

## **Statement to confirm guidance to Institutions providing NYA approved awards during Covid-19**

The National Youth Agency (NYA), through its Education Training Standards Committee is the recognised PSRB for Youth Work, validating professional qualifications in youth work in England as agreed with the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers.

The NYA is acutely aware of the impact that Monday's announcement of a 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown in England may have on Youth Work students completing their mandatory placement hours towards professional recognition. The NYA is asking all institutions to continue following the guidance published in July 2020 that provides exceptional allowances for JNC recognised professional youth work qualification routes in the light of Covid-19 restrictions [[COVID-19 Response - ETS Guidance for HEIs - NYA](#)]. This guidance is designed to cover the full 2020-2021 academic year and it is expected the guidance will continue to apply to all students who have been impacted by Covid-19 restrictions as they work towards the completion of their studies in future academic years.

This statement has been produced to emphasise the advice and allowances contained in the guidance that can be applied to students as they work towards completion of the courses:

### **1. A reduction to the minimum required practice hours (to 75% of normal requirements):**

The NYA has consulted with colleagues in universities and agreed students on JNC endorsed professional qualifications in youth work who have been affected by COVID restrictions can achieve professional recognition on completion of a minimum of 75% of the normally required total assessed practice hours (normally 800 for undergraduate programmes, and 400 for post-graduate). This reduced minimum applies to the sum total of practice hours from across all levels of placement, and in more than one setting, providing that students have successfully demonstrated the required level of competence (as contained within programme documentation / validation guidelines) in regards to National Occupational Standards, Ethical Conduct and Subject Benchmarks. To be clear, this means that students who are currently undertaking Youth Work qualifications can qualify, providing they demonstrate competence in all areas of the National Occupational Standards, with a total of 600 hours at undergraduate level, or 300 hours at post graduate level by the time they complete their programme.

### **2. Exceptional allowances for individual students**

Where an individual student is not able to meet the revised minimum practice hours, the NYA recommends that Programme Leaders give due consideration to other related evidence of competence in practice that demonstrate a student meets threshold standards for professional recognition, or provides support for the student to undertake additional practice hours at a later date in order to meet threshold standards. In principle, the NYA supports programmes to apply the 'no detriment' philosophy, where possible, though we recognise that in some instances, students will have to undertake practice hours at times other than those originally scheduled (and that extend their studies beyond the current academic year) in order to be able to demonstrate their professional competence and achieve professional recognition.

### **3. Approval of exceptional allowances for students**

Programme Leaders are encouraged, within QAA guidelines, to work closely with Fieldwork External Examiners to agree any amendments or changes to assessment / practice that reflect these guidelines. The NYA is also recommending that the Fieldwork External Examiner's approval is requested where any exceptional allowances for professional practice are applied to individual students. More widely, Programme Leaders are requested to immediately notify the NYA of any specific issues that may impact on a whole student cohort (as opposed to an individual student) by contacting the NYA Workforce Development Officer, Kevin Jones at: [kevinj@nya.org.uk](mailto:kevinj@nya.org.uk)

### **Continuing Assessment of Covid-19 Impact:**

Before the 2020 Christmas break, we surveyed programme leaders to establish how the restrictions to date have impacted on students' ability to undertake the required practice hours. At that point, we were reassured that in the vast majority of cases students are predicted to be able to meet the revised minimum practice requirement. NYA would like to thank colleagues for their flexibility and ingenuity in supporting students to achieve this, and we encourage institutions to continue to be as flexible and accommodating as possible in supporting learners to meet the practice requirements. For many students this has involved increased digital youth work engagement and developing youth work connections in their home locations. This may be particularly pertinent for supporting learners who are remaining in their home location during lockdown instead of returning to university. The NYA is committed to continuing assessment of current restrictions and welcome further feedback from programme leaders as the year continues to progress.

### **Operating Placements within Covid-Safe Guidance:**

The NYA have continued to work with Government during the pandemic to secure continuing youth work practice. 'professionally qualified youth workers and those in training have now been recognised as Key Workers under Government guidance and, the Government has approved and endorsed the NYA's national 'readiness' guidance to the youth sector during the lockdown period (see <https://nya.org.uk/guidance>). The guidance allows for and enables a considerable range of youth work activity to take place at the varying levels of readiness and during lockdown. While we recognise that some placement organisations may opt to close for the lockdown period, others will be operating within COVID-safe guidance, and we encourage universities to support these placements by making youth work students available for practice.

### **Endorsement of Continuing Face-to-Face Teaching**

The NYA encourages programmes to facilitate a measure of face-to-face teaching, where possible, for students but recognises this may be a more blended or hybrid experience combined with digital engagement. This request reflects the emphasis on relational and groupwork engagement that are a requirement of youth work programmes and supports students to address the core knowledge detailed within the subject benchmarks, skills required in professional practice assessments and to evidence compliance with requirements for ethical conduct.

### **Concluding remarks:**

In making this updated statement, the NYA's over-riding focus is to maintain and support high quality youth and community work education, such that we continue to meet the needs of young people and their communities at this difficult time. If you have any specific queries arising from the guidance, please contact Kevin Jones, Workforce Development officer at NYA at [kevinj@nya.org.uk](mailto:kevinj@nya.org.uk)