



**UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK**

**OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH**

**University of Limerick**  
**Student Fitness to Practise Policy**

Approved by Academic Council 6 March 2019

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## 1 Introduction

*Fitness to practise means having the necessary skills, knowledge, health and character to undertake and complete, safely and effectively, a programme that includes elements of professional practice, experiential learning or clinical work.*

The University of Limerick (UL) [Student Vetting Policy](#) seeks to adopt best practice and ensure public confidence by requiring that students who are placed in positions of trust or responsibility with members of the public (including children and vulnerable adults as defined under section 2 of the [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\) Act 2012](#)) always act in a manner that meets professional and ethical standards.

The University will seek to provide students with the advice and support necessary to help them meet the fitness to practise requirements of their programme of study. The University's expectations of a student on placement will be commensurate with the stage of the student's academic programme and the professional practices and competencies associated with the placement. This Fitness to Practise policy operates in conjunction with Garda vetting requirements, UL's Student Code of Conduct (as specified in chapter 6 of the [Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures](#)) and general health screening procedures.

UL seeks to ensure that all students have an opportunity to demonstrate professional competencies in a manner consistent with the above objectives. Through this policy, the University aims to ensure that its students are fully aware of the professional practice requirements in their field of study and to encourage them to ask questions and to seek clarification, where necessary, in relation to fitness to practise protocols. The University strives to deliver a quality student experience and to ensure that students are informed of the range of supports available to them, including a student advisor. The University's student supports include counselling, health and disability support services.

UL has a legal requirement to provide 'reasonable accommodations' to students with disabilities. UL's policy on supporting students with disabilities in professional practice (Appendix 1) has been informed by the University's strategic goals and by national policy and legislation requirements and should be consulted when including learners with disabilities on programmes that are subject to this Fitness to Practise policy.

## 2 Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Foster and instil in students the qualities and competencies required for professional practice and support students who experience issues that may affect their ability to practise
- Provide an overarching UL framework, including academic staff fitness to practise requirements, to effectively manage fitness to practise issues that may arise either prior to or during a student's programme of study
- Protect the public, students, placement providers and the University

This policy applies to all students registered on the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes listed on the [Fitness to Practise website](#). The website specifies the fitness to practise requirements relating to each programme. In addition to being subject to this

Fitness to Practise policy, students of these programmes are advised that they may also be subject to the fitness to practise policies of the relevant regulating professional body and to the HR and fitness to practise policies of the placement partner.

### **3 The University's Obligations**

This Fitness to Practise policy is grounded in the principles of fairness and informed by professional codes of conduct and legislative requirements. In fulfilling its obligations in relation to the policy, UL will:

- Specify in its prospectus and other relevant publications, including websites, the programmes to which the policy applies.
- Promote students' understanding of the importance of professional standards and an awareness of the provisions of the Fitness to Practise policy along with any other conditions of registration, such as healthcare screening and Garda vetting.
- Ensure that the relevant course boards submit for approval to the Academic Regulations Committee a Fitness to Practise statement (Appendix 2). The statement will include specific details in relation to the core competencies against which fitness to practise is measured. The statement should provide details on the standards of behaviour or conduct that are expected of a student and indicate behaviour or conduct that is likely to be of concern in relation to a student's fitness to practise.
- Ensure the right to equal treatment established by equality legislation<sup>1</sup> for all applicants and students.
- Ensure that information in relation to fitness to practise is treated as sensitive student information. This information is subject to data protection standards relating to storage, access, dissemination and disposal. In cases where there is a reasonable belief that a student's fitness to practise has been called into question and where other relevant parties are required to discuss the matter, this will not be considered a breach of confidentiality but will be taken as being in the public interest. It will be a condition of entry to these specific programmes that students give consent, in line with this policy, to this sharing of information where deemed necessary by the University.
- Ensure that all fitness to practise committees deal with fitness to practise issues with sensitivity and in a timely manner.

### **4 Applicant Guidance and Student Responsibilities**

The following points are intended to provide guidance to those applying to programmes and to students in relation to their responsibilities:

- An applicant who has concerns about his/her ability to meet the fitness to practise criteria for the programme in question should seek advice from the relevant course director, the Admissions office or the Disability Support Services office.
- Students should make themselves aware of the Fitness to Practise policy and other relevant conditions of registration, such as healthcare screening and Garda vetting.
- At the beginning of each academic year of their programme, students are required to confirm that they continue to meet the fitness to practise requirements. This statement

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<sup>1</sup> The Equal Status Act 2000 (as amended) guards against discrimination on nine specified grounds.

should confirm that, in the student's opinion, he/she has the ability to undertake safe and effective practice and to meet the standards of professional competencies noted in the statement. False declarations in any of these statements will be regarded by UL as a matter for referral to the student disciplinary process.

- Students must, at all times, meet the professional and ethical requirements of their programme of study. In addition, poor professional performance while on placement is not acceptable and may ultimately lead to a referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee.
- As part of his/her professional responsibility, it is each student's responsibility to bring to the University's attention as soon as practicable any issue, such as illness, incapacity, substance misuse, other medical issue or pending prosecution or any other issue, that is likely to affect his/her capacity to engage in a professional manner at all times during his/her programme of study.
- Students should discuss with their placement/clinical supervisor or head of department/school concerns they may have about fitness to practise issues relating to their own conduct or that of others.

## **5 Identifying Fitness to Practise Issues**

Issues that might impair a student's fitness to practise are wide-ranging and can arise at any time throughout the student's a programme of study. Specific issues may be temporary in nature and can be dealt with informally by advising the student on how best to address conduct, competence or health issues so that fitness to practise issues are managed in a professional manner.

Where a member of UL's academic or work-based placement staff or other relevant individual has a concern regarding a student's fitness to practise, he/she will refer the student's case, in the first instance, to the relevant head of discipline or head of department/school. The head of discipline or department/school may refer the case to the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee and may also decide to refer the case to the disciplinary process under the Student Code of Conduct.

In the event of a student carrying out an action that poses an immediate threat to life or the safety of any person or property, the Vice President Academic & Registrar (VPA&R) or person duly authorised to act in his/her stead may exclude the person who is reasonably suspected of being responsible for such action from access to UL facilities, property or placement pending a formal hearing of any fitness to practise concerns.

## **6 Fitness to Practise and Student Code of Conduct**

Some students' behaviour may constitute a breach of the Student Code of Conduct. The head of department/school will be notified of all cases taken where a student registered on programmes with professional accreditation requirements is the subject of a complaint under the Student Code of Conduct.

However, it should be noted that a pattern of behaviour/misconduct, a series or sequence of events or, on occasion, a single act of serious misconduct or misbehaviour may not be considered to be a breach of the Student Code of Conduct but may give rise to a concern

regarding an individual's fitness to practise. The head of department/school reserves the right to refer all such complaints to the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee.

## **7 Faculty Fitness to Practise Procedures**

The Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee shall comprise at least three members, and shall be appointed by the Executive Dean. Two members will be drawn from the department/school to which the student is attached, and the third member, who will act as chairperson, will be drawn from outside the department or school (within UL) to which the programme is attached. Where the Faculty Executive deems it appropriate, additional members from the profession or practice partner may be appointed.

The Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee shall:

- Consider student fitness to practise matters referred to it by the head of department/school
- Ensure that a fair, clear and consistent approach is taken to dealing with student fitness to practise matters
- Advise the dean of faculty and heads of department/school on matters relating to fitness to practise
- Provide reports to the faculty, department/school or other nominated committees as required

The Faculty Fitness to Practise hearing process shall include the following steps:

- The student in question shall be informed in writing that a fitness to practise procedure has been initiated and the committee will meet. The student shall be given 10 days' notice of the date and time of the hearing. However, a student may choose to waive this notice period should the University be able to convene a committee earlier.
- Any documentation to be considered by the committee shall be made available to the student at least five working days in advance of the meeting, and the student shall be permitted to make his/her own written submission in advance of the meeting.
- A list of other relevant parties, including witnesses, placement supervisor, etc. who will be called to the hearing, will be compiled and given to the student at least five working days prior to the hearing.
- The student shall, at least three working days in advance of the hearing, notify the Chairperson in writing of the name(s) and address(es) of the witness(es) he/she proposes to call and supply to the Chairperson a copy of any document(s) and a list of any exhibit(s) that he/she proposes to submit at the hearing.
- The student should confirm his/her availability to attend the meeting and advise if he/she intends to be accompanied by a friend, parent, Students' Union or legal representative or student advisor.
- At least five working days prior to the date of the Fitness to Practise hearing, the student may request and the chairperson of the committee may grant a further period of time, not exceeding seven working days, to prepare his/her case.
- If the student fails to appear before the Fitness to Practise Committee on the appointed day without providing a valid excuse, the Fitness to Practise Committee may, if satisfied that the student has had due notice of the hearing of his/her case,

proceed to deal with the case in the student's absence. No inference of culpability shall be drawn from the student's non-appearance at the hearing of his/her case.

- The chairperson of the Fitness to Practise Committee shall outline the procedures at the start of the meeting and advise the student of the range of outcomes available to the committee.
- Members of the committee may ask the student questions relating to concerns raised *vis-à-vis* his/her fitness to practise.
- At any stage in the proceedings, the committee shall be entitled to adjourn proceedings to seek further information or advice or for any other purpose as agreed by the majority of the members of the committee.
- Having reviewed all the oral evidence and documentation, the committee shall make a decision as to whether or not there has been a breach of the programme's fitness to practise criteria. Decisions shall be taken by a simple majority; in the event of a tied vote, the chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- Proceedings of the meeting shall be minuted.
- For each case heard by the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee, a copy of the committee's decision and reason(s) for its decision in such form and content as is determined appropriate by the committee shall be sent within five working days after the hearing by email to the student's UL email account and by registered post to the address notified by the student to UL or by personal delivery by any employee or agent of UL.
- The student shall be informed of his/her right of appeal and notified that appeals are required to be made in writing to the University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee within two weeks from the date of the decision.
- The chairperson of the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee shall communicate the outcome of the hearing, where appropriate, to the relevant UL personnel and offices and the relevant placement partners and professional bodies.
- The committee reserves the right to communicate details of the complaint and minutes and outcome of the fitness to practise hearing to the University Advocate for consideration under the Student Code of Conduct.

## **8 Possible Outcomes of a Faculty Fitness to Practise Hearing**

The following is a list of possible outcomes from a Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee hearing. (The committee reserves the right, following any subsequent hearing, to review the case to select alternative outcomes.):

- Dismissal of the case with no further action to be taken.
- Recommend to the student that he/she engages with the support services of the University.
- Pending further review of the case by the committee, permission for the student to continue his/her programme of study subject to some or all of the following conditions:
  - That the student agrees to be mentored for a defined period of time by a named senior academic member of staff.
  - That the student agrees to specific conditions or restrictions to apply to their programme of study. The committee may also decide that a student can repeat

elements of the programme without academic penalty, e.g., repeat a PARE (professional accreditation related elements) module.

- That the student agrees to (i) undergo, at UL's expense, any medical, psychiatric and/or psychological assessment requested by the committee and conducted by a suitably qualified person nominated by the committee and (ii) provide to the committee the assessment report.
- Pending further review of the case by the committee, suspension of the student from his/her programme of study subject to some or all of the following conditions:
  - That the student agrees to engage with any programme of treatment or course of action recommended by the committee. The student will be responsible for all costs and expenses associated with such treatments or actions.
  - That the student agrees that, following such treatment or course of actions, he/she will (i) undergo, at UL's expense, any medical, psychiatric and/or psychological assessment requested by the committee and conducted by a suitably qualified person nominated by the committee and (ii) provide to the committee the assessment report.
- Termination of the student's participation on the programme of study. The committee can approve a student transfer to another programme of study with permission from the relevant course board and subject to compliance with UL's transfer regulations and policy. Alternatively, the committee can approve a transfer for the student into any approved exit programme.
- Expulsion from the University.

## **9 Appeals to the University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee**

The VPA&R or his/her nominee shall appoint members to the University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee on a case-by-case basis to hear appeals. The committee shall comprise at least three members, two of whom shall be from departments/schools that offer programmes to which the Fitness to Practise policy applies and the third of whom shall be external to UL and shall have academic or professional experience in the relevant or a comparable discipline. The VPA&R shall appoint one of these three people to be the committee's chairperson. The committee cannot include any member of the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee that heard the original case or any staff member belonging to the student's department/school. Where the VPA&R deems it appropriate, additional members from the profession or practice partner can be appointed.

The University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee shall:

- Hear appeals from students on stated grounds in relation to outcomes from the faculty fitness to practise committees
- Ensure that a fair, clear and consistent approach is taken to dealing with appeal cases
- Provide reports to Academic Council or its nominated committee, as required

The appeals process shall include the following steps:

- The student in question shall be informed in writing that a University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee will meet. The student shall be given 10 days' notice of the date and time of the hearing. However, a student may choose to waive this notice period should the University be able to convene a committee earlier.



- Any documentation to be considered by the appeals committee shall be made available to the student at least five working days in advance of the meeting, and the student shall be permitted to make his/her own written submission in advance of the meeting.
- A list of other relevant parties, including witnesses, placement supervisor, etc., who will be called to the hearing will be compiled and given to the student at least five working days prior to the hearing.
- The student shall, at least three working days prior to the hearing, notify the chairperson in writing of the name(s) and address(es) of the witness(es) he/she proposes to call and supply to the chairperson a copy of any document(s) and a list of any exhibit(s) that he/she proposes to submit at the hearing.
- The student should confirm his/her availability to attend the meeting and advise if he/she intends to be accompanied by a friend, parent, Students' Union or legal representative or student advisor.
- At least five working days prior to the date of the hearing, the student may request and the chairperson of the appeals committee may grant a further period of time, not exceeding seven working days, to prepare his/her case.
- If the student fails to appear before the appeals committee on the appointed day without providing a valid excuse, the committee may, if satisfied that the student has had due notice of the hearing of his/her case, proceed to deal with the case in the student's absence. No inference of culpability shall be drawn from the student's non-appearance at the hearing.
- The chairperson of the appeals committee shall outline the procedures at the start of the meeting and advise the student of the range of outcomes available to the committee.
- Members of the appeals committee may ask the student questions relating to concerns raised vis-à-vis his/her fitness to practise.
- At any stage in the proceedings, the appeals committee shall be entitled to adjourn proceedings to seek further information or advice or for any other purpose as agreed by the majority of the members of the committee.
- Having reviewed all the oral evidence, documentation and the original outcome of the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee, the appeals committee shall make a decision. Decisions shall be taken by a simple majority. In the event of a tied vote, the chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- Proceedings of the meeting shall be minuted.
- For each case heard by the appeals committee, a copy of the committee's decision and reason(s) for its decision in such form and content as is determined appropriate by the committee shall be sent within five working days after the hearing by email to the student's UL email account and by registered post to the address notified by the student to UL or by personal delivery by any employee or agent of UL.
- The chairperson of the appeals committee shall communicate the outcome of the hearing, where appropriate, to the relevant UL personnel and offices and the relevant placement partners and professional bodies.
- The appeals committee reserves the right to communicate details of the complaint and minutes and outcome of the fitness to practise hearing to the University Advocate for consideration under the Student Code of Conduct.

## 10 Possible Outcomes of a University Fitness to Practise Appeals Hearing

The following is a list of possible outcomes from the University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee hearing. (The appeals committee reserves the right, following any subsequent hearing, to review the case to select alternative outcomes.):

- Uphold the decision of the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee.
- Dismissal of the case with no further action to be taken.
- Recommend to the student that he/she engages with the support services of the University.
- Pending further review of the case by the committee, permission for the student to continue his/her programme of study subject to some or all of the following conditions:
  - That the student agrees to be mentored for a defined period of time by a named senior academic member of staff.
  - That the student agrees to specific conditions or restrictions to apply to their programme of study. The committee may also decide that a student can repeat elements of the programme without academic penalty, e.g., repeat a PARE module.
  - That the student agrees to (i) undergo, at UL's expense, any medical, psychiatric and/or psychological assessment requested by the committee and conducted by a suitably qualified person nominated by the committee and (ii) provide to the committee the assessment report.
- Pending further review of the case by the committee, suspension of the student from his/her programme of study subject to some or all of the following conditions:
  - That the student agrees to engage with any programme of treatment or course of action recommended by the committee. The student will be responsible for all costs and expenses associated with such treatments or actions.
  - That the student agrees that, following such treatment or course of actions, he/she will (i) undergo, at UL's expense, any medical, psychiatric and/or psychological assessment requested by the committee and conducted by a suitably qualified person nominated by the committee and (ii) provide to the committee the assessment report.
- Termination of the student's participation on the programme of study. The committee can approve a student transfer to another programme of study with permission from the relevant course board and subject to compliance with UL's transfer regulations and policy. Alternatively, the committee can approve a transfer for the student into any approved exit programme.
- Expulsion from the University.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Policy on Supporting UL Students with Disabilities in Professional Practice

#### 1 Introduction

The University of Limerick welcomes the increase in the number of students with disabilities on its programmes of study. The Disability Support Services office coordinates the provision of a range of supports to students with disabilities. The required supports are identified through a needs assessment process and the completion of a Learning Education Needs Support (LENS) report, a summary of which is provided to course and module leaders.

There is a growing awareness in the University of the requirements of students with disabilities in professional practice. Disability Support Services works with practice coordinators in UL and with practice partners outside UL to ensure that students with disabilities are included in this element of their programmes. While most students with disabilities will have disclosed their disability on application to the CAO and registered with Disability Support Services, some students may not register because of feeling uncertain about potential negative implications. A clearly documented and transparent policy in this area can assure such students that disclosure is 'safe' and in their best interests. This policy<sup>2</sup> attempts to do that.

There is sometimes a tension between the regulatory requirements of professional practice and the University's legislative obligations to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. The legislative definitions of disability and reasonable accommodations are discussed below.

#### 2 Definition of Disability

For the purposes of the Equal Status Acts (2000-2012) and the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2011), 'disability' is defined as:

- (a) the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,
- (b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
- (c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,
- (d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
- (e) a condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

Both acts provide that discrimination is taken to occur when a person is treated less favourably than another person on the grounds of a disability that currently exists, previously existed but no longer exists, may exist in the future or is imputed to a person.

#### 3 Reasonable Accommodations

A reasonable accommodation may be any action that helps alleviate a substantial disadvantage. The purpose of a reasonable accommodation is to enable a student with a

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from 'Supporting disabled students in practice: a tripartite approach' by Lauren Griffiths, Piers Worth, Zoe Scullard and Davina Gilbert in *Nurse Education in Practice 10* (2010), pp. 132-137.

disability to participate fully in all aspects of the programme and to have the opportunity to demonstrate core competencies in terms of knowledge, skill and attitudes.

Reasonable accommodations may include but are not limited to:

- Assistive technology
- Human/personal supports (such as note-takers, readers, Irish sign language interpreters, etc.)
- Additional time, for example in exams or for learning specific skills
- Information in alternative formats
- Physical access to required areas and/or timetabling of course elements into accessible locations
- Alternative forms of assessment
- Alternative or specifically selected practice education experiences that enable the student to demonstrate core competencies in an environment with fewer barriers

The nature of reasonable accommodations will depend on the student's individual needs or disability, the tasks that are required (be they lecture- or placement-based) and the environment in which the student will learn.

### **3.1 Reasonable Accommodations and the Equal Status Acts (2000-2012)**

Generally speaking, UL programmes fall under the remit of the Equal Status Acts (2000-2012). The scope of the acts applies to people who attend or are in charge of educational establishments. The disability ground is broadly defined, as discussed earlier, and includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions. Educational institutions must do all that is 'reasonable' to 'accommodate' the needs of a person with a disability.

The Equal Status Acts require providers of goods and services to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities by making reasonable changes to what they do or how they do it in situations where, without these changes, it would be very difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to obtain those goods and services. However, these entities are not obliged to provide special facilities or treatment when the cost would amount to more than what is termed a nominal cost. What amounts to a nominal cost will depend on the circumstances, such as the size and resources of the body involved. If the State provides grants or aids to assist with the provision of special treatment or facilities, there may be an onus on the body to avail of these grants.

### **3.2 Reasonable Accommodations/Appropriate Measures and the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2011)**

UL programmes that are viewed as 'professional programmes' fall under the remit of the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2011). According to the acts:

... any person, including an educational or training body, who offers a course of vocational training shall not ... discriminate against a person (whether at the request of an employer, a trade union or a group of employers or trade unions or otherwise) –

- a) in the terms on which any such course or related facility is offered,
- b) by refusing or omitting to afford access to any such course or facility, or

c) in the manner in which any such course or facility is provided.

‘Vocational training’ is defined in the acts as follows:

“*vocational training*” means any system of instruction which enables a person being instructed to acquire, maintain, bring up to date or perfect the knowledge or technical capacity required for the carrying on of an occupational activity and which may be considered as exclusively concerned with training for such an activity.

The Employment Equality Acts state that an employer or, in this case, an educational institution must take ‘appropriate measures’ to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Appropriate measures are defined as effective and practical changes the institution makes to suit learners with disabilities. An educational institution might not be able to provide these types of appropriate measures if it means that the institution would suffer a ‘disproportionate burden’. A ‘disproportionate burden’ means that unreasonable pressure might be put on some institutions to carry out the measures needed. When deciding what measures are reasonable for institutions to take, several factors are taken into account, including:

- The financial cost of the measures
- The size of the institution’s business

Before an educational institution can claim that providing the suitable measures or facilities would place them under a ‘disproportionate burden’, they must look at the possibility of obtaining funds from such sources as public funding or grants.

#### **4 Supporting Students with Disabilities in Professional Practice**

The work that the Disability Support Services office engages in with UL’s placement coordinators and partners on behalf of students with disabilities places students at the centre of the process and gives them the responsibility of working with the relevant placement partners to ensure that the agreed reasonable accommodations meet their needs. The model discussed below is based on existing practice, specifically in the areas of developing a body of critical information through experiential learning that can be applied to different situations. The model highlights the importance of providing focused disability awareness training to both practice coordinators and external partners.

The model aims to ensure that students with disabilities have the supports they need right through their education and before, during and after their professional placements. The model is premised on the practice that supports are identified in an action plan and reviewed and modified, where necessary, at all stages of the student’s programme of study. The reasonable accommodations provided to the student in UL’s learning environment should align to those provided to the student in the professional practice setting. The fundamental guiding principle is that there should be an agreement between the student, Disability Support Services, the practice coordinator and the practice partner with regard to the context of practice, the competencies to be exhibited and the reasonable accommodations to be provided.

The aims of the model are to:

1. Extend the support provided to students with disabilities to encompass practice.

2. Design a proactive working arrangement between the University, practice partners and students with disabilities.
3. Establish a working policy for practice that incorporates the identification of appropriate supports for students with disabilities.
4. Develop a valid and reliable system to plan, implement and evaluate practice supports provided to students with disabilities.

The model includes the following six key phases:

1. Disclosure: identify and assess student needs
2. Establish support systems and processes in practice
3. Early-placement review: determine, where necessary, alternative strategies
4. Develop detailed plans and models of support
5. Establish a critical information base
6. Revise the support strategy

#### **4.1 Disclosure: Identify and Assess Student Needs**

It is important that as much information and advice as possible is available to students and applicants in relation to the professional accreditation and fitness to practise requirements of programmes and in relation to whom to contact to discuss issues of concern. Applicants considering applying for programmes with fitness to practise requirements are advised to carefully consider the programme's fitness to practise competencies and seek guidance on the reasonable accommodations and other supports provided by UL. Where the potential impact of a student's disability jeopardises the duty of care owed by the University to the student, employees or patients, the student is obliged to make this known to the course director.

Applicants with disabilities should disclose their disability on their CAO application form and, if offered a place on a programme of study at UL, register with Disability Support Services as soon as practicable. Without the disclosure of a disability, it is not possible for UL to process and implement reasonable accommodations, in the necessary timely manner, on professional practice placements. Students who do not disclose their disability run the risk of encountering significant difficulties on professional practice placements. It is in the best interest of students with disabilities to disclose their disability as soon as they accept their programme offer.

Students who do not disclose their disability and then realise that their disability is negatively affecting their capacity to develop particular programme competencies are strongly advised to register immediately with Disability Support Services.

After a student with a disability registers at UL and with disability support services, the student and a disability officer meet to assess the student's needs in relation to the specific programme of study, including, if applicable, a placement element.

#### **4.2 Establish Support Systems and Processes in Practice**

- A) Disability-related student information is provided to the course director through a LENS report. A meeting is held between the placement coordinator and the Disability Support Services office to finalise the support needs of the student in the placement element of his/her programme. These considerations may include issues such as

distance to the placement, travel arrangements and the identification of the optimum placement environment to allow the student to capitalise on his/her strengths.

- B) Consultations are held with the placement partner, and an agreement is reached on the range of supports and reasonable accommodations to be put in place for placement. Central to these discussions is getting the balance right between any statutory practice requirements of the programme and the support needs of the student. The underlining principle for these discussions is that the reasonable accommodations should support the student through a safe and effective practice placement. This partnership approach should ensure that there is a clear agreement between the Disability Support Services office, the placement coordinator, the placement partner and the student on the range of reasonable accommodations to be put in place before the placement commences. The discussions should be framed by clear guidance in relation to the competencies expected to be attained by the student in the placement and professional practice setting. It is expected that there will be an agreement between the relevant UL personnel and the placement partner in relation to the reasonable accommodations to be put in place. The placement coordinator or relevant academic member of staff should ensure that any alternative assessment instruments to be used on the placement are discussed with the head of department/school. At all stages, it should be borne in mind that there is a legislative onus on the University to provide reasonable accommodations or appropriate measures to students with disabilities.
- C) If, for whatever reason, agreement on the reasonable accommodations to be put in place is not reached, the outstanding issues should be discussed with the relevant head of department/school with a view to the partners taking an agreed approach to the supports to be provided to facilitate the student to meet the required professional practice competencies. If the placement partner is unwilling to proceed with the placement because of the nature of the required reasonable accommodations, the head of department/school should secure an alternative placement opportunity for the student.

#### **4.3 Early-placement Review: Determine Alternative Strategies**

As early as is practicable, the effectiveness of the student's reasonable accommodations in his/her placement will be reviewed. In cases where the student is finding the module or placement component particularly challenging or is at risk of failing or where the placement partner raises issues in relation to the student's performance, such a review can be conducted at any stage of the student's placement. The student's progress will be assessed and the range of reasonable accommodations reviewed. The tracking, analysis and evaluation of successful reasonable accommodations in practice placements will enable the development of a number of case studies that will contribute to the effective inclusion of students with disabilities in the healthcare and other professions. As part of this sharing of information, disability awareness training initiatives will be available to both practice coordinators and placement partners.

#### **4.4 Develop Detailed Plans and Models of Support**

Each student will be considered on an individual-case basis when the LENS report is being prepared and during the interim review early in the placement. These interventions will assist UL to develop models of support that best meet the needs of all parties. Where it is

not possible to identify reasonable accommodations for students, it is important that such information be used to ensure that the students have the earliest possible notification of the challenges they may be facing.

#### **4.5 Establish a Critical Information Base**

An information base will be developed from case studies completed in section 4.4 above.

#### **4.6 Revise the Support Strategy**

This policy and supporting models of support will be reviewed and revised as required.



## Appendix 2: Fitness to Practise Statement Application Approval Form<sup>3</sup>

When completing this form, please delete the italicised text. The completed form must be signed by the relevant course director(s) or Associate Dean Academic Affairs.

1. **Programme Name(s)** (BSc; B.Med. B.Sur.; etc.):

2. **Course Director(s):**

3. **Professional Fitness to Practise Requirements**

*Give a brief statement on the aims of the profession and requirements for a fitness to practise statement. Reference should be made to any external accrediting/professional requirements that inform the development of these requirements.*

4. **Professional Competencies**

*Professional competencies are the knowledge and skills required by the student. Programmes of study that have fitness to practise requirements have both general and specific professional competencies. A description/justification of how each of the following competencies applies to the programme(s) listed in no. 1 above should be given below. Include reference to any relevant placement provider or professional regulatory requirements.*

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Description/justification of how the competency applies to the programme(s) listed above (add bullets as required)</b>
a) Protection of the service user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
b) Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
c) Working within the scope of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
d) Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
e) Managing risks and reporting concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
f) Honesty and trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
g) Behaviour on and off campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
h) Keeping appropriate records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>
i) Include any additional competencies (i.e. profession-specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ...</li><li>• ...</li></ul>

<sup>3</sup> All Fitness to Practise application forms should be submitted to the Academic Regulations Committee for its consideration.

**5. Health Requirements**

*Professional settings and practice will generally require the student to maintain a level of good health to ensure the student and service users are not adversely affected by any health condition that may arise. As part of a general health protection, UL and/or the placement partners may require students to undergo health screening, vaccination or other forms of health assessment. The specific health requirements that a student must meet should be listed below. Any restriction and supporting justification on students with disabilities enrolling on this programme and seeking to avail of accommodations provide by Disability Support Services should also be listed below:*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

Course Director(s)

Associate Dean Academic Affairs