



Unite the Union Response to:

Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) consultation on Guidance on conduct and ethics for students

This response is submitted by Unite. Unite is the UK's largest trade union with 1.5 million members across the private and public sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, transport, local government, education, health and not for profit sectors.

Unite represents in excess of 100,000 health sector workers. This includes eight professional associations - British Veterinary Union (BVU), College of Health Care Chaplains (CHCC), Community Practitioners and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists (GHP), Hospital Physicians Association (HPA), Medical Practitioners Union (MPU), Mental Health Nurses Association (MHNA), Society of Sexual Health Advisors (SSHA). Unite also represents members in occupations such as allied health professions, healthcare science, applied psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, dental professions, audiology, optometry, building trades, estates, craft and maintenance, administration, ICT, support services and ambulance services.

Unite has 80,000 members in Local Authorities and represents members in social work, social care, housing, schools, waste and refuse, craft and maintenance.

Introduction

Unite welcomes the opportunity to respond to the HCPC consultation *Guidance on conduct and ethics for students*. As part of this response, Unite has used its ongoing routes throughout the organisation to hear back the views of our members in the relevant professions and these have informed our response.

Question 1

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

Unite suggests that the layout and some of the terms used do not provide clarity around the documents purpose. It initially states that it is intended to give students information about the HCPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics. However, as it begins with a list of what students *should do* this suggests it is intended as guidance rather than simply as information. Unite considers it would be helpful to have this list later in the document, for example, under the heading of *Guidance on conduct and ethics*.

Question 2

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

Yes. Unite considers that the section 'Report concerns about safety' should include the importance of and the process for students to raise concerns. Such concerns may not be limited to safety or wellbeing of service users or carers but could relate to staff, equipment etc.

Question 3

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

Some members consider that the use of the term 'professional' needs to be reviewed. There was consensus around the fact that those who are not in regulated professions, including students, are also professionals, aiming to deliver in their role to the highest standards. In the introduction, within 'Personal and professional conduct' it was suggested by some that the sentence 'studying to become a *professional* in a regulated profession' should be changed to 'studying to become a *practitioner* in a regulated profession'. The same point was made about the sentence '*on your programme you have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge you need to become a professional in an environment which protects the public*'. However, others pointed out that using the word practitioner could lead to confusion as there are assistant practitioner roles.

The section on guidance 'Promote and safeguard the interests of service users and carers', point 4 states 'respect a person's right to have their carecarried out by a *professional* and not a student'. Again we consider that this implies that students are not 'professional'.

In addition in paragraph 1 of the Guidance, Unite would question what is meant by *appropriate authority* in relation to students obtaining consent from a service user and would suggest this needs a further explanation.

In 'Respect confidentiality', point 3, Unite would suggest that policies or guidelines on confidentiality produced by the education provider **and** placement provider should be followed and would therefore advise adding *and/or* to this sentence. In relation to the last

point, we would suggest that as safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, students also have a responsibility to ensure they adhere to safeguarding policies.

Question 4

Do you think the addition of guidance on delegation for students is appropriate and clear?

Yes

Question 5

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

Apart from the issues with 'professional', no.

Question 6

Do you have any other comments on the guidance?

No

This response is submitted on behalf of Unite the Union by:
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