Suitability of Students for Professional Practice

FITNESS TO PRACTISE PROCEDURES GUIDE

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FITNESS TO PRACTISE PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

The University of Liverpool offers a number of undergraduate clinical programmes which, on graduation permit those who have taken such programmes

- the right to practise as members of a particular profession, with a right to membership of appropriate professional bodies on receiving that degree; or
- a requirement to register with an appropriate regulatory body if they wish to practise after graduation; or
- a right to be accepted into a profession upon confirmation from the University that they are fit to practise.

A joint CVCP/GMC Group produced a report on Medical Students' Health and Conduct in 1998. The issues raised are equally applicable to all clinical professions. The report states:

“A heavy responsibility therefore falls on universities with medical schools in the UK; in awarding medical degrees to their students they are entitling those students to be entered on the Medical Register. Universities must accept the consequences of that responsibility. It means that any conduct, behaviour or other matters that could bear on a student's suitability for fitness to practise or dealing with patients which comes to light during the student's course must be properly handled by the University.”

This was endorsed by the CVCP’s Council, which noted its relevance to other university programmes leading to professional qualifications. A report commissioned jointly by the Council of Heads of Medical Schools and Universities UK in 2001 (Eversheds Report) commented:

Those universities that to date have not established fitness to practise arrangements are urged to do so as a matter of priority.”

In line with the CVCP/GMC recommendations and Procedures established in other Universities, the University of Liverpool therefore approved a Fitness to Practise procedure which was subsequently reviewed and revised in 2010. This document therefore places the procedure in the context of the relevant programmes in the University.
2. To which students do the Fitness to Practise Procedures apply?

2.1 Fitness to Practise Procedures apply to students on those programmes listed in Appendix 3 (hereafter referred to as “included programmes”).

3. In what circumstances may the Fitness to Practise Procedures be applied?

**Health concerns**

3.1 Students whose health gives rise to serious concern that s/he will not be fit to practise may be referred to Fitness to Practise Procedures. Students who are referred on health grounds will normally be required to attend an appointment with the University’s Occupational Health Physician who will be asked, as part of the investigation, to submit a report on the nature of the student's illness, the prognosis, and the likely impact on the student's ability to practise professionally, response to treatment and willingness to undergo treatment, how the illness affects the student's ability to communicate with human patients or the owners of animal patients, and whether there is a possibility of the student being a danger to themselves, or to a patient or to the owner of an animal patient or to other persons within the University or external placement.

3.2 Students referred in this category could include those with severe, intractable psychiatric illness, those who develop a physical illness which would preclude them from practising in any branch of their profession, or those with personal characteristics which prevent them from fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

3.3 Students suffering from a serious communicable disease may be referred to Fitness to Practise Procedures. Account should be taken of the requirements pertaining to that particular profession, the student's response to treatment, and their willingness to co-operate with a required or recommended course of action.

3.4 While patient care and health and safety are paramount, there is a need for a non-judgmental approach in instances of student ill health which places substantial weight on the therapeutic needs of the student. It is necessary also to distinguish between temporary conditions, which may be resolved, and those which may last twelve months or more and amount to disabilities under the Equality Act 2010.

**Misconduct and behavioural concerns, including professional conduct**

3.5 Misconduct, as normally defined in the University's Rules Regulating the Conduct of Students, committed by a student on a professional programme will be dealt with under the University's Student Disciplinary Procedure; this is behaviour which is judged to constitute either improper interference, in the broadest sense, with the functioning or activities of the University, or those who work or study in the University,
or action which otherwise damages the University. However, certain conduct, for example drug abuse, may be regarded more seriously if engaged in by a student registered for a programme which leads to the right to practise professionally.

3.6 During consideration of a disciplinary offence under the Student Disciplinary Procedures, information or evidence may emerge which raises questions about a student's fitness to treat patients or to practise professionally, even though it would not support a finding of misconduct; for example, there may be health problems, mental or physical, including issues relating to drink or drugs. Such a case would then be referred to the Fitness to Practise Procedures.

3.7 Students whose behavioural patterns give rise to serious concern that s/he will not be fit to practise may be referred to Fitness to Practise Procedures. Students on included programmes should be familiar with and act with due regard to the Code of Professional Conduct (or similar document) for their profession and are expected to behave in a professional, ethical, and moral manner at all times. The nature of their programme of study means that these students have contact with human patients, or animal patients and their owners in a hospital, first opinion clinic or agricultural community setting, and will have responsibility for patients once qualified. Any behaviour, therefore, which places a human patient or an animal patient or its owner at risk or gives rise to concern about the student's future commitment to the protection and safety of human patients or animal patients or their owners, should be considered under Fitness to Practise Procedures.

Criminal offences

3.8 In the event that a student on an included programme is convicted of, cautioned for, reprimanded for or charged with any criminal offences, including motoring offences (except parking or speeding offences which are subject to fixed penalties), they may be considered under Fitness to Practise Procedures once all due legal and risk assessment processes have been completed. However, it may be necessary to suspend the student from the University and/or from external placements until the legal processes have been completed in accordance with established Procedures where a student is charged with a criminal offence or acquires a criminal record whilst registered on a programme of study.

Academic progress

3.9 Students who fail to make satisfactory progress in academic studies or in assessed clinical work will be considered by the Board of Examiners and Faculty Progress Committee, which will determine the appropriate course of action. If during deliberations concerns come to light about the student's suitability to practise professionally on grounds of health or conduct, then the fitness to practise procedure will be initiated. The fitness to practise procedure may be initiated independently of these bodies.
Graduation

3.10 Where a student in the Final Year of study or a graduand is referred to Fitness to Practise Procedures, s/he shall not be permitted to graduate from the University until the Procedures have been completed.

4. **The pool of members for a Fitness to Practise Panel**

4.1 The Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors for the Faculties in which the included programmes are situated shall submit on an annual basis, to the Senate, a list of nominated individuals to form a pool from which membership of a Fitness to Practise Panel shall be drawn. These nominations shall be considered for approval by the Senate prior to the start of the academic year. Normally an individual should be appointed to the pool for no more than five consecutive academic sessions.

4.2 Those eligible for nomination to the pool are as follows and the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors are responsible for ensuring that an appropriate balance of nominees from each of these categories are put forward for Senate approval:

- Senior academic staff of the University. These will normally be drawn from the Faculties in which the included programmes are situated but may include staff from other Faculties with suitable expertise (e.g. former members of the University Board of Discipline, Pro-Vice-Chancellors etc.)
- Members of the University Board of Discipline
- Appropriately experienced professionals external to the University. These shall normally have experience of practice within the professions to which the included programmes relate and may include members nominated by professional bodies where this is a requirement of a professional body.
- Individuals who have expertise in matters relating to student health.

The Student Representative Officers of the Guild of Students shall also be *ex-officio* members of the pool.

4.3 The members of the pool for the current academic session, as approved by the Senate are listed in Appendix 4.

5. **Referral to Fitness to Practise Procedures**

5.1 A student may be referred to the University’s Fitness to Practise Procedures by a Board of Examiners, a Faculty or Senate Progress Committee, the University Board of Discipline or Board of Appeal, or directly by the Programme Director/Director of Studies, following routine monitoring at programme level and/or concerns raised by external placement providers.
5.2 A referral to Fitness to Practise Procedures may be made in the following instances:

- Concern about a student's academic or clinical performance as agreed by a Board of Examiners or Faculty or Senate Progress Committee.
- Concern about the outcome of any Student Disciplinary Proceedings, including any summary jurisdiction
- Concerns raised by routine monitoring at programme level
- Concerns about a student’s health
- Concerns about a student’s professional conduct

5.3 In cases where a designated member of staff with responsibility for certifying to a professional body that a student at the end of their studies is fit to practise feels that they are unable to do so, then that member of staff shall refer the student to the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the appropriate Faculty. No disclosure of issues relating to an individual student's health or professional conduct shall be made to a professional body without that student first having been considered by under the Fitness to Practise Procedures.

5.4 Subject to the absolute discretion of the University, a referral or an allegation of concern must be made in writing to the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and signed by the maker. Anonymous allegations will not normally be considered.

6. Formal Investigation

6.1 Where a case is referred to the Fitness to Practise Procedures, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall determine, or shall ask a senior member of academic or clinical staff to consider, within a period of five working days, whether there is a *prima facie* case to be investigated.

6.2 If a *prima facie* case is not considered to have been made, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall inform the student and the maker of the referral or allegation in writing that no case has been established and that no further action will be taken.

6.3 If a *prima facie* case is considered to have been made, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall appoint a senior member of academic or clinical staff as an Investigating Officer to conduct a Formal Investigation, which should normally be completed within twenty-eight working days. The Investigating Officer must not have been involved in the circumstances leading to the student’s referral.
6.4 If a *prima facie* case is considered to have been made, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall inform the student and the Chief Operating Officer\(^1\) (or her/his appointed officer) in writing that a Formal Investigation has been instigated. S/he should inform the student of the reason for the Investigation, the name of the Investigating Officer and the expected timescale for completion of the Investigation. The student must also be provided with a copy of the Fitness to Practise Procedures. If, for good reason, the Formal Investigation requires an extension beyond twenty-eight working days, the Investigating Officer should advise the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor who should inform the student of the new expected date of completion for the Investigation.

6.5 The Investigating Officer shall investigate the case in accordance with the procedure set out in Appendix 5.

6.6 When there are concerns about a student’s suitability for professional practice on grounds of health, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor may require the student to be assessed by the University’s Occupational Health Physician in accordance with paragraph 3.1 above.

6.7 If a case has been referred by the Board of Discipline, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor may choose to refer the case straight to a Fitness to Practise Panel without a further Formal Investigation.

6.8 At the end of the Formal Investigation, the Investigating Officer shall submit a written report of her/his findings as follows:

(i) Inform the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Operating Officer (or her/his appointed officer) that there is no case to be taken forward, in which case the student should be informed in writing by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor that no further action will be taken.

(ii) Inform the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Operating Officer (or her/his appointed officer) that there is a case for matters to be dealt with by other means to be determined by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor, which could include specific undertakings or conditions, but that there is no immediate need for a Fitness to Practise Panel hearing, in which case the student should be informed in writing by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

(iii) Inform the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Operating Officer (or her/his appointed officer) that there is a case for the matter to be referred for further consideration by a Fitness to Practise Panel in which case the Procedures under Sections 10 and 11 below should then be followed.

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\(^1\) Throughout these Procedures, the title ‘Chief Operating Officer’ is used to reflect current terminology. The Ordinance and Regulations (see Appendix 1) formally refer to the ‘Registrar’ as this has not yet formally been changed to ‘Chief Operating Officer’ but the University Calendar notes that “With effect from 1 May 2004, all duties, responsibilities and authorities of the Registrar (as set out in the University’s Charters, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations) have been transferred to the Chief Operating Officer until further notice. All references in this Calendar to the Registrar should, therefore, be taken to refer to the Chief Operating Officer.”
7. Suspension of study and/or external placement during Formal Investigation

7.1 If, at any stage between the referral of a student to the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and any outcome of a Formal Investigation, any matters are raised which are deemed to constitute reasonable grounds for believing that there may be undesirable consequences if the student is permitted to remain in the University (including clinical activities as appropriate) or in external placements, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor may suspend the student from the University and/or from external placements for a period which shall not normally exceed twenty-eight working days. It is recommended that the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor should normally exercise this authority only after having consulted the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer or having been instructed by her/him to exercise it. The Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor must inform the student in writing of the reason for the suspension, its duration and any implications.

7.2 When a student is suspended from studies and/or placements, the Investigating Officer should make every effort to complete her/his Investigation during the period of suspension and normally within fifteen working days. Only exceptionally may the period of suspension be extended beyond twenty-eight working days and then only by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor after having consulted the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer.

8. Suspension of study and/or external placement during Fitness to Practise Panel proceedings

8.1 If any matters have been raised which are deemed to constitute reasonable grounds for believing that there may be undesirable consequences if the student is permitted to remain in the University or in external placements, the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor may suspend the student for a period which shall not normally exceed twenty-eight working days. This period of suspension may be in addition to any period of suspension which has been imposed during the Formal Investigation stage (see Section 7 above). It is recommended that the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor should normally exercise this authority only after having consulted the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer or having been instructed by her/him to exercise it. The Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor must inform the student in writing of the reason for the suspension, its duration and any implications.

8.2 When a student is suspended from studies, every effort must be made to arrange the meeting of the Fitness to Practise Panel during the period of suspension. Only exceptionally may the period of suspension be extended beyond twenty-eight working days and then only by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor after having consulted the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer.
9. Monitoring of periods of suspension

9.1 Where a student is suspended from studies (including clinical activities as appropriate) and/or placements either during the Formal Investigation or during Fitness to Practise Panel proceedings, the member of Professional Services staff with responsibility for supporting the programme on which the student is registered shall be responsible for ensuring that the deadlines relating to the period of suspension are monitored and that the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer and the Investigating Officer, in the case of suspensions during the Formal Investigation, are kept informed of the approach of any such deadline.

10. Establishment of a Fitness to Practise Panel

10.1 Each Fitness to Practise Panel shall comprise of the following members, drawn from the Pool established by the Senate (see Section 4 above) and approved by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

- A Chair (see Section 10.3 below)
- Four members as follows:
  - One member who shall be qualified to practise in the same profession as the student being considered
  - One member who shall be a member of the Senate from another School to that in which the student is registered
  - One member who shall be external to the University
  - One member who shall be a representative of the Guild of Students

The quorum for all meetings will be five.

10.2 The Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer shall be the Secretary to the Fitness to Practise Panel.

10.3 A senior member of the University’s academic staff within the Pool established by the Senate shall be nominated normally for a three-year term to chair all Fitness to Practise Panel hearings except where the requirements of a professional body stipulate that the Chair must be a member of the profession concerned and/or a member of that professional body or where the nominated Chair has already been involved in the student’s case, in which case the Chair shall be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate, on a recommendation from the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

10.4 In establishing the membership of a Fitness to Practise Panel, any other recommendations or requirements of a relevant professional body shall be taken into consideration.

10.5 In cases involving health issues, the Panel shall include as one of its four members someone with specialist expertise in matters relating to student health.
10.6 In cases involving a Foundation Year 1 (FY1) trainee, the Panel shall include as one of its members the Postgraduate Dean or her/his nominee.

10.7 No person who has previously been involved in the case shall be appointed as a member of the Panel.

10.8 The Panel shall not include any member who at any time has had pastoral responsibilities for the student or supervised the student on any placement and, where possible, should not include any member who, within one year of the referral to the Panel, has taught the student concerned.

11. Procedures before a Fitness to Practise Panel meeting

11.1 The Secretary to the Panel will be responsible for arranging the hearing. This will include:

- convening the meeting
- notifying the student, her/his tutor, the Director of Studies for the student’s programme and the relevant School Manager that a case has been referred to the Panel, of the substance of the case, of the procedure to be followed and of the membership of the Panel;
- making a written account of the proceedings.

11.2 The student will be given a minimum of ten working days’ notice of the date of the hearing. Any written communication to the student will be posted to the registered semester-time address last supplied by the student and to her/his home address. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the current address is known to the University.

11.3 The Investigating Officer will submit a written report to the meeting. This may comprise reports prepared by a number of members of University and a report from an independent health care practitioner. It may also include relevant minutes from the Board of Discipline, Boards of Examiners or Faculty Progress Committees or similar bodies. Copies of any relevant Code of Professional Conduct, appropriate guidelines issued by appropriate relevant professional body or similar document should also be provided. The Investigating Officer shall attend the Panel hearing and shall present the University’s case. The Investigating Officer may also choose to call witnesses in accordance with the procedures under Section 11.9 below.

11.4 The student is required to attend the hearing in person. The student will be invited to submit a written statement and may submit statements from other persons in support of himself or herself.

11.5 Factual information about the student's progress on the programme will also be provided to prior to the meeting.
11.6 All documents submitted to the Secretary shall be provided to all parties except witnesses before the hearing. Documents must be submitted a minimum of five working days before the hearing.

11.7 In writing to the student, the Secretary shall advise her/him to consult her/his tutor in the first instance for advice. The student is entitled to be accompanied by one other person who may be, for instance, her/his tutor or friend. This person may act as the student's representative and speak on her/his behalf, if the student so desires, or the student may present her/his own case and have the other person present merely for moral support. The student is strongly advised to exercise this right. The student must give notice ten working days in advance of the meeting as to who will be accompanying him or her and that person's contact details for receipt of papers.

11.8 The student may ask a representative of her/his professional organisation to accompany him or her, but, if choosing to do this, s/he must give the Secretary to the Panel notice in writing, including the designation of the representative. The student is entitled to be legally represented at the hearing but must bear the expense of such a choice, whatever the outcome. Legal representatives will attend in addition to the student's friend. If the student is legally represented by a barrister, there may also be a solicitor in attendance. The Chair may decide to postpone the hearing in order to arrange appropriate representation for the University. If either party (the student or the University) arrives at the hearing with representation without having given proper notice of intention to do so, the other party may request, and be granted, an adjournment of the hearing so that it may seek appropriate equivalent representation.

11.9 Witnesses may be called by both the student and the University. Both the student (or the student's representative) and the University's representative must ensure:

(i) that the names and addresses of all their respective witnesses are communicated to the Secretary to the Panel not later than five working days before any date fixed for the hearing;

(ii) that their respective witnesses are informed of the date, time, and place of the hearing and are able and willing to attend. It is the responsibility of each party, not the Secretary, to ensure that the witnesses are ready to appear when they are called.

Witnesses should be warned that they will be required to wait in an ante-room until they are called. It is not possible to run a hearing to any kind of timetable. After they have given evidence, witnesses will be required to retire to the ante-room if any need to recall them is anticipated by either party. Otherwise the Chair of the Board may dismiss them as soon as they have finished giving their evidence. Witnesses are not permitted to remain to observe the hearing after they have given their evidence, or to take any further part in the hearing unless they are recalled.
12. Procedures during a Fitness to Practise Panel meeting

12.1 If the student fails to attend the hearing, the Panel is entitled to reach a decision in her/his absence.

12.2 The following Procedures are those that will normally be followed when the Panel hears an individual student case. The Chair, after consultation with the Panel, may modify these Procedures in exceptional or unusual cases, as long as the principles of natural justice, as set out in the Procedures below, are maintained.

(i) The members of the Panel take their places.
(ii) The Investigating Officer, the student and any friend or representatives accompanying the student are invited to come in.
(iii) The Chair identifies the persons present and their roles within the hearing. These are:

The Chair
The student
The members of the Panel

The student’s friend or other representatives whose role in the proceedings should be clarified by the student. Note: it is important to establish who is presenting the case for the defence: the student or a representative. The Chair will ask the student to confirm or amend any such information given on the attendance list and will then identify the persons named and their part in the proceedings. If a student presents her/his own case then the friend or representatives will only contribute to the hearing at the request of the student in agreement with the Chair.

The Investigating Officer
The Secretary and any other persons present

(iv) The Chair asks the student to confirm that he/she has received copies of the papers submitted to the Panel, including the reasons for the referral and these notes of guidance on procedure.

(v) The Chair then explains the powers of the Panel, as set out in Section 13.

(vi) The Chair invites the Investigating Officer to present the University’s case.

(vii) The Investigating Officer may then call her/his witnesses (if any). Each in turn may be questioned by:

(a) the Investigating Officer;
(b) the student or her/his representative;

(c) the Panel.

Note: after each party and the Panel has questioned a witness once, the Chair of the Panel may allow each party a further opportunity to question the witness, then allow the Panel members to question the witness again, in order to clarify any statements made.

(vii) The Chair invites the student (or the student's representative) to make a statement. The Chair will explain that the Panel will wish to hear directly from the student in her/his own words, although s/he may be supported by her/his representative.

(viii) The Chair asks the student (or the student's representative) whether s/he wishes to call witnesses.

(x) Any witnesses nominated by the student are called in turn and questioned by:

(a) the student or her/his representative;

(b) the Investigating Officer;

(c) the Panel.

Note: after each party and the Panel has questioned a witness once, the Chair of the Panel may allow each party a further opportunity to question the witness, then allow the Panel members to question the witness again, in order to clarify any statements made. The student (or the student's representative) must, however, be allowed to ask the final question of each witness, if s/he wishes to do so.

(xi) Once the Chair is satisfied that the Panel has completed its questioning and that the student has had a full opportunity to convey information to the Panel, the Chair will ask all except members of the Panel and the Secretary to withdraw, so that the Panel may consider its finding.

(xii) If for any reason the Panel requires further clarification of any aspect of the case from any participant, including the Secretary, then all participants must be invited back into the meeting while the questioning takes place. They will then leave the meeting again.

(xiii) The Panel shall discuss the case and must refer to the code of professional practice for the relevant profession and the powers of Fitness to Practise Panels (see Section 13 below) in arriving at its decision.

(xiv) The hearing reconvenes and the Chair announces the finding of the Panel.
13. **Powers of the Fitness to Practise Panel**

13.1 The Panel has the power to adjourn or postpone a hearing for good cause at its discretion, but its discretion shall not be exercised in a manner which may embarrass or prejudice the case of the student. It shall also have the power, to be exercised only if the circumstances of the particular case make it necessary, to continue the suspension of a student until the next meeting of the Fitness to Practise Panel at which the case is to be considered. Notification of the adjournment or postponement of a meeting and any continuation of suspension shall be given in writing by the Secretary to the Panel to the student, her/his tutor, the Director of Studies for the student’s programme and the relevant School Manager.

13.2 The Panel has the power delegated by the Senate to decide:

- That the student is fit to practise and is
  
  (i) permitted to continue with the programme or to graduate with no formal record of the fitness to practise referral placed on file or disclosed to any professional body and should be assisted with any deficits in their programme which have occurred as a result of the investigation and hearing including, where necessary, considering the process as a mitigating circumstance; or
  
  (ii) permitted to continue with the programme under supervision as defined/required by the Panel; or
  
  (iii) permitted to continue with the programme but that a formal warning be issued by the Chair of the Panel and placed on the student’s file; or
  
  (iv) subject to any other undertaking, condition or action considered appropriate by the Panel to enable the student’s successful completion of the remainder of the programme; or
  
  (v) allowed to continue on her/his studies or to graduate but that issues around the student’s health or conduct be drawn to the attention of the relevant professional body for on-going monitoring after graduation.

- That the student is not fit to practise and
  
  (i) is required to suspend her/his studies for a specified period of time, with or without specific conditions, following which the Panel will review the situation and decide whether to allow the student to continue on the programme, with or without conditions or undertakings. In this case, the Panel will need to reconvene at a later date to review the situation and the Procedures outlined in Sections 11 and 12 above shall again be followed;
(ii) the student's studies on her/his current programme of study be terminated, but that it be recommended that the student may seek admission, possibly with advanced standing, to an alternative programme within the University.

(iii) the student's studies be terminated and the student be required to withdraw from the University. Subject to the recommendation of a Board of Examiners, the student shall receive any exit award to which s/he is entitled.

13.3 In the case of a Foundation Year 1 (FY1) trainee, the Panel may decide:

(i) that the individual is fit to practise with no formal record of the fitness to practise referral placed on file or disclosed to any professional body

(ii) that remedial action be taken to overcome the problems in training;

(iii) that the pre-registration period be extended;

(iv) that certification be refused.

14. Procedures after a Fitness to Practise Panel meeting

14.1 The Secretary shall keep minutes of the proceedings and a précis of the statements of witnesses.

14.2 The Secretary shall notify the student, her/his tutor, the Director of Studies for the student’s programme, the member of Professional Services staff with responsibility for supporting the programme on which the student is registered and the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor in writing of the outcome of the hearing and of the student’s right to appeal to the Professional Appeals Board.

14.3 In the event that the student is deemed fit to practise and permitted to continue on the programme, the Director of Studies of that programme (or such other person as may be nominated by the Panel) shall be responsible for ensuring that any additional supervision or conditions or sanctions identified as required by the Panel are implemented and monitored as appropriate.

15. Establishment of a Professional Appeals Board

15.1 The Professional Appeals Board shall consist of:

• the President of the Council, (ex-officio)
• a member of the Senate who has hitherto not had contact with the case, nominated by the Vice-Chancellor
• a representative of the appropriate professional body who has practised in that profession in the last two years (nominated by that body at the request of the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer).

No member of the Professional Appeals Board should have taught the student concerned, had pastoral responsibilities for the student or supervised the student on any placement.

15.2 The President of the Council shall be the Chair of the Professional Appeals Board. The Secretary shall be the Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer.

16. Procedures before a Professional Appeals Board meeting

16.1 The student must give notification in writing to the Chief Operating Officer, within ten working days of the written communication of the decision of the Fitness to Practise Panel, of her/his intention to appeal.

16.2 In the notice of appeal the student must specify briefly, but clearly, the grounds for the appeal.

16.3 An appeal may be submitted only on the grounds that:

(a) s/he has received an inadequate or a biased hearing; or

(b) there were procedural irregularities in the circumstances leading up to and/or in the conduct of the Fitness to Practise Panel hearing; or

(c) that there is new evidence which for good reason could not have been brought reasonably to the attention of the Fitness to Practise Panel.

(Note: ‘good reason’ means that the student could not, rather than did not, provide the evidence at the time of the Panel meeting. Sensitive personal, family or cultural reasons will not be accepted as ‘good reasons’.)

16.4 If suspension of the student was imposed by the Fitness to Practise Panel, the suspension shall continue to be in place pending the determination of the appeal.

16.5 The Secretary will be responsible for organising the meeting of the Professional Appeals Board, collating and circulating the papers and conducting correspondence.

16.6 The student will be given a minimum of ten working days’ notice of the date of the hearing.
16.7 All parties except witnesses shall receive copies of all the documentation which was submitted to the Fitness to Practise Panel and the minutes of the meeting of the Fitness to Practise Panel.

16.8 The student and the Chair of the Fitness to Practise Panel or her/his nominee are required to appear before the Board.

16.9 The student is entitled to be accompanied by one other person who may be, for instance, her/his tutor or friend. This person may act as the student's representative and speak on her/his behalf, if the student so desires, or the student may present her/his own case and have the other person present merely for moral support. The student is strongly advised to exercise this right. The student should give notice in advance of the meeting as to who will be accompanying him or her.

16.10 The student is entitled to be legally represented at the hearing but must bear the expense of such a choice, whatever the outcome. Legal representatives will attend in addition to the student's friend. If the student is legally represented by a barrister, there may also be a solicitor in attendance.

16.11 A student who chooses to be legally represented must give the Secretary notice of that intention as early as possible, so that the University may consider its representation. The Chief Operating Officer or her/his appointed officer will then consider the postponement of any date already set for the hearing and instruct the Secretary to act accordingly. If either party (the student or the University) arrives at the hearing with legal representation without having given proper notice of intention to do so, the other party may request and be granted an adjournment of the hearing so that it also may instruct a legal representative of equivalent status.

16.12 The Professional Appeals Board must refer to the code of professional practice for the relevant profession in reaching its decision.

17. Procedures during a Professional Appeals Board meeting

17.1 The following Procedures are those that will normally be followed when the Board hears an individual student case. The Chair, after consultation with the Board, may modify these Procedures in exceptional or unusual cases, so long as the principles of natural justice, as set out in the Procedures below, are maintained.

(i) The members of the Board take their places.

(ii) The Chair of the Fitness to Practise Panel or her/his nominee, the student and any friend or representatives accompanying the student are invited to come in.

(iii) The Chair identifies the persons present and their roles within the hearing. These are:
The Chair himself/herself

The student

The members of the Board

The student’s friend whose role in the proceedings should be clarified by the student. Note: it is important to establish who is presenting the case for the Appellant: the student or a representative. The Chair will ask the student to confirm or amend any such information given on the attendance list and will identify the persons named and their part in the proceedings. If a student presents her/his own case then the friend will only contribute to the hearing at the request of the student in agreement with the Chair.

The Chair of the Fitness to Practise Panel or her/his nominee

The Secretary and any other persons present.

(iv) The Chair establishes the nature of the appeal:

(v) The Chair shall invite the student or her/his representative to make a submission in support of the appeal against the finding of the Fitness to Practise Panel.

(vi) The Board may then question the student or her/his representative.

(vii) The Chair shall invite the Chair of the Fitness to Practise Panel or her/his nominee to reply, after which the student or her/his representative, then the members of the Board, may similarly question the Chair of the Fitness to Practise Panel or her/his nominee about any matters which require clarification.

(viii) The student or her/his representative shall be invited to make a closing statement.

(ix) The Chair shall ask all except members of the Board and the Secretary to withdraw in order that the Board may consider its decision.

(x) The hearing reconvenes and the Chair announces the Board's decision. The Board may:

- uphold the decision of the Fitness to Practise Panel
- decide upon an alternative course of action
- overturn the decision of the Fitness to Practise Panel

(xi) The Chair closes the hearing.
18. Procedures after a Professional Appeals Board meeting

18.1 The Secretary shall keep minutes of the proceedings.

18.2 The Secretary shall notify the student, her/his tutor, the Director of Studies of the student’s programme, the relevant School Manager and the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor in writing of the outcome of the hearing.

18.3 The student has no further right of appeal within the University.

18.4 All decisions of the Professional Appeals Board shall be reported to the Senate on an annual basis.

19. Completion of Procedures

19.1 Students who do not submit an appeal against a decision of a Fitness to Practise Panel within the specified timescale shall be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter by the Chief Operating Officer.

19.2 Students who appeal to the Professional Appeals Board shall be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter by the Chief Operating Officer after the Board has made its decision.
APPENDIX 1: Ordinance 18: Suitability of Students for Professional Practice

1. Students on professional programmes whose health or professional conduct gives rise to concern about their suitability to practise professionally may be referred by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the appropriate Faculty to a University Fitness to Practise Panel. A Professional Appeals Board shall hear and determine appeals against decisions taken by the Fitness to Practise Panel.

2. The Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the appropriate Faculty shall have the power, to be exercised only if the circumstances of the case make it necessary, to suspend a student until the formal investigation into the matter has been completed, provided that such suspension shall not normally exceed twenty-eight working days.

3. The Fitness to Practise Panel and the Professional Appeals Board shall be autonomous bodies, but reports on all meetings shall be submitted to the Council and the Senate for information.

4. The Fitness to Practise Panel and the Professional Appeals Board respectively shall have the following compositions, powers and duties:

   (a) THE FITNESS TO PRACTISE PANEL

   (i) The Panel shall consist of a Chairman who shall be appointed, together with four other members, from a pool appointed by the Senate. Each Panel shall consist of at least one member who shall be qualified to practise in the same profession as the case being considered, one who shall be a member of Senate from another School to that in which the student is registered, one member who shall be external to the University and a representative of the Guild of Students.

   (ii) The Registrar or her/his nominee shall be the Secretary to the Fitness to Practise Panel.

   (iii) The quorum for a meeting of the Fitness to Practise Panel shall be five members.

   (iv) The Fitness to Practise Panel may determine that a student is not fit to practise or it may determine that a student is fit to do so, but stipulate conditions, if any, under which the student may be allowed to continue with the programme.
(b) THE PROFESSIONAL APPEALS BOARD.

(i) The Professional Appeals Board shall consist of the President of the Council, who shall be an ex-officio member, a member of the Senate who has hitherto not had contact with the case, nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, a member of staff of an equivalent institution and a representative of the appropriate professional body (nominated by that body at the request of the Registrar or her/his nominee). The President of the Council shall be the Chairman of the Professional Appeals Board.

(ii) The Registrar or her/his nominee shall be the Secretary to the Professional Appeals Board.

(iii) The quorum for a meeting of the Professional Appeals Board shall be four members.

(iv) The Professional Appeals Board may uphold the decision of the Fitness to Practise Panel or it may decide upon an alternative course of action or it may overturn the decision of the Panel.

5 The membership of the Fitness to Practise Panel and the Professional Appeals Board shall be such that no one person shall be a member of both. Any person who referred a case for consideration by the appropriate Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall be ineligible to sit as a member of either the Fitness to Practise Panel or the Professional Appeals Board, nor shall any person involved in investigation of matters relating to the case be eligible to sit as a member of either.

6 Regulations shall prescribe the procedure to be followed for meetings of the Fitness to Practise Panel and the Professional Appeals Board.

Regulations

1. A pool of individuals from whom membership of a Fitness to Practise Panel shall be drawn shall be appointed by the Senate. The pool shall include senior academic staff, members of the University Board of Discipline, appropriately experienced professionals external to the University, and individuals who have expertise in matters relating to student health. The Student Representative Officers of the Guild of Students shall also be ex-officio members of the pool.

2. The procedure for meetings of the Fitness to Practise Panel and the Professional Appeals Board shall be as follows:

(a) THE FITNESS TO PRACTISE PANEL

(i) The decision to refer a student to the Fitness to Practise Panel will be taken by the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty in consultation with the Registrar or his or her nominee following a formal investigation which shall be undertaken by a senior member of academic staff. The Registrar or his or her nominee shall inform, in
writing, the student concerned, his or her tutor and the person who referred the case to the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor. The Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall have the power, to be exercised only if the circumstances of the case make it necessary, to suspend a student following the decision to refer the student to a Fitness to Practise Panel until the meeting of the Panel, provided that such suspension shall not normally exceed twenty-eight working days.

(ii) The student who is the subject of the referral shall receive a written notice from the Registrar or his or her nominee:

(a) notifying the student of the referral and giving details of the substance of the case, of the procedure to be followed, and of the membership of the Panel;

(b) giving at least ten working days' notice of the meeting of the Panel and indicating the student's need to attend;

(c) requesting that the student provides a written response to the case being referred to the Panel and informing the student that he or she may call such witnesses as he or she may think fit and requiring him or her to provide the names of any such witnesses in advance of the date of the meeting;

(d) informing the student that he or she may be accompanied at the meeting of the Panel by his or her tutor or other member of the academic staff or by a friend, any of whom may conduct the case on his or her behalf if he or she so desires;

(e) informing him or her that he or she should, in any event, approach her/his tutor for advice in the matter.

(iii) The case against the student shall be presented first and then the case for the student. Both parties shall be entitled to cross examine witnesses, and both parties shall be allowed to make a final address, the student or the person presenting his or her case having the right to speak last.

(iv) The person presenting the case against the student, the student, any person accompanying the student and all witnesses shall withdraw when the Panel considers its decision.

(v) The Fitness to Practise Panel shall have the power to adjourn or postpone a hearing for good cause or at its discretion, but its discretion shall not be exercised in a manner which may embarrass or prejudice the case of the student. It shall also have power, to be exercised only if the circumstances of the particular case make it necessary, to continue the suspension of a student until the next meeting of the Fitness to Practise Panel at which the case is to be considered.
(vi) In all cases a minute of the proceedings and a précis of the statements of witnesses shall be kept by the Secretary.

(b) THE PROFESSIONAL APPEALS BOARD

(i) After receiving the decision of the Fitness to Practise Panel, the student concerned shall have ten days in which to submit to the Registrar or his or her nominee a notice in writing of appeal.

(ii) In the notice of appeal the student shall briefly, but clearly, specify the ground or grounds for his or her appeal.

(iii) An appeal may be submitted only on the grounds that:

he or she has received an inadequate or a biased hearing; or

there were procedural irregularities in the arrangements for the conduct of the hearing; or

there is new evidence which could not have reasonably been brought to the attention of the Fitness to Practise Panel.

(iv) If suspension of the student was imposed by the Fitness to Practise Panel, the suspension shall continue to operate pending the determination of the appeal.

(v) When notice of appeal has been given, the Registrar or his or her nominee shall summon the appellant to appear before the Board giving him or her at least ten working days’ notice in which to do so.

(vi) Each member of the Board and the student shall receive copies of all the documentation that was submitted to the Fitness to Practise Panel and the report of the meeting of that Panel.

(vii) The student may be accompanied at the meeting of the Board by his or her tutor or other member of the academic staff or by a friend, any of whom may conduct the case on his or her behalf if he or she so desires.
APPENDIX 2: Rules Regulating the Conduct of Students

The following provides a substantive but not exhaustive list of activities which the University regards as constituting misconduct. (Clause 1 of Ordinance 17).

1. Any breach of University Ordinances or Regulations or Codes of Practice, including the Regulations for the Conduct of Examinations;

2. Substantial obstruction or interference with the functions, duties or legitimate activities of any student or member of staff of the University, or any visitor to the University;

3. Violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening, intimidating or offensive behaviour or language (whether expressed orally, in writing or electronically, including blogs, social networking websites and other electronic means);

4. Distribution or publication of a poster, notice, sign or any publication which is offensive, intimidating, threatening, indecent or illegal, including the broadcasting and electronic distribution of such material.

5. Harassment of any student or member of staff of the University or any visitor to the University;

6. Fraud, deceit, deception or dishonesty in relation to the University or its staff, students or visitors;

7. Theft, misappropriation or misuse of University property, or the property of its students, staff or visitors;

8. Misuse or unauthorised use of University premises or items of property, including the misuse of computers and the communications network or any breach of the University’s policy on the use of its information systems;

9. Damage or defacement to University property or the property of other members of the University caused intentionally or recklessly, including misappropriation of such property;

10. Action which may cause injury or jeopardise safety on University premises, including occupation of premises of which the University is owner or occupier after being required to leave by an authorised member of the staff of the University;

11. Failure to provide identity such as name and student ID number to a member of staff of the University in circumstances where a request to do so is reasonable;
12. Any conduct, whether on or off campus, which results in a student receiving a formal police caution, irrespective of whether or not such a caution leads to the student being charged or convicted of an offence;

13. Any failure on behalf of the student to inform the University of any police caution, charge or conviction. (Convictions for a motoring offence for which a fine and a maximum penalty of three points are imposed are excluded. Offences which are spent under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 should also be reported as they may affect the right to practise for students following programmes leading to a professional qualification);

14. Any conduct which may be discreditable to the University or detrimental to the discharge of its duties or which may more widely bring the University into disrepute;

15. Failure to comply with any punishment imposed as a result of the University’s disciplinary Procedures or contempt of those Procedures;

16. The possession or sale or the use or misuse of any controlled drug on University premises
APPENDIX 3: List of programmes to whose students the Fitness to Practise Procedures apply (referred to as ‘included programmes’)

DClinPsychol Doctor of Clinical Psychology (CPDM)
BSc Dental Hygiene/Dental Therapy (B750)
Combined Diploma in Dental Hygiene/Therapy (DSDT)
BDS Dental Surgery (A200, A201, A202)
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography (B821)
MBChB Medicine and Surgery (A100, A101, A105)
BN (Hons) Nursing (B700)
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (B920)
DDSc Professional Doctorate in Orthodontics (DDSC)
BSc (Hons) Orthoptics (B520)
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy (B160)
MPH Master of Public Health (HPMA)
BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy (B822)
PGDip in Radiotherapy (HSRT)
BVSc Veterinary Science (D100, D101)

The procedures may also be applied to Foundation Year 1 (FY1) trainees within the Mersey Deanery
APPENDIX 4: Pool of Potential Fitness to Practise Panel Members

For details of the current Session's approved Pool, please contact the Director of Student Administration and Support.
APPENDIX 5: Guidance and Procedures for Formal Investigations

1. In accordance with the Fitness to Practise Procedures (Section 6.3), the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall appoint a senior member of academic or clinical staff as an Investigating Officer to conduct a Formal Investigation. The Investigating Officer must not have been involved in the circumstances leading to the student’s referral.

2. The Investigating Officer shall write to the student informing them that they are being considered under the Fitness to Practise Procedures and shall tell her/him that, whilst s/he is under no obligation to comment at this stage, s/he may do so by providing a statement of written evidence. Even if the student chooses to reserve her/his defence, s/he has a right to see all evidence that has been submitted.

3. The Investigating Officer shall review all written submissions, supporting evidence and any voluntary statements from the student and shall review any relevant Code of Professional Conduct or other guidelines on Fitness to Practise matters issued by relevant professional bodies. The Investigating Officer may also request assistance from the member of Professional Services staff responsible for supporting the student’s programme to identify additional documents which may inform her/his investigation including details of the student’s academic and relevant personal records. The Investigating Officer shall determine whether the case requires further investigation.

4. If, during the Investigation, any issue is identified which raises reasonable grounds for believing that there may be undesirable consequences if the student is permitted to remain in the University and/or in any external placement, the Investigating Office must immediately inform the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

5. During the Formal Investigation, the Investigating Officer shall normally interview:
   - The person making the allegation
   - The student
   - Witnesses on both sides

6. Where the Investigating Officer decides that interviews shall be conducted, students and any other relevant party should be provided with at least three working days’ notice and informed that they may be accompanied at the meeting by a friend. This would normally be a fellow student or the student’s Personal Tutor. The student may decline to co-operate at this stage and reserve her/his defence.

7. The Investigating Officer must be accompanied at any meeting by a University colleague acting as a note-taker.

8. A précis will be taken of any interview conducted as part of the Formal Investigation (to be signed and dated by the Investigating Officer and the student) and participants in the interview shall be entitled to have sight of this record.

9. Any interview with the student must be held face-to-face and this is advisable for interviews with any other party. Where it is not practicable to hold a face-to-face interview with a party (e.g. an external placement provider outside of the Merseyside
region), a telephone interview may be held but a summary of the telephone discussion must then be provided in writing by the Investigating Officer and signed by the other party as an accurate representation of the discussion.

10. Where further written statements are required, the Investigating Officer will write to the appropriate party to ask for the statement, informing them of the reason for the request.

11. The Formal Investigation should not normally take longer than 28 working days. Where it is likely to take longer, the Investigating Officer must inform the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor, who shall be responsible for informing the student of the new expected date for completion of the Investigation in accordance with Section 6.4 of the Fitness to Practise Procedures.

12. After considering all evidence submitted prior to and during the Investigation, the Investigating Officer shall prepare a written report for the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer of her/his findings, attaching evidence as appropriate. Any recommendations or determinations within the report must be cross-referenced to the appropriate Code of Professional Conduct or other guidelines on Fitness to Practise matters issued by a relevant professional body and/or to University of Liverpool Ordinances, Regulations, Codes of Practice, Guidelines or similar documents.

13. Within the report, the Investigating Officer shall include one of the following determinations, in accordance with Section 6.8 of the Fitness to Practise Procedures:
   - that there is no case to be taken forward and that no further action should be taken; or
   - that there is a case for matters to be dealt with by other means, which could include specific undertakings or conditions, but that there is no immediate need for a Fitness to Practise Panel hearing; or
   - that there is a case for the matter to be referred for further consideration by a Fitness to Practise Panel.

14. The Investigating Officer shall attend any Fitness to Practise Panel hearing and shall present the University’s case, in accordance with Section 12 of the Fitness to Practise Procedures.
APPENDIX 6: Process for referral of a student for assessment by the University Occupational Health Physician

The attached forms should be used where a student is being referred for assessment by the University Occupational Health Physician.
Consent for student referral to Occupational Health

Name of Student .................................................................

School or Faculty ..............................................................

Course ..............................................................................

Date of Birth ......................................................................

Date of Commencement of training ............................... 

I confirm that I understand the purpose of this referral is to obtain objective, independent medical advice to assist with a decision regarding my fitness to train and practice. I give consent for the referral, the consultation and for the report to be sent to the referring manager based on the consultation.

I have also been informed that a subsequent meeting may be arranged to discuss the outcome of the consultation and I may request a copy of the report at any time.

Student signature ........................................................... Date ..............................

Referring supervisor:

Name: ..............................................................................

Signature: ................................................................. Date ..............................

Title: ..............................................................................
Student Referral Letter

1. Student details

   Name:
   School or Faculty:
   Contact address:
   Email address:
   Date of Birth:
   Course of study:
   Date of proposed or actual commencement of training:

2. Training details and background information, including concerns about performance:

3. What medical questions are you asking to assist with a managerial decision?
I confirm that this student understands that the purpose of this referral is to obtain objective, independent medical advice to assist with a decision about fitness to train and practise, and has given explicit, informed consent for the referral, the consultation and for a report to be sent to the referring supervisor based on the consultation.

Referring Supervisor:  Name:

Date:

Professional title:

Email address:

Please submit the completed referral letter, in PDF format, to ohadmin@liv.ac.uk.
## Details of Sickness Absence Record

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