



Iron Mill College

Education & Training in Mental Health & Wellbeing
Established 1981

FAQs IMC Student Placement

Online client work: If you are offered the option of returning to placement with online client work, ADC and FdA students are first advised to read the [BACP FAQs relating to courses, placement providers and students.](#)

And psychotherapy students

<https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/ukcp-news/coronavirus-hub/>

If you are considering returning to your placement with online/telephone client work, you will need to complete the **Four-Way Agreement** form that can be found in your Placement Handbook.

Q. What is BACP's position on transitioning back to face-to-face placements?

- a. *"it is still not clear when face-to-face practice will resume, but as the situation unfolds it looks like this could be ongoing for some time. We recognise that returning to face-to-face will depend on many factors including the individual context of each student, the placement setting and client group. Judgements about returning to face-to-face practice need to take account of the prevailing government advice on social distancing".*

Q. What if my placement is beginning to transition back to face-to-face placements?

- a. Placements will need to take into account of the prevailing government and scientific advice that it is safe enough to do so. As a duty of care towards their employees, volunteers and clients, placements should provide their written COVID-19 risk assessments to you prior to re-opening, with their planned mitigating actions, and should explain clearly how they intend to reduce the health risk to you and your clients;
- b. You should be given adequate time to consider those proposals and to discuss them with your Supervisor and the College before committing to any course of action.
- c. Before agreeing to resume your placement in person, you should contact Jana Collins.
- d. You would need to complete the COVID-19 Risk Management for Iron Mill College Students in Placement form.

We aim to support your wishes providing they are in line with current safety advice, and providing the placement has taken all necessary steps to mitigate the risk to you; also providing that you accept that no placement can eliminate risk entirely, and you are accepting of the risks presented to you.

Q. As a current student can I begin taking on new clients for online/telephone counselling?

- a. Students can begin working with new clients online/over the phone provided they are competent to do so, and where there are adequate support structures in place. Please read the new 4-way agreement.
- b. The focus of any online/telephone training and practice should be on using online video platforms or the telephone, not text-based or email counselling which requires additional skills and knowledge.
- c. At this stage, you should only begin working with clients who will be able to attend face-to-face sessions once restrictions are lifted.
- d. Clients will need to be based in the UK as there are additional legislative and insurance issues for practice in other countries

Q. Some of my clients are having underlying health conditions and are not able to return face to face immediately. Can I continue working with these clients online/by telephone until they can start having face-to-face counselling?

The BACP advise that students should not begin working remotely with clients who are unable to attend face-to-face sessions unless an ethical judgement has been made for continuing to work remotely with a client after the restrictions have eased. IMC is in support of students to continue working online with shielded clients providing the placement and supervisor are also happy with this. Please note that this agreement is subject to change in future as the COVID-19 situation changes.

Q. My placement is reopening for face-to-face client work, but I am concerned what happens if we went into lockdown again.

This is a discussion for the student to have with the placement first, before contracting with the client. In discussion with the placement manager, students should contract with all clients when starting face to face work, to agree what they would do if there was an area lockdown, or if one party had to self-isolate.

Q. At this stage, many placements continue working remotely. Surely with the client work taking place online, can I apply for a placement anywhere in the country?

Students can only work in a placement which has been approved by the placement coordinator in advance. Online work can therefore only take place with an approved placement at which the client can attend once allowed to resume face to face work. Any work taking place outside of 4-way placement agreement is a clear breach of the placement terms and therefore, cannot be counted towards placement hours.

Q. My placement is returning to face-to-face working. Can I therefore continue my placement online/by telephone?

IMC is fully supportive of students working up to 50% of their required placement hours via online/telephone counselling during the social distancing period. However, the provision of online/telephone counselling is a temporary measure and students should return to face-to-face working as soon as possible when it is practical and safe to do so.

Q. I am not keen starting my placement remotely,

The BACP recommends *If possible, you should consider delaying placement start dates until 2021 to give students the best chance of getting started with clients face to face, to see how the COVID-19 situation unfolds, to give themselves the best chance of getting started with clients face-to-face.* Students with specific health concerns or who are caring for vulnerable people should not be forced to face-to-face work.

Q. Who shall should contact if I have any concerns about the safety of a placement.

Please contact the Placement Coordinator, Jana Collins.

Q. I am concerned that I might not meet the deadline for completion of my placement hours.

Any student who has been unable to undertake their placement hours due to the COVID-19 situation, and is worried about their ability to complete their placement hours in the required time, should speak with Jan Cavill (ADC students) or Lucia Capaldi (FdA students) and Briony Nichols (TA students) to discuss the possibility of an extension due to Mitigating Circumstances. All students, regardless of the course, will still be required to meet the required number of placement hours stated for their course.

Q. I am shielding/my supervisor is shielding, can I continue having my supervision sessions online/by telephone?

Yes. Returning to face-to-face working depends on the government advice on social distancing and the individual context of each student and supervisor. When it is practical and safe to do so, you should return to face-to-face supervision sessions.

Q. Will my online training qualify me as a “online counsellor “?

No. This is a short term measure and does not mean that students are qualified as an ‘online counsellor’ once the pandemic has ended – although they may be able to continue to work in this way after they have completed their core training by addressing any gaps in their competence via further training

Q. Is there a limit to the number of online/telephone placement hours allowed?

- a. In the current situation the BACP are not setting a limit provided students are able to return to face-to-face work as soon as is reasonable, practical and safe to do so.
- b. Students should not begin working remotely with clients who are unable to attend face-to-face sessions unless an ethical judgement has been made for continuing to work remotely with a client after lockdown restrictions have eased.
- c. In the longer term, if/when Accredited courses choose to incorporate online/telephone training and practice into the core training, the BACP will then accept up to 30 online/telephone placement hours.

Q. Do my client have to be based in the UK?

Yes. Clients will need to be based in the UK as there are additional legislative and insurance issues for practice in other countries.

Q. Can I offer online therapy to children and young people while in training
The BACP recommended that students only work with existing clients under 16 who they already have a relationship with.