



UK Therapy Guild Academy of Integrative Counselling & Hypnotherapy Training

Fitness to Practice Policy & Procedure

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1. Purpose and Guiding Principles

The primary responsibility of UK Therapy Guild Ltd is to the public and the wider therapeutic profession. Our fundamental duty is to ensure that students who are awarded our qualifications are fit and suitable to practice as safe, competent, and ethical therapists.

This Fitness to Practice Policy is a crucial safeguarding tool. It provides a formal, fair, and supportive procedure for addressing serious concerns about a student's health, character, or professional conduct that may render them unsuitable to continue with their training or to enter the profession.

This policy is not intended to be punitive. Where possible, it aims to support students in addressing and resolving issues. However, the Guild's duty of care to future clients will always be the paramount consideration. This procedure is distinct from our standard academic progress or complaints policies and is enacted only when a student's fundamental suitability for the profession is in question.

All proceedings under this policy will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in our adopted **BACP Ethical Framework**.

2. Scope and Definition of 'Fitness to Practice'

This policy applies to all students enrolled on any training programme with UK Therapy Guild Ltd.

"Fitness to Practice" is more than academic competence. It encompasses a student's ability to demonstrate the professional conduct, character, and health necessary to practice therapy safely and effectively without posing a risk to themselves, the public, or the reputation of the profession.

3. Grounds for Concern

A Fitness to Practice procedure may be initiated if significant concerns arise in one or more of the following areas:

- **Conduct and Character:**
 - A serious breach of the BACP Ethical Framework.
 - Dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation (e.g., plagiarism, falsifying placement hours).
 - Aggressive, violent, or threatening behaviour towards staff, peers, or clients.
 - A failure to respect appropriate professional boundaries.
 - Use of alcohol or drugs that impairs judgment or performance.

- Receiving a criminal caution or conviction that is relevant to public protection.
- Any behaviour, either within or outside the training context, that brings the profession into disrepute.
- **Health (Physical or Mental):**
 - A physical or mental health condition that is not being appropriately managed and which impairs a student's judgment, reliability, or ability to practice safely.
 - A lack of insight into the impact of their health on their ability to train and practice.
- **Professional Development and Insight:**
 - A persistent failure to engage with the learning process.
 - An inability to receive and integrate feedback from tutors or supervisors.
 - A significant lack of self-awareness or personal insight, which is critical for therapeutic work.
 - A failure to use clinical supervision appropriately.

4. The Fitness to Practice Procedure

The process is designed to be fair and transparent, with the student being kept informed at every stage.

Stage 1: Raising a Concern

Concerns can be raised by tutors, supervisors, placement providers, peers, or through student self-referral.

1. A concern should be reported in writing, with any supporting evidence, to the Director, Nichola Doyle.
2. The Director will conduct an initial assessment within **10 working days** to determine if there are sufficient grounds to invoke the Fitness to Practice procedure. They may decide:
 - To take no further action.
 - That the matter is better addressed under a different policy (e.g., Academic Appeals).
 - To proceed to a formal investigation.

Stage 2: Formal Investigation

1. If the procedure is invoked, the student will be informed in writing. This letter will clearly state the nature of the concern and provide a copy of this policy.
2. The Director will appoint an Investigating Officer (this may be a senior staff member not directly involved with the student's core tuition) to gather information.
3. The student will be invited to a meeting with the Investigating Officer to discuss the concern and provide their perspective. The student may be accompanied by a friend or representative.
4. The Investigating Officer will produce a report and, in consultation with the Director, will decide whether to dismiss the concern or refer it to a Fitness to Practice Panel.

Stage 3: Fitness to Practice Panel Hearing

This is a formal hearing to consider the evidence and make a decision.

1. **Panel Composition:** The Panel will be chaired by the Director, Nichola Doyle, and will include at least two other members: one senior tutor from the Guild and one **independent external professional** (e.g., an experienced therapist or supervisor not affiliated with the Guild).
2. **Notification:** The student will be given at least **15 working days' notice** of the hearing. They will receive all documentation and evidence being presented to the Panel.
3. **The Hearing:** The student has the right to attend, to be accompanied by a representative, to submit a written statement, to present their case, and to respond to the concerns raised.
4. **Confidentiality:** All Panel hearings are confidential.

5. Panel Outcomes

Following the hearing, the Panel may decide on one of the following outcomes. The decision will be communicated to the student in writing within **7 working days**.

1. **No Case to Answer:** The concerns are dismissed, and no further action is taken.
2. **Issue a Warning:** A formal warning is placed on the student's file.
3. **Impose Conditions:** The student may continue on the course subject to specific conditions, such as:
 - Undertaking personal therapy.
 - Receiving additional supervision.
 - Completing a specific piece of reflective work.
 - Agreeing to a health monitoring plan.
4. **Suspend Studies:** The student's training is suspended for a fixed period to allow them time to address the concerns raised.
5. **Termination of Training:** The student is required to withdraw from the training programme. This is the most serious sanction and is used when the Panel concludes that the student is not suitable for the profession and that no other outcome would be sufficient to protect the public.

6. Appeals

A student has the right to appeal the decision of the Fitness to Practice Panel. An appeal must be submitted in writing within **10 working days** of receiving the outcome and can only be made on the following grounds:

- A procedural error or irregularity occurred during the hearing.
- New material evidence has emerged which was not available at the time of the hearing.
- The sanction imposed was disproportionate to the findings.

The appeal will be reviewed by a panel of individuals not previously involved in the case. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.