

Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

Owner	Head of Quality		
Version	1.8		
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy renamed from <i>Fitness to Study Procedure</i> to <i>Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure</i>. New triage stage added before the informal stage. Cause for Concern Meeting renamed to Support to Study Meeting. Panel membership updated: COO removed, now Dean (Chair/nominee) + two senior staff + Casework Officer as secretary. Notice period for panels changed from 10 working days to at least 5 working days. Emergency protocol updated: inform Safeguarding Lead (previously Chief Operations Officer). New Compliance section aligning with OfS, QAA, OIA, Equality Act, and UKVI. Definitions section introduced for clarity (e.g., Fitness to Study, Action Plan, Reinstatement). Accessibility and support strengthened (reasonable adjustments, online meetings, extensions). Representation clarified: supporter normally a friend or family member (not legal counsel). Appeals section expanded with grounds, process, outcomes, and OIA referral (previously brief). Returning to Study expanded into full section with structured Reinstatement Plans. Monitoring and review strengthened: annual anonymised reporting to LTQC and Academic Council. 		
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Related internal policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Disciplinary Procedure Student Safeguarding, Prevent and Harassment Policy 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidated Appeals Procedure • Student Attendance and Engagement Policy • Fitness to Practise Policy • Student Transfer and Change of Status Policy
Related external policies and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office for Students (OfS) Condition B2 (Student Support) • QAA UK Quality Code (Enabling Student Achievement) • OIA Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals • Equality Act 2010 • UKVI compliance guidance for Student Route visa holders

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Introduction

Regent College London (RCL) is committed to supporting all students to achieve their full potential while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our community.

This Fitness to Study Policy provides a fair, transparent, and supportive framework for managing situations where a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour may be impacting their ability to engage with study, meet academic requirements, or participate safely in College life.

Key principles

- Support first – focusing on enabling continuation of study wherever possible.
- Proportionality – taking the least intrusive steps necessary to address the concern.
- Transparency and fairness – the student's perspective is always heard and considered.
- Joined-up working – linking with other College procedures to avoid duplication and ensure a coherent approach.

Purpose

This policy sets out how RCL responds when there are concerns that a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour may be affecting their ability to engage with study, meet academic requirements, or participate safely in College life. Its aim is to ensure a fair, supportive, and proportionate process that enables students to continue their studies wherever possible, while safeguarding the wellbeing of the student and the wider College community.

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 **Safeguarding Lead** 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.

Compliance and Good Practice Statement

This policy is designed in full alignment with the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions, the QAA UK Quality Code, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework. All decisions under this policy will be made without discrimination and will take into account the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff involved in decision-making will have appropriate training in mental health awareness, equality duties, and data protection. In cases involving safeguarding concerns, the College's Safeguarding and Prevent procedures will take precedence.

Accessibility and support

Regardless of awarding body, the College will make reasonable adjustments to the Fitness to Study process where needed. This includes accessible formats, online meetings, and extensions where a disability or serious circumstances prevent meeting deadlines. Students may seek advice from their SSO and may be accompanied to any meeting by a supporter (normally not legal representation).

Scope and Application

Section	Details
Applies to	All RCL students: full-time, part-time, on-campus, blended, or online, including those on placements or fieldwork.
Application	At any point in the student journey (from enrolment to graduation), and in any setting (on-site, off-site, or online) where health or wellbeing concerns affect study or safety.
Links to other policies	Use alongside relevant procedures such as Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances, Fitness to Practise, Attendance and Engagement, Disciplinary Procedure and Consolidated Appeals. Coordinate to avoid duplication.
When not to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the issue is non-health-related disengagement → refer to the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy.• If it involves professional conduct in regulated professions → refer to the Fitness to Practise Procedure.• If it's an emergency or safeguarding matter → follow safeguarding protocols first.

Application by Awarding Body

This policy applies to all Regent College London students, regardless of awarding body, with minor variations to reflect each partner university's requirements. RCL retains operational responsibility for the management of Fitness to Study cases and student wellbeing. Where applicable, awarding bodies are notified of formal panel outcomes and appeal decisions in line with partnership agreements.

Awarding Body / Programme Type	Application and Review Process
Pearson (HND / HNC)	Fully managed under Regent College London's Fitness to Study Policy. Appeals follow RCL's Consolidated Appeals Procedure. After internal completion, students may refer the case to the OIA.
University of Greater Manchester (UGM)	Procedure applies in full. The University is informed of Fitness to Study outcomes where relevant. Appeals follow University procedures, with final review available through the OIA via the University.
Buckinghamshire New University (BNU)	Procedure applies in full. RCL liaises with BNU regarding any academic or registration decisions. Appeals follow BNU procedures, with final review via the OIA.
St Mary's University (SMU)	Procedure applies in full. Outcomes are shared with SMU. Appeals follow SMU procedures, with final review via the OIA.

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this policy and procedure:
 - a. **Fitness to Study** – A student's ability to participate fully and safely in academic life, meet course requirements, and engage appropriately in the College community, without causing undue risk to themselves or others.
 - b. **Concern** – Any issue relating to a student's health, wellbeing, behaviour, or engagement that could affect their Fitness to Study. This may be raised by staff, other students, or external parties (e.g., placement providers).
 - c. **Casework Officer** – A designated staff member within the Academic Quality Team responsible for managing Fitness to Study cases, maintaining records, coordinating communication, and ensuring procedural compliance.
 - d. **Support to Study Meeting** – An informal meeting held under Stage 1 of the Fitness to Study Procedure to discuss concerns, identify support options, and agree an Action Plan aimed at enabling the student to continue studying safely and successfully.

- e. **Reasonable Adjustments** – Changes to learning, teaching, assessment, or College processes to support a student with a disability, health condition, or other need, in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- f. **Reasonable Support Measures** – Temporary adjustments or interventions implemented to assist a student experiencing health, wellbeing, or behavioural difficulties that impact their engagement or academic progress.
- g. **Action Plan** – A written agreement between the student and the College outlining specific steps, timelines, and responsibilities to address Fitness to Study concerns.
- h. **Reinstatement to Study** – The process by which a student who has taken a break from their programme under the Fitness to Study Procedure is permitted to resume their studies, following a formal review of readiness and the agreement of a Reinstatement Plan.
- i. **Reinstatement Plan** – A structured document setting out any medical evidence required, reasonable adjustments, monitoring arrangements, and review dates to support a student's successful return.
- j. **Fitness to Practise** – A separate process applied to programmes leading to a professional qualification or registration where a student's conduct, health, or competence raises concern about their suitability to enter the profession.
- k. **Safeguarding Concern** – A situation in which a student's behaviour or circumstances suggest that they or others may be at risk of harm, triggering the College's Safeguarding and Prevent procedures.
- l. **Panel** – The Fitness to Study Panel, convened under Stage 2 of the procedure, which considers formal cases and determines appropriate outcomes.
- m. **Suspension of Studies** – A temporary break in enrolment agreed under the Fitness to Study Procedure, with the expectation that the student may return at a later date subject to meeting reinstatement requirements.
- n. **Withdrawal** – Permanent removal from the programme, normally as a last resort after all reasonable alternatives have been explored.

Advice and Support

2. Students can be directed to contact:
 - a. **Student Services** – wellbeing, counselling, and reasonable adjustments.
 - b. Their **Personal Academic Tutor (PAT)** or **Programme Leader** – academic guidance and process questions.
3. Students may bring a friend or family member to any meeting under this procedure.
4. Reasonable adjustments (e.g., accessible formats, remote attendance, or extra time for evidence submission) are available at any stage, students should let their SSO know if they need these.

Procedure Overview

5. The Fitness to Study (FTS) Procedure consists of three main stages: an initial triage stage, an informal support to study meeting, and a formal FTS panel meeting. Entry into any stage may depend on the severity of the concern, but most situations should be addressed informally first.

Initial Triage

6. Anyone with a concern about a student's fitness to study may initiate the procedure by contacting the Casework Officer within the Academic Quality Team. The officer will record the concern and assess whether there is an immediate risk to the student or others. If an urgent safety or safeguarding issue is identified, the emergency process will be followed.
7. The Casework Officer will determine which College procedure should apply: Fitness to Study, Student Attendance and Engagement, or another appropriate route. Any necessary adjustments for accessibility or other needs will be arranged at this stage.

Stage 1 – Informal: Support to Study Meeting

8. For cases suitable for informal resolution, the Casework Officer will arrange a Support to Study Meeting with the student, typically within five working days of the initial concern. Before this meeting, relevant information such as attendance records, assessment results, and mitigating circumstances will be reviewed, and Student Services may be consulted for additional context.

9. The meeting serves as an open forum to discuss concerns, listen to the student's point of view, and explore how best to support their continued studies. Support may include workload adjustments, extra academic help, wellbeing support, or changes to placement arrangements. Where health matters are involved, discussion will focus on supporting the student's ability to remain enrolled.
10. The meeting aims to:
 - Address all concerns raised
 - Identify existing support and any additional support needed
 - Clarify responsibilities for providing support
 - Set timelines for monitoring progress
 - Agree a follow-up date to review progress.
11. Possible outcomes of the Support to Study meeting include:
 - No further action: the student exits the Fitness to Study Procedure
 - An Action Plan is agreed with the student, with a review meeting scheduled in 4-6 weeks
 - Escalation to the formal panel stage if concerns persist or are serious
12. The student will receive an Action Plan within five working days of the meeting.
13. If the student disagrees with the Action Plan, they must contact the Casework Officer within five working days to discuss further. If agreement cannot be reached, the case may move to Stage 2.
14. A follow-up meeting will take place within four weeks to assess the student's progress.
15. If a suspension of studies is agreed, it will be processed according to the Student Transfer and Change of Status Policy.
16. Should a student decline the recommendation to suspend their studies, this decision will be documented. Any future concerns about fitness to study will be considered afresh.
17. The Fitness to Study Procedure may continue even if the student does not attend meetings. All documentation will be sent to the student, and lack of engagement may lead to escalation to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal: Fitness to Study Panel

18. Escalation to the formal stage occurs if issues persist after the informal stage or if circumstances warrant immediate review. Stage 2 may be used when:
 - The student's behaviour due to health or disability is of urgent concern, or there is significant risk to others' wellbeing
 - The student has not met Stage 1 criteria
 - There is a sudden deterioration of a long-term health condition or disability
19. The Casework Officer will consult the Dean of School (or nominee) to decide whether to convene a Fitness to Study Panel.
20. Written notice of the panel hearing will be provided to the student at least five working days in advance, detailing the meeting's purpose, panel members, rights to object or be accompanied, deadlines for evidence, and all documents to be reviewed.
21. The panel will normally be chaired by a Dean from a different School to ensure independence, and will comprise two senior College staff, supported by the Casework Officer as Secretary. At least one representative from the student's School will be included as a panel member to provide subject-specific expertise and contextual understanding of the programme. To ensure efficiency and consistency, the College will establish a pool of trained representatives from each School who are familiar with the Fitness to Study process and may be called upon when required.
22. The panel will:
 - Ensure the student understands the concerns.
 - Hear the student's perspective.
 - Make a final decision regarding fitness to study.
23. Decisions may include an action plan, further monitoring, temporary suspension, or, in exceptional cases, withdrawal from the programme. The panel will seek to agree a way forward with the student wherever possible.
24. If the student does not attend and does not provide a valid reason, the panel will proceed in their absence. The panel may also decide to meet without the student if their attendance could adversely affect their wellbeing.
25. The panel's decision, including the rationale and explanation of alternatives considered, will be sent to the student within five working days.

26. The Casework Officer will communicate the outcome to relevant professional services to implement necessary changes or support.

Appeals

27. Students have the right to appeal the outcome of a Fitness to Study Panel.
28. For students registered on a partner University programme, appeals are considered under the awarding body's procedures. The College will provide guidance on the correct route and supply all necessary documentation to support the process.
29. For students registered on Pearson programmes, appeals will be considered internally by the College under the Consolidated Appeals Procedure.
30. Appeals must normally be submitted within ten working days of the decision letter. The grounds for appeal are:
 - the procedure was not followed correctly (procedural irregularity);
 - new, material evidence has become available that could not reasonably have been provided earlier (for example, confirmation of hospitalisation or other serious medical circumstances);
 - the decision was unreasonable or disproportionate in light of the evidence presented.
31. Pending the outcome of an appeal, the original Panel decision will remain in effect. However, the College will ensure that the student continues to have access to appropriate support, and reasonable adjustments may be made to prevent undue disadvantage.
32. Processing of appeals:
 - **Partner University programmes:** the appeal will follow the awarding body's procedures and timelines.
 - **Pearson programmes:** where an appeal is accepted for review, it will be considered by a senior member of staff with no prior involvement in the case. The outcome will be provided in writing with clear reasons.
33. Outcomes where an appeal is upheld:
 - **Partner University programmes:** the outcome will follow the awarding body's decision.
 - **Pearson programmes:** the College may amend or overturn the decision, refer the case to a new Fitness to Study Panel with different membership, or adjust support/monitoring arrangements to reflect the revised outcome.

This may include converting a withdrawal into a suspension of studies with authorised medical absence, or reinstating the student subject to a Reinstatement Plan.

34. Where reinstatement follows a successful appeal, a Reinstatement Plan will normally be agreed in line with the “Returning to Study” section of this Policy. The outcome and reasons will be communicated to the student in writing.
35. When all internal procedures are complete, the College will issue a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter confirming the conclusion of Regent College London’s process.
 - For **Partner University programmes**, the College will confirm completion of internal stages and refer the case to the **relevant awarding body**, which will issue its own COP letter in line with its appeals process.
 - For **Pearson programmes**, this COP letter enables students to refer the matter directly to the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)** within 12 months of the date of the letter.
36. Further details on the application of this procedure by awarding body are provided in the *Application by Awarding Body* section of this Policy.

Returning to Study

37. Where a student has suspended their studies for health, wellbeing, or behavioural reasons under this procedure, a structured Reinstatement Plan must be agreed before they can resume their programme. The requirements for return are set out in this section and will normally take the form of a Reinstatement Plan. The plan will be developed collaboratively between the student, their Programme Leader or PAT, and Student Services, and will take into account any medical or professional evidence confirming the student’s readiness to return.
38. The Reinstatement Plan will set out any reasonable adjustments required, such as modified timetables, reduced workload, or additional academic and wellbeing support. It will also identify named contacts for both academic and pastoral matters, establish a check-in schedule, and specify review dates to monitor progress. The plan will include clear escalation criteria so that, if concerns re-emerge, the case can be addressed promptly.
39. This Returning to Study process applies specifically to suspensions made under the Fitness to Study Policy. Where suspension is imposed under another procedure (e.g., Student Attendance and Engagement, Disciplinary,

or Student-Led Suspension), the relevant procedure will govern the conditions and process for reinstatement. The Academic Quality Team will ensure alignment between procedures to avoid duplication and provide students with a clear and consistent route back to study.

Monitoring and Review

40. The College will maintain accurate and confidential records of all Fitness to Study cases, including the stage and outcome.
41. Records will be stored securely in line with the College's Data Protection Policy and retention schedule.
42. This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by regulatory or legislative changes, to ensure it remains effective and fair.

Annex A – Examples of Triggers for Fitness to Study

(Not exhaustive – each case assessed individually)

The following are common situations in which the Fitness to Study Procedure may be considered. Inclusion here does not mean that the procedure will automatically be triggered; staff should assess the facts and context in each case.

Academic Indicators

- Significant and sustained deterioration in academic performance linked to health or wellbeing concerns.
- Persistent inability to meet deadlines or complete assessments despite existing support measures.
- Repeated mitigating or extenuating circumstances claims citing the same ongoing health or wellbeing issues.

Attendance and Engagement Indicators

- Extended or repeated absence from teaching, placements, or other learning activities due to health-related issues.
- Persistent disengagement in learning activities (online or in person) where there are indicators of health or wellbeing causes.

Behavioural and Wellbeing Indicators

- Behaviour raising concern about the safety of the student or others.
- Significant changes in mood, behaviour, or appearance which suggest a deterioration in mental or physical health.
- Disruptive behaviour suspected to be linked to health or wellbeing.

External or Third-Party Concerns

- Concerns formally raised by placement providers, employers, or external agencies regarding a student's capacity or conduct.
- Reports from emergency services or healthcare professionals relating to the student's capacity to engage in study.

Serious Health or Safeguarding Concerns

- Hospitalisation, emergency intervention, or sectioning under the Mental Health Act.
- Disclosure or evidence of self-harm, suicidal ideation, or threats of harm to others.

Annex B – Support, Adjustments, and Resources

The College is committed to enabling students to continue their studies wherever possible through reasonable adjustments and tailored support. The following list provides examples of available measures and resources:

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

- Timetable modifications to reduce study load.
- Alternative assessment formats or extended deadlines.
- Access to assistive technology and accessible learning materials.
- Temporary remote learning arrangements.
- Modified placement or fieldwork arrangements.

Internal Support Services

- **Student Services:** Wellbeing advice, counselling referrals, and disability support.
- **Personal Academic Tutors (PAT):** Guidance on academic planning and coordination of support measures.
- **Programme Leaders:** Oversight of academic engagement and liaison with other support teams.

External Helplines and Support Networks

- **Samaritans:** 116 123 (freephone, 24/7) – www.samaritans.org
- **Mind:** 0300 123 3393 – www.mind.org.uk
- **NHS 111:** For urgent but non-emergency health advice.
- **Papyrus HOPELineUK** (suicide prevention for young people): 0800 068 4141 – www.papyrus-uk.org

Related College Policies and Procedures

- Mitigating / Extenuating Circumstances Policy
- Student Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Fitness to Practise Policy
- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- Consolidated Appeals Procedure
- Student Transfer and Change of Status Policy

Annex C – Flowchart of Fitness to Study Procedure

Step 0 – Initial Triage



Concern raised → Risk assessment (immediate safety/safeguarding first) → Decide appropriate process.



Step 1 – Informal Stage (Support to Study Meeting)

Meeting with student to discuss concerns and support options.

Possible outcomes: no further action, monitoring with Action Plan, adjustments, or escalation.



Step 2 – Formal Stage (Fitness to Study Panel)

Formal hearing with Dean (Chair), and two panel members.

Decision: monitoring, suspension, or withdrawal (last resort).



Reinstatement to Study

Structured Reinstatement Plan before return, with adjustments and monitoring.



Appeals

Appeal to awarding body process / Consolidated Appeals Procedure within 10 working days.



Monitoring & Reporting

Records maintained by Academic Quality; annual anonymised reporting to Education Committee.

Annex D – Terms of Reference: Fitness to Study Panel

1. Purpose

The Fitness to Study Panel is convened under Stage 2 of the Fitness to Study Procedure. Its purpose is to:

- Consider serious or unresolved concerns regarding a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour that may affect their ability to engage with their studies or participate safely in College life.
- Ensure that the student understands the concerns raised, has the opportunity to present their views, and is supported in the process.
- Agree an action plan or make a decision that addresses the issues in a proportionate, fair, and supportive manner.

2. Authority

The Panel has delegated authority from Academic Council to:

- Impose or recommend support measures and monitoring arrangements.
- Approve temporary suspension of studies where necessary.
- Recommend withdrawal only as a last resort, after alternatives have been considered and documented.
- Agree conditions for reinstatement of study following suspension.

3. Membership

The Panel will normally consist of three members of staff from the Panel Pool. The Chair will normally be a Dean from a different School to the student's programme, ensuring impartiality. At least one representative from the student's School will be included to provide subject-specific expertise. A trained pool of representatives from each School will be maintained to support Panels, ensuring availability of subject-specific expertise while promoting consistency across cases

Additional attendees may include:

- Registry representative (to advise on records, regulatory compliance, and to record proceedings).
- Student Services or Welfare representative (to advise on support options).
- Other professional staff may be invited to provide specialist input where relevant.

4. Quorum

A minimum of three core members must be present for the Panel to make decisions.

5. Student Rights

The student will:

- Be given at least five working days' written notice of the Panel hearing.
- Receive copies of all documentation to be considered.
- Have the right to object to any panel member on grounds of conflict of interest.
- The student has the right to be accompanied by a supporter, normally a friend or family member. In exceptional cases, another appropriate supporter may be permitted, but not normally legal counsel
- Have the right to appeal the outcome in line with the Consolidated Appeals Procedure.

6. Decision-making

- Decisions will be made by consensus wherever possible.
- The outcome and reasons will be provided to the student in writing within seven working days.
- Records will be maintained securely by the Casework Officer.

7. Reporting

An anonymised summary of Fitness to Study cases and outcomes will be reported annually to the Education Committee with oversight by Academic Council.