

*This Fitness to Practise Statement was approved by the UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science Programme Board on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024.*

### **UCD Definition of Student Fitness to Practise**

The health and safety of the public, patients, animals, service users, staff and students are paramount. Student fitness to practise means 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 in a manner that meets professional and ethical standards. Examples of areas of concern or circumstances that might render a student unfit to practise include, but are not limited to: substance misuse; aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour; persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour; failure to accept and follow educational advice; failure to follow health and safety requirements or the regulations; impaired judgement; lack of competence; having health concerns and lack of insight or management of these; failure to seek medical treatment or other support; refusal to follow medical advice or care plans including monitoring and reviews, in relation to maintaining fitness to practise; failure to recognise limits and abilities or lack of insight into health concerns.

### **Objectives of UCD Fitness to Practise**

- a) Protect the public, patients, animals, students, faculty, staff placement providers and the University.
- b) Instil in students the qualities and competences required for professional practise and to support and guide students who experience issues that may affect their ability to practise.
- c) Identify and support students whose behaviour, capacity, welfare or wellbeing are of concern to themselves or others, or whose behaviour or actions are impacting adversely on, or pose a risk to, the learning, working, or living experiences of themselves or others.
- d) Provide a suitable framework for the effective, consistent and timely identification and management of student fitness to practise issues that may arise, either prior to or during a student's programme of study.
- e) Treat concerns regarding student fitness to practise seriously and as quickly as possible.

### **Fitness to Practise in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics**

The UCD Student Fitness to Practise Policy applies to all students on the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics programme: [UCD Student Engagement, Conduct, Complaints and Appeals | Student Fitness to Practise](#)  
The guide to Fitness to Practise on this programme has been developed with reference to the current UCD Student Fitness to Practise Policy, the UCD Student Code and the CORU Dietitians Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics.

### **Aims of the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Fitness to Practise Statement**

This Fitness to Practise statement aims to:

Ensure students on the UCD MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics programme have a clear understanding of UCD Fitness to Practise Policy requirements and processes.

### **Fitness to Practise Standards**

The following positive attitudes and behaviours are expected of students registered to the UCD MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Programme:

#### **Personal Behaviour**

MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics students must demonstrate their Fitness to Practise in all aspects of their personal behaviour throughout their period of registration by behaving in a manner appropriate to their position as a student of the University studying for a qualification, the successful completion of which leads to eligibility for entry to a statutory regulated profession. Students are required to keep high standards of personal conduct and to always behave with integrity and honesty. Students are required to follow and obey the laws of the land and to always refrain from unlawful activity. As a condition of acceptance onto the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics programme with a clinical practice placement component, students must undergo and receive Garda



Vetting. Garda vetting procedures must be completed by the student in advance of beginning practice placement.

During their period of registration, where a MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics student is subject to a Garda caution, allegation of criminal activity, or criminal prosecution they are required to notify 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, in correspondence with the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Programme Committee may require the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics student to discontinue a practice placement if applicable until such time as the issue is resolved. Failure to notify the Programme Director or to agree to temporarily discontinue a clinical placement while an outstanding legal issue is being resolved will result in the initiation of formal Fitness to Practise procedures.

### **Appearance**

MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics students demonstrate their Fitness to Practise during their course of studies by maintaining a standard of appearance that will be perceived by others as professional. Students are required to follow the guidelines for standard of dress as detailed in the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Practise Education Handbook. Students are required to adopt the dress code of their host organisation while on practice placement.

### **Behaviour Towards Others**

MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics students demonstrate their Fitness to Practise continually during their course of studies in all aspects of their behaviour towards others: members of the public, patient/client/service user and their families, classmates and other students, research participants, University staff, practice tutors, other staff on placement, colleagues, and employers. Students are required to treat others with due respect, courtesy, honesty, accountability, humility, fairness, and impartiality and to recognise, respect and tolerate individual differences in others including gender, religious values, sexual preferences, age, disability, and cultural beliefs and values. This requires the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics student to be open and positive towards new learning experiences and to demonstrate the ability to receive, and respond to, feedback in a constructive and non-defensive manner always. In instances where there is a concern that a MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics student is unreasonably defensive and unresponsive to constructive feedback offered to them in the University or on practice placement, then the specific feedback given, and the response of the student should be clearly documented by the supervising University or practice placement staff member and returned to the module co-ordinator.

### **Learning**

The content of the majority of the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics programme of study is designed to meet the requirements of a statutory regulatory body and may be amended if required by the CORU Dietitians Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics. MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics students demonstrate their Fitness to Practise by pursuing their studies with due diligence, ensuring they avail of the range of educational opportunities made available to acquire the skills and knowledge identified in the relevant professional and statutory body guidance. Students are expected to adhere to the highest ethical and academic standards, through sound academic writing, avoiding plagiarism, and use of appropriate referencing and citation. Students are required to take responsibility for their own learning by fulfilling the attendance, learning and assessment requirements of the academic and practice placement aspects of their education. Students are required to demonstrate good time management and regular attendance and to adhere to the guidelines for reporting non-attendance on both academic and practice placement elements of the programme as stated in the Student Handbook and Practise Education Handbook. Failure to follow the procedure for reporting non-attendance may result in the initiation of formal Fitness to Practise procedures.

### **Health**

MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics students must be able to perform their professional skills in a safe, competent and proficient manner in order to meet the needs of patient/client/service users. UCD is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities registered to the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics programme are required to register with the UCD Access and Life Long



Learning Centre for a Needs Assessment to identify any appropriate supports required in the academic and/or practice placement settings. As a condition of acceptance onto the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics programme, students are required to undergo health screening and immunisation as outlined on

<http://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/policiesandgeneralregulations/healthscreening/>.

Students will also be required to satisfy the Health Service Executive (HSE) requirements for Covid-19 and influenza vaccination as they pertain at the time.

Students are required to adhere to safety and infection control procedures as described in the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Practice Education Handbook. On an annual basis, students are required to declare themselves fit to practise by signing this Fitness to Practise Statement. By signing this Fitness to Practise Statement, students declare themselves to be physically and psychologically well to competently execute the various academic coursework, practical classes, and practice placements. If a student experiences a change in their physical or psychological health affecting their ability to execute their academic and/or practice placement responsibilities, they are required to notify the Programme Director in writing within seven days. In such circumstances, the Programme Director and programme team will work with the student to develop an appropriate plan to manage the student's changed circumstances in a supportive manner. Students who have had to withdraw from practice placement for health reasons will need to be certified as fit to return to practice placement by an impartial physician with relevant expertise before they will be permitted to return. Failure to follow any aspect of this procedure, which affects an individual's capacity to carry out their various academic and practice placement requirements may result in the initiation of formal Fitness to Practise procedures.

### **Duty of Care**

MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics students will demonstrate their Fitness to Practise at all times with reference to the CORU Dietitians Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (2019) by conducting themselves in a professional manner in all aspects related to patient/client/service user care while on placement and when conducting supervised research as outlined in the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Programme Curriculum. Students will always respect the rights and dignity of the patient/client/service user, maintain accurate patient/client/service user management records, research data, obtain appropriate informed consent and adhere to the relevant host guidelines for all aspects of service user care. Students may have access to confidential personal information and are required to ensure patient/client/service user confidentiality and comply with Data Protection legislation. Students are also required to follow the health and safety requirements of the School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science, UCD and the practice placement partner. In instances where there is a concern that a MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics student has breached their duty of care, the specific incident should be documented by the practice placement or research supervisor and the response of the student clearly documented. Both should be forwarded to the Programme Director as soon as possible but no more than seven days following the incident.

### **Reporting to Practice Education Placement**

The Programme Director has a duty to inform current practice placement supervisors of any Fitness to Practise hearings and their outcome on which a MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics student is being referred. In the event that the Programme Director is informing a supervisor of the outcome of a Fitness to Practise investigation which has resulted in the student's continuation on their programme of study, this information should be conveyed in a manner that supports the student in achieving and maintaining the appropriate standard of professional practice in a constructive manner.

### **Fitness to Practise Process**

The student Fitness to Practise Process is described in detail at the following link: [PowerPoint Presentation \(ucd.ie\)](#)



I agree to adhere to the MSc in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics Fitness to Practise Statement:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**References**

UCD Student Fitness to Practise Policy: <http://www.ucd.ie/secca/studentfitnesstopractise/>

UCD Student Code of Conduct: [Governance Document Details \(ucd.ie\)](#)

CORU Dietitians Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Dietitians: <https://coru.ie/files-codes-of-conduct/drb-code-of-professional-conduct-and-ethics-for-dietitians.pdf>