SECTION 34 APPENDIX 1: COURSE POLICY ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction
Because the Course places a strong emphasis on the development of a wide range of clinical and academic skills, and it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that clinical training should be a time of personal and professional development, and that training can be a stressful experience. On this basis Course policy, and more importantly Course practice, is oriented towards creating conditions that support personal development, and offering support systems designed to ameliorate stress.

To be more specific, the Course values the development of personal skills which are rooted in self-awareness in relation to feelings and values, such as a capacity to reflect on one's practice, an ability non-defensively to recognise one's limitations, an openness to new learning, and a sense of how personal feelings can be legitimately incorporated into professional life. It also considers a capacity to care for oneself a critical part of practice, since balancing personal needs against work demands can be difficult to achieve. These are valuable skills in their own right, but there is some consensus that practitioners with these capacities are more likely to engage well with their clients and colleagues, and hence work more effectively and productively.

The Course attempts to foster a climate in which personal development is seen as a legitimate part of professional training. This is especially important given that at times the demands placed on trainees are considerable, and that to some extent an experience of personal stress is normative. Trainees need to know that the Course takes this perspective, and to feel able to seek support without feeling that this will be counted against them.

The Course follows a number of principles in order to actualise these aims.

Course structures and procedures
The Course aims to ensure that it operates in a way that reduces unnecessary stress by minimising uncertainty and maximising the clarity and transparency of its procedures.

a) Trainees should be clear about the expectations of the course in relation to academic, clinical and research standards.
b) Trainees should be fully informed about course structures, such as the various tutoring and support systems available to them
c) Trainees should understand the roles of individual members of course staff
d) Course staff should be aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to trainees, and make it as easy as possible for trainees to access support associated with their roles.

In practice the Course should:

a) ensure that trainees have regular scheduled access to their Course Tutor, with the aim of maintaining contact and facilitating development
 b) ensure that there is easy access to clear written information about every aspect of its functioning, available in hard copy through the Trainee Handbook, the Supervisors' Handbook, the Staff Handbook, and also available on the Unit webpage.
c) endeavour to maintain clear channels of communication through it various committee structures, enabling trainee feedback to be heard, and acting on that feedback as appropriate, and particularly when it becomes clear that poor communication or organisation is creating difficulties for trainees.

d) ensure that trainees are given appropriate professional supervision and support related to the various aspects of the programme they are undertaking (academic, clinical and research)
e) have in place feedback and auditing systems to monitor the efficacy of its support systems, and ensure that action is taken when it becomes clear that supervision or support is not adequate or is failing.

Personal and professional development in the teaching programme
The Course aims to structure the teaching programme in a manner that fosters an openness to learning and development. It should include teaching regarding the various support systems, on the management of stress, and schedule sessions that enable discussion of the various personal transitions inherent to training. It should also include sessions which enable the year cohort as a whole to reflect on its development and progress through training.

Course Tutoring systems and systems for Developmental Review
The Course aims to put in place tutoring systems that are genuinely facilitative rather than simply reactive to problems. This is critical, because this stance is one of the most fundamental ways in which the Course can represent its commitment to trainee development, and make this process come alive for the trainee. In practice this means that meetings with tutors should take place on a regular basis, and include discussion of strengths and achievements rather than being focused only on areas of concern.

At the start of the Course each trainee will be allocated a Course Tutor who meets with them at regular intervals throughout the Course. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure the development of a supportive relationship between individual trainees and a member of the Course Team.

Meetings will usually involve discussion of academic, clinical, professional or personal issues. Course Tutors will also undertake a more formal annual Developmental Review, which aims to clarify individual training objectives, provide feedback on performance, overview professional development, advise on career options and elicit feedback on the Course from the trainee.

Personal support systems
It is important that the course gives trainees ready access to systems of personal support in order to demonstrate that these are potentially integral to the process of training.

To achieve these aims it will ensure that trainees are fully informed about the various systems of support open to them. As one of the most readily available sources of formal support is the Student Counselling Service, representatives from this service will be invited to attend the trainee induction programme.

The Course recognises that under some circumstances it can be inappropriate for Course staff to act both as facilitators and appraisers. This can be the case when trainees are having significant difficulties on the Course, and the Course Tutor is involved in appraisal of failure. Although this is not invariably problematic, where it is clear that the trainee-Tutor relationship is under strain, the Course will usually assign trainees to an additional member of staff, usually on the basis of trainee choice, who can act to support the trainee. Trainees should be informed that such requests will not influence the appraisal process.

Because of the inevitable strains between appraisal and facilitation, the Course offers trainees support from Personal Advisors. These are qualified clinical psychologist with whom the trainee meets to discuss personal and professional issues arising out of training, but in confidence and outside of the Course. Personal Advisors will be people who usually are not directly associated with the supervision or evaluation of the trainee. The scheme is intended to enable personal and professional development throughout training rather than being used for crisis management or personal therapy.

The Course recognises that it may be particularly useful and important for black and ethnic minority trainees and for gay and lesbian trainees to have mentors who can help them to integrate their personal with their professional experiences. On this basis the Course offers a parallel Personal Advisor scheme oriented towards these two groups.

Physical Disability and Mental Health Problems
The Course recognises that trainees with physical disability and mental health problems may experience additional levels of stress. The Course will take responsibility for making appropriate adaptations that enable trainees to undertake and complete the Course. It will do this by consultation with the trainee regarding their needs, liaison with the UCL Disability Service and with the Occupational Health Service of the trainee's employing NHS Trust.

The Course recognises that disability comes in many forms, and that not all disability is immediately apparent. It also acknowledges that individuals with disability are keen for this not to be the characteristic by which they are defined, and that a failure proactively to make appropriate adaptations can – inappropriately - make their disability the focus of attention. On this basis the Course and especially Course Tutors will signal their willingness to discuss such matters, and to demonstrate a willingness to be responsive to need. It is often clinical placements that present the greatest challenge to adaptation for individuals with disabilities. On this basis the course will:
> a) represent its concern by explicitly asking trainees about their needs (for example in pre-placement allocation questionnaires)
> b) make it clear that in order to meet these needs, individuals will be privileged over their peers in placement allocation

Physical Illness
The Course recognises its responsibility to trainees who suffer significant physical illness while on the Course. While medical advice and prognosis are obviously important, the Course will take all steps to ensure that on recovery trainees are offered appropriate additional support in order to help them complete their studies.

Trainees who act as carers
Trainees with significant duties as parents or as carers may, at times, find that these impose restrictions on their capacity to undertake aspects of the Course. The Course will be responsive to these concerns, and it is part of the Course Tutor role to discuss appropriate accommodations (for example, to course deadlines or to placement allocations) where it is clear that these are required.

Information about how these various principles are realised in practice can be found in the Trainee Handbook and the Supervisors' Handbook, which contain information about personal and professional support systems. Details of sessions offered by the Course as part of the teaching programme can be found on the Course website (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dclinpsy/).