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Do undergraduate heathcare students have to disclose their academic status to patients when involved in their care?

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hcpc health & care professions council

Information for students and education providers

Guidance on conduct and ethics for students

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About this document

We, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), have written this document to give students on education programmes information on our standards of conduct 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 **practitioner in training**;
- a member of **academic staff** who is teaching students on a programme we approve; or
- a **practice placement educator** or **supervisor**.

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 a regulator and were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

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
- Social workers in England
- Speech and language therapists

We may regulate other professions in the future. For an up-to-date list of the professions we regulate, please see our website (www.hcpc-uk.org).

Each of these professions has one or more 'protected titles' (protected titles include titles like 'physiotherapist' and 'dietitian'). Anyone who uses one of these titles must be on our Register. Anyone who uses a protected title and is not registered with us is breaking the law and could be prosecuted.

Our Register is available on our website for anyone to search, so people can check that a professional is registered.

Another important part of our role is to consider any concerns raised about registrants. We look at every concern to decide whether or not we need to take action. We may hold a hearing to get all the information we need to decide whether someone is fit to practise. When we say that someone is 'fit to practise', we mean that they have the skills, knowledge, character and health to practise safely and effectively.

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.

How the HCPC is run

We were created by the Health and Social Work 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 registrants and members of the public. The Council sets our strategies and policies and makes sure that we are meeting our responsibilities under the Health and Social Work Professions Order 2001.

Professionals must register with us before they can use a protected title for their profession. This means that even if you have completed a course in, for example, physiotherapy, you will still not be able to call yourself a 'physiotherapist' unless you are registered with us.

The standards of conduct, performance and ethics

We set standards of conduct, performance and ethics which apply to the professionals we regulate. You will learn about these standards on your programme.

The standards also apply to people who are applying to become registered with us. If you are applying to be registered, 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 also in cases where we decide whether someone is fit to practise.

Approving education programmes

We also assess education programmes against the standards that we set. These standards are the standards of education and training. If a programme meets our standards we approve it, and 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.

We have a register to show the public that 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.

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 go on our Register, as part of your application you need to send us information which includes a health declaration, a character reference, a photograph and copies of relevant identification. You will also need to let us know if you have any criminal convictions and if you have ever had action taken against you by another regulator, a professional body or an employer.

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 (www.hcpc-uk.org).

About this guidance

This guidance is based on the standards of conduct, performance and ethics, as these standards apply to both registrants and those applying to be registered. We hope that this guidance will make you more familiar with these standards.

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. 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 (if appropriate).

Education providers and those that provide practice placements often have their own policies and procedures which you should follow.

Language

This guidance applies to all students as far as possible. We have tried to use words which everyone can understand. However, we understand that some of the standards may not apply to students on particular programmes.

We have used the term '**student**' throughout this document to refer to anyone studying on an education and training programme which leads to being eligible to join our Register. A student includes trainees or practitioners who are training. The word '**programme**' means these education and training programmes.

Throughout this guidance we have used '**service users**' to refer to anyone who uses or is affected by a registrant's services, for example your patients, clients, and their carers or relatives.

We have used the word '**intervention**' in this document to describe a number of actions that you may take. This means actions you take to, for, on or with the service user and it can include diagnostic or monitoring procedures, therapy or advice.

Conduct outside your programme

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.

We have recently made several changes to the standards that we use to approve education programmes. We started following these changes from September 2009. One of these changes is that programmes must have processes for dealing with concerns about a student's behaviour (see our standards of education and training, point 3.16). This means that misconduct may affect your ability to complete your programme. You can download our document Standards of education and training from our website (www.hcpc-uk.org).

When you apply to join our Register, we ask for information as part of a declaration that you have a 'good character'. This includes whether you have:

- any convictions or cautions;
- been disciplined by a professional organisation, regulator or employer; or
- had any civil proceedings made against you.

The professions we regulate are not covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that you must tell us about all of your convictions and cautions, including those that are considered 'spent'. A spent conviction is one which, under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, can be ignored after a certain amount of time. Usually the convictions or cautions which might affect your registration are those for more serious offences.

It is important that you give us any information about your character which falls within the declaration. We look at any information you give us to see if it may affect whether you can go onto our Register. In most cases, information you give us about your character will not affect whether or not you can go on our Register.

We have produced more information about how we consider information on your health and character in our document Guidance on health and character. You can download this from our website (www.hcpc-uk.org).

Guidance on conduct and ethics

1 You should always act in the best interests of your service users.

– You should respect a person's right to have their interventions carried out by a professional and not a student.

– You should not exploit or abuse your relationships with service users.

– You should treat everyone equally.

– You should not do anything that you think will put someone in danger.

– If you are worried about a situation which might put someone at risk, you should speak to a member of the placement team or your education provider.

2 You should respect the confidentiality of your service users.

– You should keep information about service users confidential, and only use it for the purpose for which it was given, unless the information raises concerns about a situation where someone may be at risk.

– You should not knowingly give any personal or confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to access it.

– You should remove anything that could be used to identify a service user from confidential information which you use in your assessment.

– You should follow local policies or guidelines if you want to use information that may identify someone in your assessments.

– You should follow local policies or guidelines on confidentiality produced by your education provider or placement provider.

3 You should keep high standards of personal conduct.

– 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 be polite with service users, your colleagues and the programme team.

– You should make sure that your personal appearance is appropriate for your placement environment.

– You should follow your education provider's or placement provider's policy on attendance.

4 You should provide any important information about your conduct, competence or health to your education provider.

– You should tell your education provider and placement provider about any existing health conditions or changes to your health which may put your service users or yourself at risk.

– You should tell your education provider if you are convicted of, or cautioned for, any offence.

5 You should limit your study or stop studying if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.

– You should get help from a doctor or an occupational health professional if you are worried about your health.

– You should be aware that you may put your service users or yourself at risk if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.

6 You should keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.

– You are responsible for your own learning.

– You should think about and respond positively to feedback you are given.

7 You should act within the limits of your knowledge and skills.

– You should only carry out an unsupervised task if you feel that you have the appropriate 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 make sure that you do not claim that you have knowledge and skills which you do not.

8 You should communicate effectively with service users and your education provider and placement providers.

- You should take all reasonable steps to make sure that you can communicate appropriately and effectively with service users.
- You should communicate effectively and cooperate with colleagues to benefit service users.
- You should communicate effectively and cooperate with the programme team and placement team.
- Where appropriate, you should share your knowledge with colleagues.

9 You should get informed consent to provide care or services (so far as possible).

Informed consent is when someone has all the information they need, in a format they can understand, to make a decision about receiving care or services.

You should do the following (so far as possible).

- You should make sure that before you carry out any intervention, the service user is aware that you are a student.
- You should make sure that the service user has given their permission for the intervention to be carried out by a student.
- You should explain the intervention you are planning to carry out.
- Before you carry out any intervention, you should explain any risks associated with it.
- You should follow your education provider's or placement provider's policy on consent.

10 You should keep accurate records on service users.

– You should make sure that any information you put in someone's record is accurate and clear.

– You should protect information in records from being lost, damaged, accessed by someone without permission or tampered with.

11 You should deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection.

– You should make sure that you take all appropriate steps to deal with the risks of infection.

– You should follow your education provider's or placement provider's policy on managing the risks of infection.

12 You should behave honestly.

– You should not pass off other people's work as your own.

– You should make sure that you reference other people's work appropriately.

– You should make sure that you truthfully and accurately fill in any documents.

– You should not let any improper financial reward influence the advice and services you provide, or the products you recommend.

– You should follow your education provider's policies on ethics when carrying out research.

13 You should make sure that your behaviour does not damage public confidence in your profession.

– You should be aware that your behaviour may affect the trust that the public has in your profession.

– You should not do anything which might affect the trust that the public has in your profession.

More information

Other useful documents

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

- Guidance on health and character
- A disabled person's guide to becoming a health professional
- Confidentiality – guidance for registrants
- Standards of conduct, performance and ethics
- Standards of proficiency

You can download copies of these documents from our website or ask us for a hard copy by writing to 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). Here we publish information about how we work, including the standards that we produce, all of our forms, news releases and much more.

You can also contact us at the following address.

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