THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

School of Health in Social Science
Clinical & Applied Psychology

School of Health in Social Science Stage One Fitness to Practice Protocol Programme Documentation: Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

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1. Introduction

The School of Health in Social Science has a Stage One Fitness to Practice FtP Protocol, which can be found here. The protocol provides guidance on the management of fitness to practice issues within the school.

The protocol requires that programmes that are subject to FtP procedures must outline their own specific aspects in line with this protocol, this document provides those Programme Specific aspects, in line with the school protocol.

This document outlines the specific standards of professionalism that are required of students on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. It draws upon professional expectations that are described in:

- British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct
- British Psychological Society Practice Guidelines
- HCPC Standards of Ethics and Conduct for Students
- HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance, and Ethics
- BPS Standards for the Accreditation of Doctoral Programmes in Clinical Psychology

2. Standards of Professional Conduct and Expectations of Fitness to for students enrolled on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

This section sets out the relevant expectations of students.

In preparing a report of a fitness to practice concern, the concern should be described as clearly, concretely and factually as possible and should endeavour to align closely to the standards set out below. Appendix One contains a summary and synthesis of these criteria.

HCPC Standards of Conduct and Ethics for Students

Students should:

- promote and protect the interests of service users and carers;
- communicate appropriately and effectively;

- work within the limits of their knowledge and skills;
- delegate appropriately;
- respect confidentiality;
- manage risk;
- report concerns about safety;
- be open when things go wrong;
- be honest and trustworthy; and
- keep records of their work with service users and carers.

HCPC Standards of Conduct Performance and Ethics for Practitioner Psychologists

By the end of training, graduates of Clinical Psychology training programmes (DClinPsychol) must:

- Promote and protect the interests of service users and carers
- Communicate appropriately and effectively
- Work within the limits of your knowledge and skills
- Delegate appropriately
- Respect confidentiality
- Manage risk
- Report concerns about safety
- Be open when things go wrong
- Be honest and trustworthy
- Keep records of your work

Standards for the Accreditation of Doctoral Programmes in Clinical Psychology

The following are relevant elements of the BPS accreditation standards that describe Trainee Clinical Psychologists' fitness to practice requirements and professional conduct expectations.

- High level skills in managing one's own personal learning needs, self-care, critical reflection and self-awareness. The combination of these skills should enable the transfer of knowledge and skills to new settings and problems and professional standards of behaviour as might be expected by fellow trainees, academic staff, the public, employers and colleagues.
- Exercising personal responsibility, integrity and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in professional practice. Demonstrating self-awareness and sensitivity whilst working as a reflective practitioner within ethical and professional practice frameworks.
- Capacity to utilise supervision effectively to reflect upon personal effectiveness, and shape and change personal and organisational practice, being influenced by information provided by outcomes monitoring, including in relation to unexpected or unsuccessful outcomes.
- Capacity to use and access feedback on professional activity from other professionals and peers, e.g. reflective practice groups, placement staff groups, personal and professional development groups.
- A high-level understanding of the application of principles of professional ethics and their application in complex clinical contexts. This should include knowledge of and evidenced

adherence with relevant frameworks of professional ethics (including the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct and the HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics) in all relevant clinical, professional and research settings.

- Working effectively at an appropriate level of autonomy, with awareness of the limits of own competence and accepting accountability to relevant professional and service managers.
- Capacity to adapt to, and comply with, the policies and practices of both the employing organisations and University with respect to time-keeping, record keeping, meeting deadlines, managing leave, health and safety and good working relations.
- Managing own personal learning needs and developing strategies for meeting these. Utilising self-directed reflection, discussion with peers and using supervision to reflect on practice and making appropriate use of feedback received.
- Developing strategies to handle the emotional and physical impact of practice and seeking appropriate support, when necessary, with good awareness of boundary issues.
- Developing resilience but also the capacity to recognise when one's own fitness to study or practice is compromised and take steps to manage this risk as appropriate to ensure practise remains safe and effective.
- Working collaboratively and constructively with fellow psychologists, trainees and other colleagues and users of services, respecting diverse viewpoints and differences in opinion.
- Knowledge of clinical governance, which should include assessed knowledge of the principles of organisational ethics, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement methodologies, and an understanding of how both quantitative metrics and qualitative user feedback are critical to the provision of safe services. The principles of clinical governance also need to be considered within digital practice and professional contexts in relation to digital practice, including digital record systems, risk management, clinical safety online, information storage and sharing.
- Knowledge of research ethics and governance, which should include Health Research Authority policies regarding information governance and digital training.
- Trainees are required to have or develop the capacity to engage in all aspects of training and teaching notwithstanding the emotional challenge.
- Trainees must be cognisant of university, employer and placement organisations' policies for working ethically and legally and ensure that these policies are implemented.
- Trainees should also have the capacity to monitor their own fitness to study and practice, recognise when this is compromised, and take steps to manage this risk as appropriate.
- Trainees should be familiar with relevant health and safety policies within their employing and placement organisations and should be familiar with the Fitness to Practice policies of the university.
- Trainees should have the capacity to adapt to, and comply with, the policies and practices of a host organisation with respect to time-keeping, data governance, record keeping, meeting deadlines, managing leave, health and safety and good working relations.

British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct

The code of conduct and ethics spells out four overlapping principles: Respect, Competence, Responsibility and Integrity. Each of these principles has a statement of values and aspects to consider.

RESPECT

Respect for the dignity of persons and peoples is one of the most fundamental and universal ethical principles across geographical and cultural boundaries, and across professional disciplines. It provides the philosophical foundation for many of the other ethical principles. Respect for dignity recognises the inherent worth of all human beings, regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or any other such group-based characteristics. This inherent worth means that all human beings are worthy of equal moral consideration.

Statement of values: Members value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over persons and peoples and with particular regard to people's rights. In applying these values, members should consider:

- Privacy and confidentiality;
- Respect;
- Communities and shared values within them;
- Impacts on the broader environment – living or otherwise;
- Issues of power;
- Consent;
- Self-determination;
- The importance of compassion, including empathy, sympathy, generosity, openness, distress tolerance, commitment and courage.

COMPETENCE

Our members offer a range of services that usually require specialist knowledge, training, skill and experience. Competence refers to their ability to provide those specific services to a requisite professional standard. Members should not provide professional services that are outside their areas of knowledge, skill, training and experience.

Statement of values: Members value the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in their professional work and the importance of working within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education and experience. In applying these values, members should consider:

- Possession or otherwise of appropriate skills and care needed to serve persons, peoples and organisations;
- The limits of their competence and the potential need to refer on to another professional;
- Advances in the evidence base;
- The need to maintain technical and practical skills;
- Matters of professional ethics and decision-making;
- Any limitations to their competence taking mitigating actions as necessary;
- Caution in making knowledge claims.

RESPONSIBILITY

Because of their acknowledged expertise, members of the Society often enjoy professional autonomy; responsibility is an essential element of autonomy. Members must accept appropriate responsibility for what is within their power, control or management. Awareness of responsibility

ensures that the trust of others is not abused, the power of influence is properly managed and that duty towards others is always paramount.

Statement of values: Members value their responsibilities to persons and peoples, to the general public, and to the profession and science of psychology, including the avoidance of harm and the prevention of misuse or abuse of their contribution to society. In applying these values, psychologists should consider:

- Professional accountability;
- Responsible use of their knowledge and skills;
- Respect for the welfare of humans, non-humans and the living world;
- Potentially competing duties.

INTEGRITY

Acting with integrity includes being honest, truthful, accurate and consistent in one's actions, words, decisions, methods and outcomes. It requires setting self-interest to one side and being objective and open to challenge in one's behaviour in a professional context.

Statement of values: Members value honesty, probity, accuracy, clarity and fairness in their interactions with all persons and peoples, and seek to promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours. In applying these values, members should consider:

- Honesty, openness and candour;
- Accurate unbiased representation;
- Fairness;
- Avoidance of exploitation and conflicts of interest (including self-interest);
- Maintaining personal and professional boundaries;
- Addressing misconduct.

BPS Practice Guidelines

The Practice Guidelines use the term 'psychologist' to refer to all psychologists whether registered, chartered or in training who provide psychological services across the full range of applied psychology, in any context of practice.

The following elements are drawn from the guidelines:

Maintenance of high standards of competence in their practice and the importance of working within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience.

Psychologists should be mindful of the potential effect of health conditions or medications which they may be taking, on their practice.

It is important that psychologists from all disciplines look after their own wellbeing.

When interacting in an online environment, be minded to act responsibly at all times and uphold the reputation of the profession, whether identified as a psychologist or not on the social media platform.

Be minded that social networking sites can make it easier to engage (intentionally or unintentionally) in professional misconduct.

Be aware of the issues of multiple relationships and professional boundaries which may lead to (real or perceived) conflicts of interest or ethical considerations.

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 duty of candour (regulation 20) requires all health and adult social care providers registered with the Care Quality Commission to be open with people when things go wrong. Psychologists need to be aware of the terminology relating to this regulation including:

- openness – enabling concerns and complaints to be raised freely without fear and questions asked to be answered;
- transparency – allowing information about the truth about performance and outcomes to be shared with staff, patients, the public and regulators; and
- candour – any patient harmed by the provision of a healthcare service is informed of the fact and an appropriate remedy offered, regardless of whether a complaint has been made or a question asked about it.

As far as possible, psychologists should seek to resolve any conflict with or between other professional colleagues (including relating to consultation/supervision or line management) by clear communication, relevant evidence and collaboratively working through the issues in reasoned argument within the context of respectful relationships.

Appendix One: Summary and synthesis of the above standards and expectations*

1. **Professional Competence and Continuous Learning**
    - Maintain high standards of competence through continuous learning, staying updated with the latest research and developments in the field.
    - Understand and work within the limits of one's knowledge, skills, training, and experience.
2. **Ethical and Legal Responsibility**
    - Adhere to established professional ethics and legal responsibilities, including respect for confidentiality, managing risks, and adherence to health and safety regulations.
    - Demonstrate honesty, integrity, accountability, and responsibility in all professional actions.
3. **Communication and Interpersonal Skills**
    - Communicate effectively and respectfully with all stakeholders including service users, peers, supervisors, and the public.
    - Work collaboratively and constructively with colleagues and other professionals, respecting diverse viewpoints and differences in opinion.
4. **Respect and Dignity**
    - Treat all individuals with dignity and respect, recognizing and valuing the inherent worth of every person regardless of background or personal characteristics.
    - Ensure privacy, confidentiality, and consent in interactions, especially concerning sensitive information.
5. **Reflective Practice and Self-Awareness**
    - Engage in continuous critical reflection of one's practice to enhance personal and professional growth. Utilize feedback effectively to improve practice.
    - Be self-aware, manage personal biases and the emotional impact of the role, and maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
6. **Risk and Fitness to Practice**
    - Identify and manage personal and professional risks that might impact safety or effectiveness in practice. This includes recognizing when personal fitness to practice is compromised and taking appropriate steps.
    - Utilize supervision and offered support to make progress in meeting professional standards.
7. **Professional Documentation and Accountability**
    - Keep thorough, accurate and secure records of professional activities. Ensure transparency and openness, particularly when things go wrong, in line with duty of candour principles.
    - Be diligent about meeting deadlines, managing schedules, and fulfilling administrative responsibilities as required by employing and training institutions.
8. **Adherence to Organizational Policies**
    - Comply with policies and practices of employing and placement organizations encompassing all operational aspects such as data governance, time-keeping, and leave management.

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*The summary and synthesis of the detailed criteria was produced by the Edinburgh Language Model (ELM – a large language model AI), and reviewed and edited carefully to ensure accuracy. It is included to provide a brief overview for ease but it does not supersede any of the individual details in any of the documents from which it is derived, as these remain the final statements of the requirements for competences, conduct, performance and ethics.