



**Policy on General Health,
Infectious Diseases
Screening and Vaccination
of RCSI Bahrain Students
AY 2023-24**

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

Policy / Regulation History

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1 PURPOSE

This policy outlines the university process regarding students' general health, infectious diseases screening and vaccinations. RCSI Bahrain is aware of its overriding duty of care to the public with whom students are in close contact, and takes reasonable and appropriate measures not only to safeguard students but also patients and members of the public.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

All medical and nursing students must read and agree to abide by the terms and conditions of the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health (MOH) Policy - ***“Policy for Immunization and Infectious Diseases Screening for Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Physiotherapy Students”*** and the RCSI Bahrain policy on Blood Borne Viruses.

The Student Health and Wellbeing Unit of the Student Development & Wellbeing Department at RCSI Bahrain is responsible for ensuring that students' medical records, screening and vaccinations are compliant with the Ministry of Health regulations.

3 APPLICATION

This policy is applicable to all RCSI Bahrain students.

4 POLICY CONTENT

a. General Health

Applicants to the university **must** disclose a known disability or medical condition. The Student Health and Wellbeing Unit can discuss health and wellbeing support available under the university's Reasonable Accommodation Policy. **RCSI reserves the right to discontinue students who have failed to disclose significant health information which may, even with the provision of Reasonable Accommodation, prevent a student from progressing through the academic programme.** Where necessary, the assessment of a candidate's ability to progress through the programme will be made by referral to an independent Occupational Health Consultant and following the university's Fitness to Study policy. ***Students have a responsibility to protect the interests of the public and their colleagues and to inform RCSI if any form of physical, mental or other ill-health could seriously affect competence and responsibility to patients.***

Students have a responsibility to self-care, both for their own benefit and for that of colleagues and the public with whom they will come in contact. This responsibility takes many forms, but one obvious one is for students to provide clinicians who will be involved in their care in Bahrain with adequate advance information on any significant ongoing health issue.

Some examples of what might be needed include:

- **Diabetes:** List of current medications and blood results over the previous year
- **Asthma:** List of current medications and copy of previous spirometry
- **Ongoing surgical issues:** Relevant copies of specialist reports and investigations
- **Psychiatric illness:** Relevant reports from specialist and current treatment plan
- **ADD/ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder/attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder):** These conditions require some special attention as there may be challenges in receiving treatment in Bahrain.
- **Gastroenterological issues:** Relevant copies of specialist reports and investigations, particularly endoscopies.

This list is not exhaustive, but is meant to facilitate continuity of good quality medical care. All reports should be in English.

b. Needle stick injuries

Students must report any needle stick injury to the appropriate clinical authority at their clinical placement. The clinical authority is responsible for assessing the risk and providing first aid treatment and follow up, which may include booster vaccinations and blood borne virus testing. The student must also inform the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit staff, who will provide counselling and advice to the student for follow up at the student's local health centre. A copy of the incident report and serology screening will be kept in the student's confidential health file in the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit. The Student Health & Wellbeing Unit maintains a database of needle stick injuries to monitor practice and identify retraining needs which may need to be communicated to the relevant School.

c. Infectious diseases medical screening and vaccination programme

Please also read the RCSI Bahrain Blood Borne Virus Policy.

Healthcare workers, including students, face the possibility of exposure to infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B and TB. While the risks are small, increasing efficiency of preventive measures such as vaccination has highlighted the importance of these diseases. RCSI has introduced procedures to offer both students and patients' protection against Hepatitis B, Tuberculosis and several other common diseases. According to the Ministry of Health regulations, RCSI students must be screened for and offered protection against the following diseases:

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C
 HIV
 TB
 Varicella/Zoster
 Measles, Mumps, Rubella
 Meningitis C
 Tdap
 Polio
 Influenza
 Covid -19

- **Hepatitis B**

1. First year students must attend for blood tests (Hepatitis B Surface Antigen, Hepatitis B Core Antibody) and medical screening according to the RCSI Bahrain Blood Borne Virus policy.
2. Non-immune students are required to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B through the programme organized by the RCSI Bahrain Student Health and Wellbeing Unit.
3. Students who show evidence of Hepatitis B or other serious infectious diseases are referred to the RCSI document Blood Borne Viruses Policy.
4. More information is available here:
<https://www.moh.gov.bh/HealthInfo/Immunizations?lang=en>
5. **The most time-consuming element of the screening and vaccination programme is vaccination against Hepatitis B which comprises of 3 shots over a six month period with a follow up blood test two months later to confirm seroconversion. Up to 10% of students will be negative at this point and will need to have the entire course again.** This obviously has implications for starting clinical attachments, doing electives etc., and is another reason to start the programme as early as possible.

- **Hepatitis C**

All students will be screened for Hepatitis C in first year and again prior to their clinical attachments.

- **Measles, Mumps and Rubella**

1. Students must provide evidence of having received two doses of MMR.
2. Students who cannot provide evidence of having received both doses of MMR must receive a booster dose of MMR.
3. Students without any prior vaccination should receive both doses of MMR, given at least one month apart, unless otherwise contra-indicated.
4. More information is available here:
<https://www.moh.gov.bh/HealthInfo/Immunizations?lang=en>

- **Pertussis (whooping cough)**

1. A booster dose of a low-dose pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap-Boostrix) is now (2013) recommended for health care workers, including students, who come into contact with infants, pregnant women and the immunocompromised to prevent transmission of this disease.
2. More information is available here :
<https://www.moh.gov.bh/HealthInfo/Immunizations?lang=en>

- **Chicken pox (Varicella)**

1. Students without a definite history of chickenpox or vaccination will be considered non-immune, and will be tested for the presence of immunity to Varicella Zoster Virus.
 2. Non-immune students may need vaccination against VZV.
It is important that a copy of the post-vaccination blood test confirming immunity is given to the Occupational Health Officer. If a student comes into contact with chicken pox and cannot demonstrate immunity, they will be removed from clinical duties and patient contact for 21 days. Also, students may wish to participate in overseas elective attachments and many of these insist on evidence of immunity to Varicella. More information is available here:
<https://www.moh.gov.bh/HealthInfo/Immunizations?lang=en>
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- **Polio**

Students are required to provide documentation of a complete primary series of polio vaccine. A complete series consists of 5 doses for children up to 6 years of age, and 3 doses after age 7.

- **Influenza Vaccine**

Students are encouraged to receive the annual influenza vaccine. The vaccination will be made available to students at King Hamad University Hospital free of charge between the months of October until March each year.

- **Covid-19 Vaccine**

All students must be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 for the beginning of academic year 2023/24 and evidence of vaccination must be submitted to the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit. Students attending clinical placements will not be eligible to attend without providing proof of having been fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Boosters must be taken in line with recommendations of the Ministry of Health Bahrain. The Covid-19 vaccine is available from the Ministry of Health free of charge to all residents of Bahrain; this includes international students who hold a Bahraini CPR.

- **Tuberculosis**

Students will be assessed in relation to Tuberculosis as part of the pre-registration screening. Medical students will be assessed again prior to entering clinical placement during Year 3.

- **Mantoux Testing**

Regardless of previous BCG vaccination, all students will need to provide evidence of having a Mantoux test during pre-registration screening. Medical students will be assessed again prior to commencing clinical placement during Year 3.

Results of Mantoux:

- **Less than or equal to 5mm and unvaccinated** - will receive TB education.
- **Greater than 5mm but less than 15mm** - will receive TB education.
- **Greater than or equal to 15mm** – refer for medical evaluation.

Medical Referrals

Students with a positive PPD greater than 15mm will need to seek medical evaluation and treatment from a health care provider, a medical report detailing the investigations and treatment plan should be given to the Student Health Service and the report will be kept in the student health records. Students will need to pay for TB follow up investigations and treatment.

- **Meningitis C**

Students should provide evidence of receiving one dose of Meningitis C vaccine. Otherwise, students will be offered vaccination (a single shot). More information is available here:

<https://www.moh.gov.bh/HealthInfo/Immunizations?lang=en>

- **HIV**

All students must undergo HIV screening as part of the pre-registration screening. International students may also require rescreening on arrival in Bahrain (see i. below). Medical students will be screened again prior to commencing clinical placement during Year 3.

By participating in this medical screening and vaccination programme, students agree to the following:

- To undertake appropriate tests and clinical follow-up for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV
- To have vaccination for Hepatitis B and follow-up testing, if deemed necessary
- To have screening for Tuberculosis if necessary
- To have screening for immunity to measles, mumps, rubella and chicken-pox and subsequent vaccination for these if necessary
- To participate in immunization campaigns such as Covid-19 and influenza vaccination programmes.

Complex work is undertaken for individual assessment, gathering formal documentation of previous vaccinations, blood tests to confirm current immune status for different diseases, administration of a vaccination programme (unique to each individual), and appropriate follow up. This work is administered by Student Health and Wellbeing Unit, in conjunction with the specified medical services provider.

Many hospitals/clinical sites used for electives as well as prospective employers seek confirmation of a student's immunization status. Students are advised to request an appointment with the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit student-health@rcsi-mub.com to discuss requirements.

It is very important that students attend for immunization and screening appointments when requested. Students will receive an excused absence from class to attend such appointments.

Non-compliance with the medical screening and vaccination programme is a breach of the RCSI Bahrain Code of Conduct and can result in discontinuation from the university.

Pregnancy

Most of the above vaccines are contra-indicated in pregnancy. It is extremely important that students do not proceed with vaccinations if they are, or may become, pregnant over the course of their immunization schedule. Students should discuss their case in confidence with the Occupational Health Officer in the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit.

i. Screening and Vaccination Programme: Costs

First Year (all newly registered RCSI Bahrain students)

- Students are expected to have all required medical screening and vaccinations completed prior to joining the university (pre-registration screening).
 - Students who are holding Bahraini passports who have completed their screening at a health centre in Bahrain **will not** need to have **repeat screening** after registration.
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- Students who are holding a passport from a Gulf Cooperation (GCC) country who have completed their initial medical screening at a Ministry of Health facility in that country will **not** need to have repeat screening after registration.
- Students who are residents of certain Gulf Cooperation (GCC) countries who have completed their initial medical screening at a Ministry of Health facility in that country, which is accepted by the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health, **may not** need to have repeat screening after registration. The Student Health and Wellbeing Unit will advise if repeat screening is required.
- All other students **will need to have** repeat medical screening after registration. The Student Health and Wellbeing Unit will make the necessary arrangements for the screening and inform the student accordingly. There is a cost for this screening, which will be communicated to students upon registration. Students are responsible for paying their medical screening fees directly to the clinic providing the screening. Results are provided to the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit for follow up as necessary (see RCSI Bahrain Blood Borne Virus Policy).

Other Years

Vaccinations which require updating will be provided by RCSI Bahrain at an appropriate clinical site, free of charge. Any further serology tests or medical screening (i.e. prior to starting School of Medicine Year 3) will be paid for by the student.

Elective Applications

Students who require elective application forms to be completed with vaccination status should request an appointment with the Occupational Health Officer in the Student Health and Wellbeing unit. If additional blood tests are required, there will be a charge for the tests. Vaccinations are free of charge.

d. Outbreak Situations

1. In the event of an outbreak of any infectious illness on campus, in clinical locations or in the wider local community, students are required to adhere to all infection control measures recommended during that outbreak.
2. Students who contract an infectious illness should adhere strictly to the Ministry of Health and clinical location guidelines. Students must comply with any recommended isolation period and must not return to campus or clinical environment until that period has elapsed and they have recovered from their illness. Advice can be obtained in confidence from the Occupational Health Officer.
3. Students should avail of any other appropriate immunization as and when recommended during an outbreak situation. This may include obtaining boosters to previously completed primary immunization courses.

e. Summary of Process

i) Initial screening and vaccinations prior to registration

1. The Admissions Department will send the Student Agreement together with a copy of this policy, the Blood Borne Virus Policy and the Ministry of Health Policy referred to in this document to accepted student applicants for review and signature of acceptance.
 2. Prior to registration in the university, all accepted student applicants must complete an initial blood borne viruses screening. Screening results and immunizations records are
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sent by the student to the RCSI Bahrain Student Health & Wellbeing Unit, where student health records are confidentially maintained.

Infectious Disease screening results are only valid for a period of three months, therefore **screening should not be done more than three months before the start of the programme**, as results will no longer be valid and cannot not be accepted.

3. If the screening result submitted is positive for an infectious disease, the student will not be eligible to join the University, according to the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health regulations.

ii) Student rescreening after registration

- Students who are holding Bahraini passports and who have completed their screening at a health centre in Bahrain **will not** need to have repeat screening after registration.
- Students who are holding a passport from a Gulf Cooperation (GCC) country who have completed their initial medical screening at a Ministry of Health facility in that country **will not** need to have repeat screening after registration.
- Students who are residents of certain Gulf Cooperation (GCC) countries who have completed their initial medical screening at a Ministry of Health facility in that country, and which is accepted by the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health, **may not** need to have repeat screening after registration. The Student Health and Wellbeing Unit will advise if repeat screening is required.
- All other students **will need to have** repeat medical screening after registration. The Student Health and Wellbeing Unit will make the necessary arrangements for the screening and inform the student accordingly. Repeat medical screening will take place during the first six weeks of the academic semester. Information on rescreening is given to students during their orientation programme into the university by the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit.

Offers of places in the School of Medicine and School of Nursing and Midwifery are made to students in good faith and are subject to the results of the repeat medical screenings. If a student is subsequently found to be tested positive for a blood borne virus, the offer will be considered null and all fees paid will be reimbursed. International students will have to be repatriated according to the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health regulations.

iii) Student medical screening and vaccination records

1. Student medical records will be retained in accordance with the University policy on data retention, and following data protection regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
2. Student screening results are retained confidentially in the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit and in the student record file in Student Records (SARA), according to regulations of the Higher Education Council.
3. Medical screening and vaccination records will be maintained for each student by the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit. This information is strictly confidential and only accessed by the relevant personnel.
4. Students can have access to their medical reports and immunization record on request. Vaccination records are returned to students upon graduation.

iv) Vaccinations and rescreening during the academic programme

Vaccinations: During the academic programme, the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit is responsible for ensuring that students' vaccinations are up to date. Vaccinations are offered to all RCSI Bahrain students, free of charge.

According to the Ministry of Health Policy (page 5: Strategies to minimize infectious disease risks), students can only opt out of the immunization programme with the prior written approval of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, for example in case of previous adverse reactions and immuno-suppressed students. In such cases, the Occupational Health Officer would arrange a risk assessment of the student.

2. Rescreening: All School of Medicine students will be rescreened for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV and Tuberculosis in Year 3. This is **mandatory**. Students' vaccinations will also be updated. If results for a blood borne virus are positive, the student will not be eligible to continue on the programme according to the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health regulations. The university is required to inform the Disease Control Section at the Ministry of Health of the positive results.

3. If a student tests positive for a blood borne virus at any stage during his/her programme of study, the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit is required to immediately notify the Disease Control Section at the Ministry of Health. Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV are notifiable diseases according to the Ministry of Health regulations. This notification process requires the provision of demographic details so that the public health authorities can undertake contact tracing if indicated, in order to ensure public safety.

The student will be asked to meet confidentially with an appropriately qualified physician and a member of the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit so that he/she can be provided with post-test counselling and psychological support, and discuss treatment options.

5 Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I get a copy of the Infectious Disease Screening and Immunization Form?

The form will be sent to all new students during the admissions process and can be found at :

<https://www.rcsi.com/bahrain/undergraduate/application-information/policies>

What should I do if my physician doesn't speak English?

You will need to have the information needed for the form and all your relevant records translated into English.

Can I scan my immunization records and send them attached to an e-mail?

New students should submit their records to the Link provided (see appendix 1).

Enrolled students can send immunization reports to student-health@rcsi-mub.com

Do I have to pay for my screening required immunizations, or are they covered by RCSI?

Vaccinations are free of charge, however blood tests (serology testing) should be paid for by the student.

What immunisations are necessary?

Please refer to the main document above for a complete list and instructions. You will find specific requirements for measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, meningococcal disease, Influenza and Covid-19 vaccination, as well as a recommendation for varicella (chicken pox).

What should I do if my immunisation records are lost or unavailable?

You could have special blood tests called IgG titers to show immunity. You will be offered vaccinations against those diseases to which you are not already immune.

Why do I need to have two mumps vaccines?

It is strongly recommended that students entering medical university have proof of two doses of a mumps vaccine or MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) or proof of immunity through blood testing. This is also recommended as a way to decrease the risk of mumps among the students and others in the community in which they reside.

In my country, a rubella immunisation is required for females only.

Rubella immunity is required for all male and female students. Regardless of your sex, you must have a rubella immunisation or a blood titre that proves immunity.

Will you accept my mother's word that I was immunised for measles, mumps, and rubella?

While your parents may be a reliable source of knowledge about your childhood health, we do require medically documented proof of immunity. Blood titres can also be used to prove immunity.

What does "documented proof" of immunity mean?

Documented proof is a written record of your immunisation dates provided by school, university, college, or physician's office, and/or results of laboratory blood testing.

My blood titre was equivocal or borderline. Do I need another immunisation?

Yes, because we cannot accept borderline immunity. You will need another immunisation to boost your immunity.

Do I need the hepatitis B immunisation if I'm married?

Yes. The hepatitis B immunisation is required by law for all newly entering students, regardless of age, gender, or marital status.

Do I need the Covid-19 Vaccine?

Yes. All students must provide proof of being fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Covid-19 vaccination will be mandatory for student to attend clinical locations and is mandatory for entry to many social environments such as cinemas, indoor dining.

How many shots are there for the hepatitis B immunisation?

Three. The second injection must be administered at least 28 to 60 days after the first injection. The third injection must be administered six months after the first injection.

6 ANNEXES

Template: New Applicants Immunizations and Infectious Diseases Screening form and Appendix

7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Bahrain Ministry of Health (MOH) Policy for Immunization and Infectious Diseases Screening for Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Physiotherapy Students
 - RCSI Bahrain Blood Borne Virus policy
 - RCSI Bahrain Student Code of Conduct
 - RCSI Bahrain Fitness to Study policy
 - RCSI Bahrain Student Agreement
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Template: New Applicants Immunizations and Infectious Diseases Screening Form and Appendix

RCSI Bahrain Student Health & Wellbeing Unit **New Applicants Immunizations and Infectious Disease Screening Form**

In compliance with the Ministry of Health, “***Policy for Immunization and Infectious Diseases Screening for Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Physiotherapy Students***” (Policy attached) all new applicants must submit evidence of having completed the Infectious Disease Screening identified below (Section A) and complete the Immunization Report (Appendix 1). **Please note that all new students will need to provide proof of completing the Covid-19 Vaccine.**

International Applicants

Should complete the screening identified below (Section A) and get (Appendix 1) completed by their health care provider. It is mandatory that international applicants who require rescreening are re-screened for Infectious Diseases once they arrive in Bahrain. The Student Health & Wellbeing Unit will advise of the requirement for rescreening and arrange this following registration.

Applicants from the GCC

Should complete their Infectious Disease Screening identified below (Section A) at a Ministry of Health Facility in their country of origin. **Results should be recorded on a medical examination certificate, which clearly states the applicant’s fitness and stamped by the health authority.** Their health care provider should complete Appendix 1.

Bahraini Applicants

Bahraini applicants should complete their Infectious Disease Screening at their Local Health Centre and results should be recorded on the “Medical Examination Certificate – Studies Fitness”. Their health care provider should also complete Appendix 1 at the local health centre.

Section A. Infectious Disease Screening Required:

- Hepatitis B Surface Antigen
- Hepatitis B Antibodies
- Hepatitis C Antibody
- HIV 1 & 2
- Tuberculosis Screening (PPD skin test)
- Chest X Ray

The Infectious Disease Screening and immunization report should be submitted to [link](#) .

Please note: Infectious Disease Screening completed more than 3 months from registration will not be accepted.

Applicants should complete the required vaccinations listed in (Appendix 1) before registration. Once enrolled in RCSI Bahrain, Student Health & Wellbeing Unit will arrange for vaccines to be updated accordingly.

If you have any questions or need further advice, please contact Student-health@rcsi-mub.com

Appendix 1

**RCSI Bahrain Student Health & Wellbeing Unit
Immunization Report**

This report should be completed by a licensed health care provider e.g. GP, Practice Nurse,
Occupational Health professional etc.

Name:	DOB:
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Vaccine		Date	Result
MMR Vaccine	MMR 1 st		
	MMR 2 nd		
Hepatitis B Vaccine	Hepatitis B 1 st		
	Hepatitis B 2 nd		
	Hepatitis B 3 rd		
	Hepatitis B Surface Antibody Level		_____mIU/ml
Secondary Hepatitis B series (<i>for non-responders</i>)	Hepatitis B 4 th		
	Hepatitis B 5 th		
	Hepatitis B 6 th		
	Hepatitis B Surface Antibody Level		_____mIU/ml
Hepatitis A vaccine	Hepatitis A 1 st		
	Hepatitis A 2 nd		
Tetanus – Diphtheria and pertussis	Tdap (<i>must be within 10 year</i>)		
Polio	<i>Last dose received</i>		
Meningococcal	Menactra		
Typhoid	<i>Within 3 years</i>		
Varicella	Varicella 1 st		
	Varicella 2 nd		
	Varicella Serology IgG		Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>
Covid -19 vaccine	Vaccination Name		Please attach your Covid-19 Vaccine Certificate
	1 st dose		
	2 nd dose		

Health Care provider Signature

_____ Date: _____

Official Stamp: