

Practice Education Handbook

For

Level 5 & 6

2019/2020

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The purpose of this handbook is to supplement the information provided within the course guide, detailing further practice learning and associated policies and procedures. The handbook should coincide with additional material provided by the University Tutors and Practice Educators, for example student portfolios and guidance for modules.

This handbook is designed to be a reference book for students throughout the course, and for those staff responsible for supporting students through their learning and assessment in practice.

An electronic link is provided to enable access to the most recent versions of all of the [University of Essex' policies and procedures.](#)

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg/>

If you require further information that is not contained within this handbook, please contact the Placement Co-ordinator.

A website to support practice learning is available and this handbook and all related information, policies and procedures will be available online through the university website.

Please note: details and documents included are accurate at the time of printing and may be subject to change.

University Staff

The University Staff who may be most useful for you to contact about issues concerning placement are:

Placement Co-ordinator:	Olivia Hanson	01702 328286 ohanson@essex.ac.uk
Placement Administrator:	Jade Shortland	01206 874312 jade@essex.ac.uk
Programme Administrator:	Sarah Wiblin	01702 328229 swiblin@essex.ac.uk
Programme Lead:	Gert Scheepers	01702 328287 gscheepers@essex.ac.uk

1.1 Purpose of Handbook

Welcome to BA (Hons) in Social Work programme. The School of Health and Human Sciences is committed to making a difference to local, national and international health, social care and voluntary services through education, research and knowledge transfer. In accordance with the placement criteria (as stipulated by the College of Social Work), placements are an essential component of the BA (Hons) Social Work degree, that all students must complete a total of 170 practice learning days in two different professional settings, a minimum of 70 days during year two and 100 days during year three. The College of Social Work has described the placement experience as *the cornerstone of social work students' learning*.

The purpose of this handbook is to supplement the information provided within the course guide, detailing further practice learning and associated policies and procedures. The handbook should coincide with additional material provided by the University Tutors and Practice Educators, for example student portfolios and guidance for modules.

This handbook is designed to be a reference book for students throughout the course, and for those staff responsible for supporting students through their learning and assessment in practice.

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If you require further information that is not contained within this handbook, please contact the Placement Co-ordinator. Further contact details for staff associated with practice learning can be found in section [8.2 of this handbook](#).

A website to support practice learning is available and this handbook and all related information, policies and procedures will be available online through the university website.

Please note: details and documents included are accurate at the time of printing and may be subject to changes for example, The College of Social Work ceased to exist in September 2015. The PCF's are overseen by BASW but transition arrangements of other duties of The College of Social Work are not yet available.

2. Professional body requirements

The following information details the relevant professional body requirements that inform and underpin the BA (Hons) Social Work degree.

2.1 Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Regulatory body for social work programs uses Standards for Education and Training (SfET) to assess and monitor all social work programmes and the **HCPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics**.

Move from HCPC to Social Work England (2nd December 2019)

https://socialworkengland.org.uk/?dm_i=2NJF%2CXGO1%2C6RQ43Q%2C3I1K1%2C1

2.2 Quality of Assurance of Placement Learning (QAPL)

As stipulated through the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) benchmark statements and aligned with the Social Work Reform Board's reforms and requirements for the regulation and professional endorsement of social work programs.

2.3 Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)

Practice is assessed using the PCF. The PCF is an overarching professional standards framework, with nine domains: professionalism; values and ethics; diversity; rights, justice and economic well-being; critical reflection; analysis; knowledge; intervention and skills; contexts and organizations; and professional leadership.

Students must meet all practice requirements as specified within the module guide and portfolio to be successful in achieving the professional standards for placement learning that is applicable to their stage of the programme.

2.4 Service user/carers involvement

Service user/carers involvement is integral to all aspects of the programme and qualifying award. Consequently the University of Essex has established a panel of past and present service users/carers, to advise and inform the development of and subsequent delivery of the academic and practice learning modules. There will be a day of every term, dedicated to community development and activities relevant to the modules for all students and service users/carers involved with the programme.

2.5 Glossary

OSS	Onsite Supervisor
PE	Practice Educator
HEI	Higher Education Institute
PCF	Professional Capabilities Framework
UT	University Tutor
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
LA	Learning Agreement
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council

SOPS	Standards of Proficiency
APC	Agency Placement Co-ordinator
PC	Placement Co-ordinator (HEI)
BASW	British Association of Social Workers

3. Prior to Placement

When students accept a place on the B.A (Hons) social work programme they have agreed to conform to the University of Essex' Code of Student Conduct.

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/code-conduct.aspx>

A structured framework of meetings is pivotal to the assessment of practice, and to enhancing learning. These are described in the following flowcharts.

3.1 Practice Placement Level 5 (First Placement/70 days) Flowchart

	Events/Actions	Deadlines
1	Pre-Placement Meeting with PE, student and or, if there is one, OSS at agency	At least 2 weeks prior to beginning placement
2	Completion of Pre Placement Check List	
3	Begin Placement and maximum 9 day induction period	
4	Meet with PE (and OSS) to draft Learning Agreement	Within 6 days of starting placement
5	Draft of Learning Agreement to be sent to UT, PE and OSS 2 days prior to LA meeting.	Within 10 days of beginning of placement
6	Learning Agreement Meeting – Student, UT, PE and OSS must all attend. The LA will be finalised during this meeting if possible. At meeting all parties agree Midway date.	Within 12 days of beginning placement
7	If the LA is not completed at LA meeting then a finalised copy must be sent to the HEI. If there is no finalised LA in place and there is no formally agreed extension of the deadline for this then the placement may be suspended.	By day 15 of placement
8	First Direct Observation of Student's Practice	5 days prior to Midway
9	First Critical Reflection by student	
10	Meet with PE (and OSS) to draft Midway	Within 27 days of beginning placement

11	Midway meeting Student, UT, PE and OSS must all attend. Midway documents to be sent to all parties 2 days prior to Midway meeting. At meeting all parties agree Final Meeting date.	Within 39 days of beginning placement
12	Completed Midway document to HEI– if this is not done and there is no formally agreed extension of the deadline for this then the placement may be suspended	By day 42 of placement
13	Second Direct Observation of Student's Practice	By day 50 of placement
14	Second Critical Reflection by student	
15	Third Direct Observation of Student's Practice	By day 63 of placement
16	Third Critical Reflection by student	
17	Final Placement meeting – draft Workbook to be discussed as well as overall holistic assessment of the student's practice.	Within 65 days of placement
18	Completed workbook to be handed into PE	By 4pm 3 days after the final placement day
19	PE to mark and return the workbook to the student for handing into the University.	Within 3 weeks of end of placement

3.2 Practice Placement Level 6 (Second Placement) Flowchart

	Events/Actions	Deadlines
1	Pre-Placement Meeting with PE, student and or, if there is one, OSS at agency	At least 2 weeks prior to beginning placement
2	Completion of Pre Placement Check List	
3	Begin Placement and maximum 16 day induction period	
4	Meet with PE (and OSS) to draft Learning Agreement	Within 6 days of starting placement
5	Draft of Learning Agreement to be sent to UT, PE and OSS 2 days prior to LA meeting.	Within 12 days of beginning of placement
6	Learning Agreement Meeting – Student, UT, PE and OSS must all attend. The LA will be finalised during this meeting if possible. At meeting all parties agree Midway date.	Within 12 days of beginning placement
7	If the LA is not completed at LA meeting then a finalised copy must be sent to the HEI. If there is no finalised LA in place and there is no formally agreed extension of the deadline for this then the placement may be suspended.	By day 15 of placement
8	First Two Direct Observations of Student's Practice	5 days prior to Midway
9	First Two Critical Reflections by student	
10	Meet with PE (and OSS) to draft Midway	Within 42 days of beginning placement
11	Midway Meeting with Student, UT, PE and OSS must all attend. Midway documents to be sent to all parties 2 days prior to Midway meeting. At meeting all parties agree Final Meeting date.	Within 55 days of beginning placement

12	Completed Midway document to HEI– if this is not done and there is no formally agreed extension of the deadline for this then the placement may be suspended	By day 60 of placement
13	Third Direct Observation of Student's Practice	By day 70 of placement
14	Third Critical Reflection by student	
15	Fourth Direct Observation of Student's Practice	By day 85 of placement
16	Fourth Critical Reflection by student	
17	Final Placement meeting – draft Workbook to be discussed as well as overall holistic assessment of the student's practice.	Within 95 days of placement
18	Completed workbook to be handed into PE	By 4pm 3 days after the final placement day
19	PE to mark and return the workbook to the student for handing in to the University.	Within 3 weeks of end of placement

3.3 Disclosure and Barring Service

All students are required to have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS). At the point of application, all students are required to declare any unspent convictions. Students applying for courses for which a satisfactory DBS check is a mandatory entry requirement must declare all convictions, cautions and reprimands, whether spent or unspent. When students enrol upon the course they will be asked to complete a (DBS) form. The forms will be returned to the universities DBS administrator who will progress the DBS checking process. Students should be aware that this process could take an average of 4 – 6 weeks. Further information can be found here. <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/dbs/applications.aspx>

A student will not be able to start their placement without this check being completed. If a student is aware of any un-spent criminal convictions / cautions registered against them, they must make their University Tutor / practice co-ordinator aware at the earliest opportunity.

Students are required to share their DBS Certificate with the placement agency providers at interview. Some placement agencies may complete their own DBS checks. The university is not able to share the contents of a DBS check without the students consent. The university is required to have written consent, ordinarily through signing the 'Student Support Confidentiality Agreement,' before sharing any student information; however, it is an expectation that a student's acceptance onto the programme includes agreement from the student to share relevant information, where appropriate to placement providers, Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO), where issues of safety or legality apply.

DBS checks are usually undertaken on a three yearly basis; however students will be required to complete an online declaration at the start of every academic year before they can re-enroll.

In the interim of DBS checks and yearly declarations, should students become subject to criminal proceedings / convictions / or cautions they must inform their University Tutor or practice coordinator immediately.

The student should keep the original copy of their DBS record for the duration of the course.

3.4 Pre-Placement Checklist

Students will be provided with a pre-placement checklist to be completed a tutor at least two weeks prior to the beginning placement.

The check list provides detailed information about all issues and areas that must be explored prior to placement, including

- DBS Disclosure
- Conduct
- Pre-Placement Interview
- Prior Relationships or conflict of interest
- Car Documents

- Attendance
- Health / Disability / Learning Difficulties
- Travel
- Other Commitments / Personal issues
- Placement Handbook and Workbook
- Inoculations (Hospital placements)

An example of the pre-placement checklist can be found in the student workbook or online.

3.5 Mandatory Training

All Social Work students undertake a range of mandatory training annually. Allocation of placements are subject to the successful completion of the mandatory training. This mandatory training consists of online and practical sessions on the following topics:

Fire Safety
 Protection & Safeguarding of Vulnerable People
 Risk Assessment
 Protection & Safeguarding of children
 Personal Safety and Security Awareness
 Information and records governance
 Disability awareness
 Equality & Diversity
 Health & Safety Awareness

3.6 Students with Disabilities / Learning Difficulties

The University of Essex is committed to supporting Students with disabilities and / or Specific Learning Difficulties and to conforming to the Disability Discrimination Acts (DDA) 1995, 2005.

Applicants who meet the academic criteria for selection and who indicate on their application form that they have a disability will be contacted by a Disability Adviser with information about the support available.

Disabled students or those with any other learning difficulties, including dyslexia and mental health issues, any medical conditions or placement related needs are encouraged to notify the placement learning coordinator at the earliest opportunity to enable appropriate arrangements to be made.

Further Information can be found on the University website.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/access-and-disability>

With the student's consent any specific requirements will need to be shared with the placement provider to ensure their needs are met appropriately or reasonable adjustments can be made.

Specific requirements of students must be negotiated at the initial interview, learning agreement and reviewed at the mid-way meeting and monitored regularly during the placement.

4. Suitability for Practice

Students are required to demonstrate that they are suitable to practice in social work to be eligible to register as a Social Worker with the HCPC.

The HCPC state

'Completing an approved programme does not guarantee someone will become registered. It shows us the applicant meets our professional standards and is eligible to apply for registration. We need additional information from them in order to be able to register them.

The information provided by applicants helps us to know that:

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

For further information please go to <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/uk/>

4.1 Professional conduct

Students are therefore required to meet the standards that are set out by the HCPC, which include Standards on Conduct Performance and Ethics. It is highly recommended that students familiarize themselves with these standards as they will be used to draw conclusions about professional conduct and behavior. The standards can be found in the publication 'Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students' which is available from the HCPC.

4.2 Fitness to practise

Upon successful completion of the course, registration with the HCPC requires students to have demonstrated that they are 'fit to practise'. The publication Guidance on Health and Character (HCPC 2012) defines fitness to practise as having the skills, knowledge, character and health to do the job safely and effectively.

Doubts about a student's fitness to practise may arise if there are persistent or serious causes for concern about their health, conduct or competence, this will impact upon their ability to continue on the course and subsequently their suitability to practise.

Concerns about fitness to practise will be managed in accordance with the University of Essex' School of Health and Human Science Fitness to practise Policy.

[https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/departments/hsc/procedures-fitness-to-practise-\(9\).pdf?la=en](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/departments/hsc/procedures-fitness-to-practise-(9).pdf?la=en)

4.3 Occupational Health

Students may need access to the University's screening service for Occupational Health when they enroll.

The objective of health screening is to be supportive and if necessary provide guidance around how to manage specific health issues / disabilities within the workplace. Having a disability or health condition will not inevitably mean a student is not fit to practice.

Students who will be on placement at a hospital will be subject to Occupational Health screening and inoculations.

Further information including contact details can be found by following the link to the university's Health and Safety and Occupational Health Standards, Policy and Procedures

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/health-and-safety-support/policies>

4.4 Confidentiality

There are strict codes to follow in relation to confidentiality and these can be found in the guidance of the HCPC, and the [University statement and policy of confidentiality](#).

- You must not discuss service users and carers outside the workplace
- Service users and carers names and details must be anonymised in all assessments
- For your protection, you should be cautious about personal information shared about yourself with service users, for example you should not disclose personal phone numbers or your home address. You are advised to refer to your Practice Educator or supervisor for further guidance
- To enable judgments to be made about your progress, information relating to your academic and practice assessments may be shared with practice supervisors and Practice Educators responsible for assessing your capacity and fitness to practise.

The university is required to have written consent, ordinarily through signing the 'Student Support Confidentiality Agreement,' before sharing any information or taking any action on behalf of a student. The written consent will be held in Student Support files. If a student chooses not to give consent for information to be shared, this decision will be respected, except where issues of safety or legality apply (see Section 5 confidentiality policy). However, the student should understand this might limit their progression on the course and the kinds of support that are available to them.

4.5 Social Media

It is becoming more frequent that people are using social networking sites as a method of communicating and maintaining contact with others.

This can be extremely problematic in maintaining and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of yourself and others.

If students engage with social networking they are required to adhere to the principles of the codes of conduct performance and ethics, specifically:

- You must act in the best interests of service users
- You must respect the confidentiality of service users, colleagues/staff, carers and others we work with
- You must keep high standards of personal conduct
- You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behavior does not damage the public's confidence in you or your profession.

5. Co-ordination of Placements

The placement coordinator organises placements for students, contact details for staff associated with practice learning can be found in section [8.2 of this handbook.](#)

5.1 Student Placement Profiles

Before placements can be allocated, students are required to complete a Student Placement Profile (SPP) Upon completion this document will be used by the Placement Co-ordinator and relevant social care agencies to identify an appropriate placement. It is important that all sections are completed accurately and with sufficient information as partner agencies may refer to a student's SPP to assess their experience and suitability for the placement. The SPP will also be forwarded to Practice Educators and On-Site Supervisors.

5.2 Allocation of Placements

Students are allocated placements to facilitate their placement learning and to meet the professional body requirements as described in section 2.

Students will need to demonstrate their 'readiness for practice' and ability to meet the PCF to become eligible for placement allocation.

Students are not permitted to contact an agency directly to organize their own placements and the University will not accept requests from students for specific placement allocation. If a student is aware of an organization that might provide placements for students, they should inform their Placement Co-ordinator.

During the allocation process it is important that students remain in regular contact with the University, especially checking email correspondence. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the University is informed of any changes to contact details. Failure to maintain regular contact could delay or even result in a loss of placement.

The Placement Co-ordinator will aim to give students 4 weeks' notice upon placement allocation. A meeting prior to the placement commencing will be convened with the agency. Students must ensure they have appropriate knowledge

about the agency and be prepared to discuss their own individual learning needs, previous experience and what they might contribute to and learn from the placement.

Students must have a valid reason to refuse a placement and there is no guarantee that another placement will be found for the same academic year if a placement is refused.

5.3 Travel Arrangements

Students are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to and from placements. Having a full driving license might be considered essential criteria for working in social work; those students who do not drive may want to consider taking lessons.

5.4 Car insurance

Students are not insured by the University to use their own cars, where students intend to use their own vehicles for work purposes, business insurance will be required, some insurance companies will not apply additional charges for this cover. When on placement, students must not use their own vehicles to transport service users without confirmation of relevant insurance cover. Students will be expected to provide evidence of their insurance cover.

5.5 Finance for travel

Some agencies will provide finance to cover mileage accrued through work purposes. The rates payable will depend upon the agency or local authority, further advice including how to claim can be obtained from the placement. An element of the social work bursary is attributed to finance travel to and from placement, further information about the bursary and including eligibility can be found at [NHS Business Services Authority](#).

5.6 Allocating Time for Travel.

The Placement Co-ordinator will try to ensure that all placements are located within 1.5 hours travelling time of the students' home or the University. However, this may not always be possible due to placement availability. Where students are required to travel for extended time periods it may be possible to make alterations to the normal working hours, any changes will need to be negotiated between the Placement Co-ordinator, On-Site Supervisor and Practice Educator.

6. Procedures during Placement

The following information provides details about the procedures to follow whilst on placement.

6.1 Health and Safety

Whilst on placement, the University of Essex and placement provider have a duty of care towards the student. To satisfy their duty of care the University will:

- Make sure that the student is prepared for placement and aware of the usual health and safety features of the placement.
- Be responsible for giving students an opportunity to give feedback about any health and safety issues.
- Escalate any issues that are raised.

Statutory duties of care and liabilities are the responsibility of the placement provider whilst the student is on placement; the University expects that the student will be given the same rights as all employees in relation to health, safety and welfare.

Therefore the placement provider must:

- Provide evidence to the University of up to date liability insurance
- There is a section within the learning agreement that must be completed to confirm that health and safety procedures have been discussed with the student, usually during the induction period.
- Undertake risk assessments where relevant to the safety of the student whilst in placement, an example being if the student is pregnant.

The students have a responsibility to conform to health and safety procedures, whilst they are in placement they must:

- Ensure they are familiar with health and safety procedures applicable to the placement provider.
- Take care of their own personal safety.
- Report any concerns that have the potential to place themselves, service users or colleagues at risk.
-

Further information can be found in the [University Health, Safety and Well Being policy](#)

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/health-and-safety-support/policies>

6.2 Learning Agreement

A learning agreement should be drafted before the placement begins, usually during the induction period. The Practice Educator and On-Site Supervisor (where appropriate) along with the student are responsible for formulating this agreement. The content of the agreement should detail practical arrangements, special requirements (including learning needs or disabilities) and roles and responsibilities. The agreement will plan how the learning opportunities within the placement can meet the learning requirements. The learning agreement will be discussed and finalized at a learning agreement meeting with any amendments being recorded and all relevant parties signing to acknowledge their responsibilities and commitment.

The learning agreement must be finalized within 12 practice placement days and shared with all relevant parties, including their allocated University Tutor within 15 days. Failure to do so without securing an extension will lead to the suspension of the placement.

The learning agreement meeting should consider:

- The students previous experiences, areas of strengths and weaknesses, learning requirements
- The role of service users, carers or groups in providing feedback to the student
- Anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice
- The imbalance of power within the relationships between the students, Practice Educator, On-Site Supervisor
- The individual needs of students including approaches to learning
- Specific needs of the student whilst in placement
- The use of theory and evidenced based practice within the placement
- Methods of practice education.

The learning agreement informs and underpins the mid-way review of progress. A copy of the learning agreement must be included in the student's final workbook.

6.3 Mid-way Review

The date of the midway review should be agreed at the learning agreement meeting.

A midway review provides an interim assessment of the student's progress in placement, a formal meeting taking place at a midway point during the placement. In attendance are the student, Practice Educator, on-site supervisor and University Tutor, with all parties being required to provide a progress report

- Students are required to have completed the specified number of observations and critical reflection of practice by the mid-way review meeting.
- If the student has been unable to achieve the requirements, this should not interfere with the meeting going ahead. The meeting then provides a forum for discussion about what has prevented the student from meeting the requirements. If necessary an action plan should be implemented
- If danger to failure procedures has been started at the time of the mid-way review, it could be dealt with separately.
- The midway report is completed by the student and Practice Educator and forwarded in advance of the meeting to the University Tutor. The report must include evidence as stipulated in the workbook
- All parties in attendance at the mid-way review meeting must sign the relevant sections of the report
- Students must include a copy of the mid-way review report in their final workbook.

6.4 Submitting reports

Every effort must be made to submit all reports and assessments in a timely manner. Failure to do so could have a serious impact upon progress and completion of the course. Work that is submitted after the deadline will be given a mark of zero.

In line with the University's academic regulations, in exceptional circumstances students can apply for an extension to the date for submission. Extenuating circumstances are divided into two types: (1) those which affect a student's ability to

submit coursework by the deadline (late submission), and (2) those affecting a student's performance in coursework or exams, or circumstances affecting a student's ability to submit their coursework at all and/or circumstances which cause a student to absent themselves from an exam. Further information including the process that must be followed can be found in the University's policy and guidance on the late submission of coursework.

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/late-submission.aspx>

6.5. Concerns about Placement

Concerns can be raised by students, Practice Educators working in placements, or University Tutor and should be forwarded to the Placement Coordinator (HE) and/or Programme Manager. Concerns will be discussed in a three way meeting where a decision will be made as to the most appropriate response to the concerns. If these concerns are sufficient to cause concern over performance to the point where there is a possibility of the student failing the placement a [Danger of Failure form](#) will be completed and will form the action plan. If an action plan is established this can be reviewed twice. If this does not resolve the initial concern then the concern will be put to the Placement Panel or Professional Suitability Group as appropriate to the nature of the concern. See diagram: [Concerns and Professional Misconduct Process](#).

6.6 Requesting a change of placement

Any concerns about a placement must be discussed with the Placement Coordinator and / or Practice Educator, they are usually resolved within a 3 way meeting and through devising an action plan.

If the concerns cannot be resolved then requests to change placements can only be made in exceptional circumstances and through a formal appeals process.

Legitimate reasons to appeal include:

- For specific health reasons
- The placement does not meet the professional requirements detailed in section 2.
- Conflict of interest, for example previous / current involvement as a service user of the agency.

If no resolution can be agreed then the process to follow is detailed in the [Concerns and Professional Misconduct Process](#).

Students must be aware that requesting a change of placement could prevent the student from completing the practice learning module in a timely manner and will likely require the module to be repeated.

6.7 Delayed and Disrupted Placements

Generally, placements will begin on time however should the start of a placement become delayed (for a period of two weeks or more) this will impede upon the date for the completion of the placement. Subsequently, the date for handing in the workbook will need to be rearranged. The only circumstances in which a placement

might be delayed will be in the extremely unlikely event that the university / placement coordinator cannot identify an appropriate placement.

6.8 Attendance

The module timetable allows students sufficient days in which they can complete the practice placement and includes supplementary days for independent study. Students are required to complete the specified amount of practice learning days and so time out for any reason must be accounted for before the placement can be finished.

The placement week equates to the average working week of 37.5 hours. Students are required to spend the normal hours of a working day in the placement, 7 to 7.5 hours. Where students are required to travel for extended time periods it may be possible to make alterations to the normal working hours, any changes will need to be negotiated between the Placement Co-ordinator, On-Site Supervisor and Practice Educator.

There may be times when a student is required to work outside of the usual working day, these hours must be recorded in the record of attendance (which can be found in the student workbook) and can be taken as time off in lieu (toil), in agreement with the organization, on site supervisor, practice supervisor and / or on site PE.

Students are required to keep a record of attendance, which must be verified weekly by the Practice Educator or OSS. The record of attendance must be submitted at the end of the placement with the portfolio.

Students are encouraged to take 30 minutes reflection time during each day, the time must be negotiated and agreed with the Practice Educator and / or on-site supervisor, this time must be protected and used for the purpose of reflection only.

6.9 Short term Absence from the placement

Short term and temporary absence from placement, usually for reasons of ill health or exceptional circumstances. The absence should be:

- reported via email to the Placement Co-ordinator and the Practice Educator on the first and last day of absence, and for every three days of absence.
- Email hhsplace@essex.ac.uk to register their absence with the admin team
- The organisational procedures for reporting illness should also be followed.

These procedures must be explained at the start of the placement as part of the induction process.

Students are required to maintain a record of attendance, which will be shared and discussed during supervision and included in the student workbook for submission.

6.10 Long Term Absence from the Placement

Students must inform their University Tutors and / or Placement Coordinators if they are aware of any issues that might interfere with their ability to complete their placement, prior to starting the placement. Students may be advised to postpone their placement until the following year, depending upon the circumstances and length of leave.

Once the placement has started, leave of absence from the placement will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the head of the social work department. Evidence to support the request for leave will be required, for example medical certification.

If a request for leave is approved, a report will be compiled detailing the student's progress to enable continuity upon return. Dependent upon the length of absence from a placement, the timescales of the placement may be extended to incorporate placement days missed, alternatively it might not be possible to return to the same placement, in those circumstances students will be required to repeat the placement. All reports from previous placements are shared with future placements.

6.11 Suspended Placements

There are a number of reasons why placements might be suspended usually falling into one of two categories;

- Concerns about the suitability of the placement and / or the provision of supervision
- Concerns about the suitability of the student as a Social Work practitioner due to a serious breach of code/s of professional practice / placement policies and procedures.

Suspension of a placement will be conducted in strict accordance with the procedures for [Concerns and Professional Misconduct Process](#).

Placement providers can only suspended a placement if a service user is deemed to be at immediate risk and it is not possible to contact the university, a student can be suspended until an urgent meeting can be convened.

Students must not terminate or suspend their own placement, if a student suspends or terminates their own placement without prior consultation and authority they will automatically fail the placement and will not be entitled to repeat the placement.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

This section details the roles and responsibilities of all people involved in the co-ordination, maintenance and the success of practice placements.

7.1. Students

Whilst in placement, students are responsible for:

- Learning in placement and including relevant lectures that underpin the theory to their practice whilst in placement

- Ensuring that they are fully aware of all requirements, expectations and professional standards and policies relevant to their placement, the University and their professional and personal conduct.
- Attendance and punctuality, including when conducting agency business.
- Preparing in advance for supervision, share responsibility for ensuring your learning needs are being met and capabilities evidenced.
- Informing relevant people if not coping or meeting deadlines within the workplace or module.
- Attending all formal meetings including mid-way, tutorials and three / four way meetings.
- Informing On-Site Supervisor, Practice Educator and Placement Co-ordinator of any absences, planned or unplanned.
- Informing their Practice Educator and On-Site Supervisor if there are any circumstances that may impact negatively upon their progress in placement at an early stage and throughout their placement.
- Completing specified number of days pertinent to stage in programme.
- Ensuring all reports, both for the University and practice placement and assignments are completed and submitted in a timely manner.
- Developing personal and professional skills as a reflective practitioner, through academic learning, personal and group tutorials and considering the feedback from others, finding creative approaches to working.

7.2 University

Students are entitled to:

- Consultation to prepare for the placement and including information about the assessment process and expectations of learning outcomes
- Regular supervision from both the Practice Educator and On-Site Supervisor and to be allocated a named University Tutor. Supervision will be an informative meeting where students can expect to explore their progress, receive feedback and plan to meet required learning outcomes. Supervision should also be a forum to discuss any issues of concerns on behalf of the OSS or student
- Access to workshops to facilitate learning requirements
- Be treated fairly and equally and in accordance with equal rights opportunity and legislation (Equality Act 2010) and to be assessed in accordance with the University regulations.

7.3 Practice Tutor

All students will be assigned a Practice Tutor whose primary responsibilities are to:

- First point of contact for the student
- Monitor students' progress and keep relevant parties informed of any concerns / issues arising
- Attend or coordinate action plan meetings and facilitate resolution, working alongside all parties
- Routinely attend all review meetings.
- Provide academic guidance to students
- Liaise with the Placement Co-ordinator to ensure the quality of the placement learning.

- Maintain an over view and up to date records of all areas of the students' progress.
- Facilitate the development of anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, exploring all issues of diversity.
- Facilitate group tutorials / supervision to enhance the learning experience.

7.4 Placement Co-ordinator

The Placement Co-ordinator is responsible for the procurement and quality of placements and that the standards as stipulated by the professional, regulatory and statutory bodies can be met. Therefore the primary responsibilities of the Placement Co-ordinator are to:

- Allocate placements
- Ensure the agency is aware of and meeting their responsibilities to promote learning within the placement
- Liaise with module leaders to synchronize and enrich the student experience.
- Provide training for On-Site Supervisors
- Organise, coordinate and support off site practice education
- Provide an annual evaluation and audit report to the course management committee that endorses the quality assurance of placements and learning, to detail and respond to any concerns arising.

7.5 Practice Educator (on site)

The role of the Practice Educator is underpinned by the Practice Educator Professional Standards. <https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/draft-practice-educator-professional-standards-social-work>

Which sets out the requirements and responsibilities of Practice Educators when teaching, assessing and supervising social work students. They include:

- Ensuring that the students can meet the relevant professional standards for which they are being assessed by liaison with the placement, service users and carers to identify appropriate work.
- Monitoring, supporting and promoting the students learning experience.
- Assessing the students practice in accordance with University requirements.
- Providing regular formal and informal supervision, at least 90 minutes in duration every five-placement days.
- Creating and facilitating formal and informal teaching, learning and feedback sessions in liaison with the On-Site Supervisor, University and other relevant professionals.
- Implementing an induction plan for the student and advice staff about their roles in supporting and assessing the students practice.
- Contributing to the mid-way and final meetings; be responsible for the relevant reports in accordance with the assessment framework for the course.
- Recording all meetings, including supervision being aware that these may need to be shared in the event of formal investigations / enquiries being made.
- Undertaking a minimum of two direct observations of the students practice
- Notifying all relevant parties and the student if any concerns arise.

- Contributing to the quality assurance process and evaluate the practice learning agency and potential.
- Facilitating the development of anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, exploring all issues of diversity.
- Encouraging students to become reflective practitioners and protect time specified for reflection on a daily basis.

7.6 Practice Educator (Off-Site)

The responsibilities of the Off-Site Practice Educator are the same as if they are situated on site, however in addition they must liaise closely with the On-Site Supervisor.

The On-Site Supervisor will be providing supervision in the work place and so the offsite Practice Educator will provide supervision on a 10 work day basis and for a timed duration of a minimum 90 minutes.

7.7 On-Site Supervisor

If the Practice Educator is on-site (based within the practice placement) then it is not necessary for the student to have an On-Site Supervisor, however where Practice Educators are off-site the student will have an On-Site Supervisor.

The On-Site Supervisor is based and works within the same agency as where the student is placed, they are responsible for;

- Managing daily tasks and activities
- Provide supervision every 10 placement days, to compliment with supervision provided by the Practice Educator for a minimum of 90 minutes
- Daily guidance and support
- Allocation of work and as specified within the learning agreement.
- Verification of the work of the student
- Liaising closely with and provide feedback to the Practice Educator
- Participating in review meetings
- Recording all meetings, being aware that these may need to be shared in the event of formal investigations / enquiries being made.
- On site supervisors are not required to provide formal reports, except for within the work book, a short report detailing over all progress, however they are required to provide feedback that will inform assessments / judgments about the capacity and development of the student.
- In accordance with the university procedures contribute to the quality assurance process and evaluate the practice learning agency and potential.
- Facilitating the development of anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, exploring all issues of diversity.
- Encouraging students to become reflective practitioner and protect time specified for reflection on a daily basis.

7.8 Agency Placement Coordinator

Students will be placed within the voluntary sector or a Local Authority; the ideal is for students to undertake a placement in both sectors over the two placements learning periods. Within the practice agency there will be a nominated person whom coordinates social work placements, their key responsibilities are to:

- Arrange learning opportunities within the placement that will meet the course requirements
- Identify and prepare a Practice Educator and On-Site Supervisor
- Liaise with the university to communicate any issues or problems and to attend relevant meetings
- Assure the quality of placements and ability to meet the requirements of the course.

7.9 Agency Team Role

The success of a placement learning opportunity is the responsibility of the whole agency / team, specifically they are responsible for:

- The student's induction including all relevant agency policies, health and safety, confidentiality, maintaining records, dress code, lone working, duty systems and IT systems.
- Identifying who will be accountable for the students work.
- Supporting, guiding, mentoring and reviewing capabilities and competence.
- Identifying any concerns with the student and relevant parties including the Practice Educator / On-Site supervisor.

7.10 Placement Administrator

- Assists the placement coordinator
- Available for students and placement providers to contact
- Manages placements on the PEMS system
- Manages access to the PEMS system
- Makes placement payments

8. Difficulties in the Placement

If students experience difficulties or problems whilst on placement they are usually resolved informally however where this is not possible, please refer to the table below for a guide about who to contact.

Issue/problem	Who to contact
Placement allocation Type of placement offered Quality of placement	Placement Co-ordinator (HEI)
DBS queries	Placement Co-ordinator (HEI)
General queries about the requirements of the practice learning module	University Tutor
Supervision and support: Arrangements for supervision and frequency and amount of supervision that can be expected and any concerns about this process	University Tutor
Practice Supervisor and Practice Educators absent from placement e.g. due to sickness	Agency Placement Co-ordinator or Placement Co-ordinator (HEI)
Concerns that the placement is not going well, for example, you are not achieving to the standard expected, lack of opportunity to achieve, feeling unsupported or not getting feedback	In the first instance discuss this with the Practice Educator/On-site Supervisor, and if not resolved contact the module leader/University Tutor
Notifying sickness or absence from placement	Follow the placement policies for notifying non-attendance to the placement and notify the Placement Co-ordinator. (HEI) If sickness/absence is more than 2 weeks notify the module leader/University Tutor
General enquiries about attendance requirements and hours of work	University Tutor
Changes to the Practice Learning Agreement	3 way meeting
Changes to your health or character status that impedes your fitness to practise	Director of Social Work/Programme Lead
Witness severe bad practice that compromises the safety of service users	Refer to advice given in the escalating concerns policy
Concerns about your health and safety	Agency Placement Co-Ordinator or University Tutor
If your problem is unresolved after exhausting all normal channels of resolution	Director of Social Work/Programme Lead

8.1 Student Support on Placement

If a student is experiencing difficulties or requires support for any other reason, they should speak to their;

- Practice Educator
- On-Site Supervisor
- University Tutor
- Placement Coordinator

The key roles and responsibilities of these people are detailed in section seven.

8.2 Contact details for relevant staff Members

Placement Co-ordinator:	Olivia Hanson	01702 328286 ohanson@essex.ac.uk
Placement Administrator:	Jade Shortland	01206 874312 jade@essex.ac.uk
Programme Administrator:	Sarah Wiblin	01702 328229 swiblin@essex.ac.uk
Programme Lead:	Gert Scheepers	01702 328287 gscheepers@essex.ac.uk

9. Complaints

The University aims to resolve any concerns or complaints quickly and efficiently and if appropriate informally.

In the first instance if a student has an issue or complaint about the placement agency this should be raised with their Practice Educator and or the On-Site Supervisor at the earliest and most appropriate opportunity. Supervision may present the ideal situation to explore issues or concerns.

If a student does not feel comfortable to discuss a concern or complaint with their PE or OSS they should speak to their University Tutor / Placement Co-ordinator.

If concerns cannot be resolved informally then the [Concerns and Professional Misconduct Process](#) should be followed.

We aim to resolve any issues of complaint as speedily as possible. If you wish to make a formal complaint about any aspect of practice education it should be addressed to:

(Dean of Health and Social Care)
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
CO4 3SQ
T 01206 874487

9.1 Whistle Blowing

All social care agencies have a duty to conduct their affairs in a responsible and transparent manner and in accordance with the HCPC standards.

If a student witnesses 'severe bad practice,' that is damaging to service users and / or carers then the [Professional Misconduct Process](#) should be followed.

The Public Disclosure Act 1999 gives legal protection to students / workers against being dismissed or suffering any other detriment as a consequence of raising, with appropriate senior and line managers any concerns which they believe indicate malpractice within the organization.

10. Quality Assurance of Placements

Practice learning modules must meet the HCPC Standards for Education and Training, specifically standard 5.

The University of Essex quality assures all practice learning opportunities in accordance with the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL).

10.1 Evaluation

Students, Onsite Supervisors and Practice Educators are required to complete an online (PEMS) evaluation questionnaire (QAPL) at the end of each placement. This information is used to monitor and maintain and improve the quality of placements. Information provided will be anonymised and used to complete a report for the social work management committee (Scrutiny Panel), and HCPC. The information produced will be used to benefit all of those parties involved in the practice-learning module and to enhance the student experience and to continually develop the quality of placements.

Placement monitoring is a standing agenda point for the termly Scrutiny Panel meetings.

The Agency Placement coordinator will be able to view student evaluation on the PEMS.

Guidance on the process for completion of the QAPL will be provided to Students, Onsite Supervisors and Practice Educators by the Placement Administrator.

10.2 Practice Assessment Panel

The Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) has a key role in developing and contributing the quality of practice learning. This is achieved through providing feedback about the practice learning opportunities and assessment process. The membership of the PAP consists of representation from both academic and agency staff. The PAP meets as and when required, if there are unresolved disputes at standardization or if a student contests a Practice Educators decision or if an independent view of

assessment practices is required. The PAP will make recommendations to the assessment board but does not have the authority to confirm grades or change the progression of students.

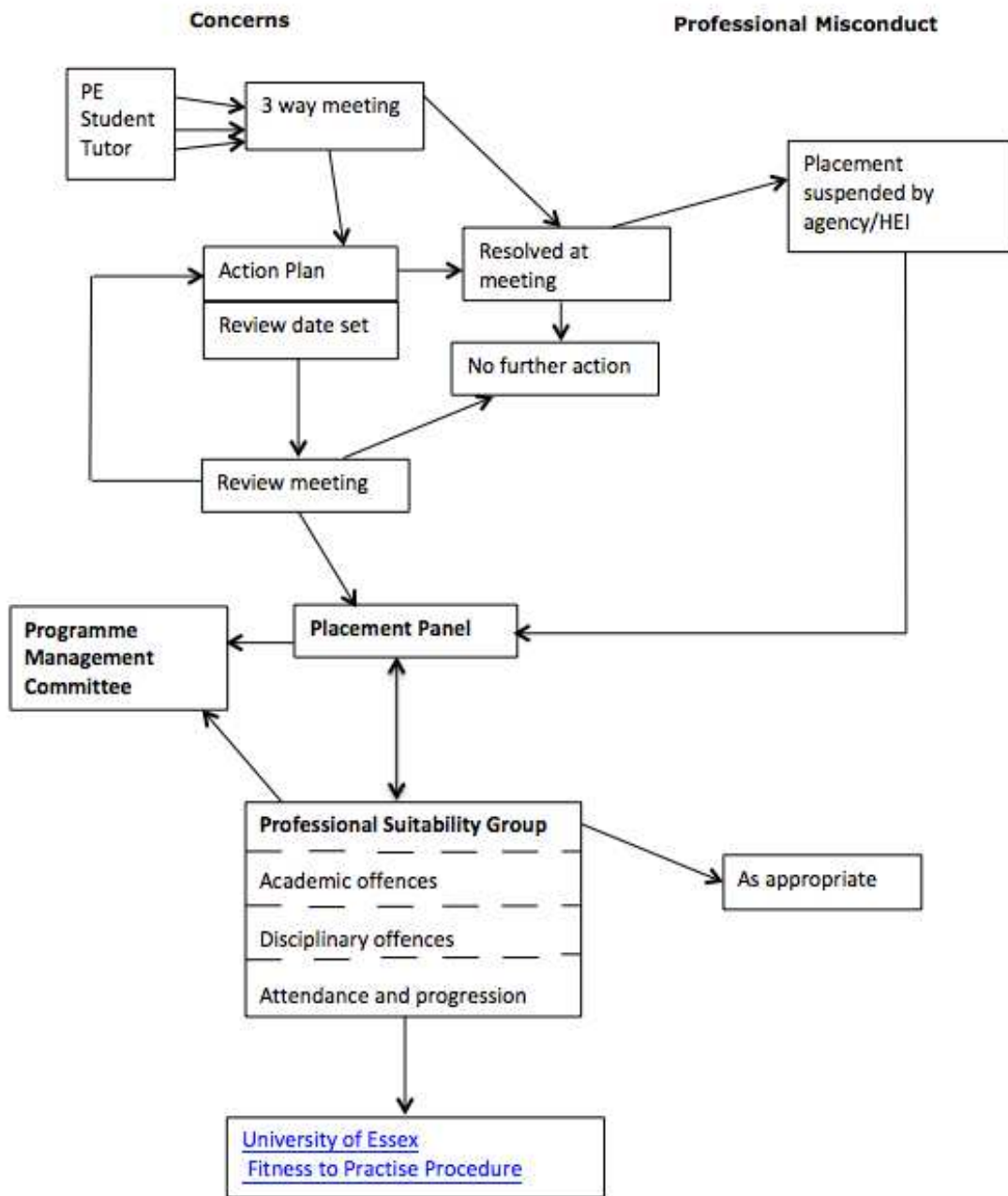
Assessment boards are responsible for the ratification of student results and ensuring that university regulations and procedures have been applied properly in verifying the students' qualifications and in confirming their right to continue with their studies. All grades are provisional until the assessment board ratifies them.

If the assessment board's decision does not support the decision made by the PAP, then feedback from the assessment board will be provided.

11. Appendices

- Appendix 1. Concerns and Professional Misconduct Diagram
- Appendix 2. Danger of Failure Forms
- Appendix 3. University Fitness to Practise Process
- Appendix 4. HCPC Code of Conduct
- Appendix 5. Standards of Proficiency

11.1 Concerns and Professional Misconduct Process



11.2 BA Social Work: Danger of Failure Form

This form is an official record of the under-performance of a pre-registration Social Work student. It is completed by the University Tutor, Practice Educator and the student concerned.

The use of the form signifies concerns and/issues on placement that may lead to the student underperforming or failing to perform at a satisfactory level. If improvement is not demonstrated within an agreed timescale it is likely to result in the student failing the placement.

The form outlines the areas of poor performance and is used to create an action plan to assist the student in improving their performance to the required level. A copy of this form is given to the student, the Practice Educator and the University Tutor. The original must be given by the lecturer to Sarah Wiblin for confidential storage in the student's placement file. Practice Educator and University Tutor copies must be treated as confidential documents and must be destroyed when the student completes the placement.

Student		Date	
Year of Study		Level/Type of Placement	
Practice Educator		Name of Placement	
Placement Locality		University Tutor	
Indicators of poor performance: (these must be aligned with the relevant placement assessment criteria i.e. HCPC Standard of Proficiency and or PCF Domain)			
Indicator 1			
Indicator 2			
Indicator 3			
Indicator 4			

Indicator 5	
Student and date (to be achieved)	Objectives to be achieved by first review: (these should include what action will be taken and how success will be demonstrated)
Objective 1	
Objective 2	
Objective 3	
Objective 4	
Objective 5	
Date of Review: (Usually 2 weeks after this form is completed and then weekly until student is performing at the required level or has failed the placement).	

Signature of Student _____

Signature of Practice Educator _____

Signature of University Lecturer _____

BA Social Work: Danger of Failure Review Form

This form is completed by the University Tutor and the Practice Educator in discussion with the student. The use of the form acts as an official record of the review of the performance of a student who is underperforming or failing to reach a satisfactory standard.

The student, the Practice Educator and the University Tutor must be provided with copies of this form. The original must be given by the lecturer to Sarah Wiblin for confidential storage in the student's placement file. Practice Educator and University Tutor's copies must be treated as confidential documents and must be destroyed when the student completes the placement.

Student		Date	
Year of Study		Level/Name of Placement	
Practice Educator		University Tutor	
Current student performance in relation to the indicators of poor performance identified on the original danger of failure form dated _____:			
Progress on Indicator 1			
Progress on Indicator 2			
Progress on Indicator 3			
Progression on Indicator 4			
Progress on Indicator 5			

Current student performance in relation to the objectives to be achieved identified on the original danger of failure form/last review form dated_____:	
Progress on Objective 1	
Progress on Objective 2	
Progress on Objective 3	
Progress on Objective 4	
Progress on Objective 5	
Summary of student's current level of performance:	

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Recommended Further Action:

Is the student now passing the placement? **YES** **NO**
(If yes the student can be signed off from the danger of failure process below)

Has the student now failed the placement? **YES** **NO**
(If yes sign off this form below and complete placement assessment documentation indicating failure of the placement). If you need any assistance/advice please ring 07785286371

Is the student still on a danger of failure? **YES** **NO**
(If yes indicate objectives to be met by next review, set review date and sign off below)

Objectives to be achieved by next review:

Objective 1	
Objective 2	
Objective 3	
Objective 4	
Objective 5	

Reviews should usually be undertaken weekly until student is performing at the required level or has failed the placement **Date of Review:**

Signature of Student _____

Signature of Practice Educator _____

Signature of University Lecturer _____

11.3 University of Essex Fitness to Practise Procedure

Introduction

- 1 All University students are required to comply with the regulations of the University regarding conduct. Students enrolled on courses where a practical professional placement is required (including health, social work and education) have additional responsibilities placed upon them regarding not only their conduct but also their professional suitability, as outlined in relevant regulatory and/or professional body codes of practice. Failure to meet these responsibilities can lead to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure* being invoked. Students will be notified on registration if their course of study is subject to the terms of this procedure.
- 2 The *Fitness to Practise Procedure* applies to all relevant courses leading to awards of the University of Essex, although the office holders identified in Sections A and B below may be adapted where the course is offered through a partner institution of the University.
- 3 The *Fitness to Practise Procedure* is not intended to replace the University's membership and Disclosure and Barring Service, disciplinary or academic offences procedures, though the outcome of a case raised under these procedures for a particular student might also raise issues of fitness to practise. Where a conviction, caution or reprimand comes to light as part of the DBS checking process, the matter is considered in accordance with the Student Membership and Disclosure and Barring Service Checks Policy and Procedure. Where a student allegedly commits an act that is actionable under the University's disciplinary or academic offences regulations then these procedures must be completed prior to instigating action under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*.
- 4 In the event of concerns that a student may not be suitable for engagement in the relevant profession, the University's *Fitness to Practise Procedure* shall be invoked. A student may at any time be suspended or precluded from further study by the University if a concern is raised under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*.
- 5 Schools/Departments that are running courses where students are subject to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure* will establish a School/Departmental Professional Suitability Group as outlined in appendix 1 of this procedure.
- 6 Concerns about a student's fitness to practise may be raised from any source, including any member of staff, student, placement partner, member of the public, the Occupational Health Service or other agencies such as the Police or Social Services. Concerns about fitness to practise may involve a range of actions or omissions relating to professional conduct or professional suitability but may include any of the following:
 - a) actions that are harmful to service users, other members of the public or service providers

- b) actions that are likely to constitute an unacceptable risk to the student or others
- c) failure to disclose information about previous matters relating to their professional suitability prior to registration on the course, including health, previous convictions and cautions
- d) contravention of the relevant professional code of conduct
- e) concerns about health¹ or well being, including a failure to seek appropriate medical treatment or other support; unreasonable failure to follow medical advice or care plans and treatment resistant conditions which might impair fitness to practise
- f) actions that are prejudicial to the development or standing of professional practice.

7 This Procedure includes normal timescales. Every effort will be made to expedite the overall process and meet the normal timescales. However sometimes circumstances arise which mean that exceptionally the normal timescales will not be met. In these cases the student will be contacted and informed of the adjusted timescale.

A Procedure for dealing with concerns about a student's fitness to practise

- A1 Concerns about the fitness to practise of a student shall be made in writing to the Professional Suitability Group of the Department/School offering the professional course.
- A2 It must be borne in mind that an allegation raising concerns about fitness to practise is a serious and potentially defamatory one. Consequently it is essential that the proceedings should be conducted on a basis of strict confidentiality.
- A3 On receipt of a written allegation, the Professional Suitability Group, in consultation with the relevant Course Director or equivalent, shall:
- a) take such immediate action as is deemed appropriate in the circumstances to safeguard all relevant parties, but without prejudice to the outcome of the enquiry
 - b) normally within five working days of receipt of the allegation shall confirm in writing the nature of allegation made, the action taken under A3 (a) above and the procedures for dealing with the allegation
 - c) normally within ten working days of the receipt of the allegation either:
 - i. decide no further action is required, or
 - ii. appoint an Investigating Officer from the list approved by the Academic Registrar for this role.

¹ By Health we are not referring to pre-existing medical conditions or disabilities that the student has already disclosed and where reasonable adjustments have been made to enable the student to access their study. Cases will be considered where disability prevents the student meeting the core competences after adjustments have been considered or made or where this has implications for the safety of the student, patients, service users or colleagues

A4 The Investigating Officer shall impartially assemble the evidence relevant to the case in a timely manner. Appropriate methods for gathering evidence will normally include

- Interviewing the student concerned, who may be accompanied by a student or other member of the University, the relevant partner institution or the Students' Union if he or she wishes. The interview can be conducted by telephone if appropriate.

and may include:

- Interviews with relevant University staff, students, professional or practice partner colleagues
- Obtaining a written professional opinion on the effect of the student's behaviour or state of health/well-being on their fitness to practise
- Obtaining other relevant documents and other information
- Obtaining information about the student's progress on the course.

A5 The Investigating Officer shall prepare a written report for the Professional Suitability Group, normally within fifteen working days of the case being referred to him/her. The report shall not pass judgement nor recommend a particular course of action.

A6 If the Professional Suitability Group deems that no *prima facie* case has been made they shall inform the student in writing.

A7 If the Professional Suitability Group deems that a *prima facie* case has been made against the student, they shall refer the case as expeditiously as possible to a Fitness to practise Committee which shall be appointed, normally within five working days, by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). The Committee shall normally comprise the following, but will also conform to the requirements of the relevant professional and/or regulatory body:

- a) an Executive Dean, his/her Deputy or the Dean of Health who has had no previous involvement with the case as Chair
- b) two members of academic staff from the relevant subject discipline within the School who have had no previous involvement in the case
- c) one practicing member of the relevant profession who is from outside the University and who has not been associated with teaching the student.

A8 The Secretary of the Fitness to practise Committee shall be the Academic Registrar or his/her representative.

A9 The Professional Suitability Group shall submit to the Secretary of the Fitness to practise Committee all relevant evidence, including the report of the Investigating Officer, and a case summary. The Secretary shall convene a meeting of the Committee as soon as possible and send copies of the evidence to the members of the Committee and at the same time to the student concerned a minimum of ten working days before the meeting.

- A10 The student should submit to the Secretary of the Fitness to practise Committee any papers for the consideration of the Committee at least five working days before the meeting.
- A11 All representations to the Fitness to practise Committee should be submitted in writing. Exceptionally the Committee may ask for witnesses to attend in person.
- A12 The student will normally be required to attend the meeting of the Fitness to practise Committee in person. In the event of their non-attendance, without very good reason, the Committee meeting will continue in their absence.
- A13 If the student wishes, they may bring to the Committee meeting a student or employee of the University, the relevant partner institution or the Students' Union to help him/her in presenting his/her case to the Committee.
- A14 The Head of Department/School or another member of the Departmental/School Professional Suitability Group will attend the meeting of the Fitness to practise Committee to set out evidence relating to the concern. The Head/member of Professional Suitability Group should not propose or comment on any outcome or penalty which might be imposed.
- A15 The Head/Professional Suitability Group member is not a member of the Committee and can only attend when the student is present (not before and after). Head/Professional Suitability Group member is not permitted to ask questions of the student during the meeting except through the Chair
- A16 The Fitness to practise Committee will operate on the principle of 'the balance of probability' rather than that of 'beyond reasonable doubt'.
- A17 The conduct of the Fitness to practise Committee is at the discretion of the Chair but shall normally proceed as follows:
- a) The members of the Committee have a preliminary discussion without the student, the student's representative or the Head/Professional Suitability Group member being present.
 - b) The student, the student's representative and the Head/Professional Suitability Group member enter the room and the Chair introduces all those present.
 - c) The Chair checks that the student has received details of the concern and any supporting documentation.
 - d) The Chair explains the order of proceedings to the student.
 - e) The evidence relating to the concern about fitness to practise is then presented by the relevant Head or member of the Professional Suitability Group, and members of the Committee, the student and the student's representative are invited to put questions to them.
 - f) The Chair then invites the student to put forward a case orally if he or she wishes to do so including any mitigation, and members of the committee (but not the Head) are invited to put questions to the student.

- g) The Chair invites the student's representative to put forward any additional statement.
- h) Exceptionally the Committee has the power to call witnesses who shall only attend to present their evidence and to answer questions that the Committee or other party may put to them through the Chair. Once their evidence has been heard and there are no more questions, witnesses shall be required to withdraw
- i) The Chair invites the student to make any final response.
- j) The student, the student's representative and the Head/Professional Suitability Group member are then asked to leave the room. The Committee then deliberates and comes to a decision. If the Committee is unable to reach a decision then the Committee may be adjourned.
- k) If the Committee finds on the balance of probability that the case is proven, they determine any further action or sanction, clarifying the reasons for the choice of penalty.
- l) The student is then recalled to the room and is told the decision, the reason for the decision and details of any further action or sanction if appropriate. The Head /Professional Suitability Group member may be present during this final stage.

A18 Only members of the Committee and the Secretary shall be present while a Committee is reaching a decision on the outcome, or on any penalty or other action

A19 The Committee shall have the power to seek such other evidence as it deems necessary. The Committee may be adjourned to allow for such evidence to be gathered

A20 If the Committee decides that the fitness to practise concern is unproved, it will dismiss the case

A21 If the Committee decides the fitness to practise concern is proven then it shall have the power to do any one or combination of the following:

- a) Permit the student to continue on the course with no further action required
- b) Permit the student to continue on the course with adjustments
- c) Issue a formal warning
- d) Discontinue the placement and institute arrangements for locating an alternative placement if this is permitted under the Rules of Assessment
- e) Require the student to intermit from the course for a defined period of time with return subject to conditions
- f) Require the student to withdraw from the course because they are unfit to practise
- g) Impose such other penalty as it considers appropriate, provided that no such penalty requires or implies a concession or exemption under the Rules of Assessment

A22 The Secretary shall confirm to the student and the Head of Department/School concerned in writing within five working days the decision, the reason for the decision and details of any sanction or further action. The student shall be

informed of the right to appeal against the decision in accordance with Section B (below).

- A23 If the fitness to practise case against the student is found proven, the Head of Department/School and the Academic Registrar shall decide whether a report should be made to the relevant professional or regulatory body and/or the student's employer, if applicable. The student will be informed in writing whether such a report will be made.

B Procedure for Appeals against Decisions of the Fitness to practise Committee.

- B1 Written notice of appeal by the student must be lodged with the Academic Registrar within five working days of the student being informed of the decision by the Fitness to practise Committee.
- B2 In the event of an appeal, the Academic Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) shall decide whether the grounds for the appeal are covered by the provisions of paragraph B5 below and warrant further consideration by a Fitness to practise Appeals Committee. If they agree that there are no grounds for further consideration of the appeal, the Academic Registrar shall inform the student in writing giving the reasons for that decision.
- B3 If the Academic Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) decide that the appeal does warrant further consideration, the Academic Registrar shall refer the case to a Fitness to practise Appeals Committee which shall be appointed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and which shall normally comprise:
- a) a Chairman who shall be from a different Faculty from that relevant to the course
 - b) one member of staff from the relevant subject and professional discipline within the Faculty concerned who shall not be the Head of Department/School or the Investigating Officer or a member of the Professional Practice and Conduct Committee
 - c) one senior practicing member of the relevant profession who is from outside the University and who has not been associated with the teaching of the appellant.
- B4 The Secretary of the Committee shall be the Academic Registrar or his/her representative.
- B5 The grounds for the appeal shall be one or more of the following:
- a) that new evidence had become available that could materially affect the Fitness to practise Committee's decision
 - b) that there was evidence of procedural irregularity or prejudice or bias in the conduct of the hearing by the Fitness to practise Committee.
- B6 The Committee shall have before it all documents relating to the original hearing, together with a written statement submitted by the student setting out the grounds for the appeal. The Committee shall not proceed by way of a re-

hearing, but shall have power to require the presentation of such further evidence as it deems necessary.

- B7 The Committee shall have the same powers as the Fitness to practise Committee and may confirm the decision of the Fitness to practise Committee or substitute such other decision as it considers appropriate.
- B8 When the Committee has reached its decision, the Secretary shall inform the student and the Head of Department/School concerned in writing.
- B9 If any action had been taken under paragraphs A23 above to inform the relevant professional or statutory bodies and/or the student's employer, the Head of Department and the Academic Registrar shall decide whether any further report should be made to the professional or statutory bodies and/or the student's employer concerned in the light of the decision of the Committee.
- B10 The decision of the Fitness to practise Appeals Committee shall be final.
- B11 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provides an independent course for the review of student complaints or appeals. When the University's internal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals have been exhausted, the University will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. Students wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity of an independent review by the OIA must submit their application to the OIA within three months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter. Full details of the course are available on request and will be enclosed with the Completion of Procedures.

Guidelines on the Operation of a Departmental Professional Suitability Group

- These guidelines are only relevant for Departments/Schools that are running courses where a professional or regulatory body has concerns for a student's fitness to practise. These students will be subject to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*.
- Any concerns raised under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*, will initially be made to a Departmental/School Professional Suitability Group so all relevant Departments/Schools will need to establish such a group.
- There are a number of different policies and procedures where the outcome for a particular student might raise issues of fitness to practise. These procedures operate separately from each other but there is a need for them to be considered as a whole in assessing a student's suitability for practice.

- Information on Academic Offences cases, Disciplinary cases and Progress cases will be reported to the Professional Suitability Group within the Department/School.
- The Professional Suitability Group will receive and consider reports from all the relevant sources and then make appropriate referrals
- Professional Suitability Groups will vary in operation dependent on the needs of the Department/School and the relevant professional/regulatory bodies.
- In Departments/Schools which run courses for which it is a requirement, the Professional Suitability Group will consider all students who need to be 'signed off' as being of good character as part of their programme of study and will make the appropriate report to the Board of Examiners.
- Departments/Schools must ensure that students are informed of the operation of the departmental Professional Suitability Group and other processes relating to fitness to practise. This information should appear in student handbooks.

Constitution of a Professional Suitability Group

- The constitution of the Professional Suitability Group will vary in operation dependent on the needs of the department and may need to take account of the requirements of relevant professional/regulatory bodies. The membership of the group may vary dependent upon the reason it has been convened.
- The minimum requirements for membership of the group are:
 - The Head of School/Department will chair the group
 - There shall be at least two other members
 - A majority of the members of group should be members of staff working on courses where the students are subject to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*
 - Other individuals may be co-opted into the group as appropriate. This may include, for example, the Programme Lead for a particular student under consideration or a member of staff with a particular clinical or professional background relevant to the case under consideration

Remit of the Professional Suitability Group

The Professional Suitability Group will:

- only consider students who are on programmes which are subject to *Fitness to Practise Procedure*
- have a remit to consider any report submitted to it as part of the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*
- will, where relevant, consider any student on courses where students are required to be signed off as being of good character as part of their course, and either confirm to the Exam Board that there are no issues to raise, or deal with any issue arising under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*

- be a central point, established at Departmental/School level, to which the outcomes of a number of different processes can report. These are: Disciplinary procedures, Academic Offences Procedures, outcome of Progress Committee, Exam Board. It might also consider reports from Occupational Health, Student Support, or reports made directly from a placement.
- have referral powers as outlined under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*

Operation of group

- The Professional Suitability Group will meet on an ad hoc basis, and may meet 'virtually' to consider any referral made as outlined in the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*, keeping to the appropriate timescale where required.
- For programmes where it is a requirement, the Professional Suitability Group will also need to meet before relevant exam boards, to review all students on the programmes to verify professional suitability and make referrals if necessary
- A record should be kept of all cases considered by the Professional Suitability Group, noting decisions made.

11.4 HCPC Code of Conduct

Your duties as a registrant

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Health and Care Professions Council's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

We first published the standards of conduct, performance and ethics when our Register opened in July 2003. We began to review them in July 2006 to make sure that they continued to be fit for purpose and meet the expectations of the public, registrants and other stakeholders. The review was led by the Conduct and Competence Committee. We also held a formal consultation process on the draft standards. The review process and consultation produced extremely valuable feedback and we are grateful to everyone who gave their time to help us in shaping the standards that follow.

As part of that consultation process, we agreed some broad principles which have influenced the standards laid out in this document.

We decided that the standards should:

- focus, where possible, on providing guidance to registrants, based on our expectations of their behaviour;
- be based on over-arching principles with some more detail on important points (with more detailed guidance available elsewhere, if necessary);
- apply to all registrants (as far as possible), including those involved in direct practice, management, education, research and roles in industry; and
- be written in broad terms to be able to take account of changes in best practice, technology, the law and wider society in the future.

We made a number of changes to the previous standards, mainly to set out our aims more clearly or to correct any mistakes. We also revised the introduction to focus less on the role of the standards in Fitness to Practise Procedures and we added more information on how registrants can use and meet the standards.

I am confident that the standards are both fit for purpose and reflect both professional and public expectations of the behaviour of registrants.

These standards were adopted in July 2008. Some minor changes were made to them on 1 August 2012, when we became the Health and Care Professions Council. The revised standards apply from that date.

Anna van der Gaag

Chair

Introduction

Your duties as a registrant

The standards of conduct, performance and ethics you must keep to

- 1 You must act in the best interests of service users.
- 2 You must respect the confidentiality of service users.
- 3 You must keep high standards of personal conduct.
- 4 You must provide (to us and any other relevant regulators) any important information about your conduct and competence.
- 5 You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
- 6 You must act within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience and, if necessary, refer the matter to another practitioner.
- 7 You must communicate properly and effectively with service users and other practitioners.
- 8 You must effectively supervise tasks that you have asked other people to carry out.
- 9 You must get informed consent to provide care or services (so far as possible).
- 10 You must keep accurate records.
- 11 You must deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection.
- 12 You must limit your work or stop practicing if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.
- 13 You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in you or your profession.
- 14 You must make sure that any advertising you do is accurate.

This document sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics we expect from our registrants. The standards also apply to people who are applying to become registered.

If you are registered, you must make sure that you are familiar with the standards and that you keep to them. 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.

We also publish standards of proficiency, which are standards we use to make sure the professions we regulate work safely and effectively. We set these standards at a level we think is necessary to protect members of the public.

What we expect of you

The standards of conduct, performance and ethics 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.

It is important that you read and understand this document. If someone raises concerns about your practice, we will consider these standards (and our standards of proficiency) when we decide whether we need to take any action. Please see the back of this document for more information about how we use the standards when we consider concerns raised about registrants.

The standards and your practice

The standards are written in broad terms and designed to apply to all registrants as far as possible. **However, we recognise that some of the standards may not apply to all the professions that we regulate or to the practice of some registrants.** The standards that might not directly apply to all registrants include standard eleven, which says that 'You must deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection'.

If we receive a complaint about you, the fitness to practise panel will consider the individual circumstances of the case (for example, the profession you work in and your scope of practice).

Meeting the standards

It is important that you meet our standards and are able to practice safely and effectively. We also want to make sure that you maintain high standards of personal conduct and do not do anything which might affect the public's confidence in you or your profession. However, we do not dictate how you should meet our standards.

Each standard can normally be met in more than one way. The way in which you meet our standards might change over time because of improvements in technology or changes in your practice.

As an autonomous and accountable professional, you need to make informed and reasonable decisions about your practice to make sure that you meet the standards that are relevant to your practice. This might include getting advice and support from education providers, employers, professional bodies, colleagues and other people to make sure that you protect the wellbeing of service users at all times.

In particular, we recognise the valuable role professional bodies play in representing and promoting the interests of their members. This often includes providing guidance

and advice about good practice, which can help you meet the standards in this document.

Making informed and reasonable decisions

We often receive questions from registrants who are concerned that something they have been asked to do, a policy, or the way in which they work might mean that they cannot meet our standards. They are often worried that this might have an effect on their registration.

If you make informed, reasonable and professional judgements about your practice, with the best interests of your service users as your prime concern, and you can justify your decisions if you are asked to, it is very unlikely that you will not meet our standards.

By 'informed', we mean that you have enough information to make a decision. This would include reading these standards and taking account of any other relevant guidance or laws. By 'reasonable', we mean that you need to make sensible, practical decisions about your practice, taking account of all relevant information and the best interests of the people who use or are affected by your services. You should also be able to justify your decisions if you are asked to.

Language

Our registrants work in a range of different settings, which include direct practice, management, education, research and roles in industry. We have tried to use terms which are as broad as possible and which everyone can understand.

Throughout these standards, we have used the term 'service user' to refer to anyone who uses or is affected by a registrant's services. Who your service users are will depend on how and where you work. For example, if you work in clinical practice, your service users might be your patients. In some circumstances, your service users might be organisations rather than individuals. The term also includes other people who might be affected by your practice, such as carers and relatives.

We have used the phrase 'care or services' in most places in this document to describe the different work that registrants carry out. Where appropriate to the standard we have used the word 'treatment'.

Changing these standards in the future

We produced these standards after speaking to our stakeholders about how the standards were working, how they were seen and how relevant they were to registrants' practice. We also made some minor changes (to the language but not the principle of the standards) when we became the Health and Care Professions Council.

We will continue to listen to our stakeholders and review our standards. We may make changes to the standards in the future to take account of changes in practice or public and professional expectations.

Contact us

If you are not sure how to interpret the standards, you should write to our Director of Policy and Standards at the following address.

Policy and Standards Department
The Health and Care Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

Email: policy@hcpc-uk.org

The standards of conduct, performance and ethics

1 You must act in the best interests of service users.

You are personally responsible for making sure that you promote and protect the best interests of your service users. You must respect and take account of these factors when providing care or a service, and must not abuse the relationship you have with a service user. You must not allow your views about a service user's sex, age, colour, race, disability, sexuality, social or economic status, lifestyle, culture, religion or beliefs to affect the way you deal with them or the professional advice you give. You must treat service users with respect and dignity. If you are providing care, you must work in partnership with your service users and involve them in their care as appropriate.

You must not do anything, or allow someone else to do anything that you have good reason to believe will put the health, safety or wellbeing of a service user in danger. This includes both your own actions and those of other people. You should take appropriate action to protect the rights of children and vulnerable adults if you believe they are at risk, including following national and local policies.

You are responsible for your professional conduct, any care or advice you provide, and any failure to act. You are responsible for the appropriateness of your decision to delegate a task. You must be able to justify your decisions if asked to.

You must protect service users if you believe that any situation puts them in danger. This includes the conduct, performance or health of a colleague. The safety of service users must come before any personal or professional loyalties at all times. As soon as you become aware of a situation that puts a service user in danger, you should discuss the matter with a senior colleague or another appropriate person.

2 You must respect the confidentiality of service users.

You must treat information about service users as confidential and use it only for the purposes they have provided it for. You must not knowingly release any personal or

confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to it, and you should check that people who ask for information are entitled to it.

You must only use information about a service user:

- to continue to care for that person; or
- for purposes where that person has given you permission to use the information or the law allows you to do so.

You must also keep to the conditions of any relevant data-protection laws and always follow best practice for handling confidential information. Best practice is likely to change over time, and you must stay up to date.

3 You must keep high standards of personal conduct.

You must keep high standards of personal conduct, as well as professional conduct. You should be aware that poor conduct outside of your professional life may still affect someone's confidence in you and your profession.

4 You must provide (to us and any other relevant regulators) any important information about your conduct and competence.

You must tell us (and any other relevant regulators) if you have important information about your conduct or competence, or about other registrants and health and care professionals you work with. In particular, you must let us know straight away if you are:

- convicted of a criminal offence, receive a conditional discharge for an offence, or if you accept a police caution;
- disciplined by any organisation responsible for regulating or licensing a health or social care profession; or
- suspended or placed under a practice restriction by an employer or similar organisation because of concerns about your conduct or competence.

You should cooperate with any investigation or formal inquiry into your professional conduct, the conduct of others, or the care or services provided to a service user, where appropriate. If anyone asks for relevant information in connection with your conduct or competence, and they are entitled to it, you should provide the information.

We can take action against you if you are convicted of a criminal offence or have accepted a police caution. We will always consider each case individually to decide whether we need to take any action to protect the public.

However, we will consider rejecting an application for registration, or removing you from the Register if you are already registered, if you are convicted of a criminal offence or accept a police caution that involves one of the following types of behaviour.

- Violence
- Abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Supplying drugs illegally
- Child pornography
- Offences involving dishonesty
- Offences for which you received a prison sentence

This is not a full list. We will always look at any convictions or cautions we find out about, and we have arrangements in place to be told about convictions and cautions involving registrants.

5 You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.

You must make sure that your knowledge, skills and performance are of a good quality, up to date, and relevant to your scope of practice.

You must be capable of meeting the standards of proficiency that apply to your scope of practice. We recognise that your scope of practice may change over time.

We acknowledge that our registrants work in a range of different settings, including direct practice, management, education or research. You need to make sure that whatever your area of practice, you are capable of practicing safely and effectively.

Our standards for continuing professional development link your learning and development to your continued registration. You also need to meet these standards.

6 You must act within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience and, if necessary, refer the matter to another practitioner.

You must keep within your scope of practice. This means that you should only practice in the areas in which you have appropriate education, training and experience. We recognise that your scope of practice may change over time.

When accepting a service user, you have a duty of care. This includes the duty to refer them to others for care or services if it becomes clear that the task is beyond your own scope of practice. If you refer a service user to another practitioner, you must make sure that the referral is appropriate and that, so far as possible, the service user understands why you are making the referral.

In some circumstances, a person is entitled to be referred to another practitioner for a second opinion. In these cases, you must accept the request and make the referral as soon as you can.

If you accept a referral from another practitioner, you must make sure that you fully understand the request. You should only provide the care or services if you believe that this is appropriate. If this is not the case, you must discuss the referral with the practitioner who made the referral and, as appropriate, the service user, before you provide any care or services.

7 You must communicate properly and effectively with service users and other practitioners.

You must take all reasonable steps to make sure that you can communicate properly and effectively with service users. You must communicate appropriately, cooperate, and share your knowledge and expertise with other practitioners, for the benefit of service users.

8 You must effectively supervise tasks you have asked other people to carry out.

People who receive care or services from you are entitled to assume that you have the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide them safely and effectively. Whenever you give tasks to another person to carry out on your behalf, you must be sure that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the tasks safely and effectively. You must not ask them to do work which is outside their scope of practice.

You must always continue to give appropriate supervision to whoever you ask to carry out a task. You will still be responsible for the appropriateness of the decision to delegate. If someone tells you that they are unwilling to carry out a task because they do not think they are capable of doing so safely or effectively, you must not force them to carry out the task anyway. If their refusal raises a disciplinary or training issue, you must deal with that separately, but you should not put the safety or wellbeing of the service user in danger.

9 You must get informed consent to provide care or services (so far as possible).

You must explain to service users the care or services you are planning to provide, any risks involved and any other possible options. You must make sure that you get their informed consent to any treatment you do carry out. You must make a record of the person's decisions and pass this on to others involved in their care. In some situations, such as emergencies or where a person lacks decision-making capacity, it may not be possible for you to explain what you propose, get consent or pass on information. However, you should still try to do all of these things as far as you can.

A person who is capable of giving their consent has the right to refuse to receive care or services. You must respect this right. You must also make sure that they are fully aware of the risks of refusing care or services, particularly if you think that there is a significant or immediate risk to their life.

You must keep to your employers' procedures on consent and be aware of any guidance issued by the appropriate authority in the country you practice in.

10 You must keep accurate records.

Making and keeping records is an essential part of providing care or services and you must keep records for everyone you treat or for whom you provide care or

services. You must complete all records promptly. If you are using paper-based records, they must be clearly written and easy to read, and you should write, sign and date all entries.

You have a duty to make sure, as far as possible, that records completed by students under your supervision are clearly written, accurate and appropriate.

Whenever you review records, you should update them and include a record of any arrangements you have made for the continuing care of the service user.

You must protect information in records from being lost, damaged, accessed by someone without appropriate authority, or tampered with. If you update a record, you must not delete information that was previously there, or make that information difficult to read. Instead, you must mark it in some way (for example, by drawing a line through the old information).

11 You must deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection.

You must not refuse to treat someone just because they have an infection. Also, you must keep to the rules of confidentiality when dealing with people who have infections. For some infections, such as sexually transmitted infections, these rules may be more restrictive than the rules of confidentiality for people in other circumstances. We discussed confidentiality in more detail earlier in this document.

You must take appropriate precautions to protect your service users and yourself from infection. In particular, you should protect your service users from infecting one another. You must take precautions against the risk that you will infect someone else.

This is especially important if you suspect or know that you have an infection that could harm other people. If you believe or know that you may have this kind of infection, you must get medical advice and act on it. This may include the need for you to stop practicing altogether, or to change your practice in some way in the best interests of protecting your service users.

12 You must limit your work or stop practicing if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.

You have a duty to take action if your physical or mental health could be harming your fitness to practise. You should get advice from a consultant in occupational health or another suitably qualified medical practitioner and act on it. This advice should consider whether, and in what ways, you should change your practice, including stopping practicing if this is necessary.

13 You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in you or your profession.

You must justify the trust that other people place in you by acting with honesty and integrity at all times. You must not get involved in any behaviour or activity which is likely to damage the public's confidence in you or your profession.

14 You must make sure that any advertising you do is accurate.

Any advertising you do in relation to your professional activities must be accurate. Advertisements must not be misleading, false, unfair or exaggerated. In particular, you should not claim your personal skills, equipment or facilities are better than anyone else's, unless you can prove this is true. If you are involved in advertising or promoting any product or service, you must make sure that you use your knowledge, skills and experience in an accurate and responsible way. You must not make or support unjustifiable statements relating to particular products. Any potential financial reward should not play a part in the advice or recommendations of products and services you give.

Fitness to practise

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

We consider concerns raised about registrants by members of the public, employers, professionals, the police and other people and take action to protect the public. This can include cautioning a registrant, placing conditions on their registration, suspending them from practice or, in the most serious cases, removing them from the Register.

When we consider a concern about a registrant, we take account of whether the standards have been met when we decide whether we need to take any action to protect the public. We will also take account of any guidance or codes of practice produced by professional bodies.

You can find more information about the fitness to practise process in our brochures *How to raise a concern* and *What happens if a concern is raised about me?* These brochures are available to download from our website or you can contact us to ask for a copy.

Glossary

You may not be familiar with some of the terms we use throughout this document, so we have explained them below.

Accountable

As an accountable professional, you will be responsible for the decisions you make and you may also be asked to justify them.

Autonomous

As an autonomous professional, you make your own decisions based on your own judgement.

Delegate, delegation

When a registrant asks someone else (such as a colleague, student or support worker) to carry out a task on their behalf.

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 receiving care or a particular service.

Referral

When a registrant asks another practitioner to provide care or services to a service user which are beyond the registrant's scope of practice or, where relevant, because the service user has asked for a second opinion.

Scope of practice

The area or areas of a registrant's profession where they have the knowledge, skills and experience to practice safely and effectively.

Service user

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

Standards for continuing professional development

Standards which link a registrant's ongoing learning and development with their continued registration.

Standards of proficiency

Standards which set out what individuals should know, understand and be able to do, in order to practice safely and effectively. Applicants must meet these standards to become registered.

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11.5 Standards of proficiency
Social workers in England

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Standards of proficiency

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Health and Care Professions Council's standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

The standards of proficiency set out what a social worker should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their training so that they can register with us.

We set up a Professional Liaison Group (PLG) to help us to prepare the standards. The PLG brought together a number of key stakeholders from the social work field in England, including employers, social work educators and organisations representing the profession. Following this, we held a formal consultation on the draft proposed standards and met with a group of service users and carers to discuss the standards.

We are very grateful to members of the PLG and to those individuals and organisations who worked with us and responded to our consultation. We made a number of changes to the standards following the consultation, to ensure that the standards reflected the values and practice of social work.

Our work to set the standards of proficiency for social workers in England has developed alongside the work of the Social Work Reform Board. We were members of the Board and we are committed to working with the social work community to raise standards and achieve the Reform Board's vision of a safe, confident future for social work.

One outcome of the Reform Board, the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), is now managed by the College of Social Work. The PCF and the standards of proficiency have different roles. The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards for social workers in England, whereas the PCF describes the capabilities required of social workers at all stages of their career. However, both the PCF and the standards set out what is expected of social workers when they finish their training and start practicing. We have worked with the College to identify how the two documents work together and produced a mapping of the documents. You can find more information about this on our website alongside these standards.

I am confident that the standards of proficiency are fit for purpose and reflect the values and practice of social work.

The standards apply from 1 August 2012.

Anna van der Gaag

Chair

Introduction

This document sets out the standards of proficiency. These standards set out safe and effective practice in the professions we regulate. They are the threshold standards we consider necessary to protect members of the public. They set out what a student must know, understand and be able to do by the time they have completed their training, so that they are able to apply to register with us. Once on our register you must meet those standards of proficiency which relate to the areas in which you work.

We also expect you to keep to our standards of conduct, performance and ethics and standards for continuing professional development. We publish these in separate documents, which you can find on our website.

The standards of proficiency in this document include both generic elements, which apply to all our registrants, and profession-specific elements which are relevant to registrants belonging to one of the professions we currently regulate. The generic standards are written in bold, and the profession-specific standards are written in plain text.

We have numbered the standards so that you can refer to them more easily. The standards are not hierarchical and are all equally important for practice.

A note about our expectations of you

You must meet all the standards of proficiency to register with us and meet the standards relevant to your scope of practice to stay registered with us.

It is important that you read and understand this document.

If your practice is called into question we will consider these standards (and our standards of conduct, performance and ethics) in deciding what action, if any, we need to take.

The standards set out in this document complement information and guidance issued by other organisations, such as your professional body or your employer. We recognise the valuable role played by professional bodies in providing guidance and advice about good practice which can help you to meet the standards in this document.

Your scope of practice

Your scope of practice is the area or areas of your profession in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practice lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to yourself.

We recognise that a registrant's scope of practice will change over time and that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focused and specialised than that of newly registered colleagues. This might be because of specialisation in a

certain area or with a particular client group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research.

Every time you renew your registration, you will be asked to make a declaration that you continue to meet the standards of proficiency that apply to your scope of practice.

Your particular scope of practice may mean that you are unable to continue to demonstrate that you meet all of the standards that apply for the whole of your profession.

As long as you make sure that you are practicing safely and effectively within your given scope of practice and do not practice in the areas where you are not proficient to do so, this will not be a problem. If you want to move outside of your scope of practice, you should be certain that you are capable of working lawfully, safely and effectively. This means that you need to exercise personal judgement by undertaking any necessary training and experience, before moving into a new area of practice.

Meeting the standards

It is important that you meet our standards and are able to practice lawfully, safely and effectively. However, we do not dictate how you should meet our standards. There is normally more than one way in which each standard can be met and the way in which you meet our standards might change over time because of improvements in technology or changes in your practice.

We often receive questions from registrants who are concerned that something they have been asked to do, a policy, or the way in which they work might mean they cannot meet our standards. They are often worried that this might have an effect on their registration.

As an autonomous professional, you need to make informed, reasoned decisions about your practice to ensure that you meet the standards that apply to you. This includes seeking advice and support from education providers, employers, colleagues, professional bodies, unions and others to ensure that the wellbeing of service users is safeguarded at all times. So long as you do this and can justify your decisions if asked to, it is very unlikely that you will not meet our standards.

Language

We recognise that our registrants work in a range of different settings, including direct practice, management, education, research and roles in industry. We also recognise that the use of terminology can be an emotive issue.

Our registrants work with very different people and use different terms to describe the groups that use, or are affected by, their services. Some of our registrants work with patients, others with clients and others with service users. The terms that you use will depend on how and where you work. We have used terms in these standards which we believe best reflect the groups that you work with.

In the standards of proficiency, we use phrases such as ‘understand’, ‘know’, and ‘be able to’. This is so the standards remain applicable to current registrants in maintaining their fitness to practise, as well as prospective registrants who have not yet started practicing and are applying for registration for the first time.

These standards may change in the future

We have produced these standards after speaking to our stakeholders and holding a formal public consultation.

We will continue to listen to our stakeholders and will keep our standards under continual review. Therefore, we may make further changes in the future to take into account changes in practice.

We will always publicise any changes to the standards that we make by, for instance, publishing notices on our website and informing professional bodies.

Standards of proficiency

Registrant social workers must:

1 be able to practice safely and effectively within their scope of practice

1.1 know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional

1.2 recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources and be able to practice accordingly

1.3 be able to undertake assessments of risk, need and capacity and respond appropriately

1.4 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to unexpected situations and manage uncertainty

1.5 be able to recognise signs of harm, abuse and neglect and know how to respond appropriately

2 be able to practice within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession

2.1 understand current legislation applicable to the work of their profession

2.2 understand the need to promote the best interests of service users and carers at all times

2.3 understand the need to protect, safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults

2.4 understand the need to address practices which present a risk to or from service users and carers, or others

2.5 be able to manage competing or conflicting interests

2.6 be able to exercise authority as a social worker within the appropriate legal and ethical frameworks

2.7 understand the need to respect and uphold the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user and carer

2.8 recognise that relationships with service users and carers should be based on respect and honesty

2.9 recognise the power dynamics in relationships with service users and carers and be able to manage those dynamics appropriately

2.10 understand what is required of them by the Health and Care Professions Council

3 be able to maintain fitness to practise

3.1 understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct

3.2 understand the importance of maintaining their own health and wellbeing

3.3 understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up-to-date and the importance of career-long learning

3.4 be able to establish and maintain personal and professional boundaries

3.5 be able to manage the physical and emotional impact of their practice

4 be able to practice as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement

4.1 be able to assess a situation, determine its nature and severity and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with it

4.2 be able to initiate resolution of issues and be able to exercise personal initiative

4.3 recognise that they are personally responsible for, and must be able to justify, their decisions and recommendations

4.4 be able to make informed judgements on complex issues using the information available

4.5 be able to make and receive referrals appropriately

5 be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice

5.1 be able to reflect on and take account of the impact of inequality, disadvantage and discrimination on those who use social work services and their communities

5.2 understand the need to adapt practice to respond appropriately to different groups and individuals

5.3 be aware of the impact of their own values on practice with different groups of service users and carers

5.4 understand the impact of different cultures and communities and how this affects the role of the social worker in supporting service users and carers

6 be able to practice in a non-discriminatory manner

6.1 be able to work with others to promote social justice, equality and inclusion

6.2 be able to use practice to challenge and address the impact of discrimination, disadvantage and oppression

7 be able to maintain confidentiality

7.1 be able to understand and explain the limits of confidentiality

7.2 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users and carers or others

8 be able to communicate effectively

8.1 be able to use interpersonal skills and appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users, carers and others

8.2 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating advice, instruction, information and professional opinion to colleagues, service users and carers

8.3 understand the need to provide service users and carers with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions or to understand the decisions made

8.4 understand how communication skills affect the assessment of and engagement with service users and carers

8.5 understand how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of a range of factors including age, capacity, learning ability and physical ability

8.6 be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by a range of factors including age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status

8.7 understand the need to draw upon available resources and services to support service users' and carers' communication, wherever possible

8.8 be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5 (The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests competence in the English language. Applicants who have qualified outside of the UK, whose first language is not English and who are not nationals of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, must provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. Please visit our website for more information.)

8.9 be able to engage in inter-professional and inter-agency communication

8.10 be able to listen actively to service users and carers and others

8.11 be able to prepare and present formal reports in line with applicable protocols and guidelines

9 be able to work appropriately with others

9.1 understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships with service users, carers and colleagues as both an autonomous practitioner and collaboratively with others

9.2 be able to work with service users and carers to enable them to assess and make informed decisions about their needs, circumstances, risks, preferred options and resources

9.3 be able to work with service users and carers to promote individual growth, development and independence and to assist them to understand and exercise their rights

9.4 be able to support service users' and carers' rights to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive

9.5 be able to support the development of networks, groups and communities to meet needs and outcomes

9.6 be able to work in partnership with others, including those working in other agencies and roles

9.7 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team

9.8 recognise the contribution that service users' and carers' own resources and strengths can bring to social work

9.9 be able to work with resistance and conflict

9.10 be able to understand the emotional dynamics of interactions with service users and carers

10 be able to maintain records appropriately

10.1 be able to keep accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines

10.2 recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines

11 be able to reflect on and review practice

11.1 understand the value of critical reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection appropriately

11.2 recognise the value of supervision, case reviews and other methods of reflection and review

12 be able to assure the quality of their practice

12.1 be able to use supervision to support and enhance the quality of their social work practice

12.2 be able to contribute to processes designed to evaluate service and individual outcomes

12.3 be able to engage in evidence-informed practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures

13 understand the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to their profession

13.1 recognise the roles of other professions, practitioners and organisations

13.2 be aware of the different social and organisational contexts and settings within which social work operates

13.3 be aware of changes in demography and culture and their impact on social work

13.4 understand in relation to social work practice:

- social work theory;
- social work models and interventions;
- the development and application of relevant law and social policy;
- the development and application of social work and social work values;
- human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;

- the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which affect the demand for social work services;
- the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning;
- concepts of participation, advocacy and empowerment; and
- the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour

14 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice

14.1 be able to gather, analyse, critically evaluate and use information and knowledge to make recommendations or modify their practice

14.2 be able to select and use appropriate assessment tools

14.3 be able to prepare, implement, review, evaluate, revise and conclude plans to meet needs and circumstances in conjunction with service users and carers

14.4 be able to use social work methods, theories and models to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities

14.5 be aware of a range of research methodologies

14.6 recognise the value of research and analysis and be able to evaluate such evidence to inform their own practice

14.7 be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their practice

14.8 be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments or changing contexts

15 be able to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

15.1 understand the need to maintain the safety of service users, carers and colleagues

15.2 be aware of applicable health and safety legislation and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these

15.3 be able to work safely in challenging environments, including being able to take appropriate actions to manage environmental risk

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