Guidance for students and practice educators: How to work with a student who develops a health-related issue during practice placement

Occupational therapy students, have a responsibility under the HCPC Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students to limit, or stop practice if their performance is affected by their health (HCPC 2016). Self declaration is dependent upon honesty and insight and disclosure, whilst not a legal obligation, is certainly an ethical and moral obligation.

Student self declaration of health prior to practice placement
Prior to each practice placement commencing students complete a Self Declaration of Fitness to Practise Form confirming there has been no change to their physical or psychological health which could impact upon performance or safety of self or others.

Guiding principles
- Any student experiencing ill health and/or personal issues prior to a placement should make an appointment to meet with either the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), and/or the Professional Practice Tutor (PPT).
- The student and PAT/PPT may collaborate to develop a course of action in order that appropriate measures and/or reasonable adjustments are in place for the duration of the placement. This may involve the Programme Leader, Disability Advisor, Student Counsellor and the practice placement site as required.
- Following a discussion with the student, the Programme Leader may recommend the student consults a medical practitioner in order to obtain a medical assessment on whether the student is able to commence the placement. A supporting medical certificate must be obtained by the student and forwarded to the Programme Leader.
- If the student is unable to commence a placement, it will be deferred and the student will undertake another placement once she/he is in sound health subject to confirmation of fitness to practice by a medical practitioner.

What to do if a student develops a health issue during practice placement
Students developing a health issue during practice placement that significantly impacts on their performance, safety of self or others are advised to discuss their situation with the Practice Educator, and their PAT as soon as possible.

Guiding principles
- Following discussions with all relevant parties the student may be advised to student to consult a medical practitioner to obtain a supporting medical certificate providing confirmation of the student’s current health status and forward this to the University.
- This may result in the placement being terminated with the student commencing another placement when she/he is sound health subject to confirmation of fitness to practice by a medical practitioner.
- The PAT records that such a discussion has taken place and documents this on the Link Lecturer Report Form. A copy of the report will be held in the student’s file.