

FITNESS TO PRACTICE STATEMENT

The following is the UCD D Psych Sc in Clinical Psychology / PhD in Clinical Psychology Fitness to Practice Statement which takes effect from September 1st, 2012.

Fitness to Practice Definition: Fitness to practise 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 the responsibilities within the scope of practice in a chosen field.

Aims of the Fitness to Practice Statement:

The fitness to practice statement aims to

1. Ensure postgraduate students on the UCD D Psych Sc in Clinical Psychology / PhD in Clinical Psychology have a clear understanding of the standards of professional attitudes and behaviour required of them through-out all aspects of their training, and are supported in their continuous attainment of these standards.
2. Ensure the well-being of any members of the public or service users that our postgraduate students have contact with during the course of their clinical placements or other applied experiences.
3. Meet the requirement of the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) accreditation criteria that the UCD D Psych Sc in Clinical Psychology / PhD in Clinical Psychology have fitness to practice guidelines.

Apply University College Dublin's Fitness to Practice Policy to the D Psych Sc in Clinical Psychology / PhD in Clinical Psychology **Expected Fitness to Practice Standards:**

The following positive attitudes and behaviour are expected of postgraduate students in clinical psychology training.

1. Fitness to Practice is demonstrated continually during the course of clinical training in all settings.

Postgraduate students demonstrate their fitness to practice in all aspects of their behaviour through-out the three years of their training in clinical psychology. Open, positive and constructive interaction with members of the public, service users, clients, research participants, supervisors, other staff on placement, classmates and other postgraduate peers, the course team, and other university staff is the expected norm. While on placement postgraduate students should adopt the dress code of their host agency.

2. Training in clinical psychology requires openness to the acquisition of new knowledge, new skills and the continuous adoption of new roles. This requires the post-graduate 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 post-graduate student is unreasonably defensive and unresponsive to constructive feedback offered to them then the specific feedback given and the response of the postgraduate should be clearly documented.

3. Fitness to practice will reflect the ethical guidelines of the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) Code of Ethics. Through-out all aspects of their work while completing their clinical training postgraduates will demonstrate knowledge of and adherence to the PSI Code of Ethics (3rd Revision, May 2008). The four main organising principles of which are that in their work psychologists 1. will respect the rights and dignity of the person; 2. will practice within their level of competence; 3. will behave with responsibility; and 4. will behave with integrity.

4. As a condition of acceptance onto the UCD D Psych Sc in Clinical Psychology / PhD in Clinical Psychology postgraduate students must undergo and receive Garda Clearance. Relevant documentation indicating Garda Clearance must be lodged by the postgraduate student with the Course Administrator. After the receipt of their initial Garda Clearance and prior to the completion of their D Psych Sc degree in circumstances where a postgraduate in clinical training is subsequently subject to a Garda caution, allegation of criminal activity, or criminal prosecution they are required to notify the Course 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 Course Director may require the postgraduate student to discontinue their placement and other course work until such time as the issue is resolved. Failure to notify the Course Director or to agree to temporarily discontinue clinical training while an outstanding legal issue is resolved will result in the initiation of formal fitness to practice procedures.

5. As a condition of acceptance onto the UCD D Psych Sc in Clinical Psychology / PhD in Clinical Psychology postgraduate students must declare themselves physically and psychologically well in order to competently execute the various academic coursework, placement, research and other training requirements. On an annual basis postgraduate students are required to declare themselves fit to practice. They do this as part of their

annual on-line registration with the university. In the event that a postgraduate student experiences a change in their physical or psychological health affecting their ability to execute their responsibilities they are required to notify the Course Director in writing within seven days. In such circumstances the Course Director and Course Team will work with the post-graduate student to develop an appropriate plan to manage their changed circumstances in a supportive manner. Failure to notify the Course Director of a significant change in their physical or psychological health which effects an individuals capacity to carry-out their various responsibilities in clinical training may result in the initiation of formal fitness to practice procedures.

6. The Course Director (or members of the Course Team designed by the Course Director) has a duty to inform current or subsequent clinical placement supervisors of any fitness to practice hearings, and their outcome, to which a postgraduate may be referred. In the event that the Course Director or his/her designate are informing a supervisor of the outcome of formal or informal fitness to practice procedures which has resulted in the post-graduate's continuation in clinical training this information should be conveyed in a manner that supports the postgraduate in achieving and maintaining the appropriate standard of practice in a supportive, clear and goal-directed manner.

Fitness to Practice Causes of Concern

Issues that might impair fitness to practise are wide ranging. The following are examples of areas of concern or circumstances that might render a postgraduate student unfit to practise. The list is not exhaustive, however, it is representative of common categories of concern:

- a criminal conviction or caution;
- 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;
- a 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;
- lack of competence;
- unprofessional behaviour or attitude: breach of confidentiality; harassment; bullying; unlawful discrimination;
- health concerns and lack of insight or management of these concerns: failure to seek medical treatment or other support; refusal to follow medical advice or care plans including monitoring and reviews, in relation to maintaining fitness to practise; 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 practice without supervision. Good health means that person is capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition.

Fitness to Practice Procedures:

Fitness to practice issues should usually be resolved co-operatively and informally in the first instance. In most instances where a post-graduate in clinical training 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 postgraduate student, their supervisor or other person bringing the issue of concern to the attention of the Course Director and the development of a clear, goal directed plan that resolves the issue to the satisfaction of all concerned parties.

Formal Fitness to Practice Investigation Procedures may be initiated. In circumstances where a serious fitness to practice 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 postgraduate in clinical training will be referred to the University's formal fitness to practice procedures. This process is initiated by the matter being reported to the relevant Dean and a "Preliminary Report Form" (see below) may be used for this purpose.

Formal Fitness to Practice Investigation Procedures

1. The Dean shall receive a copy of the preliminary report plus any relevant supplemental documentation. If the Dean decides that a formal investigation is required the report and other documents will be referred to the Programme Board Fitness to Practise Sub-Committee. The Programme Board Fitness to Practise Sub-committee will comprise three members: a Chair who shall be nominated by the Dean and who shall act as a co-ordinator for fitness to practise matters relating to the programmes under the remit of the relevant programme board; the second shall be a member of the Programme Board and also be nominated by the Dean and the third member will be the relevant programme co-ordinator.

2. The student shall be advised (in writing) that a fitness to practise issue has been brought to the attention of the Programme Board Fitness to Practise Committee and shall be sent a copy of the report and relevant documentation.

3. The Chair of the Programme Board Fitness to Practise Sub-Committee will convene a meeting of the Programme Fitness to Practise Committee

4. The Committee will consider the report and the student representations and will decide on one of a range of outcomes available to them

- The case can be dismissed with no further action.
- On the recommendation of the sub-committee the Programme Board may require the student to undertake a second attempt for certain elements of the programme of study without academic penalty.
- On the recommendation of the sub-committee the Programme Board may require the student to interrupt her/his programme of study for an unspecified period of time or to resolve a specifically identified problem.
- On the recommendation of the sub-committee a Programme Board may suspend a student from a placement with immediate effect if the well-being of patients/clients/students or other service providers is put at risk. If this occurs, then the fitness to practise procedures must be expedited to enable a review to be activated within 2 working days of the suspension. The programme Fitness to Practise Policy will need to indicate what constitutes 'at risk' in the context of the programme.
- On the recommendation of the sub-committee a Programme Board may recommend to the relevant University Board that an exit strategy to be followed by the student.
- The sub-committee may refer the matter to the Registrar or their nominee to be dealt with by the University Fitness to Practise Committee.
- The student may be allowed to continue, subject to review under certain specified conditions such as careful mentoring by a named senior academic member of staff

University Fitness to Practice Committee

When a matter is referred to the University Fitness to Practise Committee the following procedures will be followed.

A University Fitness to Practise Committee will be convened on a case-by-case basis.

Membership will be drawn from a panel of senior academic staff approved by Academic Council, (a sub-panel of the existing Academic Council Disciplinary Panel, which includes Vice-Presidents; Principals; Vice-Principals; Deputy Registrars; Programme Deans; Chairs of Programme Boards; Directors of Graduate Schools, Heads of Schools and nominees of the Heads of School).

In addition to the outcomes available to the Programme Board Fitness to Practise Sub-Committee the policy states that the University Fitness to Practise Committee may also determine that resolution be under the University's student disciplinary procedures;

If the University Fitness to Practise Committee establishes serious fitness to practise concerns, the following may be applied in whole or in part:

- Require the student to undergo medical, psychiatric, and/or psychological testing at the University's expense. A student failing to comply with this requirement may be required to withdraw until such time as s/he is certified by an appropriately qualified person to be fit to proceed with their studies. The qualified person must have a high level of expertise in the health area concerned and currently work in this area;
- Suspend the student from participating in their programme of study subject to the satisfactory fulfilment of specified conditions;
- Terminate the student's programme of study but allow the student to transfer to another programme of study or exit strategy, with the permission of the relevant programme board and subject to compliance with the University's transfer regulations and policy;
- Expulsion from the University