



## **Professional Master of Education (PME)**

### **FITNESS TO PRACTISE STATEMENT**

#### **UCD Policy Definition**

Fitness to Practise means students having the skills, knowledge, health and character necessary to undertake and complete a programme with professional practice, experiential learning or clinical work safely and effectively, fulfilling their responsibilities within their scope of practice in their chosen field.

#### **Purpose of the UCD Fitness to Practise Policy**

- To protect the public, students, placement providers and the University;
- To instill in students the qualities and competencies required for professional practice and to support and guide students who experience issues that may affect their ability to practise;
- To provide a suitable framework for the effective management of Fitness to Practise issues that may arise, either prior to or during a student's programme of study.

#### **Fitness to Practise in Education**

A student on the Professional Master of Education programme which includes a mandatory school placement component must be Fit to Practise. The School of Education has a responsibility to ensure that students following a programme of study leading to a professional qualification which confers registration with a statutory regulatory body are suitable to enter that profession. It is the position of the School of Education that its students conduct themselves professionally at all times in order to justify the trust the public places in them and in the teaching profession. A guide to Fitness to Practise for the PME has thus been developed using the principles of the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as well as the central tenets of the Teaching Council's School Placement Guidelines and the supporting documentation of the School of Education. Fitness to practise is also subject to Garda vetting.

#### **Aim of the UCD School of Education Fitness to Practise Statement**

The Fitness to Practise statement aims to:

1. Ensure students understand the level of professional attitudes and behaviour required of them throughout their programme of study.
2. Safeguard pupils and the wider school community with whom the School's students have contact during their programme
3. Meet the requirements of the UCD Fitness to Practise Policy and School Fitness to Practise procedures.

## **Equal Opportunities and Fitness to Practice**

University College Dublin is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are welcome and reasonable accommodation will be made where practicable. However, regretfully, it is possible that some persons otherwise qualified to undertake the Professional Master of Education may be unable or become unable, because of ill health or physical inability, to complete all elements of the programme required.

### **FITNESS TO PRACTICE PRINCIPLES**

Mapping to the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, 2016), *four* core values underpin the School of Education's Fitness to Practise policy, namely **respect, care, integrity** and **trust**:

#### **Respect**

Student teachers must act in a manner which promotes equity and equality and is respectful of the diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds of all pupils.

#### **Care**

Student teachers' practice is motivated by the best interests of all pupils and reflects empathy, concern and thoughtfulness.

#### **Integrity**

Student teachers act in a manner which reflects integrity, honesty, dedication to their professional commitment and responsibilities.

#### **Trust**

Student teachers' relationships with pupils, colleagues, parents, school management and all stakeholders they may encounter is based on trust which requires student teachers to act in a fair, open and honest manner at all times. Such responsibilities are necessary also in the engagement between student teachers, academic and administrative staff of the University.

### **STANDARDS**

#### **Professional Values and Relationships**

Student teachers should be caring, fair and committed to the pupils entrusted to their care; acknowledge and respect the uniqueness of each pupil and promote their holistic development; be committed to equity, equality and inclusion; seek to develop positive relationships with pupils, parents, school management and other stakeholders.

#### **Professional Integrity**

Student teachers should act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work; respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of any information afforded them in the context of their placement unless a legal imperative requires disclosure or there is a legitimate concern for the well-being of an individual; represent

themselves, their professional status, qualifications and experience honestly; avoid conflict between their professional work and private interests which could impact negatively on pupils, their placement school or on the profession.

### **Professional Conduct**

Student teachers should uphold the reputation and standing of the profession; take all reasonable steps in relation to the care of pupils under their supervision; work within the framework of relevant legislation and regulations; comply with national and school policies, procedures and guidelines which aim to promote the education and welfare of pupils as well as child protection; communicate effectively with pupils, colleagues, parents, school management and any relevant stakeholder in a manner which is professional, collegial and supportive, including communication *via* electronic media and social networking sites; ensure that they do not practise while under the influence of any substance which impairs their fitness to teach.

### **Professional Practice**

Student teachers should strive to attain the highest standards of practice in consultation with the advice of university personnel, in relation to pupil learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback; apply their knowledge and experience in facilitating students' holistic development; create an environment where all pupils can become active agents in the learning process and develop lifelong learning skills; develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies which support differentiated learning in a way which respects the dignity of all learners; inform their professional judgement and practice by engaging with learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum development, ethical practice, educational policy and legislation; be open and responsive to constructive feedback and act in the best interests of their pupils.

### **Professional Development**

Student teachers should take responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by reflecting and critically evaluating their practice, taking on board the advice of their supervisor, tutor and all relevant School of Education personnel. This also includes mandatory attendance at all lectures, seminars and tutorials.

### **Professional Collegiality and Collaboration**

Student teachers should work collaboratively with all colleagues in the interests of sharing, developing and supporting good practice, of maintaining the highest quality of educational experience for all learners.

Fitness to practise issues can arise at any stage during a student's time on the PME. It is important to note that such issues may be temporary and/or satisfactorily dealt with during the programme of study. However, fitness to practise issues may affect the ability of students to complete the programme, gain the final qualification or register with the Teaching Council.

### **GARDA VETTING**

As a condition of acceptance onto the UCD Professional Masters of Education programme, students must obtain Garda Clearance. After the receipt of initial Garda Clearance and prior to the completion of the programme, subsequent Garda caution, allegation of criminal activity, or criminal prosecution must be notified to the Programme Director in writing as soon as possible and no later than seven days after they become aware of its occurrence. In the event of an alleged incident, the Programme Director may require the student to discontinue their professional placement and other course work until such time as the issue is

resolved. Failure to notify the Programme Director or to agree to temporarily discontinue their school placement while an outstanding legal issue is resolved will result in the initiation of formal fitness to practise procedures.

### **Fitness to Practise Causes/Circumstances of Concern**

Issues that might impair fitness to practise are wide ranging. The following are examples of areas of concern or circumstances which might render a postgraduate student unfit to practise.

- A criminal conviction, caution or charge arising subsequent to the Garda Vetting form being completed.
- Substance misuse, drunk driving, alcohol or drug consumption that affects study, work or the work environment.
- Aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour; assault; sexual assault; physical violence, bullying; abuse.
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour, poor time management, infrequent or non-attendance, poor communication, failure to accept and follow educational advice, failure to follow health and safety requirements or the regulations of the School or University or Placement Agency.
- Impaired judgment which would place children at risk, and which persists despite intervention and supervision by academic staff and/or professional placement supervisors.
- Lack of competence which persists despite intervention and supervision by academic staff and/or professional placement supervisors.
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitude such as a breach of confidentiality, harassment, bullying or unlawful discrimination
- Any other issue which would place children, school staff, or peers at risk.

### **Fitness to Practise Procedures**

*Fitness to practise issues should usually be resolved co-operatively and informally in the first instance.*

In most instances where a student teacher encounters some form of difficulty in any aspect of their engagement with the PME programme the default approach will be to deal with this issue in a sensitive, supportive and informal manner. This will usually involve the student, their placement supervisor or other person bringing the issue of concern to the attention of the Programme Director and the development of a clear, goal directed plan that resolves the issue to the satisfaction of all concerned parties.

*Formal Fitness to Practise Investigation Procedures may be initiated.*

In circumstances where a serious fitness to practise issue has arisen, or the public are deemed to be at risk, or the informal supportive strategy outlined above has clearly not resolved the issue, the student teacher will be referred to the University's formal fitness to practise procedures. This process is outlined in the Student Fitness to Practise Process Map in the following link:

<https://www.ucd.ie/secca/studentfitnessstopractise/>

## Student Declaration

All students entering the PME programme as well as relevant academic and administrative staff will be fully briefed on the **Fitness to Practise Policy** and related procedures through the Programme Handbook, this Policy and reference to the **Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct**. Students are required to read this Policy and acknowledge in writing that they have read, understood and accept the Programme's Fitness to Practise Policy and procedures prior to commencing Year One of the PME.

I have read, understand and accept the UCD School of Education Professional Master of Education Programme's Fitness to Practise Policy and procedures prior to commencing Year One of the programme.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Student) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You are required to read this document carefully insert an electronic signature and email the electronically signed document to [education@ucd.ie](mailto:education@ucd.ie) on or before

[https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/!W\\_HU\\_MENU.P\\_PUBLISH?p\\_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=114](https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/!W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=114)

<https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/fitness-to-teach/updated-code-of-professional-conduct/>