

UCD Fitness to Practise Statement
School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice
Professional Master of Social Work Programme (PMSW) and MSc Social Work Programme
June 2022

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 Practise Policy

1. Ensure students on the UCD PMSW and MSc Social Work programmes have a clear understanding of the standards of professional attitudes and behaviour required of them throughout all aspects of their education and are supported in their continuous attainment of these standards.
2. Ensure the well-being of any members of the public, service users and placement providers with whom PMSW and MSc Social Work students have contact during the course of their practice placements or other learning experiences.
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.

Fitness to Practise in Social Work

A student on the Professional Master of Social Work/MSc 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 MSc Social Work and Professional Master of Social Work. This policy should be read in conjunction with the UCD Student Code, procedures relating to Student Vetting, Infectious Diseases and General Health Screening and the MSc Social Work and Professional Master of Social Work programme regulations and course handbooks.

Personal Behaviour

PMSW and MSc Social Work students demonstrate their Fitness to Practise in all aspects of their personal behaviour throughout their period of registration by behaving in a manner appropriate to their position as a student of the University studying for a qualification, the successful completion of which leads to the right to apply to CORU for registration as a qualified social worker.

Students are required to keep high standards of personal conduct and to behave with integrity and honesty at all times. Students are required to follow and obey the laws of the land and to refrain from unlawful activity at all time. As a condition of acceptance onto the PMSW or MSc Social Work programmes with a placement component, students must undergo vetting in line with the UCD Student Vetting Policy.

During their period of registration where a PMSW or MSc Social Work student is subject to a Garda caution, allegation of criminal activity, or criminal prosecution, he/she is required to notify the relevant Programme Director in writing as soon as possible and no later than seven days after they become aware of its occurrence. The student must also adhere to Section 3.6 of the UCD Student

Vetting Policy. In the event of an alleged incident the Programme Director may require the student to discontinue their placement, if applicable, until such time as the issue is resolved. Failure to notify the relevant Programme Director or to agree to temporarily discontinue a placement while an outstanding legal issue is being resolved will normally result in the initiation of formal Fitness to Practise procedures.

Appearance

Students are required to adopt the dress code of their host organisation while on placement.

Behaviour Towards Others

Students demonstrate their Fitness to Practise continually during their course of studies in all aspects of their behaviour towards others: members of the public, patients/clients/service users and their families, classmates and other students, research participants, University staff, Practice Tutors, Practice Teachers, other staff on placement, colleagues and employers.

Students are required to treat others with due respect, courtesy, honesty, accountability, humility, fairness and impartiality and to recognise and respect individual differences in others including differences across the ten university equality grounds: gender (including gender identity), civil status, family status, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community. Students are required to be open and positive towards new learning experiences and to demonstrate the ability to receive and respond to feedback in a constructive manner at all times. In instances where there is a concern that a student is unreasonably defensive and unresponsive to constructive feedback offered to them in the University or on placement then the specific feedback given and the response of the student should be clearly documented and returned to the Module Co-ordinator.

Health

Students must be able to engage on placement in a safe, competent and proficient manner in order to meet the needs of clients. Students should be cognisant of [CORU's Standards of Proficiency](#), particularly Standard 1.21 indicating the need to "be aware of and be able to take responsibility for managing one's own health and wellbeing" (CORU, 2019: 21) and [CORU's Code of Professional Conduct of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers](#) which requires registered social workers to "address health issues related to your fitness to practise".

UCD is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. Students with a disability or specific learning difficulty who may require reasonable accommodations in academic or placement settings must first contact the UCD Access and Life Long Learning Centre to complete the Needs Assessment process. The outcome of the Needs Assessment must be communicated with the Programme Director, relevant module coordinators and the Practice Learning Team should accommodations, identified by the Needs Assessment process, be required. The Practice Teacher and Practice Tutor must also be informed if the accommodations are required for the practice placement.

All students, including those with disabilities and specific learning difficulties, must meet the standards required by CORU. 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. In some instances it is possible that some persons otherwise qualified to undertake the PMSW or MSc Social Work may become unable, because of ill health or physical inability, to complete all elements of the programme as required. In instances where there is a concern that a student is unable to practise at the required level due to ill health or physical inability, the specific concerns should be discussed with the student and should be documented by the relevant academic or practice teacher. The response of the student should be clearly documented and both should be forwarded to the Programme Director and Practice Learning Team, if related to a practice placement, within seven days. Failure to follow this procedure may result in the initiation of formal Fitness to Practise procedures.

Duty of Care

Students will demonstrate their Fitness to Practise at all times by working within the scope of practice of the profession and by accepting and upholding their duty of care to their clients/service users by conducting themselves in a professional manner in all aspects related to client/service user care while on placement. Students will at all times respect the rights and dignity of the client/service user, maintain accurate patient treatment records, research data, obtain appropriate informed consent and adhere to the relevant host placement guidelines for all aspects of client/service user care. Students may have access to confidential personal information and are required to ensure client/service user confidentiality and comply with Data Protection legislation. Students are also required to follow the health and safety requirements of the School, UCD and the host placement agency. In instances where there is a concern that a student has breached their duty of care, the specific incident should be discussed with the student and documented by the practice teacher. The response of the student should also be clearly documented and both should be forwarded to the Programme Director and Practice Learning Team, within seven days. Failure to follow this procedure may result in the initiation of formal Fitness to Practise procedures.

Student Declaration

All students applying for and entering the designated programme as well as relevant academic and administrative staff will be fully briefed on the Fitness to Practise Policy and related procedures through the Programme Handbook, this Policy and reference to the Social Workers Registration Board's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Social Workers. 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 prior to commencing each academic year of the designated programmes.

UCD Fitness to Practise Process

Fitness to Practise concerns will be dealt with in line with the UCD Student Fitness to Practise Process Map which can be found at [this link](#)

Composition of the UCD PMSW and MSc. Social Work Programme Board Fitness to Practise Subcommittee:

Core members

Director of the Programme [Chair]

Relevant Module Co-ordinator (if the concern relates to a specific academic module)

Director of Professional Practice

Placement Allocation Manager

Another academic staff member from the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice