

## Fitness to Practise Policy

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## Section 1: Overview

### 1.1 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1.1 Frontline's aim is to transform the lives of vulnerable children and their families by ensuring a positive contribution to outstanding social work practice. To achieve this, fitness to practise procedures are in place so that those qualifying and applying for registration with the professional body are fit to practise as social workers. The social work regulator defines a person as 'fit to practise' when they have the skills, knowledge and character to practise their profession safely and effectively. This means developing demonstrable professional attitudes and behaviour.
- 1.1.2 The Frontline curriculum address key practice knowledge, understanding and skills in order to ensure participants are enabled towards fitness to practise, so that they may obtain a professionally recognised qualification for social work.
- 1.1.3 This policy sets out that Frontline will consider issues that call into question a participant's fitness to practise (FtP). It applies to all fully registered participants and applies whenever concerns are raised about their fitness to practise. Prior to the participant completing the registration process with Lancaster University and becoming fully registered, the suitability for professional training policy will apply.
- 1.1.4 Concerns about fitness to practise may arise in relation to unsatisfactory professional performance, misconduct or disciplinary offences (both academic or otherwise), failure to disclose required information, behaviour away from studies (e.g., criminal convictions, disruptive behaviour, inappropriate use of social media), or poor health or physical impairment or disability that interferes with the participant's ability to practise safely. This list of examples is not exhaustive.
- 1.1.5 The definition of unsatisfactory professional performance is wide-ranging but may include the following:
- unsafe practice, incompetence or requiring too much supervision;
  - lack of respect, and/or aggressive or poor attitude;
  - failure to self-reflect, lack of insight;
  - lack of receptiveness to advice from professional colleagues;
  - poor self-management, lack of professional accountability;
  - dishonesty or breaking confidentiality or organisational policy.
- 1.1.6 This policy is not intended to replace any disciplinary or fitness to study procedures. However, the outcome of these policies may lead to a fitness to practise issue progressing under this policy.



1.1.7 This policy applies to Frontline participants in both years 1 and 2. In year 1, following the raising of concerns as in section 2.2 a participant can only be the subject to Frontline's fitness to practise process. In year 2 Frontline participants are also employees of local authorities or children's trusts. Depending on the circumstances, a year 2 Frontline participant may be the subject of their employer's fitness to practise process, Frontline's fitness to practise process or both (see Section 3 below).

## 1.2 Responsibilities

1.2.1 The chief social worker is accountable for the effective implementation of the policy.

1.2.2 The admissions & support manager is responsible for:

- effective implementation of the policy
- chairing fitness to practise panels
- informing Frontline's Academic Registry of the outcome of a hearing.

1.2.3 The heads of delivery or principal practice tutor are responsible for:

- the overall management of a case;
- conducting or initiating an investigation or activity to establish the facts of fitness to practise cases;
- deciding which stage of the FtP policy to action;
- seeking appropriate support and advice on procedural and policy matters;
- keeping the academic registrar informed when initiating and progressing action under this policy.

1.2.4 The academic registrar is responsible for:

- Informing LU of the initiation and status of any cases in stage 2 of the policy
- Tracking all FtP cases at all stages
- Holding all documents relating to fitness to practise procedures and shares relevant information with Lancaster University

1.2.5 The participant is responsible for:

- Engaging with the process openly and honestly
- Providing any mitigating information

## 1.3 Structure of the Policy and Fitness to Practise process

1.3.1 The policy and fitness to practise process is divided into 2 stages.

1.3.2 Stage 1 is the preliminary stage of the policy and process and is designed to address concerns and support the participant to improve their practise with the support of the practice tutor and



consultant social worker through the use of Practice Support Plans (PSPs). This process should also identify any barriers to learning and progression. See section 2.3

- 1.3.3 Stage 2 is the formal stage of the policy and process, where concerns have reached the threshold in 2.2.4. This stage involves a formal investigation and gathering of evidence which may lead to a fitness to practise hearing. See section 2.5.

## 1.4 Participants with disabilities

- 1.4.1 Frontline will consider adjustments participants involved in Fitness to Practise procedures may require.

- 1.4.2 Where there are sufficient concerns relating to their health, a participant will be asked to undertake an occupational health assessment. Its purpose is to advise Frontline on the fitness of the participant to take part in the fitness to practise process and to advise Frontline of any adjustments that may be required to the fitness to practise process as a consequence of the participant's health (see 2.2.11 and 2.5.5).

## Section 2: Policy and procedures

### 2.1 General principles

- 2.1.1 Frontline is committed to ensuring its fitness to practise procedures are carried out fairly and are proportional to the matter under consideration.

- 2.1.2 Information relevant to fitness to practise procedures will be kept confidential, unless there is a risk to the participant, other participants, staff members, children and families or the general public.

- 2.1.3 If a concern has been raised by children or families the participant has been working with, or they have provided evidence, Frontline will ensure their confidentiality is maintained.

- 2.1.4 Participants subject to the fitness to practise process may be accompanied at meetings or hearings by a friend, other supporter, or Students' Union or Union representative. This person will be present to support the participant during the hearing and, while it is expected that the participant will answer questions at meetings or hearings, their supporter will be able to represent them and/or address the panel.

- 2.1.5 If the fitness to practise process is being considered following the outcome of another procedure, it may be appropriate to proceed directly to stage 2. This will be determined by the head of delivery (or nominated representative).



2.1.6 Following receipt of a concern surrounding fitness to practise that meets the threshold for stage 2, Frontline will appoint an investigation officer to investigate further.

2.1.7 If it is concluded that a participant's fitness to practise is not impaired or does not meet the necessary threshold, as per this policy (see clause 2.2.4), Frontline reserves the right to refer the matter to an alternative Frontline policy, for example Fitness to Study.

## 2.2 Instigating a fitness to practise process

2.2.1 When a report or correspondence is received that raises concerns about a participant's fitness to practise an initial assessment of the severity of the issue will be completed by the head of delivery (or nominated representative).

2.2.2 The head of delivery (or nominated representative) will record all decisions about any concerns. All such records will be maintained and made available to the participant (although this may be restricted taking into account data protection and/or confidentiality requirements).

2.2.3 The assessment will be based on one or more sources of evidence as follows:

- written reports by Frontline, Lancaster University or Local Authority staff;
- written examiner reports or feedback on assignments;
- allegations from a member of the public;
- reports from other disciplinary procedures or panels where evidence raising concerns about fitness to practise has come to light (including review of any previous Fitness to Practise investigations or outcomes noted on the participant's record);
- reports of criminal convictions, cautions or police allegations/investigations; or
- other appropriate sources.

2.2.4 The head of delivery (or nominated representative) will determine whether or not the concerns reach the threshold for a direct referral to a stage 2 investigation, which include but are not limited to the following:

- breaching the relevant Social Work England or British Association of Social Workers codes of conduct and ethics;
- an ongoing behavioural concern that contravenes or undermines the upholding of the SWE Professional Standards;
- failing to meet the necessary standards of proficiency for the profession to the extent that there are significant concerns about risk to participant, people who use services or staff members;
- demonstrating behaviour that poses a threat to the reputation of the profession;
- presenting a health and safety risk or presenting risk to people who use services or staff members;
-



- 2.2.5 The head of delivery (or nominated representative) may determine that the report is unsubstantiated, or that it does not require any further action under this policy. They may refer the report for action under another Frontline policy if appropriate.
- 2.2.6 Should the head of delivery (or nominated representative) determine that none of the above threshold criteria has been reached, but that the complaint has raised sufficient concern in relation to the participant's fitness to practise, then a Practice Support Plan (PSP) meeting will be conducted so that appropriate measures to address the concerns raised can be discussed and implemented.
- 2.2.7 A participant who has been subject to stage 1 may consequently be referred on to stage 2 of the fitness to practise policy if it is deemed that there are continuing grounds for concern or new concerns are raised that require investigation.
- 2.2.8 If the issue leading to the fitness to practise concern meets or exceeds the threshold, a participant may be directly referred to stage 2 of the policy, therefore, bypassing stage 1.
- 2.2.9 If a participant is directly referred to stage 2, the head of delivery (or nominated representative) will provide the participant with access to all the information on which this decision has been based, unless this needs to be restricted in light of information governance requirements (e.g. data protection, confidentiality of service users etc.). If such restrictions apply, amended information which gives sufficient detail to allow the participant to defend themselves without contravening the relevant information governance regulations must be provided.
- 2.2.10 Fitness to practise concerns can arise from other procedures, for example, academic malpractice. Where an alternative procedure is being followed to establish the validity and extent of a concern, including proceedings of the police or courts, these procedures should normally be completed prior to instigating the fitness to practise policy.
- 2.2.11 As part of Frontline's duty of care to the participant, where there are any concerns relating to their physical or mental health, a participant will be asked to undertake an occupational health review at stage 1 and again at stage 2 if appropriate. A participant may refuse to undertake such a review, but would need to be aware that not only would the panel then lack information regarding any mitigating factors that might have been identified by such a review, but also that the panel may be concerned that the participant was reluctant to ensure that their health was not impeding their fitness to practise. Depending on the outcome of the occupational health review, a decision will be made by the chair by the Fitness to Practise panel as to what evidence from the occupational health review should be forwarded to a formal hearing. The participant will receive a full copy of the occupational health report.



## 2.3 Stage 1

- 2.3.1 Stage 1 is for cases that do not meet the threshold for a stage 2 Fitness to Practise investigation. At Stage 1 it is intended to put into place measures to address concerns via a Practice Support Plan (PSP). It offers participants the opportunity to improve their practice, as well as allowing staff to better explore the barriers that may be inhibiting participants' progression and their ability to practise effectively.
- 2.3.2 Participants will be informed by their CSW or practice tutor of any concerns raised as soon as possible and may be asked to reflect on their practice via a verbal and/or written reflective account which will be discussed with them at a Practice Support meeting along with the concerns that have been raised about their fitness to practise. The format and expectations of this meeting will be made clear to the participant prior to it commencing.
- 2.3.3 If participants do not engage with the stage 1, for instance, by failing to attend a meeting, the head of delivery may decide to move directly to stage 2.
- 2.3.4 Where improvement measures are agreed at the Practice Support Plan meeting, these should be clearly set out in a Practice Support Plan for the participant along with associated timescales for improvement and review, and the consequences for the participant of not meeting these. Over the course of the agreed timescales, the CSW and practice tutor will monitor whether the participant is meeting the agreed improvement measures culminating in a review. Following the review, the CSW and practice tutor will make recommendations to the head of delivery as to the following outcomes:
1. the participant has made improvements and met all the actions set in the PSP;
  2. the participant is making improvements but requires more time. The practice tutor will agree a further period of monitoring and arrange a further PSP meeting to review with the Principal Practice Tutor and Head of Delivery;
  3. the participant is making insufficient progress or the situation is deteriorating, the practice tutor may recommend commencing stage 2.
- 2.3.5 In instances where Frontline takes no further action under the fitness to practise policy following Stage 1, and where appropriate, the matter may be progressed under another policy, for example, Fitness to Study and/or Participant Discipline.
- 2.3.6 Where a concern about fitness to practise needs to proceed onto a stage 2 investigation, the participant will be notified through the process outlined below (2.5). A participant who has been subject to stage 1 may consequently be referred onto stage 2 if it is deemed by the head of delivery, in liaison with the CSW and/or practice tutor, that the circumstances meet or exceed the threshold criteria.



2.3.7 The participant's file will be updated and record all decisions about any concerns, and a copy will be shared with [academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk](mailto:academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk) so that this can be stored on the participant's record. The information will be made available to the participant (although this may be restricted as a consequence of data protection and/or confidentiality requirements).

## **2.4 Suspension while the fitness to practise process is pending**

2.4.1 At any point during Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the proceedings, if the fitness to practise concerns indicate a risk to the participant, other participants, staff members, children and families or the general public then the participant may be suspended from practice or the whole programme either temporarily or until the proceedings have been completed.

2.4.2 The chief social worker or nominated representative is responsible for making this decision and will consider each case individually.

2.4.3 Participants in Year 1 may be suspended for up to four weeks pending the outcome of fitness to practise investigations. If after four weeks the proceedings are not complete, it is unlikely that the participant would be able to complete the requirements of the practice learning experience (200 days in placement), as the maximum period by which placement can be extended is 30 days. Participants would therefore be required to intercalate whilst the proceedings take place.

## **2.5 Stage 2**

2.5.1 Stage 2 is for cases that meet the threshold for an investigation (see 2.2.4) and involves an investigation followed by a fitness to practise panel hearing.

2.5.2 Within five working days of the decision that the threshold has been reached, the head of delivery (or nominated representative) will appoint an independent investigating officer to review the participant's fitness to practise. The investigating officer will be someone who is social work qualified with no prior involvement with the case.

2.5.3 The investigation includes gathering of evidence and statements, interviews, and writing of an investigation report.

2.5.4 During the investigation, the investigating officer would normally conduct interviews with and/or request statements from the following parties:

- the participant;
- any witnesses (this can include, but are not limited to, participants, LA or Frontline staff, members of the public);
- practice tutor;
- consultant social worker;
- Any other relevant persons deemed appropriate.





Notes will be taken of any interviews held which will be part of the evidence provided to the Fitness to Practise panel.

- 2.5.5 As set out in clause 2.2.11, where there are sufficient concerns relating to the health of the participant, they will be asked to undertake an occupational health assessment. A participant may refuse to undertake the assessment, but would need to be aware that not only would the Fitness to Practise panel be unable to access any mitigating factors that might be identified by such an assessment, but also that the Fitness to Practise panel may be concerned that the participant was reluctant to ensure that their health was not impeding their fitness to practise. Depending on the outcome of the occupational health assessment, a decision will be made by the chair of the Fitness to Practise Panel as to what evidence from the assessment should be forwarded to a Fitness to Practise hearing. The participant will receive a full copy of the occupational health report.
- 2.5.6 The investigating officer will compile and review all relevant evidence and shall review relevant guidelines on fitness to practise matters issued by the professional body to write an investigation report.
- 2.5.7 The investigation should normally be completed and the report written within a maximum of 6 working weeks following the decision to proceed with stage 2. If further time is required, the investigator will advise the impacted parties of the revised timeline and reasons for the delay.
- 2.5.8 Following the conclusion of an investigation, a fitness to practise panel is convened to hear the case, normally within 15 working days of the conclusion of the investigation.

## 2.6 Fitness to Practise Panel Hearing

### Administration

2.6.1 The fitness to practise panel will include as a minimum:

- a **chair person**, who will be the admissions & support manager or nominated representative, with no prior involvement with the participant. The chair will:
  - 1) lead the proceedings and facilitate decision making;
  - 2) inform relevant parties of the meeting's outcome;
  - 3) approve the minutes taken by the panel administrator;
  - 4) check that due process has been followed.
- one member of Frontline staff who is a registered social worker and has had no significant prior involvement with the participant;
- an **independent practising social worker**, who has had no prior involvement with the participant.



- 2.6.2 A **panel administrator** will be in attendance at the fitness to practise panel hearing to take notes.
- 2.6.3 The **investigating officer** will normally be in attendance at the fitness to practise panel hearing to present the case. If the investigating officer is not available the panel can proceed in their absence.
- 2.6.4 The panel administrator will send the participant a written invitation to attend the fitness to practise panel, normally allowing at least 10 working days' notice, outlining:
- the reason the participant has been referred to the fitness to practise panel;
  - the time and date of the fitness to practise hearing;
  - the membership of the panel;
  - the date by which the participant will be sent the evidence and material that will be presented to the panel;
  - that the participant has the right to make further written submissions and provide any evidence in support of their case to the panel, which should be received at least 2 working days prior to the date of the hearing. The participant will be informed of the person to whom this should be sent;
  - that the participant may be accompanied by someone to support them. The participant should inform the panel administrator who this will be and ensure there are no conflicts of interest;
  - where the participant is to be accompanied by a legally qualified representative, the participant must inform Frontline at least 5 working days prior to the hearing. Frontline reserves the right to have their own legal representative at the hearing.
- 2.6.5 The participant is usually required to attend a fitness to practise hearing, though the chair may consent to them being absent if they judge there to be a reasonable explanation. Whether or not they are in attendance, the participant may make written submissions in their defence and/or mitigation.
- 2.6.6 In the event that a participant, who has been required to attend a hearing under these regulations fails to do so at the appointed time without reasonable explanation, then the panel will normally proceed with the hearing in the participant's absence. The fact of their non-attendance may also be included in the consideration of their fitness to practise if it is relevant to the case being made.
- 2.6.7 The participant can request to postpone the hearing if they have exceptional circumstances with supporting evidence. Exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to:
- serious short-term illness, medical treatment or accident;
  - bereavement caused by the death of a close relative or other significant person;
  - caring responsibilities which could not reasonably have been anticipated;



- serious domestic events which could not reasonably have been anticipated and which have had a severe impact;
- evidence of a short-term exacerbation of a long-term health condition.

The panel chair will make the decision whether to grant a postponement or proceed in the participant's absence and must be fair and reasonable in making this decision. A participant who cannot attend can make written submissions.

- 2.6.8 Every participant referred to a fitness to practise panel has the right to attend and present information in support of their case, as well as the right to a representative (e.g. a lay representative, a friend, a students' union or union representative).
- 2.6.9 The panel may ask witnesses to attend a hearing (normally via a mutually agreed online meeting platform) or to provide a written statement where the facts leading to the fitness to practise concern are disputed or to seek clarification after hearing the participant's account. Witnesses will be given reasonable notice should they be asked to participate in the formal hearing and their role will be fully explained.
- 2.6.10 The fitness to practise panel will usually hold an oral hearing. However, it may at its discretion and in exceptional circumstances, choose to deal with the matter via correspondence where the panel chair deems it appropriate to do so.
- 2.6.11 All documents to be considered by the fitness to practise panel will be distributed by the panel administrator to all panel members and the participant normally no later than ten working days in advance of the panel.
- 2.6.12 Minutes of the hearing will be taken and following chair's approval, shared with the participant, Examination Board, academic registrar and the head of delivery.
- 2.6.13 The panel may choose to seek support from legal or other external advisers prior to the hearing, at their discretion. This would be arranged through the panel chair.

### **Conduct of the hearing**

- 2.6.14 The chair will outline the procedure that the hearing will follow, which will involve highlighting the following:
- that the hearing is confidential and professional standards will be observed. If the hearing involves discussion of practice, then any service users or third parties will be referred to by pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality;
  - introducing the fitness to practise panel and explaining the presence of each person;
  - The structure of the hearing:



- That the participant will have the opportunity to present their response to the concerns raised about their fitness to practise;
  - That the participant will then be asked questions about the fitness to practise concerns, by panel members;
  - After hearing all the relevant information the panel will deliberate on the outcome (from which the participant is excluded). Following this, the panel chair will contact the participant to inform them of the outcome, normally within 1 working day.
- Whether the investigating officer (or nominee) will be in attendance to present the evidence that relates to the fitness to practise concerns;
  - That the participant's representative is there to support them during the hearing and will be able to address the panel and/or represent the participant.
  - when a witness is in attendance, they may be asked questions by the panel and the participant;

2.6.15 The first part of the hearing process will involve the panel considering all the written documentation and presentation from the investigating officer (if in attendance). The second part of the hearing is the presentation of the case for the participant, in mitigation or defence of the expressed concern(s) about their fitness to practise.

2.6.16 Once the Chair is satisfied that all parties have had the opportunity to convey information to the Fitness to Practise panel, the participant (and any representative), the investigation officer and witnesses (if in attendance) will be asked to withdraw from the meeting.

2.6.17 If the panel members are unable to agree on a decision then the outcome will be made via a majority vote.

2.6.18 Following its deliberations the panel will determine the outcome of the case and make a recommendation regarding any penalty or course of action to the Lancaster University Examination Board. The details and outcome of the hearing should be recorded and recommendations forwarded to the Examination Board.

2.6.19 The participant will normally be advised of the recommendation of the hearing at the conclusion of the Fitness to Practise panel's deliberations within 1 working day of the hearing, usually verbally (i.e. by telephone or video call). The participant will be sent a letter detailing the recommendation of the panel within five working days of the formal hearing. In the letter the participant will be advised that they can also write to the Lancaster University Examination Board on the matter if they wish, also enclosing any relevant new information.



## Possible Outcomes

2.6.20 If the panel finds that there are no fitness to practise issues or it is deemed that the participant's fitness to practise is not impaired it may:

- take no further action other than to record the finding; or
- refer the participant to another Frontline policy; and/or
- make recommendations to the participant as to their further progress on the course.

2.6.21 If the panel finds that the participant's fitness to practise is impaired, it may recommend to the Lancaster University Examination Board one of the following actions:

- a written warning with recommendations as to the participant's future conduct;
- a written warning with conditions related to their presence on the programme and/or placement;
- that the participant is intercalated from the programme for a fixed period of time (including recommendations for the conditions of return);
- that the participant is excluded from the programme as they are unfit to practise and cannot redeem the situation. Exclusion means the participant will not be eligible for the full final award (though they may be eligible for an exit award, depending on the academic assessments completed prior to exclusion) and may not be eligible to apply for professional registration.

2.6.22 Once the recommendation has been ratified by the Lancaster University Examination Board, where the participant is deemed not fit to practise and cannot redeem the situation, Frontline will inform other parties (such as Social Work England) of the outcome if doing so is deemed necessary to safeguard children or families with whom the participant may work with in future.

## 2.7 After a fitness to practise hearing

2.7.1 The outcome of the hearing and the recommendation of the fitness to practise panel will be considered at the next appropriate Lancaster University Examination Board (allowing time for submission of information by the participant). However, if an Examination Board is not scheduled within 28 calendar days of the hearing an extraordinary Examination Board will be convened within that time.

2.7.2 The participant can submit any new or relevant information to be considered by the Examination Board. The participant will be given at least 10 working days' notice of the Examination Board, within which to submit any such information for consideration, along with details of how and to whom it should be sent. Information can be submitted up to 2 working days before the Board is scheduled to meet.



- 2.7.3 The Examination Board will consider the recommendation of the Fitness to Practise hearing together with any new or relevant information provided by the participant. The role of the Examination Board is to consider and ratify the recommendation made in respect of the panel outcomes for the participant. The Board must also confirm, to its satisfaction, that due process has been followed at the hearing and that all relevant information has been fully considered.
- 2.7.4 The Chair of the Fitness to Practice panel will be in attendance at the examination board to present the case and answer any questions from examination board members. If the Chair is not available then they may nominate another member of the panel to attend in their place. Other members of the Fitness to Practise panel would not normally attend the examination board meeting. They may, however, attend if, in exceptional circumstances, the Chair of the Examination Board determines that their attendance would contribute information of the hearing beyond that which can be provided by the Panel Chair (or their nominee).
- 2.7.5 If the Board either fails to ratify the recommendation of the Fitness to Practise panel or considers there to be new or additional information available that would potentially impact the recommendation made by the panel then the Board can request that the original Fitness to Practise panel is reconvened. If a further recommendation, is not ratified then the participant will be deemed to have been cleared of the fitness to practise concern under consideration.
- 2.7.6 The participant will receive formal notification of the Examination Board's decision in writing within 5 working days. A copy will be retained in the participant's file.
- 2.7.7 Where the Examination Board ratifies a recommendation that a participant is not fit to practise, with any of the consequent actions listed in 2.6.12, this action will be implemented with effect from the date of the Examination Board.
- 2.7.8 In the case of a participant lodging an appeal against the decision of the Examination Board requiring the participant to withdraw or intercalate from the programme on grounds of fitness to practise, the appeal will be dealt with under the Academic Appeals chapter of Lancaster University's Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures (MARP). If the participant appeals on the basis of consequent termination of their contract of employment with the employing Local Authority or Children's Trust, this will be dealt with by the relevant procedures within that trust or local authority.
- 2.7.9 In cases where a participant is required to intercalate following a Fitness to Practise panel, details of the return to study process can be found in the intercalation policy. Frontline will make reasonable efforts to place the participant into a local authority upon their return. However, placements are provided at the discretion of local authorities or trusts and there are limitations to what Frontline can facilitate. In a case where no suitable placement can be found the participant will be unable to continue on the programme as detailed in the intercalation policy.



## Section 3: Year 2 participants

- 3.1 In year 2 Frontline participants are also employees of local authorities or children's trusts, which will have their own equivalents to fitness to practise policies. With the exception noted in 3.8, participants will not be subject to both their employer's and Frontline's fitness to practise process for the same incident, events or concerns.
- 3.2 When a potential fitness to practise issue is identified by Frontline in the case of a year 2 participant it is Frontline's Head of Delivery or nominated representative's responsibility to liaise with the participant's employer to agree whether the issue will be considered under Frontline's or the employer's fitness to practise process.
- 3.3. Where a potential fitness to practice issue is identified by the participant's employer, it is the responsibility of the participant's Line Manager to contact Frontline's Head of Delivery or nominated representative to inform them of the issue. The Head of Delivery or nominated representative will then be responsible for liaising with the participant's employer to agree whether the issue will be considered under Frontline's or the employer's fitness to practise process.
- 3.4 Once agreed whose fitness to practise to process will consider the issues the agreement should be in writing and record that both the employer and Frontline agree to respect the outcome as being authoritative. The agreement will be held in the participant's file.
- 3.5 It will be Frontline's Head of Delivery's responsibility to ensure that in cases dealt with under the participant's employer's fitness to practise processes the procedure has sufficient coverage to ensure Frontline's fitness to practise needs are covered.
- 3.6 In cases dealt with under Frontline's fitness to practise processes it will be the nominated employer's representative's responsibility to ensure that the procedure has sufficient coverage to ensure the employer's needs are covered.
- 3.7 If, following discussion between Frontline and the employer, it is not possible to agree whose fitness to practise process under which the issue is to be considered *or* if it felt that there are Frontline-specific issues that need to be dealt with via its fitness to practise process, as many common elements as possible should be maintained. So, for example, if the fitness to practise process starts with the employer those findings are kept, but if there is need for further consideration of the Frontline-specific aspects then the Frontline fitness to practise process would focus only on those.
- 3.8 Frontline's fitness to practise policy will normally be used if the fitness to practise issue is related to academic issues and attendance at Frontline teaching sessions. Employers' processes will normally be used for employment-related issues (e.g. not regularly attending work and where issues related to the safety of the participant's practise are raised).



- 3.9 The reasons why Frontline's fitness to practise policy, the employer's fitness practise policy or, in exceptional circumstances, both parties' policies are to be used will be explained to the participant, normally in writing, by the Frontline's Head of Delivery
- 3.10 If Frontline's fitness to practise procedures are used in any instance for a year 2 participant, the procedures outlined in this document will be followed. In addition, following ratification at a Lancaster University exam board, the participant's employer will be notified of the outcome.

## Section 4: Relevant references

### 4.1 [Frontline policies and documents](#)

4.1.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

- Fitness to Study
- Participant Discipline Policy
- Suitability for professional training
- Participant's practice learning agreement
- SWE Professional Standards

## Section 5: Annexe 1

- 5.1 Examples of issues that might result in the initiation of procedures under this policy could include (but are not limited to):
- 5.2 Criminal or related matters:
- Conviction of criminal offences;
  - Domestic circumstances and alleged offences where the police have been called, or where there are safeguarding issues involved.
- 5.3 Conduct or Behaviour:
- Falsification of academic records;
  - Extensive or repeated academic malpractice;
  - Extensive or repeated attendance issues;
  - Inappropriate use of social media;
  - Employment in a role outside the programme that might compromise professional identity or reputation of self or the profession;
  - Issues that cast doubt on a participant's honesty or integrity;





- Inappropriate behaviours or actions with other participants, staff or colleagues (e.g. threatening behaviour, racist/sexist language, dishonesty);
- Harassment or bullying;
- Inappropriate behaviours or actions with children and/or families during the practice and/or contrasting learning experience;
- Practice that is so lacking in competence that it is deemed to put children, families or staff at risk;
- Non-disclosure of a personal or familial relationship with a colleague in the local authority;
- Actions which might cause injury or put the health and safety of others at risk;
- Theft or misuse of property;
- Being in attendance whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including legal highs). Please note that where participants are taking prescribed medications that may affect their performance on the Frontline programme, this should be disclosed to a member of staff as soon as possible;
- The expression of any extremist views (or the provision of any material or encouragement or support for individuals or groups expressing extremist views) that have the potential to incite discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence towards others;
- Making false and/or malicious allegations regarding a fellow applicant or participant.

5.4 Participants should be aware that their conduct in their private life may adversely impact on their standing as prospective social workers and may therefore be relevant for consideration under this fitness to practise policy.