



UCD School of Education

Doctorate in Educational Psychology Fitness to Practise Statement

UCD Fitness to Practise Definition

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

Purpose of the UCD Fitness to Practise Policy

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

The Fitness to Practise statement aims to:

- Ensure students on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology understand the level of professional attitudes and behaviour required of them throughout their programme of study all aspects of their training.
- Safeguard members of the public or service-users with the students have contact during their professional placements and other applied experiences.
- Meet the requirements of the UCD Fitness to Practise procedures.
- Meet the criteria set by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) accreditation criteria for the D.Ed. Psych. Programme.

Professional Integrity & Core Values

The following positive attitudes and behaviour are expected of students in educational psychology training:

- As a condition of acceptance onto the UCD Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme, students must obtain Garda Clearance. After the receipt of initial Garda Clearance and prior to the completion of the programme, subsequent Garda caution, allegation of criminal activity, or criminal prosecution must be notified to the Programme Director in writing as soon as possible and no later than seven days after they become aware of its occurrence. In the event of an alleged incident, the Programme Director may require the student to discontinue their professional placement and other course work until such time as the issue is resolved. Failure to notify the Programme Director or to agree to temporarily discontinue

training while an outstanding legal issue is resolved will result in the initiation of formal fitness to practise procedures.

- As a condition of acceptance onto the UCD D. Ed. Psych. programme, students must declare themselves physically and psychologically well in order to competently accomplish the various academic coursework, placement, research and other training requirements. On an annual basis postgraduate students are required to declare themselves fit to practise as part of annual on-line registration. In the event that a student experiences a change in their physical or psychological health affecting their ability to execute their responsibilities they are required to notify the Programme Director in writing within seven days. In such circumstances the Programme Director and Team will work with the student to develop an appropriate plan to manage their changed circumstances in a supportive manner. Failure to notify the Programme Director of a significant change in their physical or psychological health which affects an individual's capacity to carry-out their various responsibilities in professional training may result in the initiation of formal fitness to practise procedures.
- Fitness to Practise is demonstrated continually during the course of professional training in all settings. Trainee educational psychologists should act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work; respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of any information afforded them in the context of professional placement unless a legal imperative requires disclosure or there is a legitimate concern for the well-being of an individual.
- There should be open, positive and constructive interaction with members of the public, service users, clients, research participants, supervisors, other staff on placement, peers, the course team, and other university staff.
- While on placement, trainees should adopt the dress code of their host agency.
- Training requires openness to the acquisition of new knowledge, new skills, and the continuous adoption of new roles. This requires the trainee to be open to new learning experiences and to demonstrate the ability to receive and respond to feedback in a constructive and non-defensive manner. In instances where there is a concern that a trainee is unreasonably defensive and unresponsive to constructive feedback offered to them then the specific feedback given, and the response of the trainee should be clearly documented.
- The Programme Director (or members of the Team designed by the Programme Director) has a duty to inform current or subsequent professional placement supervisors of any fitness to practise hearings, and their outcome, to which a student may be referred. If the Programme Director or their designate are informing a supervisor of the outcome of formal or informal fitness to practise procedures which has resulted in the student's continuation in professional training, this information should be conveyed in a manner that supports the student in achieving and maintaining the appropriate standard of practise in a supportive, clear and goal-directed manner.

Equal Opportunities and Fitness to Practise

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. However, Doctorate in Educational Psychology students must have the ability to practise within an agency at a level required of a trainee educational psychologist and 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 practise.

Fitness to Practise Causes/Circumstances of Concern

Issues that might impair fitness to practise are wide ranging. The following are examples of areas of concern or circumstances which might render a postgraduate student unfit to practise.

- A criminal conviction, caution or charge arising subsequent to the Garda Vetting form being completed.
- Substance misuse, drunk driving, alcohol or drug consumption that affects study, work or the work environment.
- Aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour; assault; sexual assault; physical violence, bullying; abuse.
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour, poor time management, infrequent or 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 or Placement Agency.
- Impaired judgement which would place clients/service users at risk, and which persists despite intervention and supervision by academic staff and/or professional placement supervisors.
- Lack of competence which persists despite intervention and supervision by academic staff and/or professional placement supervisors.
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitude such 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 and lack of insight or management of these concerns: failure to seek medical treatment or other support. 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. In this context ill health means a long term, untreated or unacknowledged physical or mental health condition that impairs a person's ability to practise without supervision. Good health means that person is capable of safe and effective practise without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition.
- Any other issue which would place clients or colleagues at risk.

Fitness to Practise Procedures

Fitness to practise issues should usually be resolved co-operatively and informally in the first instance.

In most instances where a trainee educational psychologist encounters some form of difficulty in any aspect of their training the default approach will be to deal with this issue in a sensitive, supportive and informal manner. This will usually involve the student, their placement supervisor or other person bringing the issue of concern to the attention of the Programme Director and the development of a clear, goal directed plan that resolves the issue to the satisfaction of all concerned parties.

Formal Fitness to Practise Investigation Procedures may be initiated.

In circumstances where a serious fitness to practise issue has arisen, or the public are deemed to be at risk, or the informal supportive strategy outlined above has clearly not resolved the issue, the trainee educational psychologist will be referred to the University's formal fitness to practise procedures. This process is outlined in the Student Fitness to Practise Process Map in the following link:

<https://www.ucd.ie/secca/studentfitnessstopractise/>

Student Declaration

All students enrolling on the programme as well as relevant academic staff will be fully briefed on the Fitness to Practise Policy and related procedures through the Programme Handbook, this Policy and reference to the PSI Code of Professional Ethics. Students are required to read this Policy and acknowledge in writing that they have read, understood and accept the Programme's Fitness to Practise Policy and procedures prior to commencing Year One.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I confirm that I have read and understand the Doctorate in Educational Psychology Fitness to Practise Policy.

I agree to adhere to the D.Ed. Psych. Fitness to Practise Statement.

Print name:

Signed:

Date: