

Introduction

This policy applies to all students enrolled on undergraduate and postgraduate psychotherapy programmes at SPTI. It is designed to support your professional development, protect clients and public safety and maintain public confidence in the profession.

At SPTI, fitness to practise is considered a continuous process, monitored both formally and informally through training. Our approach is aligned with the ethical frameworks of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the United Kingdom Association for Transactional Analysis (UKATA), the expectations of our university partner, the University of Staffordshire and the regulatory guidance of the Office for Students (OfS).

Training at SPTI is both an academic and professional commitment. This policy should inform all aspects of your engagement with SPTI including, but not limited to, clients, peers, Facilitators, Programme Leaders, teaching teams, staff, supervisors, therapists and allied organisations such as the University of Staffordshire, UKCP, BACP, UKATA, etc. As a future psychotherapist, professionalism, ethical awareness, self-responsibility and relational integrity will be central throughout your career.

Concerns regarding fitness to practice can be raised by any party, including you as the students, your Programme Leader, Facilitators, placement providers or your peers.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- SPTI's Ethical Framework
- SPTI's Student Disciplinary Procedure
- University of Staffordshire's Fitness to Practise and Academic Integrity Policies
- UKCP Ethical Framework and Professional Practice
- UKATA Code of Ethics and Professional Practice
- BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions

Fitness to Practice & Study

You are responsible for ensuring you are fit to study and practice. This includes:

- Being physically, emotionally, cognitively and relationally capable of working safely and ethically with clients
- Seeking appropriate support if difficulties arise which may impact your capacity to practice safely or engage in learning
- Reporting any health conditions, criminal charges or convictions or other personal issues that may affect your professional suitability
- Maintaining professional standards in all interactions at SPTI, in clinical placement settings and in wider public or online spaces where your conduct may reflect on the profession
- Engaging in any assessments or interventions deemed necessary to support your continued fitness to practice or study

Precautionary Actions

If concerns are raised about your fitness to practice, SPTI may apply precautionary measures. These are not disciplinary actions but are taken to protect you, your clients and the wider learning community. These measures are distinct from disciplinary actions and are intended to support the student and protect others while concerns are being addressed. Examples include:

- Temporary suspension from placement or client work
 - Additional reflection, reading supervision or therapy
 - Support plans involving Facilitators and/or your supervisor
- Such actions are always proportionate and reviewed regularly.

Duty of Care & Confidentiality

You are expected to act in the best interests of clients, peers and the profession. This includes:

- Maintaining confidentiality and sensitive data in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Fitness to Practise & Study Policy

- Avoiding any behaviour – online or offline – that may be harmful, coercive, discriminatory or professionally inappropriate

Breaches will be taken seriously and managed in accordance with SPTI's Disciplinary Procedure.

Duty to Report & Self-Declaration

You are required to report any matter that may affect your fitness to practice, including:

- Health conditions that impair safe or ethical client work
- Criminal convictions or police involvement that may affect your professional standing
- Serious ethical concerns about your own conduct or that of others in your cohort or placement

Failure to disclose relevant information may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and in serious cases, withdrawal from the programme.

Engagement in Learning & Supervision

You are responsible for:

- Actively engaging with all components of the programme, including academic modules, supervision, personal therapy and clinical placements
- Attending all modules of the course, communicating with Facilitator and/or Programme Leader appropriately when absence is avoidable and attending to requirements set by the Programme Leader or Facilitator as compensatory for the material missed
- Meeting the academic regulations of your training specified by the University of Staffordshire
- Participating in supervision honestly and reflectively
- Upholding academic integrity (including avoiding plagiarism or falsification of clinical records)

Investigation & Panel Procedures

SPTI acknowledges that challenges can arise in training. Where possible, support will be offered to help you regain your fitness to practice, including reflective work, supervision or time out of training.

However, where informal support is not sufficient, or where there are serious concerns, a formal investigation may be initiated under the Student Disciplinary Procedure. This includes:

- Investigation by a designated panel
- Your right to present your case and respond to concerns
- Outcomes including support measures, formal warnings, temporary suspension, additional training or withdrawal from the programme
- Involvement of relevant parties (e.g. university partner, placement provider, supervisor where appropriate)
- An appeals process to challenge any formal decisions

External Oversight & Public Protection

As a provider of regulated psychotherapy training, SPTI has a duty to act in accordance with:

- UKCP, UKATA & BACP expectations for training organisations
- OfS requirements for protecting student wellbeing and professional suitability
- University of Staffordshire's academic and professional conduct frameworks

Student Contract

By signing the Student Contract, you confirm that you have read, understood and agreed to abide by this Fitness to Practice and Study Policy. You accept responsibility for maintaining professional conduct and disclosing any issues that may impact on your ethical and clinical suitability throughout your training.

Reference Links

UKCP Ethical Framework and Professional Practice

<http://psychotherapy.org.uk/about-ukcp/how-we-are-structured/ukcp-committees/ethics-committee/code-of-ethics/>

UKATA Code of Ethics and Professional Practice

<https://www.uka4ta.co.uk/policies/code-of-ethics-and-professional-practice>

BACP Ethical Framework

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/>

University of Staffordshire Fitness to Practice

<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/fitness-to-study-and-fitness-to-practise-procedure>

Office for Students Student Safety and Wellbeing

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/student-protection-and-choice/resources-for-student-safety-and-wellbeing/>

Appeals Process

Students may appeal any formal decision related to fitness to practice within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Director of Training and will be reviewed by a senior member of staff not directly involved in the original decision. Decisions on appeal will be communicated within 5 working days of review.

This policy will be reviewed April 2028 or sooner in response to regulatory changes or operational needs.