

Programme Fitness to Practise Statement School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice Masters of Social Work

UCD Policy Definition

Fitness to Practice means having the skills, knowledge, health and character necessary to undertake and complete a programme with professional practice, experiential learning or clinical work safely and effectively, fulfilling their responsibilities with their scope of practice in their chosen field.

Purpose of the UCD Fitness to Practice Policy

- To protect the public, students, placement providers and the University;
- Instil in students the qualities and competencies required for professional practice and to support and guide students who experience issues that may affect their ability to practice;
- Provide a suitable framework for the effective management of Fitness to Practice issues that may arise, either prior to or during a student's programme of study.

Aim of the School's Fitness to Practice Statement

The fitness to practice statement aims to:

1. Ensure students understand the level of professional attitudes and behaviour required of them throughout their programme of study.
2. Safeguard members of the public, patients and clients with whom the Masters of Social Science (Social Work) students have contact with during their programme.
3. Meet the requirements of the UCD Fitness to Practise procedures.

Fitness to Practice in Social Work

A student on the Masters of Social Science (Social Work) Programme must be fit to practise. This guide to Fitness to Practise has been developed in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers and the practice assessment procedures set out by the Social Workers Registration Board (CORU) for those on the Masters of Social Science (Social Work). This policy should be read in conjunction with the UCD Student Code, Garda Vetting procedures and the Masters of Social Science (Social Work) Programme's regulations course handbook.

Equal Opportunities and Fitness to Practice

University College Dublin is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are welcome and reasonable accommodation will be made where practicable. For the Masters of Social Science (Social Work) programme however, students must have the ability to practise within an agency at a level required of a student social worker. They need to be able to assess risk effectively and efficiently, communicate effectively with service users and colleagues and provide appropriate interventions. Where additional support is necessary, it will be provided insofar as is practicable within the current sphere of professional practice. However, regrettably, it is possible that some persons otherwise qualified to undertake the Masters of Social Science

(Social Work) Programme may be unable or become unable, because of ill health or physical inability, to complete all elements of the programme as required.

Examples of concerns or circumstances which might render a student unfit to practise (these are not exclusive)

- A criminal conviction, caution or charge arising subsequent to the Garda Vetting form being completed.
- Substance misuse that affects study, work or the work environment
- Aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour such as poor time management, frequent non-attendance, poor communication, failure to accept and follow educational advice, failure to follow health and safety requirements or the regulations of the School or University
- Impaired judgement which would place clients at risk and which persists despite intervention and supervision by academic staff and/or practice teachers
- Lack of competence which persists despite intervention and supervision by academic staff and/or practice teachers
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitude such as a breach of confidentiality, harassment, bullying or unlawful discrimination
- Untreated or unacknowledged physical or mental health conditions that impair a person's ability to practise without supervision. As stated above, UCD is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. However, a fitness to practise issue could arise due to failure to follow medical treatment or other support, refusal to follow medical advice or care plans including monitoring and reviews in relation to fitness to practise and failure to recognise limits and abilities or lack of insight into health concerns.
- Any other issue which would place clients or colleagues at risk

Fitness to practise issues can arise at any stage during a student's time on the designated programmes and will be addressed utilising the UCD Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedures. It is important to note that such issues may be temporary and/or satisfactorily dealt with during the programme of study. However, fitness to practise issues may affect the ability of students to complete the programme, gain the final qualification or register with the Social Worker's Registration Board.

Student Declaration

All students applying for and entering the designated programmes as well as relevant academic and administrative staff will be fully briefed on the Fitness to Practise Policy and related procedures through the Course Handbook, this Policy and reference to the Social Workers' Registration Board's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers (where appropriate). Students are required to read this Policy and acknowledge in writing that they have read and understood the Programme's Fitness to Practise Policy and procedures at the academic year of the designated programmes.