

**Communicable Diseases and Occupational Health for  
Applicants to and Students in  
McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences  
Health Professional Education Programs**

**GUIDELINES**

**A. Applicants**

All applicants should be aware that they will be required to participate in the care of patients with various communicable diseases such as hepatitis, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS throughout their education. Therefore, there is a risk that the student may contract a communicable disease during the course of their studies.

As each student has a responsibility to prevent the spread of communicable diseases to others, the Faculty of Health Sciences is committed to providing education and training to all students in the methods of preventing spread of communicable diseases that is consistent with:

1. Public Health Agency of Canada Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings (reference: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/nosocomial-occupational-infections/routine-practices-additional-precautions-preventing-transmission-infection-healthcare-settings.html>)
2. Ontario Hospital Association/Ontario Medical Association Communicable Disease Surveillance Protocols for Ontario Hospitals (reference: <https://www.oha.com/labour-relations-and-human-resources/health-and-safety/communicable-diseases-surveillance-protocols>), in accordance with Regulation 965, Section 4 of the Public Hospitals Act RRO 1990 (reference: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900965>)

**B. Requirements on acceptance into the program**

1. All students are expected to be in a state of health such that they may participate in the academic program, including patient care, without posing a risk to themselves or others.
2. All students will be required to understand and comply with the Faculty of Health Sciences health screening requirements (reference: <https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/healthscreening/documents/FHSHealthScreeningRequirements.pdf>)
3. All students will be required to complete the following:
  - McMaster Health Screening Record (available for download on the Health Screening website: <https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/healthscreening/>)
  - N-95 mask education and fit testing
  - Infection prevention and control E-module training
4. Postgraduate Medical Education students must comply with the CPSO Blood Borne Viruses Policy and self-report positive serology to the CPSO and their Associate Dean (reference: <https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Blood-Borne-Viruses>)
5. Students in the Midwifery, Physician Assistant and Undergraduate Medical Education programs may perform or assist in performing exposure-prone procedures during their training, and are therefore obligated to know their status with regard to blood borne viruses Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. Students entering these programs must self-report positive serology to their Assistant Dean. (Reference: <https://cou.ca/reports/blood-borne-viruses-policy/>)

### **C. Co-Responsibility with Hospitals**

The Faculty of Health Sciences and the teaching hospitals each are responsible for ensuring that students are adequately instructed in infection prevention and control as it relates to communicable diseases. This will include the following:

1. The Faculty will provide an introductory program on routine practices/standard precautions, infection prevention and control that is consistent with current guidelines and occupational health and safety. In addition, the Faculty will inform students as to their responsibilities with respect to infection prevention and control and occupational health and safety.
2. Affiliated teaching hospitals are required to comply with the Ontario Hospital Association/Ontario Medical Association Communicable Disease Surveillance Protocols for Ontario Hospitals. Compliance with these Protocols requires the hospitals, in liaison with the University's academic programs, to provide instruction in infection prevention and control and occupational health and safety.

### **D. Occupational Health and Safety**

Within the clinical placement site, the Occupational Health and Safety Act applies to all workers, students and volunteers. Sites are required to ensure the necessary training/education has been provided to all learners.

The Faculty of Health Sciences is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities concerning the health and safety of its students.

1. Undergraduate and graduate learners including those on a visiting elective

As detailed in the [Workplace Injury and Exposure to Infectious/Environmental Hazards in the Clinical Setting for Learners in the Faculty of Health Sciences Policy](#), learners are required to complete basic safety education and training which includes a mandatory set of Occupational Health and Safety training modules. Program Offices are responsible for ensuring students have completed the safety education modules and successful completion of each module is tracked by the FHS Safety Office (FHSSO). Site specific training not covered by the FHS training modules is the responsibility of the clinical placement site.

Learners are to report workplace incidents to their clinical supervisor as well as the FHS Safety Office and the necessary documentation be completed. In the event of a workplace exposure, Occupation Health will contact the student/program to ensure the student receives direction and medical treatment if necessary.

In the event that a learner contracts a reportable communicable disease (including a new positive tuberculin skin test), the learner should share this information confidentially with their education program (program manager) and follow their program's guidelines.

2. Postgraduate medical residents

As detailed in the [PGME Health and Personal Safety Policy](#), learners are required to complete basic safety education and training which includes a mandatory set of Occupational Health and Safety training modules. In addition, the Residency Program must ensure that there is an initial, specialty, site-specific orientation available to the Postgraduate trainee.

## **E. Students with a communicable disease, injury or other medical condition**

Strict confidentiality concerning the student's state of health will be maintained. The student is central to the process. Students who have a communicable disease may pursue their studies provided that their continued involvement does not pose a health or safety hazard to themselves or to others. Students will be offered counseling from their respective Program regarding career decisions and transferring if applicable.

1. When a student's clinical activities need to be modified or limited due to an injury or other medical condition, the Associate/Assistant Dean should be notified. The Associate/Assistant Dean will request input from an Expert Board and/or other experts as appropriate regarding the details of any required modifications or limitations.
2. Students and residents have the right to appeal decisions made by the Associate/Assistant Dean or the Expert Board by submitting, in writing, a proposed amendment to the decision and the rationale supporting such an amendment. The student or resident may submit additional documentation from his/her personal physician or other healthcare worker in support of their appeal. In the case where the student's or resident's appeal is rejected by the Associate/Assistant Dean and/or Expert Board, the student or resident may engage in the Student Appeal Procedure of the University to submit any additional appeal.

## **F. Composition of the Expert Board**

Each case will be reviewed anonymously by the Expert Board. To ensure that the student's confidentiality is respected and maintained, the student will be advised of the membership of the Board prior to the case being reviewed. Disclosure of the nature of the communicable disease will be limited to the relevant Associate/Assistant Dean and the Director of the student's education program. The expert board will consist of:

- Associate/Assistant Dean, Chair (from appropriate program)
- Infectious diseases expert physicians (2)
- Physician from the discipline of the student (if applicable)
- Student representative (e.g., local PARO representative)

Additional resources available to the Expert Board:

- Medical Officer of Health
- Occupational Health
- Ethicist

The Expert Board will meet on an ad hoc basis, as required.

### **Examples of specific communicable diseases included in these guidelines:**

Blood-borne pathogens – HIV / Hepatitis B, C

Enteric pathogens – Hepatitis A / Salmonella / Shigella / Campylobacter / Verotoxin producing E-coli

Other – Influenza / Meningitis / Measles / Mumps / Rubella / Tuberculosis / Varicella

Complete list of reportable communicable diseases in Ontario: <https://www.hamilton.ca/public-health/health-professionals/reportable-infectious-diseases>