



General
Osteopathic
Council

DRAFT

Student Fitness to Practise
**Guidance about
Professional
Behaviours and
Fitness to Practise for
Osteopathic Students**

Professional behaviour expected of osteopathic students

Introduction

1. Welcome to the profession of osteopathy. Osteopathy is one of the health professions regulated by law in the United Kingdom (UK). The GOsC's role is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public as well as to promote the highest standards of osteopathic education.
2. The purpose of this booklet is to outline the professional behaviours expected of student osteopaths. It should be read in conjunction with the *Student Fitness to Practise Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Institutions*, as well as the detailed local guidance in place at your Osteopathic Educational Institution (OEI) and other clinical settings that you may work in during your training.
3. Patients and the public place trust in health professionals. In order to maintain this trust it is important for students of the health professions to behave in a way which will continue to promote the best care for patients and uphold the reputation of the profession.
4. Professional behaviour means doing the right thing and behaving appropriately when no one is checking. Regulation begins with personal responsibility. As part of your education and training as a healthcare professional, you will continue to learn about professional behaviour and personal responsibility.
5. Your conduct in both your personal and professional life counts when considering professional behaviour. Throughout your course, the importance of conduct and approaching ethical issues in an appropriate way will be emphasised to you. You will be supported to learn effective professional behaviours throughout your 'Recognised Qualification' (RQ) course.
6. If there are concerns about fitness to practise, a fair and transparent process is followed. This process will meet the requirements of the GOsC's *Student Fitness to Practise Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Institutions*.
7. You will be expected to meet all the requirements set out in the *Standard of Proficiency* and *Code of Practice* prior to the award of your RQ. These documents are available on the GOsC website: www.osteopathy.org.uk/practice/standards-of-practice/.

Health professional regulation

8. The primary purpose of the regulation of these health professions by law is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of patients and the general public.
9. There are nine health professional regulators established by law in the UK. These are:
 - > The General Chiropractic Council which regulates chiropractors.
 - > The General Dental Council which regulates dentists and dental care professionals.
 - > The General Medical Council which regulates doctors.
 - > The General Optical Council which regulates optometrists, dispensing opticians, student optometrists and certain premises.
 - > The General Osteopathic Council which regulates osteopaths.
 - > The General Pharmaceutical Council which regulates pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises.
 - > The Health Professions Council which regulates arts therapists; biomedical scientists; chiropodists; podiatrists; clinical scientists; dieticians; hearing aid dispensers; practitioner psychologists; occupational therapists; operating department practitioners; orthoptists; paramedics; physiotherapists; prosthetists; radiographers; and speech and language therapists.
 - > The Nursing and Midwifery Council which regulates nurses and midwives.
 - > The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland which regulates pharmacists and registers pharmacy premises in Northern Ireland.

What does the General Osteopathic Council do?

10. The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) regulates the practice of osteopathy in the UK. We do this by:
 - > Keeping the Register of all those permitted to practise osteopathy in the UK.
 - > Working with the public and osteopathic profession to promote patient safety by:
 - Setting and monitoring the maintenance and development of standards of osteopathic training, practice and conduct.
 - Assuring the quality of osteopathic education and ensuring that osteopaths undertake continuing professional development.
 - Helping patients with any concerns or complaints about an osteopath, with the power to remove from the Register any osteopaths who are unfit to practise.
11. By law osteopaths must be registered with the GOsC in order to practise in the UK.

Why do healthcare students have to meet high standards of professional behaviour?

12. The public have certain expectations of healthcare professionals. This is because as a patient, most people will be vulnerable. Patients expect that healthcare professionals will treat them properly and will behave ethically. Trust is critically important to this therapeutic relationship.
13. The patient will often have the same expectations of, and will put the same level of trust in, a student as they would a fully-qualified health professional. This means that healthcare students are different to students of other disciplines. Professional behaviour in all aspects of life is important.
14. Regulation takes place at a number of different levels. The first level of regulation is the individual. It is crucial that individuals are aware of and abide by principles of regulation themselves. Healthcare professionals are in day-to-day contact with patients and this requires students to take responsibility for behaving in a way that is in accordance with professional obligations and the expectations that the public have of healthcare professionals.
15. For this reason, there is no comprehensive list of activities which lead to student fitness to practise procedures. Professionalism is about doing the right thing when no one is looking. This guidance attempts to set out positive principles which help students understand how to identify the 'right' behaviours in a particular situation.
16. When considering your own behaviour and that of others, ask yourself will it:
 - a. Impact on the perception of patient safety (including that of fellow students and staff)?
 - b. Impact on the trust that the public places in the osteopathic profession that you wish to be a part of?

Standards

The standards expected of osteopathic students are set out in the *Code of Practice* and *Standard of Proficiency* as published on the GOsC website: www.osteopathy.org.uk/practice/standards-of-practice/. The RQ course will help you to gradually achieve the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to demonstrate these standards to the appropriate level.

The Code of Practice

17. The professional behaviour required of registered osteopaths is set out in the GOsC *Code of Practice*. Highlights from the *Code of Practice* have been set out below. Further guidance should be obtained from the full *Code of Practice*.

18. All healthcare regulators have subscribed to the following values:
- a. Be open with patients and clients and show respect for their dignity:
 - > Listen to patients and clients.
 - > Keep information about patients and clients confidential.
 - > Make sure your beliefs and values do not prejudice your patients' or clients' care.
 - b. Respect patients' and clients' right to be involved in decisions about their treatment and healthcare:
 - > Provide information about patients' and clients' conditions and treatment options in a way they can understand.
 - > Obtain appropriate consent before investigating conditions and providing treatment.
 - > Ensure that patients have easy access to their health records.
 - c. Justify public trust and confidence by being honest and trustworthy:
 - > Act with integrity and never abuse their professional standing.

- > Never ask for, nor accept any inducement, gift, hospitality or referral which may affect, or could be seen to affect, their judgement.
- > Recommend the use of particular products or services only on the basis of clinical judgement and not commercial gain.
- > Declare any personal interests to those who may be affected.

d. Provide a good standard of practice and care:

- > Recognise and work within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience.
- > Maintain and improve your professional knowledge, skills and performance.
- > Make records promptly and include all relevant information in a clear and legible form.

e. Act quickly to protect patients, clients and colleagues from risk of harm:

- > If either your own, or another healthcare worker's conduct, health or performance may place patients, clients or colleagues at risk.
- > If there are risks of infection or other dangers in the environment.

f. Co-operate with colleagues from your own and other professions:

- > Respect and encourage the skills and contributions which others bring to the care of patients and clients.
- > Within your work environment, support professional colleagues in developing professional knowledge, skills and performance.
- > Not require colleagues to take on responsibilities that are beyond their level of knowledge, skills and experience.

19. The GOsC *Code of Practice* sets out the principles of conduct of registered osteopathic practitioners that students should be familiar with at the earliest opportunity as part of the RQ course.

20. The main areas covered in the *Code of Practice* are as follows:
- Make the care of your patient your first concern.
 - Respect the rights of patients to be fully involved in decisions about their care.
 - Justify public trust and confidence.
 - Maintain, respect and protect confidential information.
 - Practice information and the work environment.
21. Students should also be aware of their obligations to patients from an early stage in their course. If you have concerns about the behaviour of a colleague, you should bring your concerns to the attention of a responsible person within the setting to ensure that the concerns may be addressed at an early stage.

The Standard of Proficiency

22. The *Standard of Proficiency* sets out the areas of competence to be met before the award of an RQ. If you have a particular disability which means that reasonable adjustments may need to be made to the assessment of the standards in your case, you should discuss this with your OEI tutor.

What support will I get to be fit to practise?

23. Students will be taught and will continue to have support to learn professional principles and behaviours throughout pre-registration osteopathic training.
24. It is also important for you to confide in your tutor if you have concerns about your own fitness to practise. This will help your tutor provide you with the right support and guidance to help you qualify as an osteopath.
25. The award of the RQ confirms that a student is capable of practising in accordance with the published ethical standards of the osteopathic profession.

Personal lives count too

26. As well as professional competence, personal lives count too. Issues in a student's private life may also impact on their fitness to practise. Examples of issues that may call fitness to practise into question include:

- > Aggressive behaviour.
- > Drug or alcohol misuse.
- > Dishonesty.
- > Failing to observe appropriate boundaries with patients, fellow students, staff and others.
- > Placing inappropriate photographs or postings on social media or social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc.
- > Matters of health may also impact on a student's fitness to practise.

Fitness to practise proceedings

27. OEs must investigate and consider formal student fitness to practise proceedings if matters affecting student fitness to practise are brought to their attention.
28. The purpose of student fitness to practise proceedings is to ensure patient safety and that the trust placed by the public in the profession is upheld. They are not meant to be a punishment for particular behaviours. Insight into unprofessional behaviour is normally a pre-requisite to remaining a healthcare profession student. Whilst recommendation for expulsion is a possible outcome of student fitness to practise procedures, normally, the emphasis would be on supporting students to be fit to practise.
29. The GOSc's *Student Fitness to Practise Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Institutions* provides information on admissions processes, the threshold of student fitness to practise and the student fitness to practise process, including questions to consider when making findings and sanctions. This information will also be available from OEs.

Registration with the GOsC

30. When you successfully complete your training, you will be awarded a Recognised Qualification (RQ). The RQ entitles the holder to apply for registration when other legal requirements related to good health and good character have been met alongside criteria relating to fees and professional indemnity insurance. Once registration is granted, you will be expected to obtain professional indemnity insurance before commencing practice.
31. The award of the RQ means that you are capable of practising to the required standards set out in our core documents, the *Code of Practice* and the *Standard of Proficiency*.
32. When you are registered with the GOsC, you will be required to practise to the published standards of competence and conduct, currently set out in the *Code of Practice* and *Standard of Proficiency*. The Osteopathic Practice Standards (incorporating a revised *Code of Practice* and *Standard of Proficiency*) will come into force on 1 September 2012.
33. The award of an RQ will normally lead to registration with the GOsC, and is generally good evidence that you have satisfied the following requirements for registration:
 - a. Good health is necessary to practise as an osteopath. Good health means that a person must be capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition. Many disabled people and those with long-term health conditions are able to practise with or without adjustments to support their practice. We require a health reference from a GP, osteopath or other suitably qualified health professional on first registration.
 - b. Good character is important as all healthcare professionals must be honest and trustworthy. Good character is based on a person's conduct, behaviour and attitude. It also takes account of any convictions and cautions that are not considered compatible with professional registration and that might bring the profession into disrepute. A person's character must be sufficiently good for them to be capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. We require a character reference from a GP, osteopath or other suitably qualified health professional on first registration.
 - c. Fitness to practise means having the skills, knowledge, good health and good character to do your job safely and effectively. Your fitness to practise as a student will be assessed throughout your pre-registration programme, and if there are ever concerns, these will be investigated and addressed by your Osteopathic Educational Institution (in conjunction with the validating university where appropriate).
34. Once registered, you will be expected to familiarise yourself with the *Continuing Professional Development Guidelines* available on our website (www.osteopathy.org.uk/practice/standards-of-practice/continuing-professional-development/) and to retain a folder of evidence to support the submission of a *CPD Annual Summary Form* each year before your re-registration.
35. Congratulations! We wish you every success in your future studies and career as an osteopath.



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