

Fitness to Practise

Introduction

Fitness to Practise is an essential ethical consideration throughout training, from your application / interview to study here, through to your career as a therapist. Essential to observing fitness to practise is attending to the following principles:

- Your wellbeing including your physical and mental state
- Your competence
- Your conduct (behaviour)

Monitoring these principles informs and protects members of the public, supervisees, colleagues, trainees, the counselling professions and yourself.

1. Expectations

To be deemed fit to practise, you are required to uphold high levels of professional, legal, moral and ethical standards and be open to challenging these aspects of yourself. The Programme Handbooks, policies and codes of conduct provide guidance to you regarding the standards of ethical and professional conduct expected of you during training leading to a professional and academic qualification. This document should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics of SPTI, UKCP and the BACP Ethical Framework.

Examples of circumstances, which may give rise to concerns regarding a student's fitness to practise may include (but are not limited to):

- a) Allegations of or convictions for criminal activity.
- b) A serious breach of SPTI and University regulations.
- c) Failure to make a complete and honest disclosure on application and in subsequent training years.
- d) Conduct which puts vulnerable people at risk of harm.
- e) Serious concerns regarding honesty and probity.
- f) Conduct contrary to professional guidelines.
- g) Breaches of professional responsibility such as confidentiality.
- h) Failure to cooperate with an investigation into concerns about their fitness to practise.
- i) Failure to comply with conditions imposed because of a previous finding of impairment of a student's fitness to practise.
- j) Serious physical or psychological illness either where a new condition arises or an existing condition worsens.*

Your Programme Leader in collaboration with the Head of Training and appropriate authorities, such as your supervisor and placement, would assess the severity of the concern and agree a course of action in accordance with SPTI policies and procedures.

* Reasonable adjustments would be explored, where appropriate which may allow the student to safely and competently practise.

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2. Assessment

Fitness to Practise is informally assessed from your admission interview and throughout training via self, peer and Tutor observation. At the end of the first year, you will undertake a formal assessment for readiness to undertake clinical practise by peers and your Tutor or Programme Leader. Successful completion of this process is an essential element to undertaking supervised therapy in placement and to progress through the course.

Fitness to Practise will continually be informally and formally assessed during training and in collaboration with your supervisor and through feedback in your end of year reports. We anticipate that most issues relating to fitness to practise will be resolved informally by collaborative discussion between students and their Programme Leader.

3. What happens if I'm found not fit to practise

As this is a continually assessed aspect of your programme, you should already be working with your Tutor / Programme Leader and where appropriate, your supervisor, to address any issues relating to fitness to practise. An integral part of this relationally focused training is that you are supported to work through any difficulties that arise during your studies to make decisions which are ethically sound and reflect professional standards of conduct. Where issues are difficult or not being resolved, the Head of Training will be consulted and ultimately the issue may be considered under one of SPTI's procedures relating to progression (during application or study) including student disciplinary procedure.

The circumstances which have been considered will determine the next steps available to you.

Students failing to complete their Parallel Clinical Obligations where issues of fitness to practise have been raised, for example through the placement of supervisor report, will not be able to continue with their course or proceed to study further academic modules.

Depending on the circumstances, your fitness to practise may be considered under the student disciplinary procedure.

4. Appeals

Should you be unhappy with the decision regarding your fitness to practise, you have the right to appeal. The appeal must be made in writing to the Director, giving the grounds for appeal, within 7 working days of the date the decision was issued. If, in the view of the Director, the grounds for appeal are not met, you will be informed and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued. For further information, please refer to the SPTI Complaints Procedure.

5. External Appeals

If the SPTI Complaints Procedure has been exhausted during this process and you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you have the right to take the case to Staffordshire University (where students are registered with the University) and then on to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Further details can be obtained from the relevant website:

Staffordshire University: staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/complaints-and-appeals-procedure

OIA: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

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		Public