

Education and Training Committee, 2 December 2008

Guidance on conduct and ethics for students – consultation document

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper provides the Committee with guidance on ethics and conduct for students which will be consulted on next year. A draft copy of the guidance was brought to the Committee for discussion at its meeting in September. The guidance has been revised following this discussion.

The Executive has attended student meetings organised by The Society and College of Radiographers, The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists and The British Association of Dramatherapists and would like to thank these groups for their extremely constructive comments on the guidance.

We will consult on this document alongside the guidance on the health and character process.

Decision

The Committee is invited to:

- agree and recommend to the Council the text of the attached document for consultation (subject to minor editing changes).

Background information

The Committee has considered a number of papers on student fitness to practise. The most recent of these papers was that considered by the Committee on 10 June 2008:

<http://www.hpc->

[uk.org/assets/documents/100022A4education_and_training_committee_20080610_enclosure10.pdf](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100022A4education_and_training_committee_20080610_enclosure10.pdf)

The proposed timetable for the consultation is below.

Public consultation	January – April 2009
Revised guidance to ETC	11 June 2009
Revised guidance to Council	6 July 2009
Publication process	August – October 2009

Resource implications

The resource implications were previously outlined in a paper considered by the Committee in June 2008.

Financial implications

The financial implications are those for the public consultation on the guidance and its publication. The Policy and Standards budget incorporates the financial implications of the consultation and publication.

Appendices

- Consultation document
- Guidance on conduct and ethics for students.

Date of paper

3 November 2008

Guidance on ethics and conduct for students - consultation document

Introduction

I am writing to invite you to respond to our consultation on new guidance on conduct and ethics for students. The guidance is designed for students and education and training providers.

We have written this document to give students on education and training programmes guidance on issues about conduct and ethics. We hope that the guidance will be useful to students both on their training and once they are working.

We would like to thank The Society and College of Radiographers student working group, The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy student executive committee and The British Association of Dramatherapists' student forum for their comments on the guidance during the writing process.

We are also consulting on guidance on our health and character process for applicants, registrants and education and training providers. You can download a copy of this consultation from our website: **www.hpc-uk.org**

Your response

We would welcome your comments on the guidance, in whatever format is convenient for you. You may wish to address the questions below. However, if there are any other comments you would like to make we will be happy to consider them.

1. Do you find the guidance useful?
2. Is there any information that we have missed or where more guidance is required?
3. Is the guidance clear and easily understandable?

We would like to invite any individual or organisation with an interest in these issues to respond to this consultation. To help ensure we analyse your response correctly it would be helpful if you could explain how you formulated your response.

The consultation will put the proposed guidance before a wide range of stakeholders, including education providers, professional bodies and others with an interest in our work. We would like to invite any individual or organisation with an interest in these issues to respond to this consultation. The consultation will run until 30th April 2009.

If you would like to respond to this consultation, please send your written response to:

Guidance on student ethics and conduct consultation
Policy and Standards Department
Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

You can also email consultation@hpc-uk.org or send your response by fax to +44 (0)20 7582 0866.

At the end of the consultation period we will publish a summary of the responses we receive, and the decisions we have taken as a result, on our website.

If you prefer your response not to be made public, please indicate this when you respond.

We look forward to receiving your comments.

Eileen Thornton
Chair, Education and Training Committee

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About this document

We have written this document to give students on education and training programmes some guidance on issues about conduct and ethics. We hope that the guidance will be useful to students both on their training and once they are working.

You may find this document useful if you are:

- a **student** who is studying to be a health professional;
- a member of **academic staff** who is teaching students about ethics and professional conduct; or
- a **practice placement educator** or **supervisor**.

This is not a complete list of audiences but it should help to give you an idea of whether this document can help you.

About the structure of this document

This document is broken down into four sections.

- Section 1 is the **Introduction** and contains information about us and what we do.
- Section 2 is called **About the guidance** and contains information about the guidance, including information on language and how the guidance applies to students.
- Section 3 is called **Guidance on conduct and ethics for students**.
- Section 4 is called **More information** and has information about other useful publications and also has our contact details.

Throughout this document, 'we' or 'us' refers to the Health Professions Council. 'You' refers to the student on an education and training programme.

Introduction

About us (the HPC)

We are the Health Professions Council. We are a regulator, and we were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

Health professionals on our Register are called 'registrants'. We currently regulate 13 health professions.

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech and language therapists

We may regulate other professions in the future. For an up-to-date list of the professions we regulate, please see our website at www.hpc-uk.org

Each of these professions has a 'protected title' (protected titles include titles like 'physiotherapist' and 'dietitian'). Anyone who uses one of these titles must be on our Register. Anyone who uses a protected title who is not registered with us is breaking the law and could be prosecuted.

Our Register is available on our website for anyone to search, so that they can check that their health professional is registered.

Another important part of our role is to consider any complaints we receive about registered health professionals. We look at every complaint we receive, to decide whether we need to take action or not. We may hold a hearing to get all the information we need to decide whether someone is fit to practise.

How we are run

We were created by a piece of legislation called the 'Health Professions Order'. This sets out the things that we must do, and it gives us our legal power. We have a council which is made up of registered health professionals, and members of the public. The Council sets our strategy and policy, and makes sure that we are fulfilling our duties under the Health Professions Order.

Health professionals must register with us before they can use the protected title for their profession. This means that even if you have completed a course in, for example, physiotherapy, you will still not be able to call yourself a 'physiotherapist' unless you are registered with us.

The Standards of conduct, performance and ethics

We set Standards of conduct, performance and ethics which apply to the health professionals we register. You may be taught about these standards on your programme.

The standards also apply to people who are applying to become registered with us. If you are applying to be registered, you will be asked to sign a declaration to confirm that you have read and will keep to the standards once you are registered.

The standards play an important role in helping us make decisions about the character of the people who apply to our Register, and also in cases where we decide whether someone is fit to practise.

We have based this guidance on the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Approving education and training programmes

Our role includes assessing education and training programmes against the standards that we set. If a programme meets those standards we 'approve' it and students who complete the programme are eligible to apply for registration with us.

About registration

Registration shows that the health professional meets our standards for their profession.

Registration exists to show the public that health professionals are fit to practise, and that they are entitled to use the protected title for their profession. It shows

that the people on our Register are part of a profession with nationally recognised standards set by law.

When we say that someone is 'fit to practise', we mean that they have the skills, knowledge, character and health to do their job safely and effectively.

Applying for registration

Completing an approved course does not 'guarantee' that someone will become registered. But it does show us that the applicant meets our professional standards and so is eligible to apply for registration. We need more information from them to be able to register them.

When someone first applies for registration, as part of their application, they need to send us information which includes a health reference, a character reference, a photograph and a copy of their passport or birth certificate. Applicants also need to let us know if they have any criminal convictions, and if they have ever been disciplined by another regulator.

All of the information that we need from applicants helps us to make sure that:

- they are who they say they are;
- they meet our standards; and
- we can contact them if we need to.

You can find out more about the application process on our website: **www.hpc-uk.org**

About the guidance

We have written this document to give students on education and training programmes some guidance on issues about conduct and ethics. We hope that the guidance will be useful to students both on their training and once they are working.

We have based this guidance on the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics as these standards apply to both registrants and those applying to be registered. We hope that the guidance will build familiarity with these standards.

The headings we use in this document are taken from the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics. Under each heading we have provided bullet points which give further guidance on how the standards relate to you. The guidance does not provide answers to every situation you may face. However, we hope that the broad principles within the guidance will help you and encourage you to ask for additional guidance from your education and training provider where appropriate.

Education and training providers and placement providers often have their own policies and procedures which you should follow.

Language

The guidance has been written in broad terms and designed to apply to all students as far as possible. You may undertake practice placements in a variety of settings. We have tried to use terms which are as broad as possible and which everyone can understand. However, some of the standards may not apply to students on particular programmes.

We have used the term 'student' throughout this document. We use this to mean anyone studying on a programme which leads to eligibility to join our Register. The term includes trainees or practitioners in training.

Throughout these standards we have used the term 'service users'. By this we mean your patients, clients or service users. The term also includes other people who might be affected by your practice, such as carers and relatives.

We have used the word 'treatment' in its broadest sense to include a number of actions that you may undertake. These actions could include diagnostic or monitoring procedures, therapy or advice.

We have included a glossary at the end of this document which explains some of the terms we have used.

Conduct outside your programme

On your programme you have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge you need to become a health professional in an environment which protects your service users. You also have the opportunity to learn about the conduct and behaviour that the public expects from health professionals.

As a student studying to become a health professional and to work within a regulated profession, you have certain responsibilities. On your programme you will come into contact with vulnerable people who may expect you to meet high standards of conduct and ethics.

You should be aware that in very serious circumstances, your conduct may affect your ability to complete your programme or gain the final qualification or become registered with us.

When you apply to join the Register, we ask for a number of pieces of information including whether you have any convictions or cautions. The professions we regulate are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, which means that you have to declare all convictions and cautions including those that are considered 'spent'. Usually the convictions or cautions which might affect your registration are those for more serious offences.

It is important that you disclose this information. Information that you disclose will be looked at to see if it may affect your suitability for registration. In most cases, a conviction or caution will not affect your registration. However, some serious convictions or cautions can cause concern.

We have produced more guidance about how we consider health and character information in a publication called 'Guidance on the health and character process'. You can download this from our website: www.hpc-uk.org

Guidance on conduct and ethics

1. You should always act in the best interests of your service users.
 - You should respect the rights of your service users to be treated by a health professional and not a student if they want.
 - You should not exploit or abuse the relationship between yourself and your service user.
 - You should not discriminate against a service user on the basis of their age, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, race, ethnic background, lifestyle or social or economic status.
 - You should not do anything that you believe will endanger the service user.
 - If you have concerns about any situation which might put a service user at risk, you should share these concerns with a member of the placement team or your education and training provider.
2. You should respect the confidentiality of your service users.
 - You should treat information about service users as confidential and use it only for the purpose for which it was given unless the information raises concerns about a situation where a service user may be at risk.
 - You should not knowingly release any personal or confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to it.
 - You should try to anonymise any confidential information that you use for your assessments.
 - You should obtain written consent from your service user if you want to use identifiable information for your assessments.
 - You should follow local policies or guidelines on confidentiality produced by your education and training provider or placement provider.
3. You should keep high standards of personal conduct.
 - You should be aware that conduct outside your programme may affect your ability to complete your programme.
 - You should behave with courtesy towards your service users, colleagues and programme team.
 - You should complete and submit assessment work on time.
 - You should make sure that your personal appearance is appropriate for your placement environment.

4. You should provide any important information about your conduct, competence or health to your education provider.
 - You should tell your education and training provider about any changes to your health which may put your service users at risk.
 - You should tell your education and training provider if you are convicted or cautioned for any offence.
5. You should keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
 - You are responsible for your own learning.
 - You should reflect on and respond constructively to feedback you are given.
 - You should follow your education and training provider's or placement provider's policy on attendance.
6. You should act within the limits of your knowledge and skills.
 - You should only undertake a task if you feel that you have the appropriate education and training.
 - You should ensure that you are appropriately supervised for any task that you are asked to undertake.
 - You should ask for help when necessary.
 - You should make sure that you do not misrepresent your knowledge and skills.
7. You should maintain proper and effective communications with your service users, practitioners and educators.
 - You should take all reasonable steps to make sure that you can communicate properly and effectively with your service users and their families.
 - You should communicate effectively and co-operate with other practitioners for the benefits of your service users.
 - You should communicate effectively and co-operate with the programme and placement team.
 - Where appropriate, you should share your knowledge with colleagues.
8. You should get informed consent to give treatment except in emergencies.
 - You should make sure that your service users are aware that you are a student before you provide treatment.
 - You should make sure that your service users have given their consent to be treated by a student.

- You should explain the treatment you are planning to carry out to your service user.
 - You should also explain any risks of the treatment you are planning on carrying out.
 - You should follow your education and training provider or placement provider's policy on consent.
9. You should keep accurate service user records.
- You should ensure that any information you enter in service user records is accurate and legible.
 - You should protect information in records from being lost, damaged, accessed by someone without appropriate authority or tampered with.
10. You should deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection.
- You should ensure that you take appropriate steps to deal with the risks of infection.
11. You should limit your work or stop practising if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.
- You should seek help from doctors or occupational health if you have concerns about your health.
 - You should be aware that you may put your service users at risk if you are ill.
12. You should behave with integrity and honesty.
- You should not try to pass off other people's work as your own.
 - You should ensure that you reference other people's work appropriately.
 - You should make sure that you complete any application forms truthfully and accurately.
 - You should not let any potential financial reward play a part in the advice or recommendations of products and services you give.
 - You should follow your education and training provider's policies on ethics when undertaking research.
13. You should make sure that your behaviour does not damage public confidence in health professionals.
- You should be aware that your behaviour may affect the trust that the public has in health professionals.
 - You should not do anything which might affect the trust that the public has in health professionals.

More information

Other useful publications

We have produced several publications which you may also want to look at. These include:

- Guidance on the health and character process
- The standards of conduct, performance and ethics
- The standards of proficiency

The first publication provides guidance on how we handle information about either an applicant's or registrant's health or character. This includes guidance on how we consider convictions and cautions.

You can download copies of these documents from our website or request hard copies by writing to us at the address below.

Contacting us

The easiest way to find out more information about us and our processes is to have a look at our website at **www.hpc-uk.org**

Here we publish information about how we work, including the standards that we produce, all of our forms, news releases and much more.

If the information that you need is not on our website, you can also contact us at the following address:

Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

Phone: +44 (0)20 7582 0866

Fax: +44 (0)20 7820 9684

Glossary

Anonymised information

Information about a service user that has had all identifiable information removed from it. By identifiable information we mean any information that could identify a service user, including their sex, date of birth or age.

Fit to practise

When someone has the skills, knowledge, character and health to do their job safely and effectively.

Informed consent

When a service user has all the necessary information in a format they can understand so that they can make an informed decision about whether they want to have a particular treatment.

Register

A published list of health professionals who meet our standards. The Register is available on our website at www.hpc-uk.org

Registrant

A health professional who appears on our Register. If a registrant does not meet our standards, we can take action against them. This may include removing them from the Register so that they can no longer practise.

Regulator

An organisation that protects the public by making sure people keep to certain laws or requirements.

Service user

Anyone who uses or is affected by the services of registrants.

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics

Standards of behaviour that we expect from health professionals who are registered with us.

Treatment

Actions that a student or professional carry out, including diagnostic or monitoring procedures, therapy or advice.