

Response to the Health and Care Professions Council consultation: revised 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students'

January 2016

Introduction

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care. We are an independent body, accountable to the UK Parliament. More information about our work and the approach we take is available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk.

As part of our work we:

- Oversee nine health and care professional regulators and report annually to Parliament on their performance
- Conduct research and advise the four UK governments on improvements in regulation
- Promote right-touch regulation and publish papers on regulatory policy and practice.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this Health and Care Professions Council consultation on their revised 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students'. We continue to support the HCPC's position that students should not be statutorily regulated, on the basis that any risks they present should be addressed by existing mechanisms within higher education. Publishing guidance for students however is a simple way of helping to prepare them for a career as a regulated professional.

General comments on student guidance

- We encourage the production of clear guidance by the regulators based on key principles and focusing on the outcomes that need to be achieved.
- Having separate guidance for students, based on the standards that full members of their profession follow should help students to manage the many varied circumstances and situations they face but also to recognise their limitations and to seek advice and support from their educational or placement provider where necessary.

Questions

Q1. Do you agree with the structure of the guidance? If not, how could we improve it?

The structure is generally clear and easy to follow. We would agree that structuring the guidance to correspond with the revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics is logical and makes it clear and accessible for students. Having a clear link between

the pre- and post-qualifying standards should help smooth the transition to professional life.

Q2. Do you think that any additional information or guidance should be included in the Guidance on conduct and ethics for students?

It might be useful to include a link to the main HCPC standards document for reference.

It could also be highlighted more clearly that in addition to the generic HCPC standards document there are separate standards documents for each of the professions that it regulates and students may wish to refer to the relevant standards document for their profession.

Q3. Do you think there are any parts of the guidance which should be reworded or removed?

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Q4. Do you think the addition of guidance on delegation for students is appropriate and clear? If not, why not, or how can we improve it?

It may be useful to more clearly explain the difference between referring a service user to a qualified practitioner where the student does not have appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to carry out a task which is covered in the previous section (3), and delegating a task to another member of staff in a different role.

It might also be helpful to refer more clearly to the previous section (3) and clarify that in addition to a student recognising when they need to ask for supervision or assistance from a qualified practitioner, this would also extend to recognising when they should or should not be delegating tasks to another colleague.

Q5. Do you have any comments about the language used in the guidance?

The language throughout the guidance is clear and easy to understand.

Q6. Do you have any other comments on the guidance?

We welcome the moves to strengthen the guidance in certain areas, in particular in relation to students being able to gain feedback on their work in order to aid development and the emphasis on being able to discuss concerns with the appropriate person at their education or placement provider, to ensure that concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of service users is always dealt with fully.

We would suggest that it may be useful to reference the value of teamwork, interaction and cooperation across professions and occupations within the guidance. It may be useful to reference in particular the work of the Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education, which works to improve collaboration and the quality of patient care by professions learning and working together.

Further information

Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspect of this response in further detail. You can contact us at:

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