

Education and Training Committee, 25 September 2008

Draft guidance on conduct and ethics for students

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper provides the Committee with draft guidance on ethics and conduct for students. The Committee agreed at its meeting in June 2008 that the Executive should produce guidance on ethics and conduct for students based on the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

It was agreed at the last meeting that the guidance would be brought to the Committee in December. However, a draft copy of the guidance is brought to the Committee now for the Committee to discuss.

Decision

The Committee is invited to discuss the draft guidance. The revised guidance will be brought back to the Committee at its meeting in December.

Background information

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

http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100022A4education_and_training_committee_20080610_enclosure10.pdf

A member of the Executive has arranged to attend several student meetings organised by the professional bodies and present on the guidance. These meetings will help to involve stakeholders before the public consultation early next year.

Resource implications

The resource implications were previously outlined in the paper considered by the Committee on 10 June 2008.

Financial implications

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

Appendices

- Draft guidance on conduct and ethics for students.

Date of paper

1 September 2008

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2008-09-11	a	POL	PPR	Student FtP draft ethical guidance cover paper	Draft DD: None	Internal RD: None

Guidance on conduct and ethics for students

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DRAFT

About this document

We have written this document to give you some guidance on issues about conduct and ethics specifically for students on education and training programmes.

We do not currently register students but have written this guidance to help students gain an understanding of ethics and conduct which will help them once they have finished their course.

You may find this document useful if you are:

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

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

About the structure of this document

This document is broken down into four sections.

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

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

Introduction

About us (the HPC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How we are run

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

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

Approving education and training programmes

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

About registration

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

Registration exists to show the public that health professionals are fit to practise, and that they are entitled to use the protected title for their profession. It shows that the people on our Register are part of a profession with nationally recognised standards set by law.

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

Applying for registration

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

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

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

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

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

The standards of conduct, performance and ethics

We set standards of conduct, performance and ethics which apply to the health professionals we register.

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

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

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

About the guidance

We have based this guidance on the standards of conduct, performance and ethics as these standards apply to both registrants and those applying to be registered.

We have taken the headings from these standards. Under each heading we have provided bullet points which give further guidance on how the standards relate to students. Where appropriate, we have provided more information.

We do not regulate students. However, we hope that the guidance offers broad principles which can help you to resolve some of the issues you may come across whilst training to become a health professional.

The guidance has been written in broad terms and designed to apply to all students as far as possible. However, we recognise that some of the guidance may not apply to students undertaking training and education in all the professions that we regulate.

Language

You may undertake practice placements in a variety of settings. We have tried to use terms which are as broad as possible and which everyone can understand.

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

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

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

Guidance on conduct and ethics

1. You should always act in the best interests of your service users
 - You should respect the rights of your service users to be treated by a health professional if they want
 - You should not exploit or abuse the relationship between yourself and your service user
 - You should not discriminate against a service user on the basis of their age, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, race, ethnic background, lifestyle or social or economic status
 - You should not do anything that you have good reason to believe will endanger the service user
 - If you have concerns about any situation which might put a service user at risk, you should share these concerns with a member of the placement team or your education and training provider
 - You should follow with your education and training provider's or placement provider's procedures on health and safety
2. You should respect the confidentiality of your service users
 - You should treat information about service users as confidential and use it only for the purpose for which it was given
 - You should not knowingly release any personal or confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to it
 - You should obtain written consent from your service user if you want to use identifiable information for your assessments
 - You should try to anonymise any confidential information that you use for your assessments
 - You should follow your education and training provider's or placement provider's procedures on handling confidential information
3. You should keep high standards of personal conduct
 - You should behave with courtesy towards your service users and colleagues
 - You should complete and submit course work on time
4. You should provide any important information about conduct, competence or health to your education provider
 - You should tell your education and training provider about any changes to your health which may put your service users at risk

- You should tell your education and training provider if you are convicted or cautioned for any offence
5. You should keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date
 - You are responsible for your own learning
 6. You should act within the limits of your knowledge and skills
 - You should only undertake a task if you feel that you have the appropriate education and training
 - You should ensure that you are adequately supervised for any task that you are asked to undertake
 - You should ask for help when necessary
 7. You should maintain proper and effective communications with your service users and practitioners
 - You should take all reasonable steps to make sure that you can communicate properly and effectively with your service users and their families
 - You should communicate effectively and co-operate with other practitioners for the benefits of your service users
 - Where appropriate, you should share your knowledge with colleagues
 8. You should get informed consent to give treatment
 - You should make sure that your service users are aware that you are a student before you provide treatment
 - You should make sure that your service users have given their consent to be treated by a student
 - You should explain the treatment you are planning to carry out to your service user
 - You should also explain any risks of the treatment you are planning on carrying out
 - You should be aware of your education and training provider's and placement provider's procedures on consent and ensure that you follow them
 9. You should keep accurate service user records
 - You should ensure that any information you enter in service user records is accurate
 - You should ensure that you comply with your education and training provider's and placement provider's procedures on recording information in service user records

10. You should deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection

- You should ensure that you take appropriate steps to deal with the risks of infection
- You should comply with the procedures of your education and training provider and placement provider on managing infection risks

11. You should limit your work or stop practising if your performance or judgement is affected by your health

- You should seek help from doctors or occupational health if you have concerns about your health
- You should be aware that you may put your service users at risk if you are ill

12. You should behave with integrity and honesty

- You should not try to pass off other people's work as your own
- You should ensure that you reference other people's work appropriately

13. You should make sure that your behaviour does not damage public confidence in health professionals

- You should be aware that your behaviour may affect the trust that the public has in health professionals
- You should not do anything which might affect the trust that the public has in health professionals

More information

Other useful publications

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

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

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

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

Contacting us

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

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

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

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

Phone: +44 (0)20 7582 0866

Fax: +44 (0)20 9684

Glossary

Anonymised information

Information about a service user that has had all identifiable information removed from it.

Fit to practise

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

Informed consent

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

Register

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

Registrant

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

Regulator

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

Service user

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

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics

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

[more terms could be added here as appropriate]