

Low-Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Policy

Approved by:	Effective date:	Next review:
Academic Board	1 September 2022	1 September 2023

Policy

This Policy applies to all students undertaking a course leading to eligibility to apply for entry to the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC), Health Care Professions Council (HCPC), Social Work England (SWE) or General Medical Council (GMC) registers. It also applied to those students already registered with a Statutory Regulatory body. The procedural arrangements are set out in the Low-Level Concerns, and Fitness to Practise Procedures.

Who needs to know about the Policy

Whilst undertaking a professional course, students must adhere to the professional conduct requirements of the relevant Statutory Regulatory body and the University's Code of Student Conduct. The Policy takes account of the perspective of multiple stakeholders. The intention is to reassure students, the University and the general public that students and graduates are fit to practise through the appropriate implementation of the associated procedures. The identification and addressing low-level concerns will utilise the Low-Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Procedures in assessing concerns.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy, and associated procedures, is to ensure that all students whose behaviours raise concerns are supported and managed equitably. The intention is to provide transparent and consistent processes regardless of how the concerns are raised. The Policy includes matters relating to a student's health, circumstances and conduct which may affect their fitness to practise.

Contacts

The Faculty Fitness to Practise Lead and Placement Quality Team within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care is responsible for:

- Providing advice and assistance
- Guidance and templates
- Accessing training

The team can be contacted by emailing: health.sftpp@canterbury.ac.uk

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1. Policy and Introduction of Procedures

- 1.1. This Policy applies to all students undertaking a course leading to eligibility to apply for entry to the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC), Health Care Professions Council (HCPC), Social Work England (SWE) or General Medical Council (GMC) registers. It also applied to those students already registered with a Statutory Regulatory body. The procedural arrangements are set out in the Low-Level Concerns, and Fitness to Practise Procedures.
- 1.2. The purpose of this Policy, and associated procedures, is to ensure that all students whose behaviours raise concerns are supported and managed equitably. The intention is to provide transparent and consistent processes regardless of how the concerns are raised. The Policy includes matters relating to a student's health, circumstances and conduct which may affect their fitness to practise.
- 1.3. Students are subject to the Policy's requirements from the point of initial registration as a student until the ending of their registration.
- 1.4. The Policy takes account of the perspective of multiple stakeholders. The intention is to reassure students, the University and the general public that students and graduates are fit to practise through the appropriate implementation of the associated procedures. The identification and addressing low-level concerns will utilise the Low-Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Procedures in assessing concerns.
- 1.5. This Policy sits alongside the following:
 - University Code of Conduct
 - Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
 - Disciplinary Procedure
 - Academic Misconduct Procedures

The University and its staff working on professional courses have professional responsibilities to protect the public and student(s). It is essential to uphold public confidence in the profession, so this Policy and the Low-Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Procedures take precedence, except in cases of alleged sexual misconduct which will be processed under the University Sexual Misconduct Procedures.

- 1.6. Individuals with a conflict of interest will be excluded from fitness to practise decisions. A conflict of interest occurs when an individual becomes conflicted because of a clash between personal interests and professional duties or responsibilities. It impairs their impartiality.
- 1.7. Issues raised in this Policy will be divided into health issues and those regarding good character and conduct. There may be an overlap of health and conduct issues in some cases, and both aspects would need consideration.

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1.8. In line with any regulatory requirements, concerns that have breached the threshold of professional standards will be reported to the relevant Statutory Regulatory Body as per their requirements

2. Health

- 2.1. A student's fitness to practise may be impaired for reasons of adverse physical or mental health
- 2.2. Health refers to health conditions that may affect a student's fitness to practise (HCPC 2014). Good health means that a person must be capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition (NMC 2015).
- 2.3. While undertaking the course, students must disclose any relevant changes to their health and seek the appropriate help or engage in the process to manage any condition.

3. Professional Conduct

- 3.1. A student's fitness to practise may be impaired by misconduct, including cautions and convictions and/or deficiencies in professional performance and conduct.
- 3.2. The Statutory and Regulatory guidance outlined below establishes the importance of good character and that health and social care practitioners must be honest and trustworthy. A judgement regarding good character is based on an individual's conduct. It takes account of any relevant criminal convictions i.e., those which are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013). The safeguarding of vulnerable individuals is an underpinning principle while selecting potential students, continuous monitoring during preparation and progression onto the Statutory and Regulatory registers.
- 3.3. The NMC Code (2015) is the foundation of good nursing and midwifery practice, and a vital tool in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the public. The HCPC set out the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2016) expected from registrants; these also apply to people who are applying to become registered. SWE (2019) standards set out what a social worker in England must know, understand and be able to do. The GMC set the standards and expected outcomes for medical education and training in the UK. Each Statutory Regulatory body expects students to aspire to the code or standards of conduct as appropriate to the individual profession.
- 3.4. These standards, as set out by the statutory regulatory bodies, will be used to assess a student's conduct.
- 3.5. Applicants must disclose relevant issues concerning their good character and conduct at the point of application. If it is shown later, the student failed to declare all relevant matters, the University may void the registration.

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4. Student Obligations

- 4.1. Students must disclose promptly and fully to the Course Director, or nominee, relevant issues relating to their good character and conduct, which occur at any time during their course.
- 4.2. Students are subject to a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Occupational Health (OH) clearance. Students are required to provide full and accurate information. Any relevant information that subsequently comes to light may lead to the University withdrawing the offer of a place or commencing a formal investigation.
- 4.3. Students must disclose any relevant information that may affect their ability to be on the course. It is not limited to their health and character but includes any other material information. In addition, students must keep the Course Director informed of any material changes that have the potential to affect their registration.
- 4.4. A student subject to any criminal proceedings must promptly consult with the Course Director and not wait until after the conclusion of the procedures.
- 4.5. A student must seek the appropriate help or engage in processes to manage any condition that may affect the safety of service users, themselves or colleagues.
- 4.6. Students must complete an annual declaration of their health and character (Good Health, Good Character).
- 4.7. Failure by a student to adhere to professional obligations may lead the University to instigate the Low-Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Procedures.

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Document Information	Description of Document Information
Document Title	Low-Level Concerns and Fitness to Practise Policy
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