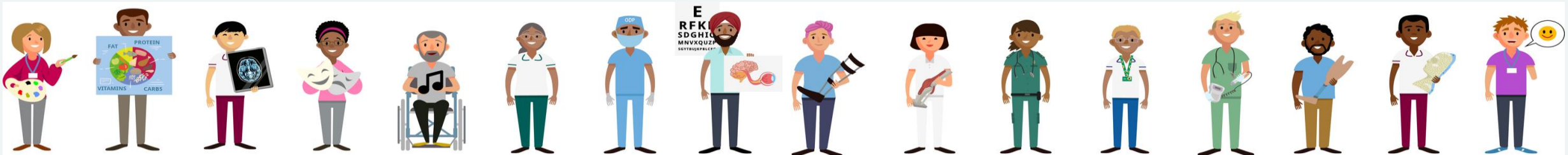




The benefits of non-patient facing placements for AHP students

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Language used within this resource

The terms “non-clinical placement” and “non-patient facing placement” have historically been used interchangeably. However, there is now a move towards using the latter to describe the type of placement this resource refers to.

This is because the term non-clinical may be used to refer to placements where students see patients but not in a traditional clinical setting.

This resource was created using the term non-clinical but the title has now been updated to reflect the use of non-patient facing instead.

What is a non-clinical placement?



A non-clinical placement is one in which a student has no direct contact with service users whether virtually or face-to-face.

They can involve research and project work that contribute towards service development and improving patient care.

By having a non-clinical placement, you can gain insight into work that is going on in the background and how services are structured.

They are an exciting opportunity to build leadership skills that can be used now and in your future career.

Allied Health Professionals across the country are discovering new and interesting opportunities in non-clinical roles.

The four pillars of practice



The four pillars of practice is a framework that encompasses all the skills and behaviours of a well rounded practitioner.

Non-clinical placements cover three of the four pillars of practice: Leadership, education, and research.

They can advance your learning and practical development and broaden your knowledge and skill set across all pillars.

Take a look at your governing body's information on the four pillars of practice.

Clinical practice

Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to provide high quality healthcare that is safe, effective and person-centred.



Leadership

Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to lead and to fulfil management responsibilities.



Education

Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to enable effective learning in the workplace.



Research

Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to use evidence to inform practice and improve services.



We surveyed students who have had non-clinical placements to find out what skills they gained...



Research

“I gained lots of knowledge on research and how it relates to clinical practice.”

Collaborative working

“I work well in a team, even virtually.”
“Better understanding of working in a multidisciplinary team.”
“Develop[ed] my skills in networking.”

Applying theory to practice

“How they [skills gained] actually relate to clinical practice.”
“Seeing things from an OT lens even if there is no OT present.”

Communication

“My communication skills have developed.”
“Professional communication and networking.”
“Discussing topics with senior members of staff.”
“Liaising with stakeholders.”
“Improved communication and people skills.”
“Active listening skills.”

Project management

Healthcare service provision
“Deeper understanding of community service provision.”

Personal growth
“I am resilient.”

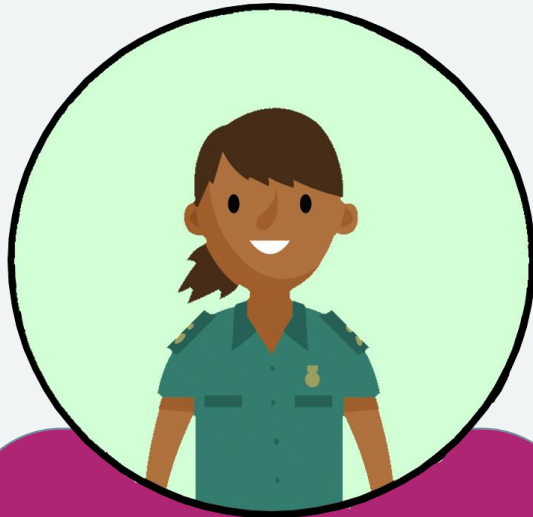
Autonomy

“Learned to manage my own diary, prioritising my workload and meetings.”
“Confidence working alone.”
“Being autonomous and handling my own workload.”

Leadership

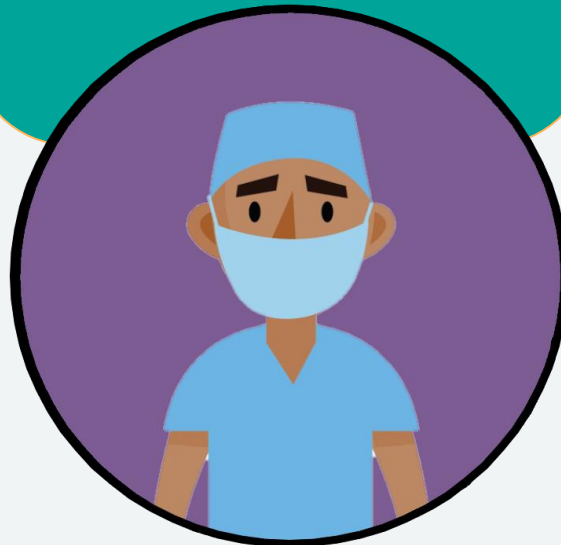
“I have gained many leadership skills.”
“Presentation skills.”
“I learned a lot about leadership styles.”

We surveyed students who have had non-clinical placements and asked what they enjoyed...



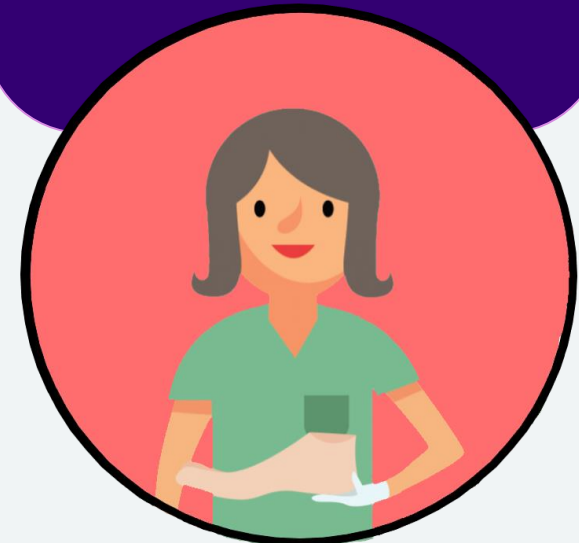
“I enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many people from different backgrounds. It shed light on the career opportunities for AHPs that I wasn’t previously aware of.”

“I now have a better understanding of what happens non-clinically in the NHS so I understand the system more.”



“I enjoyed how much I developed as an individual, in my confidence. I was able to apply all my clinical experience to this placement and felt that the experience was just as valuable as clinical”

“Being responsible for my own learning. Managing my own time and seeking out opportunities to expand my knowledge and skills.”



We asked students' their concerns about going on a non-clinical placement and they said...



What relevance will it have to my future career?



What setting will I be in and what will my job role be?

Will missing out on clinical experience negatively impact me?

How will I meet my placement competencies when I don't have any patients?

What about the logistics of working from home?

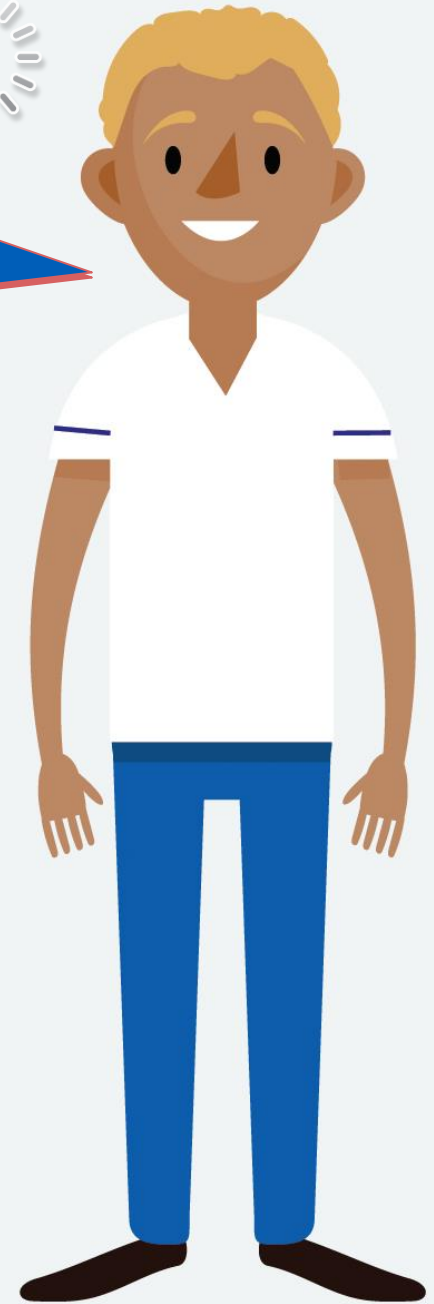
You may be allocated a non-clinical placement and **it's OK** to have concerns such as these when embarking on a new experience.

Let's take a look at each of these concerns and how you can best prepare for your non-clinical placement to achieve a great learning experience!

You will still work within a multi-disciplinary team and be supported by a practice educator who may be in the team or from another organisation who will supervise you and make sure you stay on track with your competencies.

Your role may look different but the skills of your profession will transfer into this new environment, it will allow you to develop different skills that you can apply to clinical practice.

What setting will I be in and what will my job role be?



You will likely have peers working alongside you to support you and share knowledge, this relates to the HCPC standards on working with others.

You can develop skills in: Communication, interpersonal working, critical reasoning, problem solving, managing your workload, working autonomously, project management and innovation in service development.

You may be in a setting that relates to the leadership, education and research pillars of practice.

It is likely you will be working with other students on a project that will contribute to the delivery of future services.

NHS Workforce Training and Education (formerly Health Education England) supports AHPs in developing their careers in areas such as leadership, education and research and believes AHPs should be represented across all levels of the future workforce.

It may seem strange to have no patients. Change your mindset and consider your patients as the people affected by the work you are doing (your stakeholders).

For example: If you are working on a project to build an online student support platform then your patients are the students.

Reframe your mindset when looking at your competencies.

Service users are your stakeholders.

Your assessment is your research.

Your treatment is the change you recommend or work you produce.

Models of clinical practice can also be applied to your placement project.

Your placement setting, university and educators will have mapped out the competencies you need to achieve and how you can meet them before you attend.

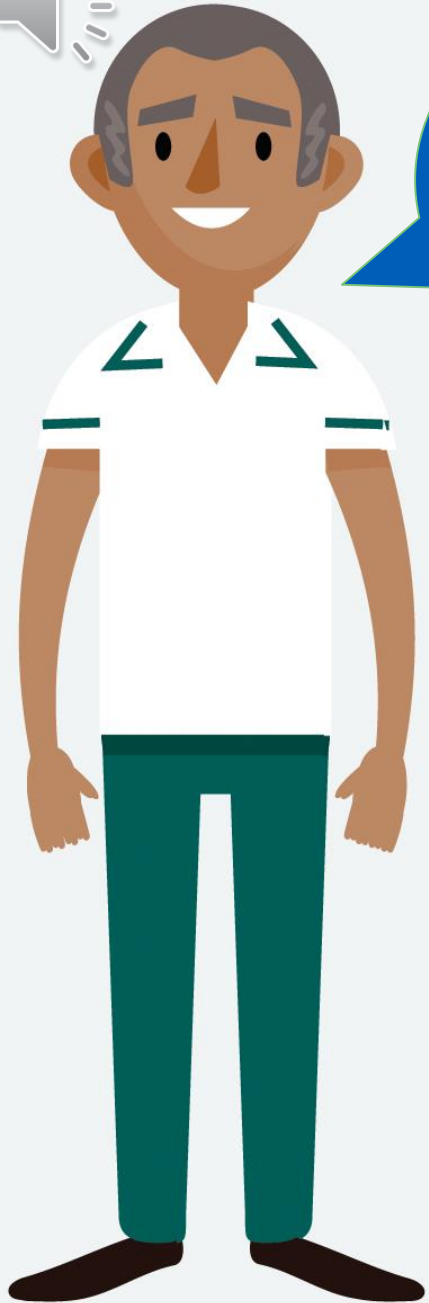
You will be working in partnership with colleagues and other professionals who will support you in contextualising the proficiencies to your role.

You will be building knowledge and skills within your scope of practice that transfer into a clinical setting. This will inform your future research, reasoning and problem solving skills, this will help you recognise the potential for your profession within alternative areas of practice.

How will I meet my placement competencies when I don't have any patients?

All of your professional bodies' competencies can be achieved on a placement such as this.





Will missing out on clinical experience negatively impact me?

You could be completing a placement in an area of practice covered by the leadership, education or research pillars of practice. You will learn skills that will set you apart from those who have not had a placement like this.

The experience you gain in a non-clinical placement is just as applicable to your clinical role and is particularly relevant to evolving modern practice. All of the skills you gain can be reframed to your profession and the HCPC standards you need to meet.

You will be working with a wide range of professionals from a huge variety of clinical and non-clinical backgrounds. This is an opportunity to work collaboratively and learn from the experience and teachings of many different professions and give you different perspectives that you can apply to patient care.

Try not to think about it as missing out, but more that you will gain skills in a different area, this can broaden your knowledge across all four pillars of practice.

Remember, your patients are your stakeholders. Your research and recommendations are your assessment and treatment and you will use your clinical reasoning skills to make decisions in any project you complete. Change your perspective and you will find there are many skills to be gained.

Check out healthcare job roles that you may wish to apply for when you are qualified, see how the job specification can have aspects of all the four pillars of practice. A non-clinical placement can broaden your skill set in all areas.



What about the logistics of working from home?



Most virtual placements have a morning meeting to discuss your plans or schedule check ins, and the people you are working with will be available to contact via telephone or online just as often as you would in the office. Even though you may be physically separated from the team and your peers, you will not be working alone! This allows you to build skills that apply to the HCPC standards in communication.

Make sure you have a dedicated desk space that you can work at and one that allows you to switch off at the end of the day as if you were on-site. This will allow you to separate work and home life.

Some placements may have office space that you can use, this could give you the opportunity to meet wider team members. Ask your educator about hot desk booking facilities when you start.

Take regular screen breaks and get up and move around little and often, taking time to get out of the house at lunch time may also benefit you.

Your placement, university or trust may be able to support you with computer equipment if you don't have access to your own.

Your placement will support you with training to use software if needed. Most meetings will take place via Microsoft Teams or another video conferencing app. It is worth researching online meeting etiquette before you start.



Leadership skills are valuable at any level of practice, you don't have to be a manager to use them. Gaining an understanding of them early in your career will give you the opportunity to practice them everyday.

There may also come a day when you want to apply for a management role and the experiences you gain on a non-clinical placement will make you stand out. Research the new HCPC standards on leadership.

What relevance will it have to my future career?

Your placement may be predominantly virtual, you will improve your active listening, verbal, visual and written communication skills. These skills are important in clinical practice when working with service users and building a therapeutic relationship.

Non-clinical placements will build skills in time management, planning, prioritising and presenting. Your experience here will improve your confidence in organising your own workload, this can directly translate to a clinical setting and managing your own caseload.

There are many non-clinical roles available in healthcare and placements such as this will help you build skills that you may need in the future. All of these roles are just as vital to patient care as clinical ones.

The research you do informs your practice – and improves your clinical reasoning skills.

You will be working with others both directly and indirectly in new ways that will build your collaborative working capability.

The IT skills you can build while working in this placement can improve your note writing accuracy and speed and can be related to the HCPC standards in record keeping.



Remember...



A non-clinical placement is an exciting opportunity to build many new skills that are applicable to your clinical practice and invaluable for your future career

You will be supported as normal by a practice educator and are likely to have peers around you to collaborate with

Keep an open mind and learn to reframe your way of thinking, this will help you contextualise your competencies

This is an opportunity to gain an understanding of the wider aspects of healthcare service provision and your chance to contribute to it

Embrace it!



Further resources

[Supporting the development of the AHP workforce and AHP careers | Health Education England \(hee.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Four pillars of practice | Career Framework \(scot.nhs.uk\)](#)

[AHP Practice Based Learning | Health Education England \(hee.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Allied Health Professionals – A Universe of Opportunities for your AHP career - YouTube](#)

[Early Leadership AHP Network | NHS Learning Hub](#)

[Self-assessment tool – Leadership Academy](#)

[Finding Your Campfire – A Remote Working Guide \(eBook\)](#)



We hope you have found this resource useful.

Please tell us what you think about it by completing a short, anonymous survey using the link below (average completion time 3 minutes)

<https://forms.office.com/e/Myy7UDpTS6>

Thank you very much.