



## **Fitness to Study and Practice Policy and Procedure**

### **Fitness to Study and Practice**

Fitness to Study relates to an individual's capacity to participate fully and satisfactorily as a student at Matrix College in relation to academic and professional practice.

Training to become an Integrative Counsellor places a range of demands on students in terms of both their own personal learning and conduct and their academic learning. Where students are unable to meet any or all of these demands then the fitness to study and practice policy is used to ensure that students are supported to take the necessary action or cease studying/practicing

Fitness to Study relates to an individual's capacity to participate fully and satisfactorily as a student at Matrix College in relation to academic and professional practice. General criteria to be fit to study/practice includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- The health and wellbeing of a student is sufficient to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of other students, tutors, colleagues and placement clients.
- The student can conduct themselves with integrity in their academic learning environment
- Students conduct themselves with professionalism and recognise themselves as representatives of Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy when in clinical practice.
- The student is able to demonstrate that they can be reflective and conduct themselves in an anti-oppressive manner towards others.
- The student maintaining regular contact (three monthly as a minimum) with their named contact at Matrix following completion of the taught aspect of the course.

### **Cause for Concern**

A student's fitness to study and practice may be a cause for concern as a result of a wide range of circumstances, including (but not restricted to) the following:

- a student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others
- the student's academic or clinical performance (in a placement) or personal conduct is not acceptable. This may or may not be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem.
- the student is found to have plagiarised
- the student has not maintained regular contact with their contact at Matrix and/or is not working towards completion of the final award

## **Conversation stage**

When a potential problem is very first identified the first action is generally that the appropriate person (which may be the student's Programme Lead, the student's supplementary year contact or the Head of Clinical Practice) will talk to the student about the issue. It is often the case that early intervention can prevent a problem from becoming more serious.

## **Informal stage**

If the problem cannot be address with a conversation then the next stage is the informal stage.

The student's Programme Lead, or the student's supplementary year contact will have a meeting with the student once concerns regarding fitness to study/practice have been raised, and attempt to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the student.

Specific arrangements will be considered and action plans agreed with the student. The majority of cases can be resolved this way.

## **Formal Stage 1**

This policy can be invoked when all informal avenues have been unsuccessful, the Complaints and Grievance Procedure have been considered and deemed to be inappropriate, the student is not engaging and action plans have not been met.

A meeting will be convened by the Principal. The meeting will usually consist of the student's Programme Lead, the student and a person to accompany the student.

The meeting will spend time considering the situation, evidence will be presented if necessary.

A letter will be sent to the student within 15 working days after the meeting setting out any decision made and the reasons for the decision.

The outcome agreed by the meeting will normally be an outcome not already attempted as part of the informal action taken. The outcomes available may be:

- No further action required.
- To monitor the student formally for a specific period of time by way of an action plan which will be agreed with the student. Regular review meetings will be arranged with the student and either their Programme Lead or the Head of Clinical Practice.
- In cases where fitness to practice is under discussion a student maybe asked to suspend their clinical practice. This decision will be undertaken in discussion with the student's placement and their supervisor.

The student should be made aware of what will happen if the action plan is breached, which will normally involve their case moving to formal stage 2.

If the student does not agree, the case will move on to stage 2.

## **Stage 2**

This course of action would be used when it is considered that withdrawal from the course may be the appropriate course of action or if the student has not agreed to a recommendation or action plan made under stage 1.

This stage will only be invoked in the following circumstances:

- if the student does not agree or is not engaging with a recommendation from the formal stage 1 meeting.

or

- if in the opinion of the Principal the case is sufficiently serious and urgent to warrant an immediate referral without consideration of stage 1.

The Principal can convene a Fitness to Study or Practice Panel to consider the case.

The Members of the Panel will usually be:

- The Chair of the Ethics Committee (this is an external person)
- The Head of Clinical Practice
- A tutor who has had little contact with the student

The student will not normally be permitted to attend in person.

The Panel will consider evidence presented to them by the student and the Head of Training. The panel may ask for extra evidence if required and may request medical evidence.

The Panel will make a recommendation which may include:-

- Requirement to agree to a further action plan being implemented.
- Requirement to withdraw from the course.
- Any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

## **Right of Appeal**

The student may appeal against a requirement to withdraw. A letter setting out the grounds of appeal should be addressed to the External Moderator, to be received within 21 days of the date on which the order for requirement to withdraw was made.

The appeal will be heard by the External Moderator who may co-opt professionals in the field onto the panel.