

Regent College London

Fitness to Study Procedure

1. The Fitness to Study Procedure governs the College's response in situations where there are concerns that a student is not well enough to study, including where the student is not aware they are not well enough to study.
2. The primary audiences for this procedure are:
 - College staff who are responsible for teaching and/or supporting students and considering, and making decisions about, a student's fitness to study
 - Students subject to the procedure.

What to do in an emergency

Where a student's health or wellbeing presents an immediate risk to themselves or others, call the appropriate Emergency Services on 999.

You should also inform the Director of Students outlining the details of the incident, the action taken and any follow-up action needed to support the student themselves, other students, or staff who have been impacted.

If appropriate, the Fitness to Study Procedure can be used after the emergency situation has been dealt with.

Introduction

3. Fitness to Study describes a student's capacity to participate fully and satisfactorily in their academic studies, and in the College community in general. It applies to student activities on or off College premises, during study or research or other activities such as work placements. It applies to any situation where conduct is brought to the attention of the College, which indicates a potential risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of the student or others.
4. The purpose of this procedure is to provide a framework within which the College may provide an appropriate and co-ordinated response in circumstances where a student may benefit from extra support due to ill health, and where it is not considered appropriate to apply other internal procedures.
5. The procedure is intended to be supportive. The focus at all stages is to support the student to succeed on their course. This may include suspension of study until such time as the student is well enough to resume their studies effectively. There will be, however, a small number of cases where students do not engage with, or are unable to agree with, the support or adjustments that the College considers to be reasonable to enable the student to continue. In these rare circumstances, the College may consider withdrawing the student from their course.

6. Students registered on a course leading to registration with a professional association, may be considered under the Fitness to Study procedure where concern or support required does not relate to professional practise. However, it may be more appropriate to consider the student’s case under the Fitness to Practise procedure.

Who does this procedure apply to?

| If you are... | Then... |
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| On a programme leading to an award from Pearson | All parts of this procedure apply to you. |
| On a programme leading to an award from the University of Bolton | All parts of this procedure apply to you. The College may contact the University to discuss the specific academic arrangements which may be used to deal with a fitness to study case, such as suspension or withdrawal. |
| On a programme leading to an award from Buckinghamshire New University | All parts of this procedure apply to you. The College may contact the University to discuss the specific academic arrangements which may be used to deal with a fitness to study case, such as suspension or withdrawal. |
| On a programme leading to an award from the University of Northampton | You should talk to your Customer Services Officer, who will refer you to the University’s procedures. |
| On a programme leading to an award from St. Mary’s University | All parts of this procedure apply to you. |
| On a programme leading to an award from NCUK | All parts of this procedure apply to you. |
| On a programme leading to an award from Regent College | All parts of this procedure apply to you. |

7. If you are not sure about who gives the award at the end of your programme, please contact your Customer Services Officer.

When to use this procedure

8. This procedure should be used whenever there is a concern that a student is not well enough to engage with their studies effectively. Examples of such circumstances include:

- a student’s academic performance is declining, which is thought to be the result of an

- underlying physical or mental health problem;
- a student is routinely making applications for mitigating circumstances stating health issues;
 - a student is exhibiting disruptive behaviour, which is suspected to be caused by an underlying physical or mental health difficulty;
 - concerns about the student's fitness to study are raised by a third party, such as a work placement provider.

When not to use this procedure

9. This procedure should not be used where a student is not engaging effectively with their studies for reasons unconnected to their own physical or mental health. Please refer to the Student Engagement Procedure for more information.

How the procedure works

10. The procedure has two stages, based on the degree of concern and/or the perceived seriousness of the situation. The procedure can be entered at either stage; however, in most cases a resolution should be sought at the first, informal stage before the second stage is considered.

Informal stage: cause for concern meeting

11. Concerns about a student's fitness to study, including those raised by the student themselves, should be reported to the relevant Programme Leader or Senior Lecturer (SL). The Programme Leader or SL should then contact the student to arrange an informal cause for concern meeting.

12. Before the meeting, the Programme Leader or SL may gather any relevant information about the student including, for example, records of summative assessments and any applications for mitigating circumstances, and consult with other staff, such as the Student Services team, to determine the full scope and impact of concerns about the student's fitness to study.

13. The purpose of the cause for concern meeting is to determine the full circumstances of the student's fitness to study and identify what the student and/or College may do to overcome any health difficulties. Although the meeting is informal, the student should be made aware that the meeting is being held according to this procedure.

14. The outcomes available at this stage are:
- to agree that no further action is required (this may involve referring the case to the Student Engagement procedure where concerns are deemed to be unconnected to the student's physical or mental health); or
 - to monitor the student formally for a specific period of time (normally between 2-6 weeks). In this case, an action plan will be agreed with the student detailing any steps the student will need to take and the support to be provided to the student, and further meeting(s) that will be arranged to review progress, as agreed by the Programme Leader or SL; or
 - for students on work placements, an alternative placement, a deferral of the placement or a transfer to another course without placements; or

- to progress to the formal stage of the process.

15. A written record of any concerns raised by the Programme Leader or SL, the actions agreed, the outcome and a review period should be determined as part of this meeting and shared with the student. If applicable the review period will normally be between 2 and 6 weeks but will be determined by the Programme Leader or SL and student.

16. The student will be invited to a follow-up meeting at the end of the review period if applicable. It is expected that in most cases, students will have responded positively and taken advantage of the support available, and no further action will be required. If, however, concerns remain, the student can remain in the Informal Stage and be invited to another review meeting at a mutually agreed time.

17. The student can remain in the informal stage, with regular review meetings planned in, as long as the Programme Leader or SL considers this approach is appropriate. If, however, the Programme Leader or SL decides that further action is required, the formal stage of the process may be initiated. Programme Leaders or SLs should consult with Academic Quality about progressing to the next stage.

Formal stage: Fitness to Study Panel

18. If, in the view of the Programme Leader or SL, there is enough concern to warrant more formal consideration of the student's case, the Programme Leader or SL will consult with the Director of Students or the Head of the relevant School to discuss whether the cause for concern should be considered by a Fitness to Study Panel.

19. A student whose case is to be considered by a Fitness to Study Panel will be notified in writing, a minimum of 10 working days prior to the date of the Panel, of the following:

- the ground(s) for calling the meeting;
- the membership of the Panel and their right to object to a Panel member;
- their right to be accompanied/represented at the hearing by a friend or representative (but normally not a legal representative);
- their right to submit documentary evidence prior to the hearing and the time limits for doing that;
- the content of any documentation intended to be used or referred to in the meeting or as part of the meeting.

20. The meeting will be organised and serviced by the Academic Quality team and chaired by the Head of School (or nominee).

21. The membership of the Fitness to Study Panel will be:

- Head of School (Chair);
- Director of Students;
- A member of Academic Quality.

22. The student will have the right to object to a Panel member, for example on the grounds of bias. If an objection is made, it must be done no later than five days prior to the Panel hearing, with supporting information as to why the Panel member is considered by the student to be unsuitable. The Director of Academic Quality or nominee will consider whether the student's representation is valid, whether an alternative Panel member can be allocated in sufficient time for the meeting to continue as scheduled, or whether the meeting may need to be postponed pending further consideration.
23. The student will have the right to submit documentary evidence to the Panel. This must be done no later than five working days prior to the Panel hearing.
24. The purpose of the Panel shall be to ensure that:
- the student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns that have been raised;
 - the student's views are heard and taken account of;
 - an action plan is drawn up with a suitable review period. This may include the student being advised to seek a medical assessment through their GP;
 - the student is informed of the possible outcomes if serious concerns remain after the review period has ended.
25. If further evidence comes to light, prior to or at the Panel meeting, which the student or the College has not already had access to, the evidence will be provided to both parties and the Chair will consider how or whether to proceed with the Panel meeting.
26. The outcomes available to the Panel are:
- to agree that no further action is required; or,
 - to monitor the student formally for a specific period of time (normally between 2-6 weeks). In this case, an action plan will be agreed with the student detailing any steps the student will need to take (such as consultation with medical professionals) and the support to be provided to the student. A further Panel meeting will be arranged to review progress, as agreed by the Chair of the Panel; or,
 - to agree that a specific academic arrangement be put in place which may include a suspension of studies or a requirement for the student to withdraw. The panel will endeavour in the first instance to reach agreement with the student on such arrangements.
27. The outcome determined by the Panel and the reasons why the Panel came to that outcome (including the reasons why alternatives were discounted) must be sent to the student normally within seven days of the panel meeting and a record should be kept on the student's file.

Student's right of appeal

28. The student has a right of appeal against the outcome of a Fitness to Study Panel using the Consolidated Appeal Procedure.

Communication with other bodies

29. The College is governed by the Data Protection Act 2018 and will treat all personal information (including sensitive personal information relating to students’ mental, physical health or personal circumstances) as confidential within the terms of the legislation.

30. Personal information about a student obtained under this procedure will only be shared within the College amongst those members of staff who need to know that information in order to offer the student appropriate support, to enable the operation of this procedure, or where it may affect work placement providers.

31. The College may ask a student for their agreement to share personal information obtained under this procedure with relevant professionals outside of the College in order to offer the student appropriate support. The College will not normally share any personal information about a student without their agreement, but may do so in exceptional cases, where permitted by law.

32. International students should be aware that the College is required to report any interruptions to study or withdrawal to the UK government.

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| <i>Version number</i> | <i>1.5</i> |
| <i>Publication date</i> | <i>December 2022</i> |
| <i>Approved by</i> | <i>Academic Council</i> |
| <i>Approval date</i> | <i>November 29 2022</i> |
| <i>Next review date</i> | <i>October 2023</i> |
| <i>Author</i> | <i>Quality Manager</i> |
| <i>Policy owner</i> | <i>Academic Quality</i> |

