

Canterbury Christ Church University
Faculty of Health and Wellbeing
Faculty Student Fitness to Practise Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Someone who is 'fit to practise' has the skills, knowledge, character and health to practise their profession safely and effectively. Statutory Regulatory bodies are responsible for safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the public. One of the mechanisms used to achieve this is through ensuring registrants are fit to practise and by dealing swiftly and fairly with those who are not. The University undertakes the monitoring of applicants' and students' fitness to practise on behalf of the Statutory Regulatory bodies that approve our programmes.
- 1.2. The purpose of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing Student Fitness to Practise (SFTP) Policy is to ensure that all students of the Faculty are fit to practise through appropriate implementation of the associated procedures. This policy applies to all students undertaking a programme leading to eligibility to apply for entry on a Statutory Regulatory body register¹, and to all students who are already registered with a Statutory Regulatory body. It includes matters relating to a student's health and conduct, both of which may have an impact on their fitness to practise.
- 1.3. The Faculty has had Fitness to Practise policy and procedures in place for nearly six years; a review of the policy and procedures was undertaken and they have been amended in light of the recommendations made. This has led to the inclusion of the wider aspects of health which were not included previously.
- 1.4. Applicants are required to undergo any 'suitability' checks as determined by the programme of study.
- 1.5. Whilst undertaking a programme of study students are required to adhere to the professional conduct guidance of the relevant Statutory Regulatory body in addition to the University's Code of Student Conduct.

¹ This excludes students registered on a GOC-accredited programme of study leading to a qualification in optometry or dispensing optics who must be registered with the GOC for the entirety of their studies and are therefore subject directly to GOC Fitness to Practise processes.

- 1.6. This policy meets the requirements of the relevant health and social care Statutory Regulators with regard to assurances of student conduct, good health and good character at the point of registration with a Statutory Regulatory body.
- 1.7. The function of the Faculty SFTP Policy and the associated procedures is to show a transparent and consistent response to matters of student fitness beginning at the point of application and includes the perspective of stakeholders.
- 1.8. The procedures of the Faculty SFTP Policy should be considered alongside those of the University's Code of Student Professional Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures. In the event of a choice needing to be made between the two, the SFTP Policy will take precedence in light of the Faculty staff's professional responsibilities to protect the public, the student(s) and uphold public confidence in the profession.
- 1.9. The Faculty will appoint an Investigating Officer to provide consistency of approach and outcomes on matters relating to fitness to practise. The Investigating Officer will be appropriate to professional requirements. For example, Midwifery and Social Work require a profession specific investigator.
- 1.10. Issues relating to fitness to practise will be divided into those regarding health and those regarding good character and conduct. In this way the processes can be suitably tailored to meet specific needs e.g. appropriate panel advisors for issues related to an applicant or student's mental health.

2. Health

- 2.1. In order to be fit to practise, students must be of good health.
- 2.2. Health refers to health conditions which may affect a student's fitness to practise (HCPC 2014). Good health means that a person must be capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition (NMC 2015).
- 2.3. Applicants are required to disclose relevant existing conditions in relation to their health at the point of application.
- 2.4. Whilst undertaking a programme, students are required to disclose any relevant changes in relation to their health.

3. Character and Conduct

- 3.1. In order to be fit to practise, students must be of good character and conduct.
- 3.2. The Statutory Regulatory guidance outlined below indicates that good character is important and that health and social care practitioners must be honest and trustworthy. A judgement regarding good character is based on an individual's conduct and takes account of any relevant criminal convictions i.e. those which are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013). The safeguarding of vulnerable

individuals is an underpinning principle during the selection of potential students, continuous monitoring during a programme of preparation and progression onto the Statutory Regulatory registers.

- 3.3. The NMC Code (2015) is the foundation of good nursing and midwifery practice, and a key tool in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the public. The HCPC set out the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016) expected from registrants and these also apply to people who are applying to become registered. Each Statutory Regulatory body expects students to aspire to the code or standards of conduct as appropriate to the individual profession.
- 3.4. The appropriate code, as designated by the relevant Statutory Regulatory body, will be used as a measure of a students' conduct.
- 3.5. Applicants are required to disclose relevant issues in relation to their good character and conduct at the point of application. If it is later shown that the applicant had not disclosed any relevant issues the University may withdraw the offer of a place or commence a SFTP investigation.
- 3.6. While undertaking a programme, students are required to disclose relevant issues in relation to their good character and conduct which occur during their programme.

4. Procedures for the management of Student Fitness to Practise

- 4.1. The Faculty Board will agree the procedures for managing student fitness to practise investigations as outlined at <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/student-support-health-and-wellbeing/policies-and-procedures/policies-and-procedures.aspx>
- 4.2. The SFTP Lead will provide the Faculty Board with a written report on an annual basis

5. Statutory Regulatory body documentation relevant to Fitness to Practise

- The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses and midwives (NMC 2015)
- Character and health decision-making guidance (NMC 2015)
- The Fitness to Practice Process (HCPC 2015)
- Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC 2016)
- Guidance on Health and Character (HCPC 2014)
- Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students (HCPC 2016)
- Medical students: professional values and fitness to practise (GMC 2009)
- Fitness to Practise: guidance for employers (GOC 2011)
- Standards of Practice for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians (GOC 2016)
- Standards for Optical Students (GOC 2016)
- Assessing the suitability of students to enter and remain on qualifying social work programmes (HEA 2014)

The above documentation is current and has been taken into account during revision of this policy and the associated procedures. Statutory Regulators

periodically review and revise their documentation and up-to-date versions can always be located through their web sites.

Document History

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1.4	F. McArthur-Rouse	07/11/08	Approved by the VC for Academic Board by Chair's Action
2	A. Hayford	09/12/09	Approved by Academic Board
4	F. McArthur-Rouse	24/10/11	Revised for QSC. Approved by AB 7.12.11
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