

**School of Medical and Health Sciences**

**Lapses in Professionalism Policy**

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## Introduction

Health courses leading to registered professional qualifications with a regulatory body have very distinct and defined values relating to behaviour and discipline. This is an aspect of education that students on these programmes are required to learn and assimilate. Registrants who enrol onto post graduate professional courses, such as independent prescribing, are also required to continue to adhere to the code of conduct provided by their regulatory body. Inevitably, learning these values and beliefs also leads to the development of personal belief and values (Poorchangzi, Borhani, et al. 2019).

## Fitness to practice

All regulatory bodies are mandated to protect the public and the reputation of the profession. There is no statutory definition of fitness to practice but this has been defined by the NMC/GMC as the registrant’s suitability to remain on the register without restriction. Providers of professionally regulated professional courses are required to have robust fitness to practice procedures to sit along site the usual academic procedures for academic integrity.

Examples of the requirements for fitness to practice can be found using the above links and the following definition of fitness to practice provided by the NMC.

Please see [What is fitness to practise? - The Nursing and Midwifery Council (nmc.org.uk)](https://www.nmc.org.uk/concerns-nurses-midwives/dealing-concerns/what-is-fitness-to-practise/), Fitness to Practise ([www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org)) and [Fitness to practise | (hcpc-uk.org)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/concerns/what-we-investigate/fitness-to-practise/)

## Misconduct

Concerns and complaints against professionals can relate to conduct rather than competence and can include conduct on social media, public behaviour etc. (De Gagne, Hall et al 2019). Issues surrounding conduct, attitudes and behaviours is recognised as an issue for students on professional courses (Riklikiene, Karosas & Kaseliene 2017).

Misconduct was defined in Roylance v GMC [2000] AC 311 as:

 *Misconduct is a word of general effect, involving some act or omission which falls short of what would be proper in the circumstances. The standard of propriety may often be found by reference to the rules and standards ordinarily required by a [nursing] practitioner in the* *particular circumstances...*

Left unchecked minor infringements relating to these issues can later amount to more major incidents, which may result in and lead to a Fitness to Practice issue and impact the professionalism of the student. This would contravene the relevant codes of practice provided by professional regulatory bodies.

## School of Medical and Health Sciences PSRB requirements

The professional regulatory body requirements for the School of Medical and Health Sciences are:

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) https://www.nmc.org.uk

General Medical Council (GMC) https://www.gmc-uk.org

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) https://www.hcpc-uk.org

General Dental Council (GDC) https://www.gdc-uk.org

Social Care Wales (SCW) https://socialcare.wales

General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) <https://www.pharmacyregulation.org>

## Tariff based system

This policy is inspired by a tariff-based system used by other providers of health and social care education, notably Anglia Ruskin University who have utilised a similar system with excellent results. It is acknowledged here that other Universities use similar systems, and this will add a clear layer of accountability and governance to student behaviour on all courses within SMHS.

This policy seeks to address the issues of ‘Lapses in Professionalism (LiP)’ (Anglia Ruskin University, n.d).  The policy will achieve this through the implementation of a tariff based and early warning system. This system will act as an alert to students to aspects of conduct that may lead to an FTP in the future. It can also be used by staff to manage and support the development of professional behaviour that are required from students on professional courses. The intention of this policy is to educate rather than penalise students and continuing to support and educate them about professional behaviour and responsibilities.

Using a simple tariff-based system students and staff can identify and address low level LiP which will form part of continuing education of students around this topic, acting as a clear indicator to students and staff to ensure that professional lapses are addressed in a timely manner. Points accumulated under the tariff system will remain as a record of lapses for individual students for the duration of their programme. At the beginning of each subsequent academic year students will start with a zero tariff for that year of study. This approach enables staff to identify pattens of behaviour and lapses that may occur over the course of the programme. Points accumulated under the tariff system will remain as a record of lapses. For students on post registration courses this will not apply for CPD modules. This approach enables staff to identify pattens of behaviour and lapses that may occur over the course of the programme.

## Recording lapses

Recording of all lapses will be via the student My Bangor record or the students’ academic assessor record for prescribing modules and entered onto the live LiP spreadsheet populated by course leads so that it is possible to track any lapses uncured by a student across the duration of their studies, this process is the responsibility of all staff. Rationale for this is that this information supports the tracking and action related to this policy and managing low level inappropriate student behaviour. As a part of their development as students and professionals it is the responsibility of the student to also keep track of any tariff points applied.

## Process for lapses in professionalism

1. Evaluation of professional behaviour is made in all academic sessions as well as placements and includes Practice Supervisors (PS), Practice Assessors (PA) and Academic Assessors (AA). In addition, any issues identified by Halls Wardens or fellow students fall within this process. (See Tariff chart for lapse categories and penalty points).
2. For LiP deemed low-level 1-3 points can be determined and applied by the referrer and relevant Course Lead and/or Lead Midwife for Education (LME). It is the responsibility of the referrer to inform the Course Lead/Director and/or LME by email, (in cases of referrer being outside of Bangor University the Course Lead/Director and/or LME will send the link to the MS form to the referrer for completion). Initially the referrer completes the LiP record form (link in LiP Team). The form then populates the spreadsheet in LiP Leads Team. This can be accessed by the Course Lead/Director and/or LME. Also, the Course Lead/Director and/or LME and/or Referrer are responsible for notifying the student of the LiP and penalty points applied and documenting the outcome on the students My Bangor record.
3. When a concern is raised resulting in 4 or more points to be applied the relevant Course Lead/Director and/or LME or deputy must be consulted, and once agreement is reached a LiP record form must be completed. Forms can be found at the LiP Microsoft Team the form is accessed by the FTP and DBS lead via the relevant MS Form. The LiP Committee will review the decision and apply the points agreed.
4. The student is notified by email letter of the lapse and LiP Committee decision including the number of points within 10 working days.
5. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the imposition of 4 or more tariff points if they can demonstrate material irregularity or administrative error within 10 days following receipt of the committee decision. Student queries will go to the LiP Committee for review, the student will not be present at the committee meeting. The student can submit their explanation of the event in the form of a written letter. The committee will be chaired by the Deputy Head of School and members relevant to the discipline will sit on the committee with the chair for appeals.
6. Any points incurred will remain on the students record however, the student will start at each subsequent academic year for pre-registration programmes with zero points. However, the points accrued for each year remain on the spread sheet for the duration of the student’s studies and on their My Bangor record and will be accessible in the event of further concerns.
7. Students on pre-registration courses who have accumulated up to 2 points in an academic year must meet with their Personal Tutor, Academic Assessor or Course Lead (according to programme of study) to discuss their situation and identify any support, signposting or developmental needs required.
8. Students who have accumulated up to 3 points in an academic year on a pre-registration course must meet with the Course Leader/Director and/or LME or deputy to review their situation and to discuss their situation and identify any support, signposting or developmental needs required (for points 7 and 8 each meeting needs to be a formative learning opportunity with constructive feedback to the student and take on any feedback about the process form the student).
9. Students who accumulate a total 4 or more points in an academic year (over separate episodes) must be discussed by Course Lead/Director and/or LME or deputy, FTP Lead and personal tutor regarding relevance for FTP.
10. Students who are awarded 4 points or more initially (in one episode) are considered at the LiP Committee meeting. Depending on the number and nature of the points accrued: where applicable a support or action plan will be agreed; the student may be given a written warning, and a copy will go on the student’s record; major concerns will invoke Fitness to Practice procedures. The LiP Committee will comprise relevant Programme Lead or Programme Professional Lead (Chair), Director of Teaching and Learning or deputy, LME, Course Leads or deputy and a member of academic staff.

## References

Anglia Ruskin University (n.d) Midwifery: Lapses in professionalism (LiP) policy. Retrieved from: <https://aru.ac.uk/business-employers/practicehub/midwifery>

De Gagne, J.C., Hall, K., Conklin, J.L., Yamane, S.S., Wyman Roth, N., Chang, J. & Suk Kim, S. (2018). Uncovering cyberincivility among nurses and nursing students on Twitter: A data mining study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies.* (89). pp.24-31.

Poorchangzi, P., Borhani, F., Abbaszadeh, A., Moghaddameh, M. & Farokhzadian, J. (2019). The importance of professional values from nursing students' perspective. *BMC Nursing.* (18-26). pp2-7.

Riklikiene, O., Karosas, L. & Kaseliene, S. (2017). General and professional values of student nurses and nurse educators. *Journal of Advanced Nursing.* (74). pp.666-676.

## Appendix 1

##

Lapse in Professionalism identified 1-3 points or 4 over separate incidents

See process points 1-10 in policy

Lapse in Professionalism identified 4 or more points in one incident

See process points 1-10 in policy

## Appendix 2 Tariff Chart

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Lapse example** | **Tariff**  | **Notes** |
| **Persistent Attendance Minor Scale**  |  |
| Absence: unauthorised (Any absence that the student has failed to declare) | **1** |  |
| Poor timekeeping | **1** |  |
| Failure to respond to emails within 48 hours and for students on PT courses this limit is one week 7 calendar days. | **1** |  |
| **Persistent Dress Minor Scale** |  |
| Breach of LHB Uniform or Dress Code  | **1** | Lapses should be clear and unambiguous and recorded in relevant practice assessment document (PAD). This should not be a matter of personal taste or preference. |
| Poor personal hygiene | **1** | Enquiries to student re finances and advice/direction to hardship funds etc.  |
| Non-use of ID badge | **1** |  |
| **Minor Scale Academic** |  |
| Work submission: Non-attendance at designated appointments with staff  | **1** |  |
| Failure to present Portfolio documents after each clinical placement as programme of study dictates (where relevant to programme structure) | **1** |  |
| Failing to contribute to module/course/placement feedback/evaluation as requested by School/LHB | **1** |  |
| Failing to request suspension of studies/special circumstances or extensions or first sit for examinations (when required) | **1** |  |
| Patient/Organisation breaches in confidentiality in academic work | **2** |  |
| Repeated failure to engage with academic content | **1** |  |
| Use of academic work previously submitted and/or from another person and presented as their own | **1-3** | Report to Chair of Exams for Academic Integrity review. All instances must be noted on student record.  |
| Signing in for or sharing a register code with another student who was not present for a taught “live” session | **1-3** | Levy higher points for repeated behaviour of this type, includes asking someone else to sign in for the student or signing in on behalf of an absent student |
| Failure to apply for a DBS in a timely manner e.g., within 4 weeks of course start or following conviction or advice after a DBS panel hearing or to declare criminal conviction on self-declaration at interview. | **1-3** |  |
| **Minor/Moderate Scale** |  |
| Inattention or lack of interest: without implications for a patient/ with implications for a patient | **1/2** |  |
| Inability or apparent unwillingness to accept constructive comments in practice  | **2** |  |
| Inability to recognise or failure to accept limitations to scope of practice | **2** |  |
| Patient record keeping failures  | **2** |  |
| Unfitness or impairment: failure to inform / discuss with staff prior to carrying out treatment / procedure/acts outside realm of competence | **2** | 3-6 if danger to patient / unsafe practice (also consider FTP) |
| Failure to confirm consent with patient prior to any procedure/task | **2** |  |
| Failure to seek approval prior to starting treatment or procedures or failure to communicate completion of task or changes in patient status/safety.  | **2** | 3-6 if danger to patient / unsafe practice |
| Repeated failure to record an absence from placement or theory using the My Bangor reporting system | **2-3** |  |
| **Moderate/Major** **Scale**  |  |
| Unprofessional attitude concern e.g., rude/dismissive | **3-6** | Consider >3 if behaviour is persistent over time and is documented/noted previously LiP etc. |
| Identified attitude difficulty towards equality diversity | **4-6** |  |
| Patient/Organisation breaches in confidentiality  | **3-6** |  |
| Impairment or unfitness due to drugs and alcohol | **6** |  |
| Behaviour: abusive, aggressive, or threatening | **6** | Consider in and out of Halls/University |
| Publicly or openly arguing with colleagues/staff. Inappropriate use of media for blended/online learning. | **6** |  |
| Alteration of documentation with intent to deceive | **3-6** |  |
| Inappropriate use of Social Media contrary to professional body advice and guidance | **3-6** |  |
| **Infection Control/Public Health** |  |
| Failure/unwillingness to comply with any regulations regarding testing or monitoring for public health conditions e.g., Covid LFT/Self Isolation etc. | **6** |  |
| Health and Safety Breach (major) includes breach of Infection Control Policy | **4-6** |  |
| **Moderate/Major Scale** |  |
| Repeated incidents of plagiarism | **4-6** | Student has already been referred and through Academic Integrity at School and University level |
| Assisting another student in procuring a fraudulent signature or fraudulently completing own documentation e.g., timesheet/PAD or other documentation | **4-6** |  |
| **Lapses outside of the University remit** |  |
| Unprofessional or disgraceful behaviour outside of studies or placement which brings the profession/ University into disrepute e.g., fighting, inappropriate sexual behaviour towards others | **6** | This may be left to external agencies to investigate first s, but the faculty reserves the right to issue penalty points in appropriate cases, e.g., bringing the Faculty or Profession into disrepute. Remedies could also include the University discipline regulations or School Fitness to Practise procedures. Consider Board of Discipline and referral to Sexual Violence policy for students. |
| Undertaking activities such as working during times of restriction e.g., when isolating or in theory blocks or placement | **3-6** |  |
| Failure to provide or falsify regulatory and mandatory documentation and declarations are per course requirements e.g., DBS, self-declaration of convictions | **6** |  |

## Appendix 3 Lapses in Professionalism Spreadsheet

This is linked and populated by the MS Forms Lapses record form. There are two spreadsheets that Programme Leads and or LME can access depending on the tariff 1-3 or 4 and above. These links can be found in the Lead Lapses in Professionalism Team.

## Appendix 4 Lapses in Professionalism reporting form 1-3 (now a MS Form for review)



**Link to complete form** [**https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VUxHxiOpKk2b1OzjcUjbsqqtLBtRbjBFpHz6wm\_9MoZUQ05IMUgxTVFHWTQ2WkhGMzRHVjgxWjFLSS4u**](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VUxHxiOpKk2b1OzjcUjbsqqtLBtRbjBFpHz6wm_9MoZUQ05IMUgxTVFHWTQ2WkhGMzRHVjgxWjFLSS4u)

## Appendix 4 Lapses in Professionalism reporting form (4 and above) Now an MS Form



[**https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VUxHxiOpKk2b1OzjcUjbsqqtLBtRbjBFpHz6wm\_9MoZUNEs3OE1ESEpRVFdSM0NUUEZSQTFFOFBHQy4u**](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VUxHxiOpKk2b1OzjcUjbsqqtLBtRbjBFpHz6wm_9MoZUNEs3OE1ESEpRVFdSM0NUUEZSQTFFOFBHQy4u)

## Appendix 6 Letter of initial information and award of tariff to student



**Date**

**Dear (Name and Banner Number)**

A report of a lapse in professional behaviour has been received on:

The nature and description of the lapse was:

Following review by the reporting person and your Course Lead it is proposed you have been given the following tariff points of.............

Please find attached a copy of the School of Medical and Health Sciences Lapses in Professionalism policy,

 (Use this section for cases referred to LiP Committee)

This will be referred to the LiP Committee and you will be notified of their decision

You may submit any written evidence of mitigating information to this Committee by...................... and send this to .......... Professionalism Lead for the School of Medical and Health Sciences who is Chair of this Committee.

Once the Committee has sat and reached a decision you will be informed days of the Tariff award. If you wish to appeal this award you have 10 working days from the Committee awarding the points and if you do not appeal or appeal is not upheld then these will be recorded on the database and in your My Bangor record.

Yours Sincerely,

(Name and designation Course Lead and/or LME)

## Appendix 7 Letter of outcome and award of tariff points



**Date**

**Dear (Name and Banner Number)**

We have received a report of a lapse in professional behaviour on:

The nature and description of the lapse was:

Following review by sitting of the School Lapses in Professionalism Committee you will be awarded the following tariff points of.............

If you wish to appeal this award you have 10 working days from the Committee awarding the points and if you do not appeal or appeal is not upheld then these will be recorded on the database and in your My Bangor record.

Yours Sincerely,

(Name and designation)