

Self-Evaluation of Fitness to Practice and Readiness for Clinical Placement: Physiotherapy Students

Instruction to Students

As of 1 July 2011, all students enrolled in a Physiotherapy course in Australia are required to be registered with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia as per the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria)*. The aim of the Law is to ensure the safety of the public.

Students do not need to do anything to register with the Board and there is no registration fee; La Trobe University is responsible for reporting student details. Student registration details are not published online and are not publicly available.

To ensure that students understand their responsibilities and obligations as a physiotherapy student under this Law, all students will need to self-evaluate their fitness to practice and readiness for clinical placements. All physiotherapy students must do this prior to each clinical placement.

Fitness to practice

Fitness to practice can be described as having 3 components which will be outlined in this document:

- Professional conduct and behaviour
- Freedom from impairment (mental and physical)
- Clinical competence (Parker, Malcom (2006) 'Assessing professionalism: theory and practice', Medical Teacher, 28: 5,399-403.)

Procedure

1. Students must read and understand **ALL** four sections of this document titled 'Self-Evaluation of Fitness to Practice and Readiness for Clinical Placement: Physiotherapy Students'.
2. Students must complete the declaration on page 7.
3. Students must scan and upload a signed copy of their declaration to In Place (student placement database at <https://inplace.latrobe.edu.au>) prior to the end of the pre-clinical program before semester 2, 3rd year/1st year GEM commences. This is accessed via the Student Screen and by selecting the Notes/Docs tab and attaching scanned document to 'Add Document'. The document is stored in this section and can be accessed by both the student and La Trobe University placements staff.
4. Students who have ticked '**Yes**' to the declaration must meet with the La Trobe University clinical coordinator at their enrolled campus (ARN coordinator) PRIOR to commencing clinical placement.
5. Students should re-assess their fitness to practice and readiness for clinical placements regularly during the clinical program.
6. In the event that a student's fitness for practice and readiness for clinical placement changes, they should make contact with their La Trobe University ARN coordinator.

SECTION 1: Obligations as a registered physiotherapy student under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria)1

As a student enrolled in a physiotherapy degree course you are registered with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia. You may refer to yourself as a 'registered physiotherapy student' or a 'physiotherapy student' but never as a 'physiotherapist'.

The following text is from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Fact Sheet and FAQ for students (available from <http://www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/> accessed 30th August 2016):

The role of the National Boards and AHPRA is focused on registering students and managing notifications about students:

- whose health is impaired to such a degree that there may be substantial risk of harm to the public or
- who have been found guilty of an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more or
- who have a conviction of, or are the subject of, a finding of guilt for an offence punishable by imprisonment or
- who have contravened an existing condition or undertaking.

Notifications may be received by AHPRA from either:

- an education provider who is required under the National Law to report students whose health is impaired to such a degree that there may be substantial risk of harm to the public, or
- a person or organisation who voluntarily reports the student for a health impairment or criminal matter and/or a contravention of an existing condition or undertaking.

What are my obligations as a student to tell AHPRA?

Under the National Law, students enrolled in an approved program of study or undertaking clinical training must notify AHPRA through the local office within seven days of becoming aware that:

- they have been charged with an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more or
- they have been convicted of, or are the subject of, a finding of guilt for an offence punishable by imprisonment or
- their registration under the law of another country that provides for the registration of students has been suspended or cancelled.

What is a voluntary notification against a student?

Any entity (person or organisation) may make a voluntary notification to AHPRA about a student when they believe that the student:

- has been charged with an offence, or has been convicted or found guilty of an offence, that is punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more or
- has, or may have an impairment that they believe may harm the public or
- has, or may have, contravened a condition of the student's registration or an undertaking given by the student to the National Board.

The National Law provides protection from civil, criminal and administrative liability for those persons, who in good faith make a notification under the National Law.

¹ Links to the legislation <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Legislation-and-Publications/Legislation.aspx>

What happens when a voluntary, mandatory or self-notification is made against a student?

AHPRA will assess all notifications to determine whether a Board must consider taking immediate action to protect public health or safety. More information about this process is published on the Notification Process page of the AHPRA website <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/>

What is an impairment?

An “impairment” is defined under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), as a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence), that detrimentally affects or is likely to detrimentally affect a registered health practitioner’s capacity to safely practise the profession or a student’s capacity to undertake clinical training (<http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications-for-Registration-FAQs/Registration-Standards-FAQs.aspx> accessed 30th August 2016).

The Physiotherapy Code of Conduct states that “*if a practitioner knows or suspects that he or she has a health condition or impairment that could adversely affect judgement, performance or the health of patients or clients*” that good practice dictates not relying on self-assessment of the risk to patients, and consulting an appropriate practitioner.

All students are required to self-evaluate their current fitness to practice before commencing each clinical placement. Section 4 of this document provides further guidance to help you evaluate your ability to participate in clinical education.

SECTION 2: Professional Behaviour

Professional behaviour consistent with the performance indicators in the APP items 1-4 and 20 is expected of students on clinical placement. The following text is adapted from the Physiotherapy Code of Conduct from <http://www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/> (accessed 30th August 2016).

Professional boundaries

Professional boundaries refers to the clear separation that should exist between professional conduct aimed at meeting the health needs of patients or clients and a student’s or practitioner’s own personal views, feelings and relationships which are not relevant to the therapeutic relationship. Good practice involves:

- a) maintaining professional boundaries
- b) never using a professional position to establish or pursue a sexual, exploitative or otherwise inappropriate relationship with anybody under a student’s or practitioner’s care; this includes those close to the patient or client, such as their carer, guardian, spouse or the parent of a child patient or client
- c) recognising that sexual relationships with people who have previously been a student’s or practitioner’s patients or clients are often inappropriate, depending on the extent of the professional relationship and the vulnerability of a previous patient or client
- d) avoiding the expression of personal beliefs to patients or clients in ways that exploit their vulnerability or that are likely to cause them distress.

Financial and commercial dealings

Good practice involves:

- a) not encouraging patients or clients to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts that will benefit a student or practitioner directly or indirectly

- b) not accepting gifts from patients or clients other than tokens of minimal value such as flowers or chocolates and if token gifts are accepted, making a file note or informing a colleague where possible
- c) not becoming involved financially with patients or clients; for example, through loans and investment schemes
- d) not influencing patients or clients or their families to make donations to other people or organisations

Consent (see Performance Indicators for APP item 1)

Good practice involves providing information to patients or clients in a way they can understand before asking for their consent. A person should give prior consent to be treated by a physiotherapy student.

In addition, some areas of physiotherapy require informed consent prior to assessment and/or treatment. Informed consent is a person's voluntary decision about health care that is made with knowledge and understanding of the benefits and risks involved. Discuss with your supervisor at each placement the specific type of consent required in that work place (implied vs informed) and how this should be documented.

Adverse events and open disclosure (see Performance Indicators for APP item 20)

When something goes wrong, good practice involves:

- a) recognising what has happened
- b) acting immediately to rectify the problem, if possible, including seeking help and advice from your supervisor
- c) explaining to the patient or client as promptly and fully as possible what has happened and the anticipated short-term and long-term consequences
- d) acknowledging any patient or client distress and providing appropriate support
- e) complying with any relevant policies, procedures and reporting requirements
 - a. This includes completing the La Trobe University online Incident Form https://www.latrobe.edu.au/pc/ohs/incident-report/report_submit.php
- f) reviewing adverse events and implementing changes to reduce the risk of recurrence
- g) ensuring patients or clients have access to information about the processes for making a complaint (for example, through the relevant board or health care complaints commission).

Personal appearance

Students are required to present a professional appearance and meet expectations regarding the clinical uniform, personal identification, safe footwear and articles of clothing or adornment that may pose a risk to clients/patients. Please refer to the 'Clinical Education Manual – Physiotherapy' for further details.

SECTION 3: Readiness for Clinical Placement

Suitable preparation for a clinical placement includes, but is not limited to:

- Revising relevant theory and skills
- Balancing study, work and recreation commitments
- Having a plan for personal and professional support
- Familiarity with APP items and performance indicators
- Maintaining an up-to-date Learning Objectives Form

Section 4: Fitness to Practice Considerations for Clinical Placement

Work in the field of physiotherapy has a high level of physical, mental and emotional demands. A description of the usual demands students is likely to experience during compulsory clinical placements are listed in the table below.

To maximise success and minimise the risk of injury to students or any other persons whilst on clinical placement, it is essential we know in advance if a student has any physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence), that detrimentally affects or is likely to detrimentally their capacity to undertake clinical training. Please read and consider each point carefully.

PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL DEMANDS OF PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDENT CLINICAL PLACEMENTS	
Physical Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate physical ability to carry out physiotherapy assessment and intervention including manual handling, facilitating body positions changes, assisting with transfers and mobility (+/- mobility aids), manual strength testing, passive and assisted limb mobilisation, hands-on treatment, leading and participating in group exercise classes • Perform physical skills required for assessment and management of patients across core areas of practice; cardiorespiratory, neurological, musculoskeletal as well as paediatrics, aged care and aquatic physiotherapy. • Regular standing, walking, bending, squatting and manual handling over 7.5 hour days, 4 days a week for 5 weeks per clinical placement. On average 2 clinical placements are scheduled per semester. Depending on clinical setting, manual handling requirements may vary from light to heavy. Setting types include hospital, rehabilitation and community.
Travel Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to two hours travel per day may be required to and from placement via public or private transport
Mental Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct sensitive, systematic patient interviews and accurately document findings • Ability to process assessment findings, clinically reason, formulate treatment plans, goal and discharge planning based on evidence based practice • Effective time management to complete caseloads, balancing work, study and rest • across a spectrum of challenging clinical circumstances such a supervised practice, periods of heavy work load and working with patients exhibiting distress • Demonstrate professional conduct and work effectively with individuals from different cultures, race, linguistic background, age, gender, disability as well as challenging patient groups such as people with dementia, unco-operative or abusive patients, substance abuse, terminal illness etc. • Effective communication and liaison within a team environment of health professionals • Continual self-reflection on performance, self-directed learning, an awareness of limitations and ability to seek help in a timely fashion
Emotional Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing and discussion of distressing information with patients, health team and caregivers e.g. poor outcome/lifelong disability • Provide treatment to terminally or critically ill patients and potentially dealing with grief and loss • Dealing constructively with emotional and or distressed patients and those with sensitive needs requiring an empathetic approach • Carrying-out potentially distressing treatments such as suctioning and pushing patients past comfortable pain thresholds (e.g. active assisted range post TKR) • Constructively take on clinical educator feedback and advice • Conflict resolution skills to address issues on placement and ability to seek support as needed (e.g. mismatch in supervisor expectations and student expectations)


Latrobe is committed to ensure students are supported and provided with every opportunity to maximise success in the clinical learning environment. If you believe you have a health or medical condition or disability that is likely to detrimentally affect your ability to safely participate in clinical placements by declaring it, your ARN coordinator will meet with you to discuss your situation and ways to accommodate your needs safely within the program.

The university will not disclose a student's personal information to a placement provider without the student's consent or as permitted by privacy laws.

Note: In some circumstances the Physiotherapy Academic Unit may require a student to produce a medical certificate indicating their current physical and mental fitness to undertake a clinical placement. In this case, please provide the medical practitioner with Section 4 of this form to read and document they have acknowledged the physical, mental and emotional demands of physiotherapy student clinical placements.

Student Declaration: (you should self-assess your fitness to practice and readiness for clinical placement prior to each clinical placement)

Do you have an impairment that detrimentally affects, or is likely to detrimentally affect, your capacity to undertake a clinical placement?

- NO**
- YES**  **Please contact your relevant ARN coordinator to arrange a time to meet and discuss your situation prior to commencing clinical placement.**

I understand:

- The physical, mental and emotional demands of physiotherapy student clinical placements at Latrobe University
- My legal obligations as a registered physiotherapy student under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria)

I undertake:

- To meet the requirements of professional behaviour during clinical placement
- To notify La Trobe if my circumstances change with regard to my fitness or ability to undertake a clinical placement
- To suitably prepare for clinical placements

Full Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date __/__/__

For more information, contact your ARN coordinator. Alternatively, the Equity and Diversity Unit and Student Counsellors can provide you with information and advice. Legal obligations under Privacy Legislation are covered by the declaration you have made as part of the In-Place process. If you wish to seek access to your personal information or would like to enquire about handling of person information, please contact the University Privacy Officer by email privacy@latrobe.edu.au. Information relating to the Latrobe University Privacy Policy can be located at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policy/documents/privacy-personal-information-policy.pdf>

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