FAQs and tips  last updated 23.9.11

Q: Can I register my students for access to the NHS National Core Content?
A: The eligibility criterion is that the students must be healthcare students on an NHS (England)-commissioned education programme which involves practice and placement within NHS provider services. They may have access for the duration of their programme.

Q: Can you give examples of eligible NHS (England)-commissioned education programmes?
A: Nursing
   Allied health professions
   - paramedics
   - dietetics
   - occupational therapy
   - operating department practice
   - orthoptics
   - orthotics & prosthetics
   - physiotherapy
   - podiatry/chiropody
   - radiography (diagnostic and therapeutic)
   - speech and language therapy
Midwifery
Audiology
Dentistry
Dental hygiene and therapy
Medicine
Healthcare scientists (Masters level only)

Q: What about pharmacy, healthcare science undergraduate and optician courses?
A: Pharmacists: Because this is a HEFCE funded course, the NHS (England)-commissioned course definition excludes them for the four years of their University course. However, during this time they spend hardly any time at all on placement. For their fifth, pre-registration, year they are employed within a healthcare setting, salary supported by the NHS, and would be eligible.

Healthcare scientists: Undergraduate courses are HEFCE funded and therefore not commissioned by the NHS. The undergraduate experience does include placements within Trusts – so students may have access whilst on placement only. The masters level courses are commissioned by the NHS and students spend all their time on placement within NHS Trusts, so would be eligible.

Opticians: This is a HEFCE funded course & therefore students are not eligible.

Q: Students are registered for the length of their course... but what about admin accounts?
A: Administrators are registered for 2 years and registration can be renewed as required.

Q: Can librarians have access to the NHS National Core Content?
A: Yes, under eligibility criterion F of the Core Content eligibility..."Individuals engaged to provide education, training or research for the NHS in England".

Q: What about access by academic staff?
A: Yes, as long as they conform to eligibility criterion F.

Q: My institution uses Shibboleth/UK Federation; can I use this instead of Athens?
A: Currently, Athens is the only means of accessing the National Core Content open to HEIs. Shibboleth access management is not used by the NHS.
Q: What format must the student email be? Can they use gmail, yahoo, hotmail etc?
A: Ideally, student emails must be their current institutional '.ac.uk' address to provide verification if self-registering for Athens. Some universities are moving away from '.ac.uk' email addresses. If the registration is done as a bulk upload process by an Athens administrator in HE, then there is some flexibility regarding the email name because the HE Athens administrator is providing verification through the bulk upload process.

Q: How do I save my data as tab delimited?
A: When you choose 'Save as' choose to save your file as 'Tab delimited (text)' from the drop down menu at the bottom of the dialog box.

Q: Can I upload user details at the start of term and then defer the actual account activation until later in the year when we give a related tutorial session?
A: Yes, you can specify the desired activation date on the upload template.

Q: Are there any technical (i.e. PC) requirements that I should know about?
A: Yes, your PC must have a fixed IP address rather than a dynamic IP address. Part of the administration process depends on Eduserv 'recognising' your specific PC. Ask your IT department to help with this.

Q: Do I need to pay to use Athens?
A: No, you don't need to pay. Athens has been procured for use by eligible institutions by NHS Evidence.

Q: Will students be eligible to register for NHS Athens while on placement in trusts, as well as registering in their HEI at the start of their course?
A: It is possible to register additionally when on placement. Central registration in HE gives access to the standard core of NHS-purchased materials. If Trusts have access to additional content through local purchasing arrangements, this can only be accessed by registering on placement. Some HEIs expect their students to access and use this additional local content whereas others are happy for students to work with core materials. This is a local decision.

Q: In our area, there are national, regional and local e-resources, and with “just” national access they’d miss a lot of stuff which would be really useful to them while with us.
A: There might be a potential for complexity, if the central mission of facilitating access to students, is extended beyond the national core content. However, this is a local shared decision between NHS Athens Administrators and HE librarians, as they are the ones who will have to do the administration work. Owing to the amount of administrative work that would be required, one might suggest that multiple Athens UserIDs would not normally be required unless there was an imperative academic or clinical reason why this had to be so. Local variations require a debate with all local stakeholders (such as undergraduate clinical tutors in Trusts and the relevant academic staff in the HEI) as to whether or not any changes would represent a useful additional resource to the student.

Q: Are HE-NHS ATHENS accounts locked at national level? Is there the facility to change the organisation linked to behind the scenes for the duration of a placement? NHS staff are able to change their host organisation; will students be able to do that?
A: Universities don't appear on the "Change organisation" page because they are not discrete Athens organisations in their own right – they are just sub-admin accounts. Students can change FROM their university TO their first placement, but can't change back to their university again (though they can change to their next placement). If NHS Athens administrators are prepared to administer students who are longer on placement at their trust (before they move to their next one), then the 'change org' functionality could be promoted/publicised. If this is not the case then this function should not be publicised.
It is theoretically possible to change organisations behind the scenes, but it is not particularly practical as it would have to be done by the national NHS Athens administrator who would require data on names of all students on placement, the university at which they are a student and the date their placement finishes. For this reason, this approach is not recommended.
Q: Are you uploading information from a central University student information system to NHS ATHENS, and if so, which field/types of information are required?
A: All that is required, is first name, last name, university email address and course expiry date.
See the Athens Administration tab in the wiki for more information. How to get this information varies between institutions. In some cases a list can be obtained from a school or faculty office - it does not have to come directly out of a student record system. There is a spreadsheet template for uploading to Eduserv but we leave it up to you as to how you populate this.

Q: What is available as part of the National Core Content?
A: A list is available at: http://www.libraryservices.nhs.uk/forlibrarystaff/information/eresources.html

Q: When does the new arrangement begin? We have students coming into our Trust and our stakeholder Trusts all through the year and it would be good to know when the new arrangement begins so that we can direct them to the appropriate HE administrator.
A: Although the eligibility criteria changed in April 2011, the arrangement starts as soon as we have administrators in place in the relevant HEIs to register the eligible users. HE Athens administrators are being recruited between July and September 2011 and have to be trained first. The current list is at http://nhs-hei-athens.wikispaces.com/Participating+institutions When administrators are in place, they will be asked to contact their local NHS Athens administrators, if they haven’t done so already. This will help us to develop a support network between colleagues in NHS and HE.

Q: How do I find out if my local university has set up NHS Athens accounts for their students?
A: You can see a list of currently participating HEI institutions on the HE/NHS Athens wiki here:
http://nhs-hei-athens.wikispaces.com/
The name of the HEI NHS Athens administrator will be listed here.

Q: Do students automatically get NHS Athens accounts when they first start their courses?
A: Only if their institution is participating in the scheme – not all HEIs are as this is a phased implementation. You can see a list of currently participating HEI institutions on the HE/NHS Athens wiki here:
http://nhs-hei-athens.wikispaces.com/

Q: Can I assume that all students on placement in our Trust have NHS Athens accounts?
A: No, only if their institution is participating in the scheme – not all HEIs are. If they ARE currently participating, only students in their 1st and 2nd years will be given NHS Athens accounts, so current 3rd, 4th and 5th years will not have Athens accounts. If students haven’t already got an account via their HEI, they may wish to register through their placement trust or self-register via N3.
You can see a list of participating HEI institutions on the HE/NHS Athens wiki here:
http://nhs-hei-athens.wikispaces.com/

Q: Will university librarians provide training in the use of NHS Athens resources?
A: HE librarians will be either providing training or directing students to NHS training resources. This training is intended to be in addition to the training currently provided by NHS library staff and does not replace it.

Q: Do the NHS Athens accounts set up by university librarians for their students provide access to national, regional and local resources?
A: Accounts set up by HEIs give access to national resources only. Students requiring access to regional and local resources will need to set up a second account when they are on placement.

Q: How long do students’ NHS Athens accounts last?
A: Student accounts set up by HEIs will expire when the student leaves the course.
Q: If students require access to local resources, may they still self-register whilst on placement?

A: The Athens system does not allow users to self-register with an address already in the system. It will allow an email to be used more than once, however, and to do this, local NHS administrators can decide to:

- Require students on placement to self-register on N3 (i.e. the NHS network)
- Manually create accounts for students on request