

Education Seminars 2012– 13 – Student fitness to practise

Case study one

A practice placement educator has come to you to discuss a first year trainee who is about to commence their second year. The trainee had finished a 6 week practice placement with the Trust and all had gone well. The practice placement educator had signed off the trainee's required competencies at the required level and discussed actions for them to develop further with future placements. This had taken place at the end of the placement and as the practice placement educator only takes first year trainees from the programme, they will not work with her again.

The practice placement educator states a member of the public had come forward to complain as they had found some comments made by the trainee on an internet based social media network. The trainee had written comments and posted information relating to a service user's diagnoses, their medication, their personal circumstances and the care they had received from the Trust. The trainee had also made derogatory comments about what they thought of their colleagues and the working conditions at the Trust.

You call the trainee in for a meeting to discuss the situation. The trainee says, in her opinion, there is no problem as her comments are not widely available, she then says that there was no breach of confidentiality in relation to the identification of the service user as she did not identify them by name and address.

Term is due to start again in two weeks and the trainee's first second year placement is due to start two weeks after this.

Questions

Is there an issue regarding the student's fitness to practise?

What course of action would you take in this situation? Why?

Should this student be accepted onto the programme / allowed to continue on the programme? Will the student's application to the HCPC Register be affected by this?

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Case study two

You are taking part in an academic misconduct process regarding a student (A) on an HCPC approved programme. During the marking of a particular module, there were two submissions which had some striking similarities implying some plagiarism had occurred. In the course of marking the papers the tutor noted that both students had picked the same topic to write their papers on and they had both provided identical references – they had both referred to an outdated piece of work, they had both made an obvious error with an unusual spelling of a word and they had both incorrectly referred to a particular piece of research twice. The tutor had come to the conclusion that they had colluded to cheat in the module coursework.

Through the academic misconduct panel student A admitted colluding on his coursework as another student (B) gave him coursework on a memory stick which he took, changed some words and submitted as his own. Student B who had given him the memory stick expected him to use it to formulate his own work in a short amount of time and was very surprised and dismayed when he learnt of the unsophisticated way in which his work had been copied.

Student A has provided character references as part of the process. Upon contacting the references it was discovered that they were unaware that their reference would be used in an academic misconduct case. Once they were aware, referees indicated they thought highly of him and gave reference to the high standard of clinical care he gives. They also stated that in their opinion his clinical practice remains at a high standard, this was out of character for him and this incident has not put any patients at risk.

Through the process student A has said at the time he acted out of desperation but the events would remain with him for a long time and he feels remorseful.

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Case study three

You have been contacted by a member of the public wanting to discuss an incident that took place. He had already talked to members of staff at the placement and was advised that the programme leader was the best person to discuss this with. He is a service user and had had an appointment where one of your students was taking the lead for the session. The practice placement supervisor and a qualified nurse were present for the session.

During the preliminary preparations the supervisor was called away to take a phone call. The service user describes how whilst the student and the nurse were assembling equipment at the other side of the room, the student and the nurse behaved in a flirtatious manner. This behaviour involved eye contact and some body contact by them leaning against one another when reaching for the equipment. The service user states he is not a man of undue sensitivity, yet he felt very uncomfortable by this behaviour which he felt was very disrespectful to him. He did not want to make a fuss at the time but having reflected on it felt it was very inappropriate.

You call the student in to discuss the incident. At first he does not recognise the seriousness of his actions and says that he knows the nurse very well. After informing him of the service user's opinions he realises the distress he has caused and is very apologetic, he states that he now regrets his actions. He also is deeply embarrassed by the knowledge that the placement provider staff are aware of his actions also. He discusses ways in which he can apologise for his behaviour and the upset caused.

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Case Study four

A second year trainee on your programme comes to you as the programme leader to discuss an incident he has been involved in. He says that up to recently he was in a relationship with a student from another programme and it became complicated. After she ended the relationship, he became depressed and did not want to believe it had ended. A series of altercations occurred, including him persistently contacting her through letters, phone calls and text messages, going uninvited to her home and going to her place of work where he admits he was a “little aggressive and threatening”. As a result of his behaviour he has been given a police conviction of Harassment Without Violence. Sentencing for this conviction included a restraining order, 12 months community service and a fine.

The trainee says that he had not come forward to disclose this to you sooner as he wanted to wait and see what the final sentencing would be so he could give you full information. He admits that he realises what he did was wrong and feels remorse for the woman involved but feels in control now and is positive the incident can be put behind him. He knows that this may affect how he continues on your programme.

You are aware that as part of the admissions procedures for the programme the trainee declared a previous police caution for an offence of common assault. The incident leading to the caution happened 3 years before the trainee applied for the programme and was reviewed as part of his application to the programme, including speaking to practice placement providers to determine whether they would be willing to offer him a placement.

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