

## **Fitness to Practice Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The UCY Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology (DPCP) has developed this Policy to assess fitness to practice for students pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy degree at UCY in the specified program.

### **2. Definition of fitness to practice**

2.1 Fitness to practice means possessing the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills to practice safely and effectively in relevant professional roles.

2.2 In addition to meeting the qualifications, the DPCP Committee ensures that students entering the psychologist's profession are safe and suitable candidates who are fit to practice. Fitness to practice is continuously monitored and assessed throughout the program. Concerns regarding misconduct, competence, and health issues are thoroughly investigated by the committee. The primary purpose is to protect the public and adhere to regulatory standards.

2.3 Fitness to practice concerns may arise from the student's health or personal conduct, including professional progression, behavioral issues, and other external factors unrelated to academic performance.

### **3. Scope**

3.1 This Policy applies to students pursuing professional career paths, particularly clinical training programs.

3.2 These characteristics and requirements are in addition to UCY's general expectations for conduct and academic progress cited in the following websites:

<https://websites.ucy.ac.cy/legislation/volumeb/5.1.4.3.htm>

<https://websites.ucy.ac.cy/legislation/volumeb/5.1.1.htm>

3.3 The Fitness to Practice Policy serves the following purposes:

- Protecting individuals and students
- Ensuring students are adequately prepared for entry into the profession, including developing professional attitudes and clear, demonstrable behavior
- Identifying students who are unfit to practice, including safeguarding measures before and during the course
- Safeguarding UCY against significant risks during students' professional training.

### **4. Use of this Policy**

4.1 This Policy does not address academic performance, extenuating circumstances, or complaints. However, if a student's alleged disciplinary offense raises concerns about fitness to practice, those issues may be referred for consideration under this Policy.

4.2 Officers involved in the application of this policy may delegate their responsibilities to ensure impartiality and timely progress of the panel.

4.3 Reasonable efforts will be made to comply with time limits outlined in this Policy. If there are delays, the student will be promptly notified with an explanation and a new deadline.

4.4 The DPCP considers relevant legislation, guidelines from regulatory bodies, and acts in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 in cases related to a student's health.

4.5 Information regarding fitness to practice requirements specific to the program, including the need to notify the regulatory body, is provided during the application process, induction sessions, and the Program Handbook.

4.6 Student confidentiality is respected throughout the procedure.

## **5. Fitness to Practice Process**

### *5.1 Raising a concern*

5.1.1 Concerns about a student's fitness to practice may arise from various behaviors, such as criminal convictions, drug or alcohol misuse, aggression, academic misconduct, ethical violations, unprofessional behavior, or health issues.

5.1.2 Reports of concerns should be submitted to the Chair of the DPCP Coordinating Committee promptly after the incident or behavior in question.

5.1.3 Cause for concern reports should include chronological information, actions taken prior to the referral, and supporting evidence. Anonymous reports are generally not considered unless exceptional circumstances related to safety arise.

5.1.4 In cases involving serious fitness to practice issues, immediate suspension of the student may be recommended by the Committee Chair without an obligation by the Department to offer placement in a different program.

### *5.2 Initial investigation*

5.2.1 The initial investigation determines if there is a case regarding the student's impaired fitness to practice.

5.2.2 The student is notified about the cause for concern report and provided with a copy. They have the opportunity to respond in writing within five working days, including any relevant extenuating circumstances.

5.2.3 Students can seek support from the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Services or the Mental Health Center before responding to the report.

5.2.4 The student should inform the Committee Chair if there will be a delay in submitting a written response within five days.

5.2.5 The Committee considers the cause for concern report and the student's response, assessing behavioral issues, impacts, risk management, and support needs.

5.2.6 The Committee produces a Fitness to Practice report, concluding that there is either no case for impaired fitness to practice or further investigation is needed

5.2.7 If no impaired fitness to practice is found (5.2.7 a), any identified support needs are implemented, and the student is informed of available advice. The student's ongoing fitness to practice is monitored as usual.

5.2.8 The investigation should be completed within 15 working days of receiving the original report.

## **6. Fitness to Practice Hearing**

### *6.1 Arranging a Fitness to Practice Panel*

6.1.2 Upon receiving the Fitness to Practice report, the Committee notifies the student, providing the report, supporting information, and details of the meeting. The notification includes:

Names of witnesses proposed to give oral evidence.

Copies of relevant documents obtained during the investigation.

Information about the student's right to be accompanied by a companion and access student support services.

6.1.3 The student must inform the Committee in advance if they will attend the meeting and if they wish to be accompanied, providing the companion's name and role.

6.1.4 The student must submit any evidence they wish to present to the Committee at least five working days before the meeting.

### *6.2 Fitness to Practice Committee membership and attendance*

6.2.1 The DPCP Committee consists of the regular members unless contraindicated and acts under this Policy as the Fitness to Practice Committee.

6.2.2 If a conflict of interest arises, the member will be replaced by another senior academic who is not a regular member of the committee, appointed by the Department Council. A Committee member serves as the secretary.

6.2.3 Additional panel members may be enlisted as needed, including seeking advice or guidance from an expert or involving an external professional from the student's program.

6.2.4 Committee members must not have prior involvement with the investigation or the allegation being considered beyond the initial examination described in section 5.

6.2.5 The student has the right to attend the hearing and be accompanied as described in 6.1.3.

6.2.6 If the student fails to attend the meeting without a reasonable explanation, the Committee may proceed at its discretion after ensuring proper notice was given.

### *6.3 Fitness to Practice Committee meeting proceedings*

6.3.1 The Fitness to Practice Committee meeting is responsible for considering fitness to practice matters and imposing appropriate conditions or sanctions on unfit students.

6.3.2 The meeting date and time are set in a timely manner. The Panel receives the same documents as the student. The Committee keeps a record of proceedings and evidence. Meetings are held privately.

6.3.3 The procedure for considering allegations typically involves the following stages:

- i. The Committee chair presents the case and may call witnesses who can be questioned and re-examined.
- ii. The student or companion presents their case and may call witnesses who can be questioned and re-examined.
- iii. The Committee may recall witnesses.
- iv. The student or companion can reply.
- v. The Committee withdraws to consider the case privately.
- vi. If possible, the Committee recalls the student and companion to hear its recommendation on the same day.

6.3.4 The Committee takes notes during the meeting, and unauthorized electronic recording is prohibited.

#### *6.4 Powers of the Committee*

6.4.1 The Committee has the power to reach the following decisions:

a) The student is fit to practice and can:

- i. Continue with the program, or
- ii. Continue on the program with conditions, a formal reprimand, or other appropriate actions to facilitate completion.

Or

b) The student is unfit to practice, and:

- i. Must suspend studies for a specified period, after which the Committee reviews the situation for potential re-admission, or
- ii. Should have their registration terminated in the Department and at UCY. The Chair of the Department recommends termination to the appropriate bodies.

6.4.2 If a student's registration is terminated, the DPCP informs them about any eligible recognition for completed studies.

#### *6.5 After the Fitness to Practice Committee Meeting*

6.5.1 A report of the Committee meeting, along with a decision and any conditions, is sent to the student and relevant parties within 10 working days.

6.5.2 The student has ten working days to provide feedback on the accuracy of the meeting's record.

6.5.3 Findings, decisions, and conditions are documented in the student's file in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

6.5.4 If applicable, findings and decisions may be communicated to the relevant regulatory body when a student is deemed unfit to practice.

6.5.5 If requested, the decision of the student being unfit to practice may be noted in references.

## **7. Appeals**

7.1 A student can request a case review by submitting a complaint through UCY's Student Complaints Procedure.

7.2 A Formal Complaint must be submitted to the Department Council within 28 days of receiving the notification letter from the Fitness to Practice Committee.

7.3 The DCPC is committed to complying with formal decisions and recommendations made by the Department Council or other UCY regulatory bodies regarding student complaints.