Code of Conduct for Trainee Dietitians on Practice Placements

Introduction
The conferral of a CORU approved degree in Human Nutrition in Dietetics is a defacto assurance to The Dietitians Registration Board of CORU that you have demonstrated the required level of competencies to be registered as a Dietitian including conforming to a code of professional conduct and ethics. As a trainee acceptance of the code and putting it into practise demonstrates your commitment to its core principles of protecting the public by fostering high standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

During your site training you will continue to develop the skills and knowledge which are required to become a professional in a patient centric environment while also ensuring that the public is protected. As a trainee in a professional course you are required to maintain high standards of conduct and ethics. To participate in on-site training (i.e. practice placement) you must read, sign and comply with the standards as set out in the code below.

The code as set out below covers three areas: conduct, performance and ethics. Once you have read and received all necessary clarifications in relation to the code (you are encouraged to seek advice from college staff) you are required to sign a declaration stating that you have read, understood and agree to act in accordance with the code at all times during your practice placements and training.

Garda Vetting
As part of your initial acceptance onto the course you are required to complete Garda Vetting/Clearance to ensure you have no convictions or cautions against you. This is a requirement to train in the HSE and other organisations and is thus mandatory before you may commence placement. Under the law it is a criminal offence if you fail to notify an employer of certain criminal offences – therefore full disclosure is paramount in the Garda Vetting process. Note that in cases where an individual has lived in many locations, either local or foreign, then the process can take a considerable amount of time and you are encouraged to commence this at the earliest possible opportunity ie immediately upon registration in year 1. Please liaise with your year tutor for additional information in this regard.

Terminology
In this document the following terms have specific meanings:
- **trainee** refers to anyone studying to become a dietitian
- **you must** is used as an overriding principle of duty.
- **you should** is used where the principle of duty may not apply in all case or where there are factors outside your control affecting your ability to comply.
- **service user** refers to all who deal with/come into contact with/are affected by the service provided by you as a trainee in a placement setting i.e. patients, clients, family members, next of kin.
- **intervention** describes all possible therapeutic actions undertaken by the trainee including advice, measurements, physical manipulations, monitoring.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct
If a trainee’s behaviour threatens the well-being and safety of a service user, other staff or trainees, a Student Disciplinary Panel may be required. The severity of a single transgression, or a pattern of repeated and apparently intractable transgressions of a less serious but still significant nature, will be taken into account before proceeding to a Disciplinary Panel. Examples of situations which may lead to the initiation of this process include (note that this is not an exhaustive list):

1. **Criminility (caution/conviction)**
   - Sexual offences (incl. child pornography offences), threatened/actual physical violence, dangerous driving, robber/theft/burglary, fraud/deception, criminal damage, public order offences, road traffic offences, controlled drug offences.

2. **Behaviour deficits in attitudes towards patients.**
- Breach of appropriate boundaries in patient interaction, poor communication including rudeness or lack of respect, breaching patient confidentiality, deceiving patients about their care/treatment, deceiving a patient about one’s student status

3. Abuse, Aggression, Threat of Violence, Use of Violence
   - Verbal abuse, intimidation, bullying, persistent harassment (including sexual harassment), assault, incitement to violence.

4. Poor Interaction
   - Persistent poor communications without improvement, persistent rudeness/lack of respect/swearing disruption of teaching and learning, persistent failure to work as a team member of a clinical team, unfair or unlawful discrimination on the grounds of gender or race or other factors.

5. Academic Deficit
   - Persistent poor attendance/absence, cheating in exams/logbooks/portfolios or other assignments, passing off others work as their own, forging any persons signature, falsifying information.

6. Dishonesty or Fraud
   - Financial fraud, producing fraudulent documents, misrepresentation of qualifications/student status, altering records of any kind without permission.

7. Alcohol or Substance abuse
   - Misuse of controlled substances/drugs (cultivation, manufacture, possession for sale or supply, possession or misuse), consumption of alcohol/drugs impacting the health of patients/student/those working in the clinical environment, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

8. Information Technology
   - Use of information to support potentially unprofessional activity incl. criminal activity, substance abuse, threatening/abusive/rude or lewd behaviour, falsification and dishonesty, breaches of patient confidentiality or dignity.

9. Management of one’s own health
   - Not declaring health issue health issue that could potentially cause harm or impact on fitness to practice, lack of insight into health concerns and their potential impact, failure to seek necessary treatment or support, refusal to follow medical advice or care plan in relation to maintaining/regaining fitness to proceed.

Minor Breaches
Following receipt of notification of a complaint that an alleged minor breach has occurred the PEC will consult with the Programme Chair and Head of School. The PEC, the Programme Chair, Head of School, the complainant and the trainee in question will attempt to resolve the issue informally. Depending on the gravity of the issue the PEC in conjunction with the Programme Chair may decide to refer the case directly to the Head of School if this is considered the more appropriate way to deal with the case.

Serious Breaches
In cases where a serious breach is reported or suspected the PEC, Programme Director and the Head of School will refer the matter to a Disciplinary Panel in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Procedures (DIT and TCD). A Disciplinary Panel formed will include appropriate representation from both Institutes.

Right to Appeal Disciplinary Panel Findings
Appeals against the decisions of a Student Disciplinary Panel are as outlined in the Student Disciplinary Procedures (DIT and TCD).
Code of Conduct for Trainee Dietitians

1. CONDUCT

1.1 Acting in the best interests of service users.
   1.1.1 You must respect a person’s right to have their interventions carried out by a professional and not a student.
   1.1.2 You must not exploit or abuse your relationships with service users.
   1.1.3 You must always show, through your practice and conduct, respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals regardless of their: gender, family status, civil status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or membership of minority groups such as the Traveller Community.
   1.1.4 You must respect service user’s vulnerability, diversity, cultures, economic status and values.
   1.1.5 You must not do anything that you think will put someone in danger.
   1.1.6 If you are worried about a situation which might put someone at risk, you must speak to a member of the placement team or your education provider.

1.2 Respecting the confidentiality of the service users.
   1.2.1 You should keep information about service users confidential, and only use it for the purpose for which it was given, unless the information raises concerns about a situation where someone may be at risk.
   1.2.2 You must not knowingly give any personal or confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to access it.
   1.2.3 You must remove anything that could be used to identify a service user from confidential information which you use in your assessment.
   1.2.4 You must follow local policies or guidelines on confidentiality produced by your education provider or placement provider.
   1.2.5 You should where possible, consult service users about their preferences regarding the use of information about them when educating relatives/carers.
   1.2.6 You must be conscious not to use social media and social networking in a way that identifies practice placement sites or the service user.
   1.2.7 Where service user information needs to be shared with colleagues internal/external to the organisation to give safe and effective care, you must make sure that they know that the information must be kept confidential and transfer of information should be undertaken in a secure and confidential manner.

1.3 Maintaining high standards of personal conduct.
   1.3.1 You must be aware that your conduct during free time may affect whether or not you are allowed to complete your programme or register with us.
   1.3.2 You must behave with dignity, integrity, empathy, honesty and politeness with service users, your colleagues and the programme team.
   1.3.3 You must ensure your dress is professional, appropriate for your placement setting, will not cause offense to the patient, staff or visitors and conforms to placement site guidelines on dress code.
   1.3.4 You should respect the roles and expertise of trainers and work in partnership with them.
   1.3.5 You must follow your education provider’s or placement provider’s policy on attendance.
   1.3.6 You should keep mobile phone use to a minimum, used only when absolutely necessary.

1.4 Provision of information about your conduct and competence to your education provider.
   1.4.1 You must tell your education provider if you are convicted of, or cautioned for, any offence.
   1.4.2 You must report to your education provider and placement provider any observed/undertaken serious breaches of behaviour or malpractice (negligence, incompetence, breach of contract), unprofessional behaviour, unsafe practice which may have a negative effect on the service user care.
2. **PERFORMANCE**

2.1 Limiting your study or stop studying if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.

2.1.1 You should tell your education provider and placement provider about any existing health conditions or changes to your health which may put your service users or yourself at risk.

2.1.2 You should get help from a doctor or an occupational health professional if you are worried about your health.

2.1.3 You should register with college disability services where an ongoing health issue (physical, emotional or psychological) may impact your academic or practical placement.

2.1.4 You should be aware that you may put your service users or yourself at risk if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.

2.2 Working within the law and regulations.

2.2.1 You must recognise that if there is a conflict of interest between the service user and the safeguarding of children or other vulnerable people, safeguarding takes precedence.

2.2.2 You must obey the laws of the country in which you live and work in all your professional and personal practice.

2.2.3 You must be aware that materials developed by individual educators are copyright protected therefore copying and dissemination of materials must only be undertaken with the authorisation of the author/original source.

2.3 Keeping your professional knowledge and skills up to date.

2.3.1 You are primarily responsible for your own learning & progression in the programme.

2.3.2 You should think about and respond constructively to feedback you are given.

2.3.3 You should actively engage with your trainers in developing rotation specific learning outcomes in each placement setting specific to your level of competence.

2.4 Practising within the limits of your knowledge and skills.

2.4.1 You should only carry out an unsupervised task if you feel that you have the appropriate knowledge and skills.

2.4.2 You should make sure that you are appropriately supervised for any task that you are asked to carry out.

2.4.3 You should ask for help when you need it.

2.4.4 You should make sure that you do not claim that you have knowledge and skills which you do not.

2.4.5 You must be able to justify any decisions you make within your scope of practice. You are always accountable for what you do, what you fail to do, and your behaviour.

2.5 Communicating effectively with service users and your education provider and placement providers.

2.5.1 You must take all reasonable steps to make sure that you communicate appropriately and effectively and sensitively with service users.

2.5.2 You should communicate effectively and cooperate with colleagues to benefit service users.

2.5.3 You should communicate effectively and cooperate with the programme team and placement team.

2.5.4 Where appropriate, you should share your knowledge with colleagues i.e. to aid collaborative learning in paired placements.

2.6 Obtaining informed consent to provide care or services.

2.6.1 You should do the following (in so far as is possible).

2.6.1.1 You should make sure that before you carry out any intervention, the service user is aware that you are a student.

2.6.1.2 You should make sure that the service user has given their permission for the intervention to be carried out by a student.

2.6.1.3 You should explain the assessment, intervention or treatment along with any risks, benefits and
alternatives to the service user in a way the service user can understand taking into account the service user’s capacity to understand the information.

2.6.1.4 You should follow your education provider’s or placement provider’s policy on consent.

2.6.2 If or where a service user cannot give informed consent, you must make sure that any actions taken are in the service user’s best interests.

2.6.3 You should make reasonable efforts to encourage the service user to go ahead with treatment or examination that is believed to be in their best interest. However, you must respect the service user’s right to refuse treatment or examination and communicate this decision with your supervisor.

2.7 Keeping accurate records.

2.7.1 You should make sure that any information you put in someone's record is accurate, clear and documented in line with local policies and procedures.

2.7.2 You should protect information in records from being lost, damaged, accessed by someone without permission or tampered with.

2.7.3 You must ensure that all patient records are legible, identifiable as being made by you the trainee, dated and timed, co-signed by the supervising dietitian, prepared as soon as practicable following assessment and/or intervention.

2.7.4 You must ensure that if records are updated, the information that was there before is not erased or made difficult to read.

2.7.5 You must take the lead in student led completion of practice placement assessment forms, doing so in a timely, evidenced based manner which is truly reflective of your practice.

2.8 Health and Safety risks.

2.8.1 You should ensure that you are familiar with all local health and safety policies pertinent to your placement sites.

2.8.2 You should make sure that you take all appropriate steps to deal with all health and safety risks including infection control according to local policies.

2.8.3 You should comply with your education provider or placement provider’s policy on managing risks.

2.9 Honest Behaviour.

2.9.1 You must not pass off other people’s work as your own.

2.9.2 You must reference other people’s work appropriately.

2.9.3 You must make sure that you truthfully and accurately fill in any documents.

2.9.4 You must not let any improper financial reward influence the advice and services you provide, or the products you recommend to service users.

2.10 Advocating for the service user

2.10.1 You should advocate on behalf of the service user, communicating to your placement provider supervisor any concerns you have about the service user safety and quality of care.

2.11 Impact of your behaviour on public confidence/impression of the profession.

2.11.1 You should be aware that your behaviour (during the programme and personally) may affect the trust that the public has in your profession.

2.11.2 You should not do anything which might affect the trust that the public has in your profession.
3. **ETHICS**

3.1 All conduct and performance outlined in the code should be undertaken in accordance to a high standard of ethics.

3.1.1 You should demonstrate an ethical awareness, having read, understood & accepted this code.

3.1.2 You should be familiar with the Dietitians Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics, 2014.

3.2 Research.

3.2.1 You should collect, protect and destroy data in accordance with you education provider’s policies and procedures.

3.2.2 You should treat all information gathered during the research confidentially and make sure that participants cannot be identified through their data.

3.2.3 You should make sure that the welfare of all participants is not adversely affected.

3.2.4 You should obtain informed consent from service users in line with clause 10 of this Code.

3.2.5 You must not distort or misuse clinical or research findings.

3.2.6 You should ensure that a service user’s refusal to take part in research does not influence the delivery of service to that service user in any way.

3.2.7 When working in a group research project, trainees should ensure that they employ good teamwork practices. Where this breaks down you must make the education provider/supervisor aware.

3.2.8 You must consult with research supervisor regarding the need to get ethical approval on any research proposals.

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*Documents Reviewed*

1. CORU: Dietitians Registration Board Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics, 2014
2. HCPC: Information for students and education providers. Guidance on conduct and ethics for students, 2012
3. TCD School of Medicine Undergraduate Medical Student Professional Practice Agreement, 2014/2015.
5. Medical Council of Ireland: A Foundation For The Future: Guidelines for Medical Schools and Medical Students on Undergraduate Professionalism, 2015
# Declaration of Acceptance of Code of Practice for DT223 – BSc in Human Nutrition & Dietetics

By signing this document I hereby confirm that:

- I have read and understood the Code of Conduct for Trainee Dietitians
- I agree to comply with these requirements at all times during the programme
- I understand the possible consequences of breaches of the code.

I have read and understood the Code of Conduct for Trainee Dietitians in relation to Conduct, Performance and Ethics and I agree to comply with these regulations at all times during the programme, including academic training, placement education and in activities related to research projects.

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I have read and understand the implications of non-compliance with the code and the sanctions that may be imposed as a consequence.

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A copy of this declaration will be provided to the student for their records and the original will be filed with student records.