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Information for students and educators

# Guidance on conduct and ethics for students

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## Students should:

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- 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.

# About this document

This document gives students on education and training programmes we approve (approved programmes) information about our standards of conduct, performance and ethics. We hope this information will be useful during your training and once you are working.

You may find this document useful if you are:

- a **student** who is studying to be a member of a profession we regulate;
- a member of **academic staff** who is teaching students on an approved programme;
- a member of an **education provider's staff** who is involved in dealing with concerns about a student's conduct;
- a **practice placement educator** or **supervisor**;
- an **employer** who provides practice placements for students during their training; or
- a **service user** or **carer** who is receiving or is affected by the care, treatment or other services of a student during their training.

This is not a full list, but it should help to give you an idea of whether or not this document will help you.

# Introduction

## About us

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

Professionals on our Register are called 'registrants'. We currently regulate the following professions:

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

Each of these professions has one or more titles that is protected by law (such as 'physiotherapist' and 'dietitian'). Anyone who misuses a protected title is breaking the law and could be prosecuted.

Another important part of our role is to consider any concerns raised about our registrants to decide whether they are 'fit to practise'. When we say that someone is 'fit to practise' we mean that they have the skills, knowledge and character to practise their profession safely and effectively. We look at every concern to decide whether or not we need to take action. Based on

the information we have collected we may hold a hearing to decide whether someone is fit to practise.

We also set standards for continuing professional development (CPD), which all registrants must meet. Meeting these standards supports professionals in their learning and development once they are registered so that they can continue to practise safely and effectively.

## How the HCPC is run

We were created by the Health Professions Order 2001, which sets out the things that we must do and gives us our legal power. We have a council which is made up of both registrants and lay members. The Council sets our strategies and policies and makes sure that we are meeting our responsibilities under the Health Professions Order 2001.

## The standards of conduct, performance and ethics

We set standards of conduct, performance and ethics which apply to the professionals we regulate and set out in broad terms how we expect our registrants to behave. You will learn about these standards in your programme.

The standards also apply to people who are applying to become registered with us. In this case we will ask you to sign a declaration to confirm that you have read, and will keep to, the standards once you are registered.

The standards help us make decisions about the character of the people who apply to join our Register and in cases where we decide whether someone is fit to practise.

## Approving education programmes

We also assess education programmes against our standards of education and training. If a programme meets our standards, we approve it and the students who successfully complete the programme are eligible to apply to register with us.

## Our Register

Being on our Register shows that you meet our standards for your profession.

Our Register shows the public that these 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.

Our Register is available on our website at [www.hcpc-uk.org/check](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/check) and allows you to search online for a registered health and care professional.

## Applying to be on our Register

Completing an approved programme does not guarantee that you will become registered. But it does show us that you meet our professional standards for registration and so you are eligible to apply. We need more information from you to be able to register you.

When you first apply to join our Register, as part of your application you need to send us information which includes copies of relevant identification, a declaration regarding your health and a declaration regarding your character. This includes whether you have any cautions or convictions.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 does not apply to an application to join our Register. This means that you must tell us about any cautions and convictions you may have, including those that are considered 'spent' under the Act (other than a protected caution or protected conviction).

In most cases, the information you give us about your character will not affect whether or not we register you. For further information on applying for registration and providing relevant character information, please consult our guidance on health and character which is available on our website<sup>1</sup>.

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

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

You can find out more about the application process on our website<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/guidance/guidance-on-health-and-character](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/guidance/guidance-on-health-and-character)

<sup>2</sup> [www.hcpc-uk.org/uk](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/uk)

# About this guidance

This guidance is based on the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. We hope that this guidance will make you more familiar with these standards and that it provides extra information about some of the issues which you may come across as you complete your approved programme. Although we do not regulate students, we do expect them to understand our standards of conduct, performance and ethics in preparation for when they are registered.

The headings we use in the following section of this document are taken from the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. Under each heading we have provided bullet points which give guidance on how the standards relate to you as students. The guidance does not provide answers to every situation you may face. However, we hope that it will help you and encourage you to ask for extra information from your education provider or practice placement provider (if appropriate).

Education providers and practice placement providers often have their own policies and procedures which you should also follow. We also recognise the important role of education providers and practice placement providers in enabling and supporting students to meet the guidance.

## Delegation

We recognise that the issue of delegation will be more relevant to some students than others and particularly those reaching the end of their approved programme. These students will have developed their skills and knowledge over an extended period which may enable them to delegate certain tasks under certain conditions. A registrant is ultimately responsible for the tasks which have been delegated by a student under their supervision as set out in the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (standard 4.2).

## Language

This guidance applies to all students as far as possible. We approve a wide range of programmes, so students are involved in many settings with varying models of supervision. We have tried to use words and language which everyone can understand.

The language used in the guidance plays an important role in distinguishing the

scope of practice and expectations of students and prospective students from those of registrants and prospective registrants. We use the verb 'should' rather than 'must' in the guidance, to reflect the fact that we do not regulate students. This differs from the language used in the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

We have used the term 'student' throughout this document to refer to anyone studying on an approved education and training programme which leads to them being eligible to apply to join our Register. This includes trainees, practitioners who are training or other people taking part in training. The word 'programme' means an approved education and training programme.

Throughout this guidance we have used 'service users' to refer to anyone who uses or is affected by the work of registrants or students, for example, patients and clients. We have used 'carer' to refer to anyone who looks after, or provides support to, a family member, partner or friend.

We understand that students may undertake a number of actions to, for, on or with a service user whilst completing their approved programme including their practice placement. This can include diagnostic or monitoring procedures, therapy or advice. We have referred to such actions in the guidance as 'care, treatment or other services'.

## Personal and professional conduct

On your programme you have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge you need to become a professional in an environment which protects the public. You also have the opportunity to learn about the behaviour that the public expects from a registrant.

As a student studying to become a professional in a regulated profession, you have certain responsibilities. On your programme you will be expected to meet high standards of conduct and ethics.

You should be aware that in very serious circumstances, your conduct may affect your ability to:

- complete your programme;
- gain the final qualification; or
- register with us<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.hcpc-uk.org/set](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/set)

All of our approved programmes have processes in place for dealing with concerns about a student's conduct. This means that misconduct may affect your ability to complete your programme. You can download our standards of education and training from our website.

# Guidance on conduct and ethics for students

## 1. Promote and protect the interests of service users and carers

- You should treat service users and carers as individuals, respecting their privacy and dignity.
- You should make sure that you have valid consent, which is voluntary and informed, from service users who have the capacity to make the decision or other appropriate authority before you provide any care, treatment or other services.
- You should follow your education provider's or practice placement provider's policy on consent.
- You should make sure that before you provide any care, treatment or other services, the service user is aware that you are a student.
- You should respect a person's right to have their care, treatment or other services carried out by a professional and not a student.
- You should treat people fairly and be aware of the potential impact that your personal values, biases and beliefs may have on service users and carers and in your interactions with colleagues.
- You should take action to ensure that your personal values, biases and beliefs do not lead you to discriminate against service users, carers or colleagues. Your personal values, biases and beliefs must not detrimentally impact the care, treatment or other services that you provide.
- You should keep relationships with service users and carers professional including using the appropriate methods of communication to provide care, treatment or other services.
- You should not abuse your position as a trainee health and care practitioner to pursue personal, sexual, emotional or financial relationships with service users, carers, other learners or members of staff at your education provider and practice placement provider.

## 2. Communicate appropriately and effectively

- You should be polite and considerate to service users, other students and staff at your education provider and practice placement provider.

- You should listen to service users and carers and take account of their needs and wishes when carrying out any care, treatment or other services.
- You should take all practicable steps to meet service users' and carers' language and communication needs.
- You should communicate effectively and cooperate with members of staff at your education provider and practice placement provider to benefit service users and carers.
- You should show other learners and members of staff at your education provider and practice placement provider respect and consideration.
- If you are experiencing any difficulties or other issues which may affect your learning or ability to successfully participate in your programme, you should tell your education provider and practice placement provider.
- You should use all forms of communication appropriately and responsibly, including media-sharing networks and social networking sites.
- You should make reasonable checks to ensure information you share is accurate, true, does not mislead the public when sharing information on media-sharing networks and social networking sites.

### 3. Work within the limits of your knowledge and skills

- You should make sure that you are appropriately supervised for any task that you are asked to carry out.
- You should ask for help when you need it.
- You should be aware of any restrictions which apply to you in carrying out certain tasks and follow any relevant policies of your education provider or practice placement provider.
- You should recognise that opportunities for carrying out any unsupervised tasks will vary during your programme and may depend upon your knowledge, understanding, skills and experience.
- You should only carry out an unsupervised task if you feel that you have the

appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to do so safely and effectively.

- You should take responsibility for your own learning.
- You should be aware of and follow any guidance issued by your education provider or practice placement provider for working with service users and carers.
- You should seek, listen to, think about and respond proactively to feedback you are given.

#### 4. Delegate tasks appropriately

- You should recognise that the opportunities for delegation will vary during your programme depending upon your knowledge, understanding, skills and experience.
- You should discuss the delegation of tasks with an appropriate member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider prior to taking any action.
- You should follow policies or guidelines on delegation and working with others produced by your education provider or practice placement provider.
- If you give tasks to another person to carry out on your behalf, you should ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the tasks safely and effectively and that your education provider or practice placement provider supports your decision to do so.
- If you give tasks to another person to carry out on your behalf, you should ensure that they have the appropriate information to carry out the tasks safely and effectively.
- You should explain to service users and carers if you have asked another person to provide any care, treatment or other services.

#### 5. Respect confidentiality

- You should keep information about service users and carers confidential, and only use it for the purpose for which it was given.
- You should follow policies or guidelines on confidentiality produced by your education provider or practice placement provider.

- You should remove anything that could be used to identify a service user or carer from information which you use in your assessments or other academic work related to your programme.
- If any confidential information raises concerns about the safety or wellbeing of someone, you should discuss this promptly with an appropriate member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider.

## 6. Manage risk

- You should make sure that you take all appropriate steps to limit the risk of harm to service users, carers and others.
- You should not do anything that you think will put someone in danger or at unacceptable risk.
- You should follow your education provider's or practice placement provider's policy on managing risk.
- You should be aware that you may put your service users or yourself at risk if your performance or judgement is affected by your physical or mental health.
- You should seek appropriate support and adapt your study or stop studying if your performance or judgement is affected by your physical or mental health and could put service users, yourself or others at risk.
- You should get advice from a doctor, or other appropriate professional, if you are worried about your physical or mental health.

## 7. Report concerns about safety

- If you are worried about the safety or wellbeing of service users, carers or others, you should speak to an appropriate member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider promptly.
- You should inform an appropriate member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider if you witness bullying, harassment or intimidation of a service user, carer, a learner or a member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider.

- You should put the safety and wellbeing of service users before any personal concerns, for example about assessments, marks, other work related to your programme, employment prospects or other personal gain.

## 8. Be open when things go wrong

- You should tell an appropriate member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider if something has gone wrong in any care, treatment or other services you have carried out involving a service user.
- You should co-operate with members of staff at your education provider and practice placement provider if something has gone wrong in any care, treatment or other services you have carried out involving a service user. You should learn from this experience.
- You should tell an appropriate member of staff at your education provider or practice placement provider if a service user or carer wants to raise concerns about any care, treatment or other services they have received.
- You should co-operate with members of staff at your education provider and practice placement provider to apologise to a service user or carer when something has gone wrong with the care, treatment or other services that you have carried out.

## 9. Be honest and trustworthy

- You should make sure that your conduct and behaviour does not damage public trust and confidence in your profession.
- You should be aware that conduct outside of your programme may affect whether or not you are allowed to complete your programme or register with us.
- You should not claim that you have knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience which you do not.
- You should be honest about your role with service users, carers and others.
- You should make sure that your personal appearance is appropriate for your practice placement environment.

- You should follow your education provider’s or practice placement provider’s policy on attendance.
- You should follow your education provider’s policies on ethics when carrying out research.
- You should make sure that all attendance, achievement and assessment records are completed accurately and truthfully.
- You should reference other people’s work appropriately and not pass it off as your own.
- You should provide constructive feedback on the quality of your teaching and learning experience in both the education and practice placement setting.
- You should provide, as soon as possible, any important information about your conduct, competence or health to your education provider and practice placement provider.
- You should tell your education provider, as soon as possible, if you are cautioned for, or convicted of, any offence.
- You should co-operate with any investigation into your conduct or competence.

## 10. Keep records of your work with service users and carers

- You should make sure that the records you keep are clear and accurate.
- You should help to protect records from being damaged, lost or accessed by someone without permission.
- You should follow your education provider’s or practice placement provider’s policy on record keeping.

# More information

## Other useful documents

We have produced several documents which you may also find useful. These include the following.

- Confidentiality – guidance for registrants
- Guidance on health and character
- Health, disability and becoming a health and care professional
- Standards of conduct, performance and ethics
- Standards of proficiency (which are profession-specific)
- Continuing professional development and your registration

You can download copies of these documents from our website or email us at the address below.

You may also want to contact your professional body for more advice.

## Contacting us

You can find more information about us on our website ([www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)). Here we publish information about meeting our standards, the standards themselves, support with applications and much more.

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# Glossary

## Approved programme

An education and training programme which has been assessed as meeting our standards of education and training. Anyone who completes an approved programme is eligible to apply to join our Register.

## Care, treatment or other services

A general term to describe the different actions that a student may carry out while completing their approved programme which affects their service users or others. This can include diagnostic or monitoring procedures, providing therapy or advice.

## Carer

Anyone who looks after, or provides support to, a family member, partner or friend.

## Conduct

A person's behaviour.

## Consent

Permission for a student or registrant to provide any care, treatment or other services, given by a service user or someone acting on their behalf after receiving all the information they reasonably need to make that decision.

## Delegate

When a student asks someone else to carry out a task on their behalf. The issue of delegation may not be relevant to all students because they are not practising as qualified professionals and are supervised during their approved programme. However, for some students, as their knowledge and skills develop during their approved programme, the issue of delegation may become more relevant.

## Discriminate

To unfairly treat a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people. This includes treating others differently because of your views about their lifestyle, culture or their social or economic status, as well as the characteristics protected by law – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## Education provider

The institution which maintains overall responsibility for the delivery of an approved programme.

## Ethics

The values that guide a person's behaviour or judgement.

## Practice placement

A period of practical experience that forms part of an approved programme.

## Practice placement educator

A person who is responsible for a student's education during their period of practical experience. This person may also be referred to as a 'supervisor'.

## Register

A list of all those health and care professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, and behaviour.

## Registrant

A person who is currently on our Register.

## Scope of practice

The areas in which a student or registrant has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to practise safely and effectively. This includes providing any care, treatment or other services to service users and others.

## Service user

Anyone who uses or is affected by the services of registrants or students, for example, patients or clients.

## Student

Anyone who is currently studying on an approved programme which leads to them being eligible to join our Register.

To request this document in an alternative format, please email  
**[policy@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:policy@hcpc-uk.org)**

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Publication code: 20240901POLPUB

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