



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

**Fitness to Practice Policy
and Procedure of the Masters
in Psychotherapeutic
Practice: Emotion Focused
Therapy Programme.**

2016/7

Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure of the Masters in Psychotherapeutic Practice: Emotion Focused Therapy Programme.

Introduction

The fitness to practice policy and procedure is guided by the standards of the professional body (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – BACP) and by the Academic Quality handbook (AQH) of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

The AQH states the students while on a course and on placements must;

- 'f) Conduct him/herself in an appropriate manner within **the relevant ethical framework**, ensuring confidentiality and treating others with respect and dignity.
- g) Act in a professional manner, including notifying the Placement Provider in a timely fashion in the event that he/she is unable to attend their placement due to illness etc.
- h) Respect any other requirements of the workplace such as dress codes.
- i) Notify their Placement Coordinator or Tutor should any issues of concern arise.'

The relevant Ethical Framework is the BACP's current Ethical Framework which came into force in July 2016. There are also UWTSD and BACP ethical guidelines for conducting research which are also followed by the course.

The Gold Book standards for BACP accredited courses has stated that;

'Formal procedures must be in place to terminate the training of incompetent, incapable or ethically unsound trainees.' These standards are given below.

The university's AQH goes on to say that;

'Working with children, young people and vulnerable adults is a privilege, not a right, and it requires a high level of professionalism. It involves the knowledge, skills and values that underpin the approach of professionals to their work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults need to show, through their actions and their attitudes, that they are fit to undertake this important work.'

The University, in conjunction with local employers has a responsibility to ensure that the student exhibits principles, values and behaviours during the course of his/her studies that demonstrate that he/she is 'fit to practise' and is adequately prepared to function at a professional standard upon successful completion of the Programme of Study. A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is a mandatory requirement for all students working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.'

In the opinion of the course team all clients fall into the category above of 'vulnerable adults'.

1. In preparation for work based learning or placements;

- All students before they attend placement undergo the Assessment of Readiness to Practice of the course. (see Appendix A at the end)
- Continue to demonstrate the ability, or the potential, to meet the admissions criteria of the course
- Submit themselves to a DBS check.
- Have good attendance on the course as the initial training is very much intended to prepare students for a placement.

- Read and understand the Placement Handbook especially the Placement Guidelines of the course.
- Find a placement and supervisor deemed suitable by the course.
- Begin personal therapy to help begin integrating learning about how to counsel.
- Complete course work (presentations, recordings of skills and written evaluation) that relates to assessment of readiness to practice
- Join the BACP and sign up to abiding by the Ethical Framework – this needs to be evidenced in the placement portfolio
- Agree never to work without adequate supervision

2. Once in placement all students must;

- Continue to demonstrate that they meet assessment of readiness to practice, and admissions, criteria of the course.
- Not behave in a way which is considered unprofessional or that might bring the counselling profession, the course or the university into disrepute.
- Abide by the Ethical Framework of the BACP
- Seek professional support and supervision when needed
- Leave a placement if asked to do so by the course team
- Submit required course work
- Ensure that they and their agencies, tutors and supervisors are all aware of the Placement Guidelines and that they are signed up to these.

3. Fitness to Practice

Students can be deemed unfit to practice for the following reasons;

Incompetence – students are deemed incompetent if he or she;

- Fails to demonstrate that they can show the core conditions, or have a realistic potential to show, of the Person Centred approach to a minimum degree as assessed by the course team of the counselling programme
- Fails to demonstrate that they can show, or have a realistic potential to show, the basic listening or communication skills of the current edition of the Skilled Helper model of Gerard Egan
- Engages consistently in 'bad practice' such as asking too many questions or giving advice as defined by the course team and after feedback and guidance
- Fails to demonstrate an ability, or realistic potential, to begin, maintain and complete an appropriate therapeutic relationship (see appendix B for criteria)
- Fails to take appropriate feedback from the course team about safety, ethical and competence issues. This is after they have consulted each other and if necessary also their own supervisors, external examiner and PTL (Partnership Team Leader appointed by the university)
- Does not appear to understand the generally understood nature of counselling. Or is unable to practice in a competent manner as assessed by the placement, and/or the supervisor or course team.
- Is not abiding by the BACP's Ethical Framework in matters of competence or self-care

- Serious concerns are raised by other therapists, supervisors or staff in placement agencies (either counselling or embedded counselling) about the competence and ability of a student despite having passed the selection process. When investigated these concerns are found to have substance enough to seriously question the competence of a student.
- Other staff within the college raise concerns about the behaviour of a counselling student or make serious complaints about their behaviour and/or attitudes. When investigated these concerns are found to have substance enough to seriously question the competence of a student.
- The student him or herself raise concerns about their ability.

Incapacity – students are deemed incapable if he or she;

- Is considered unable to practice due to changes in personal circumstances such as ill health; family break up or bereavement or trauma, etc. In these circumstances the safety and wellbeing of the student and their clients will be given priority and if deemed necessary, they will be asked to stop practising either temporarily or permanently.
- Is considered to be psychologically unsuitable to work with clients. This may well be a mental health issue that was well managed or not apparent during selection. But is later deemed by the course team in consultation with others, to be serious enough to put clients and the student him or herself at risk. Examples might be students unable to control their temper appropriately or show signs of borderline behaviour or fragile self-process.
- Fails to take appropriate feedback from the course team about safety, ethical and competence issues. This is after the team have consulted each other and if necessary also their own supervisors, external examiner and PTL (Partnership Team Leader appointed by the university)
- Seems unable to put aside their own needs and work for the benefit of the client
- Shows signs of prejudice and discrimination but is unable to change their attitudes or behaviour and this leaves clients at risk
- Is unable to maintain good enough working relationships with other stakeholders including supervisors, therapists, staff and students in the college, etc.
- Has major problems in maintaining good working relationships with the tutor team and students on the course. And they appear unable to benefit from offers of help and feedback concerning their relationships with others.
- Is unable to accept their own responsibility in any relationships that have become difficult

Ethically unsound – students are deemed ethically unsound if he or she;

- Is not abiding by the BACP's Ethical Framework
- Is putting themselves or their clients at unnecessary risk
- Is breaking confidences without good cause or maintaining confidentiality with this is considered to the detriment of the client or others
- Is ignoring normally accepted counselling boundaries
- Is consistently working beyond their safe limits

- Refuse to behave in an acceptable way towards clients who are different and uphold equality in their work
- Is ignoring appropriate advice, guidance and warnings from the tutor team, supervisors or those responsible for their work in any counselling or embedded counselling context
- Refuses to work within the Placement Guidelines of the course and/or the placement agency and in so doing puts themselves or others at risk
- Is behaving unprofessionally in any context that throws considerable doubt on their integrity in their work with clients
- Refuse to disclose information required about their client work and work based learning when required to do so (to tutors, supervisors or others concerned) or refuse to accept assessment decisions about their work with clients when it is unreasonable to do so
- Is involved in serious criminal activity
- Is in any way in breach of the guidelines set by UWTSD in relation to fitness to practice, see examples below

The AQH also states that;

‘Respecting others is fundamental to these principles. It includes respecting the dignity of those with whom an individual works and/or studies regardless of race, age, disability, gender, religion/belief, colour, ethnicity, language, lifestyle and sexual orientation. It means behaving in a professional, honest, decent and courteous manner. Students should always use language that is appropriate and that does not offend others.’

The following behaviour is also considered unacceptable and liable to bring fitness to practice into doubt;

- Criminal conviction or caution: child pornography; theft; financial fraud; possession of illegal substances; child abuse or any other abuse; physical violence.
- Drug or alcohol misuse: drunk driving; alcohol consumption that affects work or environment; dealing, possessing or using drugs even if there are no legal proceedings.
- Aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour: assault; physical violence; bullying; abuse.
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour: uncommitted to work; neglect of administrative tasks; poor time management; non-attendance.
- Cheating or plagiarising: cheating in course work; passing off others’ work as one’s own; dishonesty or fraud, including dishonesty outside the professional role; falsifying research; fraudulent CVs or other documents.
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitudes: breach of confidentiality; misleading young people or community members; sexual harassment; inappropriate physical contact or failure to keep appropriate boundaries in behaviour; persistent rudeness to colleagues or others; unlawful discrimination.

Fitness to Practice procedures

If a student is deemed by majority of the course team and/or the programme leader to be incompetent, incapable or unsound ethically then they will do the following;

Stage one

- Consult each other within the tutor team, and maybe other concerned parties outside the team, initially and try to find an informal solution
- Alert the student concerned if appropriate and try to support them in altering their behaviour and/or attitudes – usually in a tutorial which is recorded in written form, both tutor and students signs it
- The college's causes for concern can also be used to record a concern
- If this is unsuccessful then a more formal meeting with the student will be convened
- Before this can happen staff will consult others as appropriate to the circumstances such as supervisors (theirs or the students); placement agencies; line managers within the college; student support services; PTL; External examiner.
- At all times students will be given an opportunity to change their behaviour and get the support they need and this is the focus of the stage 2 meeting.

Stage two

- Students are eligible to have a supporter with them when staff confront them in these circumstances and staff are also advised not to see students on their own in these circumstances
- The meeting will be recorded or a written record kept
- If this is still unsuccessful in altering behaviour, then the fitness to practise procedures of UWTSD come into effect and will be considered if no other course of action can stop a student
- The AQH states that all students must conduct him/herself in an appropriate manner within the relevant ethical framework, ensuring confidentiality and treating others with respect and dignity.
- If the tutor team at this stage thinks there are grounds for stopping a student, then the relevant parts of the BACP's Ethical Framework will be used to bring a fitness to practice procedure within the university. If appropriate, then the student can be asked to stop practising while the procedure is underway.
- The head of school and Partnership Team Leader will be consulted first as will the Assistant principal in the college responsible for higher education. Other possible resolutions will be explored first and then the FTP procedure initiated.
- One alternative is to fail a student academically on the core module Clinical practice 2 as this includes the need to pass assessment of readiness to practice, and to work safely and ethically, in the learning outcomes. It is important to gain the support of key people in the college and the university in order for this to be used. As well as the external examiner and evidence from placements and supervisors are also useful in these circumstances such as written expressions of concern about a student.
- Another outcome is to request that a student stop practising for a defined period to be reviewed by the course team periodically with the student concerned. If necessary in consultation with others such as the supervisor and placement agency.
- If none of the above is possible for some reason or advisable then the fitness to practice procedures of the university can be used.
- A student at this point would be expected to stop practising with clients and their placement agency(ies) and supervisor(s) informed after the student has been made aware of this.

Stage three

Fitness to Practise Panel

A Fitness to Practise Panel will be convened if it becomes apparent that a student has exhibited principles, values and behaviours during the course of his/her studies that demonstrate that he/she may not be 'fit to practise' in his/her chosen area of study. This would also involve the tutor team in Coleg Sir Gâr asserting that the student was in breach of the Ethical Framework or deemed to be behaving unethically; incompetently or incapable of practising safely.

Terms of Reference

(1) To establish whether the student has been engaged in any of the following:

- making serious or repeated mistakes or errors of judgement during fieldwork practice;
- responding inappropriately to staff, colleagues, children, young people, vulnerable adults or members of the community;
- misusing information about children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- working with children, young people or vulnerable adults without obtaining necessary consent;
- behaving dishonestly in financial matters, in dealing with colleagues, staff, children, young people or vulnerable adults in the conduct of research;
- making sexual advances towards children, young people, or vulnerable adults;
- misusing alcohol or drugs.

(2) To decide upon any possible penalty in the event that the fitness to practise concern is substantiated.

(3) To provide full details of the outcome of all fitness to practise concerns that it is requested to investigate.

(4) To regularly review the appropriateness of the University's Fitness to Practise policy.

Penalty possible in the event of the student being deemed unfit to practise;

- The student's training is terminated if found to be incompetent, incapable or ethically unsound.
- The student's training is terminated until he or she can meet specific criteria. A specific time scale for this is given. If not met by then the student's training is terminated.

Membership

A Dean of Faculty (Chair)

At least two Heads of School

Three members of academic staff

External Representative

Secretary: Central appointment

The External Representative could come from another HEI or from a workplace that deals with student placements but is not directly associated with any of the fitness to practise cases under consideration.

Appendix A

Assessment of Readiness to Practice Criteria to work with clients;

Assessment of Readiness to Practice

The purpose of assessment of readiness to practice is to determine if someone is ready to begin seeing clients in an appropriate and supervised counselling placement or agency

setting. Normally this involves working in a voluntary capacity for no more than three hours a week and less to begin with. It can also involve taking on an additional counselling role within an organisation in which the student already works.

The Criteria

Each candidate is assessed against specific criteria for their assessment of readiness to practice. At Introduction and first year FdA level we are looking at potential as much as evidence. These are slightly different from the selection criteria for the course itself but there is considerable overlap. At some interviews both will be being assessed.

Based largely on McLeod's work (McLeod, 2003)

Interpersonal Skills

Is the person able to demonstrate appropriate listening, communication, interpersonal warmth, empathy, presence, awareness of non-verbal communication, sensitivity to voice quality, and responsiveness to expressions of emotion, turn-taking, structuring time and use of language. Ability to put aside own needs and attitudes to focus on the client. Warmth of personality is seen as necessary in developing a counselling relationship. The ability to be able to be present physically, emotionally, and psychologically to their clients, on a regular basis would be the outcome of having these interpersonal skills.

Personal Beliefs and Attitudes

Capacity to accept others, belief in the potential for change, awareness of ethical and moral choices. Sensitivity to values held by client and self. Acceptance of the need to look at themselves. The capacity for a sensitive response to a wide range of people and issues

Conceptual Ability

Ability to understand and assess the client's problems, to anticipate future consequences of actions, to make sense of immediate process in terms of a wider conceptual scheme, to remember information about the client. Cognitive flexibility or flexibility in thinking. Skill in problem solving, and the ability to argue critically and evaluate ideas and outcomes.

It is important that there are no absences of consciousness and understanding. Clarity of thought generally, or the ability to develop it, is required.

Personal 'soundness'

Absence of irrational needs or irrational beliefs that are destructive to counselling relationships, self-confidence, capacity to tolerate strong and uncomfortable feelings in relation to clients, secure personal boundaries, ability to be a client. Absence of social prejudice, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism. Willingness to own material as theirs. Absence of major unresolved psychological issues. Willingness to seek support appropriately. Ability to manage difficulties appropriately in own life. If there are considerable health or other problems students need to demonstrate they can manage these appropriately when working with clients and that any problems will not adversely effect the client's well being. Managing difficulties in one's own life is seen as a positive indication of ability to help others in a counselling relationship. A commitment to the Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2002) and an ability to work to the Framework are required. This would involve fitness to practise each of the six ethical principles of; Fidelity; Autonomy; Beneficence; Non-Maleficence; Justice and Self-Respect.

Mastery of technique

Knowledge of when and how to carry out specific interventions, ability to assess effectiveness of interventions, understanding of rationale behind techniques, possession of a sufficiently wide repertoire of interventions. Willingness to adapt one's way of working to suit a particular client group when appropriate. Avoiding inappropriate self-disclosure would also be included here.

Ability to understand and work within social systems

Including awareness of the family and work relationships of the client, the impact of the agency on the client, the capacity to use support networks and supervision. Sensitivity to the social worlds of clients who may be from a different gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, different abilities, first language or age group.

Openness to learning and inquiry

A capacity to be curious about clients' backgrounds and problems. Being open to new knowledge. Using research to inform practice. Willingness to accept and use feedback when appropriately given.

Ability to self-care

Having a 'life' outside counselling. Willingness to seek support appropriately, and to form good supervisory relationships. Ability to self soothe. Are they too withholding or too impulsive? Willingness to take advice about self care when appropriately given. Good time management and ability to manage relationships at work. Also an awareness of, and a commitment, withdraw from work when this is ethical and appropriate.

Evidence: Internal candidates –

- how student presents in course generally
- assessed video work and course work generally.
- references and written application

External candidates; we rely on -

- assessed course work
- how he or she presents in interview/selection day.
- references and written application

During selection days it may well be that we are trying to assess both suitability for the course and assessment of readiness to practice. Further details on interpreting the BACP criteria are below.

References

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013) *BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Rugby: BACP.

McLeod, J. (2003) *An Introduction to Counselling*. Open University.

Further explanation of some of the BACP admission criteria, and ongoing assessment of readiness to practice once on the Foundation degree in Counselling at Coleg Sir Gâr.

Selection Criteria – how to evidence if students meet them. (used in conjunction with the interview checklist)

The following selection criteria need to be evidenced clearly during the selection process. The extent to which students meet them depends on the level they are coming in at. The key word is evidence here.

Another key word would be potential; we are looking for students who will potentially gain the most and have most to contribute both to the course and to the potential clients and profession generally.

Clearly no student will be good at everything – otherwise why train at all! We are selecting those who meet the criteria most adequately and have the greatest potential to learn and grow.

For selection evidence is gained from;

- a. Application to the course
- b. Answers in interview
- c. General demeanour and participation on selection day
- d. Feedback from course tutors on the introduction to counselling or previous courses
- e. References

Once the course starts evidence is gained from:

- a. Course work
- b. Placements both embedded and counselling
- c. Interactions with others on the course and in the college
- d. Feedback from supervisors/mentors once in placement
- e. Personal development groups
- f. Skills triads and supervision groups
- g. Attendance is also a good indicator

Appendix B

Student's competence

- i. Establish a clear framework for the therapeutic work, including;
 - a. awareness of the limits of confidentiality and other ethical and professional boundaries.
 - b. clear procedures for pre-assessment communication with clients about services on offer
 - c. clear information about the process of therapy and the process of therapeutic change
 - d. a description of the responsibilities of each party to the contract
 - e. the negotiation of appropriate outcomes with clients
 - f. the negotiation of all details of the practical arrangements including the number of sessions available
- ii. Apply a body of knowledge, informed by contemporary research, consistently and effectively during the course of the therapeutic process.
- iii. Apply and monitor a range of therapeutic interventions consistent with the rationale and philosophy of the course.
- iv. Work with difference and diversity as it impacts on the therapeutic relationship or the process of therapy.
- v. Be aware of the potential power imbalance in the therapeutic relationship.

- vi. Reflect on and manage the therapeutic process and to work with the unexpected nature of life and of the therapeutic relationship.
- vii. Review and evaluate the initial assessment decisions and if necessary modify the work with the client or conduct a referral.
- viii. Conduct an ending