

Guidelines for clinical placement providers to support students who wish to wear a hijab or head covering or head scarf

Students who wish to observe the hijab, wear turbans or kippah/yarmulke during their placement time should be permitted to. As per Equality Act 2010, we need to take a pro-active approach to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity.

In places where there is requirement for students to change clothes for achieving infection control, these students **MUST** be offered an alternative head covering. Head coverings do not present an infection risk if they are properly worn and supported in the clinical environment.

The following guidance is written for all hospital staff and clinical team members to support any University of Exeter, College of Medicine and Health students on clinical placements who wish to wear head covering, head scarf, hijab, turban or skull cap in infection control areas such as theatres.

These guidelines are based on Theatre Hijab Toolkit provided by British Islamic Medical Association (britishima.org) and good practice followed by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.



If you have a student who wears a head covering you should:

- A** Ask the student about their preference for alternatives in infection control areas.
- B** Students should be asked to tuck in headscarves into the uniform neckline.

In theatres or infection control areas, one of the following alternatives should be offered:

- 01** Students may bring their own freshly washed cotton head covering for each theatre attendance, subsequently washed at 60°C. An additional theatre cap or theatre head covering is optional.
- 02** Offer students orthopaedic hoods which cover the head and neck, if you have them. However, some students may find they do not meet their needs.
- 03** Offer students sterile disposable hijabs. Consider buying them if you do not have them. The Royal Derby Hospital is the first hospital trust to do this (bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-50810176).



While communicating to students:

- 01** Converse compassionately. There is more information at the end of this document and you can read more about the importance of wearing head covering for people at:
 - [bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02mwdlw](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02mwdlw)
 - [bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02mx39q](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02mx39q)
 - [bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/znwhfg8/articles/zh77vk7](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/znwhfg8/articles/zh77vk7)
- 02** Involve students in making a decision about suitable alternatives for theatres and infection control areas.
- 03** Do NOT ask students to remove the head covering, head scarf, hijab, turban or skull cap without providing an alternative.



Background:



- In Islam, Hijab represents the principle of modesty and includes both dress and behaviour and is applicable to men and women. The most visible form of Hijab is the veil or head covering or head scarf worn by Muslim women. ([bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/hijab_1.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/hijab_1.shtml))
[sgul.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/documents/religion-belief-code-of-practice.pdf](https://www.sgul.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/documents/religion-belief-code-of-practice.pdf)
- In Sikhism, both men and women may wear a turban, which is a head covering. The turban is the symbol of their faith and shows their determination to follow an edict handed down in 1699 by the 10th Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, to not to cut their hair. ([bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03kstjr/p03ks09y](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03kstjr/p03ks09y)).
Turbans are mostly worn by Sikh males however, there are some women who observe this practice. ([bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35563415](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35563415))
- Some Jewish male students may wish to wear kippah/yarmulke, which is a small skull cap or hat. Wearing a skull cap or kippah or yarmulke is a sign of their religious faith and Jewish identity. Some Jewish females may also wish to wear a head covering. [bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/customs/yarmulke.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/customs/yarmulke.shtml)
- In some Christian denominations, adherents (usually women) will wear head scarves or coverings either for prayer / worship, or at all times in public.