

**LTC09D097**

**Title:** School of Nursing and Midwifery – Fitness to Practice  
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The School’s Fitness for Practise Panel was approved by the University’s Learning and Teaching Committee on 22.4.09. This paper presents a report on the first year of the operation of this Panel.

1. The Panel was required to meet on only two occasions during 2009.
2. At both these meetings, the terms of reference and the process for the conduct of the proceedings of the meeting were effective in ensuring that principles of the Panel were met.
3. One of the meetings of the Panel was chaired by the Head of School and the other by the Deputy Head of School and this was found to be effective in ensuring that any conflict of interests was managed effectively.
4. At the Annual Monitoring Review by Reviewers from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (UK) the documents related to the Panel were scrutinised by the Reviewers and it was also discussed with the Head of School. The Reviewers concluded that ‘A Fitness to Practice (FtP) panel is in place. The purpose of this panel is to consider any health or conduct issues related to students so as to ensure public protection. Due to university regulations the FtP panel only serves as an advisory group and can only make recommendations to the Head of School to take action. The panel consists of permanent senior staff members but others can be co-opted as appropriate. The panel will be convened as and when required. Students have been informed of the establishment and function of the FtP panel via the student newsletter’ (NMC 2009:5).
5. The School of Allied Health Professionals are currently adapting NAM’s Fitness to Practice principles and procedures as they have to set-up their own Panel in the School.

Actions points following the Future Actions.

The documents related to the Panel were reviewed at the annual formal meeting in November 2009 and several changes/ modifications have been proposed. The School would like these (Page 2-7 of this document where the changes/ modifications appear as ‘tracked changes’) to be considered and approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

## **NAM Fitness to Practise (FtP) Panel**

### **1. Introduction**

A NAM Fitness to Practise (FtP) Panel will be in operation from 1 January 2009 to comply with the NMC's 'Good health and good character: guidance for educational institutions, NMC 2008'. Although the FtP Panel is being introduced to meet the requirements of the NMC, it will be applicable to any student registered in the School.

When considering the establishment of this Panel, several factors were taken into consideration:

- (a) Several processes already exist in the School to monitor student's attendance pattern through the 'Sickness and Absence' policy.
- (b) All pre-registration students undergo an annual CRB check during the programme. In addition, all students have signed the 'Programme Conditions' which stipulate that they have to report any criminal offences and/or convictions. Both of these ensure that there is both a self-declaration by students as well as an 'external check' of character.
- (c) All students have an annual review/ pathway planning meetings with the Academic Advisors.
- (d) All students are aware of relevant University policies, in particular 'General Regulations for Students' and 'University Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion'
- (e) During the last Annual Monitoring Review by NMC - Approved reviewers, the current processes in the School and the Professional Misconduct/ Unsuitability procedures of the University were deemed to be meeting the NMC requirements for monitoring health and character.

With the above factors in mind, it is proposed that the FtP Panel supplements the current procedures/processes and not replace them. Secondly, it is proposed that the FtP Panel is seen as being an advisory/consultative body to the Head of School (HOS), who has final responsibility for all student issues.

### **2. Purpose of the FtP Panel**

The purpose of the FtP Panel is to consider any issues related to health, character and professional behaviour so as to ensure that public protection is maintained.

The Panel will achieve this purpose by considering concerns made by members of the public, faculty, other students or placement staff about a student who is undertaking a programme/module of study in the School.

The concerns may include the following:

- (a) Health or character concerns identified by the Director of Admissions after the student has registered eg issues that come to light after admission to a programme (eg a criminal conviction from the CRB check).
- (b) Any issues related to health, character and professional behaviour identified by faculty during the annual review of a student's progress or during tutorial sessions. This includes declarations of a charge, conviction or a caution made by a student to a member of faculty. It also includes changes to a student's health either due to an existing or a new condition.
- (c) Health or character concerns related to behaviour raised by Course Directors or the Lead Midwife for Education when completing the 'Declaration of Good Character' at the end of a student's programme.
- (d) Health or character concerns related to behaviour raised by placement staff that become evident or are made known when a student is undertaking a placement.
- (e) Concerns made by members of the public.
- (f) Concerns raised by the School's Plagiarism Officer or deputy.
- (g) Concerns raised by other students.

- (h) Health concerns raised by the School's Disability Officer, Dyslexia Officer or any other member of the Faculty.

The above list is not exhaustive.

### 3. Principles of the FtP Panel

The Panel will serve as an advisory group to the Head of School. The Panel makes recommendations to the HOS or the Appointed Deputy to take action according to relevant University procedures.

The Panel will not be:

- (a) Concerned with the 'signing off' cohorts of students following or prior to the meetings of the Board of Examiners.
- (b) Involved with concerns raised by the Director of Admissions about applicants/ application forms. These will continue to be the responsibility of the University's Admission Officer and Head of School.
- (c) Directly concerned with the processes and terms of reference of the University's Professional Misconduct and Unsuitability (PMU) Committee. In order to ensure this, the FtP Panel will conduct its business in a manner that is not prejudicial to any action that might be instigated/ taken by the PMU process and procedure.

The existing route whereby allegations of a serious nature may be made directly to the HOS in writing remains (see Appendix 1). Procedures may vary depending on the urgency: the HOS may consult with the FtP Panel, if time permits or inform the Panel of any decisions for cases requiring urgent action.

If a PMU is initiated by HOS, normal University procedures are followed. The FtP Panel will be advised of the HOS decision regarding PMU, where applicable.

It should be noted that members of the Panel will not be able to serve on any subsequent PMU committee but may be called as witnesses to any PMU proceedings.

### 4. Process

Concerns must be sent, in writing, using NAM's Student Concern's form to the Chair of the FtP Panel.

The Chair will consider the concern and:

- (a) if there is a possibility of public/patient safety being an issue, take immediate action and, in the case of the nominated deputy, consult the HOS so that immediate action can be taken, or
- (b) request further information, prior to (c) below or
- (c) convene a meeting (either virtual [tele or video conference] or face-to-face) of the Panel (without the student and their representative) to consider the case, and will decide on which/what information will be made available to the Panel for this meeting.

Subsequent to the meeting, the Chair of the FtP Panel will:

- (a) inform the student of the recommendations of the Panel;
- (b) where concerns were initially raised by a third party, the HOS should decide what appropriate feedback should be given to the third party.

### 5. FtP Panel Membership

The Panel will consist of 'permanent' members (\*) and the Chair can, in keeping with the requirements of NMC (2008), co-opt others as necessary in order to ensure a balanced and appropriate membership. Care will be taken where there may be a conflict of roles.

- \*Head of School (Chair)
- \* Deputy Head of School
- \* School Director of Learning and Teaching/nominated deputy
- \*Director of Examinations and Assessments or Vice Chair of Board of Examiners
- \*Disability/Dyslexia Officer/nominated deputy
- Lead Midwife for Education/nominated deputy
- \*Trust representative
- Supervisor of Midwives
- Course Directors in same branch/profession as student
- Director of Admissions
- Plagiarism Officer
- Service Users/Lay Representatives where appropriate
- Secretary to the FtP Panel (Faculty Manager) and Minute Secretary

A proportion of the 'permanent' members of the FtP Panel will have equality and disability awareness training, as stipulated by the NMC.

## **6. Timescales/Meeting Frequency**

The FtP Panel will be convened at any time in the academic year to consider individual concerns. The FtP Panel will be convened at the earliest opportunity, if possible within 20 working days. In the interests of speed and expediency, meetings of the Panel may be held 'virtually' [tele or video conference]. The Chair of the FtP Panel will decide on the membership of particular Panels.

There will be a formal annual meeting to discuss general matters of policy and procedure and to provide a report to the School Board.

## **7. Future Developments**

The procedures described above may evolve depending on Fitness to Practise developments in the Faculty of Health.

These initial procedures will be reviewed after 1 year (December 2009).

Approved by Learning and Teaching Committee: April 2009

Amended: November 2009



University of East Anglia  
Faculty of Health  
School of Nursing & Midwifery

## SCHOOL OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY STUDENT CONCERN FORM

For use by any member of staff (academic or administrative), placement staff, mentor and student who interacts with a student of the School of Nursing and Midwifery and has a concern about the student.

This form can be completed by staff at any time during the academic year.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's programme of study: \_\_\_\_\_

**I am concerned about the above student's behaviour and would like to draw this to the attention of the School for further action:**

**My concern is as follows:** *(please provide a brief description under headings below)*

What happened?

Who else (if anyone) is aware of this?

Is the student aware of your concerns?

What action have you already taken (if any)?

What would you like to happen next?

Any other comments:

Name of person who is making this concern known: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print clearly)

Date of completing this form: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the person who is making this concern known: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details of the person who is making this concern known (email / phone):  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please send this form to Mrs Rosie Doy, Deputy Head, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Edith Cavell Building, Norwich NR4 7TJ. (R.Doy@uea.ac.uk)**