Uniform & Dress Code Policy for all Students
Clinical Skills
(Based on Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Trust Policy)

Introduction

The professional image presented by students is an important component in the way we are perceived by colleagues, patients and the public. Uniforms make a profession recognisable, which in turn promotes trust and confidence. A professional image is one that is both smart and simplified with limited personal clothes. A professional appearance and manner is important to maintain patient and public confidence (Dancer 2013).

The University respects the right for students to adhere to religious and cultural observances. However, consideration should be given to infection control, the operation of machinery, clear identification of students and clear communication with patients.

General Principles

Uniform or clothing should be smart, safe and practical. It should:
• Allow freedom of movement and comfort
• Minimise infection risks and withstand decontamination for those students that work in clinical areas
• Project a professional image to encourage public trust and confidence
• Contribute to student’s identification by the patients and public
• Be designed with a client group in mind and reflect the type of work undertaken
• Contribute to the corporate image of the University.

Where students are involved in clinical activities a ‘bare below the elbows’ policy should be adopted in order to facilitate good hand hygiene practice (Johnson, 2007).

All Students

Where any student provides patient care, or simulated patient care a ‘bare below the elbows’ policy should be adopted. Jackets/white coats/fleeces should be removed, shirt sleeves rolled up above the elbow. Other personal protective equipment should be used as appropriate. Uniform or non-uniform clothing must be clean and neatly pressed.
Non uniformed students should be aware of the need to demonstrate a professional image to patients, relatives, customers and fellow students, and to ensure their own and others’ safety. Clothing should be clean, modest and tidy; jewellery should be kept to a minimum and must not cause a risk either from snagging or for infection control purposes.
All non-uniform students can wear a trouser of their choice but loud gaudy colours are not professional. They should not be flared or have patch pockets e.g. cargo style trousers.

Styles of dress should inspire confidence and add to, not detract from, effective and sensitive communication. The following are not permitted in the Clinical Skills Teaching & Learning Centre or situations where simulation of interactions with patients is undertaken.

- T-shirts with inappropriate slogans
- Jeans
- Visible body art, nail varnish or false nails
- Extreme hair styles
- Body and face jewellery (except a plain wedding band, or small ear or nose studs)
- Wrist bands/strings/watches
- Revealing clothing, no breast or bottoms should be on show and skirts should touch the knee when sitting and standing
- Open toed shoes
- Clothing that covers most of the face or makeup creating an unnatural appearance

(Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences, Communication and Dress Code for Students at the University of Manchester 2008)

**Footwear**

Footwear must be appropriate to the role employed. Sensible low heels (no more than 2 inches in height) and shoes that provide good support and an enclosed toe must be worn in clinical and front line working areas.

**Rationale:** To promote a professional image and student safety (dropping of items (sharps) onto toes, stubbing of toes and trips/falls).

Footwear must enclose the toe in particular and, in some clinical areas, the whole foot, and have non-slip soft soles with low heels. Trainers are permitted in some areas (best to check with each area, before attending, or have shoes with you as well). They should be discreet in colour and design Footwear colour, in general, should be discreet.

Flip-flops are not permitted in clinical areas.

**Rationale:** They do not look professional or meet Health and Safety guidance, and staff can incur accidents, broken toes, trips and falls in any area.

**Jewellery**

All jewellery should be kept to a minimum when wearing uniform or delivering direct patient care.

**Rationale:**
- To avoid injury to patients during moving and handling activities
- To facilitate effective hand hygiene
• To comply with health and safety guidance
• To maintain a professional appearance

Permissible Jewellery
Only 1 plain ring is permitted when delivering direct patient care.
A single discreet nose stud may be worn.
Small plain studs can be worn in the ears.

Non permissible Jewellery
Wearing of visible jewellery in the eyebrows or other sites is not permitted. At their discretion the wearing of small studs only may be agreed; hoops and chains are not acceptable when delivering direct patient care. Neck chains, if worn, should not be visible when delivering direct patient care.
Wrist watches must not be worn whilst involved in patient care.

Tattoos
It is recognised that in today’s society many individuals now have tattoos. Where a student has a tattoo in an area that remains exposed this must not be offensive. As students may be interviewed by staff, work with staff and care for patients of a different generation they are advised to bear this in mind when choosing a tattoo design and position.

Ties
Where students wear ties these must be tucked into shirts, removed or held back with a tie pin whilst carrying out patient care. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure these are laundered/cleaned regularly. The majority of Clinical Trusts no longer permit the wearing of ties in the clinical area.

Clothing in general
Should be professional in appearance, skirts should touch the knee whether standing or sitting, avoid wearing leggings, jeans or combat trousers, short skirts with leggings are not acceptable.

Rationale: Baggy clothing can easily snag on patient lines and equipment at the bed side. Clothing that exposes chest or midriff can be distracting and embarrassing to other health care professionals and patients. Leggings are not considered professional attire and are often considered too casual.

Identification
Students in the clinical area must wear photo ID badges, which must be visible at all times. If a lanyard is used to display your identification this must be removed when undertaking direct patient care, even if designed to break if pulled to avoid dangling where it should not.
Hair
Hair must be clean and tidy. Longer hair must be worn neatly off collar in a style that does not require frequent readjustment. The hair should not fall onto the face.
**Rationale:** To avoid contamination by the dissemination of micro-organisms from the hair, whilst completing clinical/cleaning/food preparation or any patient related task. Students are also at risk of taking infection back into their own homes if hair is contaminated.

Hair decoration must be plain and simple
**Rationale:** To prevent injury to patients or staff members.

Facial hair must be kept short, neatly trimmed or tidily secured.
**Rationale:** To maintain a professional image

Head scarfs, hijab
Should be clean, tidy, and securely fastened, with no sections dangling forwards. The majority of the face should be exposed. Avoid use of sharp fastenings.
**Rationale:** To avoid contamination by the dissemination of micro-organisms from the fabric. Clothing that covers the face such as peaked caps, hoods and the niqab may compromise communication between patients and professionals. Sharp fastenings may get caught or be used as weapons by confused/aggressive patients.

Makeup
Should create a natural appearance
**Rationale:** To create a professional appearance that is not distracting, confusing or disturbing

Nails
Nails must be natural, short, clean and unvarnished. Artificial nails may not be worn by any clinical staff
**Rationale:** To prevent injury to patient. Long nails prevent effective hand washing techniques and harbour pathogens. Research has shown that artificial and acrylic nails harbour organisms and contribute to the transmission of organisms and prevent effective hand washing. Additionally fungal growth occurs frequently under artificial nails.

Belts and Buckles
The wearing of uniform blue belts and buckles is optional but if worn should not restrict movement nor have sharp edges.
**Rationale:** May injure patients.

Strong odours
Patients can become nauseous and strong odours such as tobacco, heavy perfume, strong food smells and body odour may make patients feel uncomfortable. Students are asked to be mindful of this when preparing to go into a clinical setting.
Policies may differ slightly from Trust to Trust but if you follow these principles it is unlikely you will have any problems, if you are unsure regarding your personal appearance please speak to a member of staff.

References

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