UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Professional Deontology and Minor Protection - Turno A

2627-1-F5113P006-TA

Learning area

The laboratory is situated within the area of psychology applied to professional contexts involving minor patients. It integrates knowledge of professional ethics, civil and criminal legislation on minors, and psychological intervention methodology, with reference to situations in which the psychologist is called upon to manage the therapeutic relationship with the minor in compliance with the applicable legal and ethical constraints.

Learning objectives

The laboratory aims to provide students with the basic legal and deontological knowledge required to navigate professional situations involving minor patients, and to apply that knowledge to the resolution of straightforward practical cases.
Upon completion of the laboratory, the student:
— knows the main provisions of the Code of Ethics of Italian Psychologists and the civil and criminal legislation applicable to the therapeutic relationship with minor patients, with particular reference to the treatment contract, informed consent, professional secrecy, and professional liability (DL 1);
— is able to consult the Code of Ethics and apply the acquired norms to the assessment of concrete professional situations (DL 2);
— begins to develop the ability to identify the critical aspects of professional situations involving minor patients, through guided discussion of practical cases (DL 3);
— acquires familiarity with the basic legal and deontological terminology required to communicate with other professional and institutional figures involved in the intervention (DL 4);
— is familiar with the main regulatory and deontological sources of reference for continuing professional development (DL 5).

Contents

The laboratory covers the main legal and ethical norms that guide the psychologist in managing the therapeutic relationship with minor patients, the non-observance of which may give rise to professional liability in disciplinary, civil, and criminal proceedings. The focus is on the legal framework governing the treatment contract, informed consent, professional secrecy, and the lawful disclosure of confidential information. The laboratory also examines the conditions and limits under which the psychologist may be held liable for self-harming or other-directed harmful conduct by the minor patient. Students analyse problems arising in professional practice and propose solutions that are both legally grounded and clinically appropriate.

Detailed program

Ethics and law: distinctions and intersections The relationship between legal norms and deontological norms. Sources of law relevant to the psychology profession. The professional regulatory framework: Law no. 56 of 18 February 1989 and the role of the Order of Psychologists.
Psychology as a regulated profession Registration with the Professional Register and qualifying titles. Professional competence and role boundaries. Disciplinary proceedings of the Order.
The treatment contract in favour of the minor patient Legal nature of the therapeutic relationship. The issue of the minor's legal capacity. The role of parents and those exercising parental responsibility. Conflicts between the minor and the legal representative.
Informed consent of the minor patient General legal framework for informed consent. The progressive capacity of the minor in relation to age and maturity. Cases of dissent by the mature minor.
Professional secrecy Deontological and legal foundations of professional secrecy. Cases of lawful disclosure: duty to report, duty to notify, state of necessity. Limits of professional secrecy in judicial proceedings.
Professional liability Disciplinary, civil, and criminal liability of the psychologist. Conditions for liability arising from self-harming or other-directed harmful conduct by the minor patient: duty of care, causal link, foreseeability of harm.
Analysis of practical cases Discussion and resolution of professional cases drawn from real contexts (with anonymised data), relating to the topics covered in the programme.

Prerequisites

No prior legal knowledge is required. A basic background in clinical psychology and developmental psychology is recommended.

Teaching methods

The laboratory consists of four in-person sessions, delivered in Italian. Each session combines an expository component, devoted to introducing the relevant ethical-deontological and legal norms, with an interactive component, in which those norms are examined through guided discussion of professional cases drawn from real contexts. Case discussion is the primary learning method: practical problems drive the analysis of the norms and illustrate their concrete application.
In detail: — 3 sessions of 4 hours each, delivered in expository mode during the introductory part and in interactive mode during the applied part, through discussion of practical cases; all sessions are held in person; — 1 session of 2 hours, delivered in interactive mode in person, devoted to the analysis and resolution of more complex practical cases.
No remote delivery is scheduled.

Assessment methods

Attendance of at least 70% of the total hours of the laboratory is required. No formal ongoing assessments are scheduled, though exercises on the most important topics will be carried out during the sessions.
The final assessment consists of a written test combining multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The test evaluates: the acquisition of basic deontological and legal knowledge (DL 1); the ability to consult and apply the Code of Ethics of Italian Psychologists to concrete situations (DL 2); the ability to identify the correct solution in practical cases requiring the coordination of deontological and legal obligations (DL 2 and DL 3).
The outcome is expressed as pass/fail. Passing the test requires a correct response to at least 70% of the questions. Questions are distributed evenly across the topics of the programme; those relating to practical cases specifically assess the ability to apply the norms to concrete situations.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

— G. Dodaro, La professione dello psicologo. Ordinamento, deontologia e responsabilità, Mondadori Università, Milan.
— Code of Ethics of Italian Psychologists (current version, available on the CNOP website).
— Law no. 56 of 18 February 1989, Ordinamento della professione di psicologo.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS