



FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

POLICY / DOCUMENT PURPOSE STATEMENT

This policy and the associated procedure aim to clearly establish the discussions and actions which will take place should the College become concerned about an individual whether that is prior to attending the College, during or following the course.

As a small residential College, there may be occasions when the needs/expectations of an individual cannot reasonably be met. This procedure supports staff and the individual to be clear on the process which has been followed in this event.

APPLICATION

All students throughout their learner journey with us and former students' seeking a return to study whose application was interrupted, suspended or terminated under the Fitness to Study procedure.

INTERPRETATION

Further guidance on the use or interpretation of this policy may be obtained from the Student Services Team.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES / DOCUMENTS

Student Charter
Admissions Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Freedom of Expression Policy
Preventing Radicalisation Guidance
Social Media Policy
Data Protection Policy
Complaints & Compliments Procedure

Version number	5
Owner / Department	L Goodway /Student Services
Date of implementation	February 2021
Review date	February 2024
Ratified / Authorised by	SSS Committee 11/2021

FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

The college is committed to supporting student's health and mental wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of these issues is critical to student learning, academic achievement and the wider student experience.

The term 'fitness to study' as used in this procedure relates to the entire student journey and not just the student's ability to engage with their studies. This policy will apply;

- If the student appears to pose a risk to his/her own health, safety or wellbeing and/or that of others.
- If a student's behaviour is (or is at risk of) adversely affecting the teaching learning, and/or experience of other students and the behaviour falls outside of The Student Disciplinary policy and an Acceptable Behaviour Contract.
- If a student's identified support needs fall outside the scope of support and other services which the college can reasonably be expected to provide.

We aim to deal with matters understandingly and non-judgementally and in a timely and co-ordinated manner across the college.

Whilst we always seek to work with students co-operatively, there may be cases where there is no other alternative but to suspend or terminate the student's registration or application due to being determined as unfit to study.

Decisions made by the college will be based on the balance of probabilities given the information available.

2. Aim

This policy and the associated procedure aim to clearly establish the discussions and actions which will take place should the college become concerned about an individual whether that is prior to attending the college, during or following the course.

As a small residential college, there may be occasions when the needs/expectations of an individual cannot reasonably be met. This procedure supports staff and the individual to be clear on the process which has been followed in this event.

3. Scope

This policy and procedure apply to:

- All students throughout their journey with us
- Any college activity
- Former students' seeking a return to study whose application was interrupted, suspended or terminated under the Fitness to Study procedure.

Concerns may be raised by a variety of individuals such as college staff, other students, and third parties (such as health professionals or support agencies). This procedure promotes

early intervention, active collaboration between staff, students and third parties, and consistency of approach to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the person concerned and the college as a whole.

FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE

The Fitness to Study Procedure has 3 stages, based on the seriousness of the risk posed by behaviour or health of a student.

- Level 1 – New, emerging or low-level concerns
- Level 2 – Continuing and/or serious concerns
- Level 3 – Persistent and/or critical concerns

1. Level 1 – New, Emerging or Low-Level Concerns

- 1.1 Initial or emerging concerns about a student's fitness to study will normally be dealt with informally and on the day of the concern/s raised.
Any actions taken will be, noted on the student's file via the college's recording system and the student will be made aware of this. Any concerns regarding a student's health, safety and mental wellbeing should be reported by staff to a member of the Student Services team, Admissions team (or any manager) as soon as possible.
- 1.2 The decision not to allow a student onto a course or not to continue with a course will normally be made by an appropriate manager and the reasons for the decision will be provided to the student. This may be during the application process or after enrolment e.g. where a student turns up for a course and is clearly under the influence of drugs or alcohol and/or is aggressive or upset, or has needs which the college had not been made aware of and cannot reasonably immediately meet. If already at the college, assistance will be provided to ensure the individual's safe return home e.g. taxi offered. Any actions taken will be, noted on the student's file via the college's recording systems and the student will be made aware of this.
- 1.3 When it is possible to do so, a member of the Student Services team or an appropriate manager will contact the student to clearly identify issues and concerns and discuss solutions. Where possible, any support organisation identified by the student will also be contacted. Where support needs/adjustments can be identified and agreed and are reasonable, the college will put them in place for the next appropriate course. Where this is not possible, the reasons for this will be explained to the student and their support organisation if relevant and they will be signposted elsewhere or asked to re-apply should their situation change.
- 1.4 Where the issues involve unacceptable behaviour and not related to health issues the college will normally put an ABC (Acceptable Behaviour Contract) in place. This will need to be discussed with and signed by the student before further courses can be attended.
- 1.5 If a student is unwilling to agree to the solutions or no solution can be found Stage 2 will be invoked.
- 1.6 Where the issue was a 'one-off' and/or no further concerns are raised, the incident will remain recorded for 3 months but no further action will be taken other than general monitoring.

2. Level 2 – Continuing or Increasing Concerns

- 2.1 Where there are continuing or increasing concerns about a student's fitness to study, course attendance will be put on hold whilst the student is invited to meet with a member of the Student Support team or an appropriate manager to discuss the issues and concerns. The student will be provided a 5 days' notice for this meeting.
- 2.2 Where solutions and support can be identified and agreed and where the student does not pose a risk to themselves or anyone else an action plan will be put in place and courses can resume under a 'one course trial' plan where the student can apply for no more than one course at a time.
- 2.3 Once courses have restarted, if the student responds positively to the action plan in place and there are no further concerns or incidents, then no further action will be taken other than ongoing monitoring and support, however the incident will still be recorded.
- 2.4 Where the concerns are more serious or if the student does not respond in a positive way (i.e. the action plan is not followed or another incident occurs) stage 3 will be invoked.

3. Level 3 – Significant or Persistent Concerns

- 3.1 Where there are significant or persistent concerns raised about a student's health, safety or mental wellbeing that puts themselves, others, and the college at risk, admission onto courses will be suspended whilst the risks are assessed. This process (normally undertaken by the Student Support Team) will include:
 - Gaining further information from support workers/ family members where possible/appropriate.
 - Considering feedback or complaint received from any member of staff e.g. tutors, caretakers or visiting tutors/in house support workers.
 - Considering any complaints or information received from any other source on the student e.g. students, visitors.
 - Considering the impact of any college actions to date (e.g. Fitness to Study Plan or support provided)
- 3.2 The student will be invited to a meeting with the two members of appropriate staff from the college. The student will be 5 days' notice for this meeting. The student can be accompanied by one other person of relevance (e.g. family member/carer/support worker/friend) to this meeting.
- 3.3 The college will then decide on the appropriate course of action based on an honest assessment of all the information available. Decisions can include:
 - Allowing onto a limited number of courses with additional support in place.
 - Exclusion from courses for a specified period of time.
 - Suspension from attending courses until further information is gathered e.g. medical information obtained and details provided for support workers.
- 3.4 If the student is unable or unwilling to attend a meeting or if a meeting is not appropriate e.g. where there is an issue with violence or aggression, a discussion will be attempted by phone and or e-mail.

- 3.5 In addition to the meeting (or other form of communication) the college will confirm any agreements and decisions in writing/by e-mail to the student. This is normally within 5 days of the meeting.
- 3.6 If the college is unable to contact the student after 3 attempts (via telephone call or email or letter) then a decision will be made and communicated to the student. The timescale may depend on when the next course is booked for.
- 3.7 Where an exclusion has been applied a meeting or telephone conversation (as a minimum) will be required prior to acceptance onto courses after the exclusion period.

4. Crisis Situations

- 4.1 If a student shows signs of severely abnormal behaviour or is in crisis then the situation could be a medical emergency. A First Aider and an ambulance should be called.
- 4.2 If the student appears to be a danger to themselves or anyone else the police should be called to take appropriate action.
- 4.3 The Principal or a member of the Management Team must be informed straight away.

5. Alternative Procedures

- 5.1 Where there is no evidence or knowledge to support the use of the Fitness to Study Policy and Procedures the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or other relevant College policies and procedures will be applied.

6. Appeal

- 6.1 Appeals against decisions made under this policy should be sent to the Head of Student Experience within 10 days of the decision being received.

FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE FLOW CHART

