a placement locally or outside the cluster (without approved refusal) will be deemed to have withdrawn from the current placement cycle and will re-enter the placement cycle the following year when a new application for placement will need to be submitted. **Another placement will not be offered in the current cycle.**

#### **4. Withdrawal of allocated placements by placement providers**

- 4.1. If a placement provider withdraws a placement which has already been allocated to a student, the displaced student will be allocated when the next placement becomes available to that student's university (they will automatically be placed at the top of the waiting list).

#### **5. Additional guidance**

##### **5.1. Health**

Applications for placement should only be made in the knowledge that the student concerned is fit to complete the placement period. If there are any circumstances which may prevent completion of the placement such applications should not be made. You must ensure that you have attended an Occupational Health assessment. If this was not done for any reason at the start of the course you must attend assessment as soon as possible. You will be asked annually to self-declare any changes to your health that may make you unfit to complete placement.

Some placement sites pose particular difficulties or risks for pregnant staff and students and therefore disclosure is essential in order to allow for a student to be allocated to an appropriate placement site and for a full risk assessment to be completed. A placement would not normally be allocated to a student whose expected delivery date is during the expected placement period.

Students who withdraw from placement on health grounds or as a result of a change in personal circumstances should discuss their progression with their placement tutor.

Most placements take place in multiple environments at a variety of locations and some of those environments may be challenging (e.g. noisy, distressing or with significant distractions). Placements are both physically and mentally tiring and students who feel that they may struggle to perform in such an environment should speak to their course leader or placement tutor to arrange appropriate support.

All information given will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be disclosed to members of the Dietetics teams responsible for allocating the London Cluster placements.

## 5.2. Failure of pre-requisite subjects and reassessments

Students who fail subjects that are university pre-requisites for placement will not be allowed to progress to placement.

**KCL: Progression to Placement 2 also requires a pass in the modules 6MNTDT03 Diet Therapy and 6MNTPCS3 Principles of Clinical Science and Therapeutics.**

Following successful completion of pre-requisites by the student, a placement will usually be allocated in the next allocation cycle (i.e. they will join the cohort of students in the year below) or sooner, if available.

Students who have met the academic pre-requisites for placement, but may require reassessments in **one** other module may be able to progress to placement at the discretion of their course leader. Students should not normally take re-assessments during the placement period and can only do so with the prior agreement of the placement provider and the university placement tutor or lecturer.

### **London Metropolitan University students only:**

Students who have met all placement pre-requisites at the first attempt will be prioritised. This may include the need to unallocate students who have reassessments or who are re-sitting modules due to previous module failure.

## 5.3. Placement Dates

Whilst start dates for placements are requested by King's College London and London Metropolitan University, students are advised that the final decision on start dates is made by placement providers. As patient care often necessitates changes to NHS services at short notice, start dates can and do change with little warning and students are advised not to make plans (such as bookings for holidays) that cannot be changed. In addition, students may require additional placement time for a variety of reasons, which may affect placement finish dates. Advice should be sought from King's College, London and London Metropolitan University lecturers/tutors if students are unclear about availability expectations for placements.

| <b>Placement cohort time</b> | <b>Cohort</b>                                       |
|------------------------------|---|
| January                      | Placement 1 (KCL PG, London Met UG & London Met PG) |
| January                      | Placement 3 (KCL UG)                                |
| February                     | Placement 2 (London Met UG)                         |
| May                          | Placement 2 (KCL PG)                                |
| June                         | Placement 2 (London Met PG & KCL UG)                |
| Summer period                | Placement 1 (KCL UG)                                |
| September                    | Placement 3 (London Met PG, London Met UG & KCL PG) |

## 5.4. Policy on student contact with practice placements

Students who are allocated to a placement should await confirmation regarding placement dates from the practice placement provider. Confirmation and paperwork is usually sent to allocated students approximately one to two weeks prior to the given start date. If the placement provider has not made contact approximately 2 weeks prior to the start date, students should notify their placement tutor to seek advice about contacting the placement trainer.

**Under no circumstances are students to contact placement trainers directly to request placements, or to use family connections to make requests on their behalf. Such action will be considered unprofessional behaviour and will result in disciplinary action from the university where the student is enrolled, and could jeopardise the student's status as 'fit for placement'.**

## **Reference**

Great Britain. Parliament. Equality Act 2010: Elizabeth II. (2010) London: Stationery Office.

London Dietetics Placements Team

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