

The Fitness to Study Procedure is governed by Resolution No. 673 of the University Court, which at the time of publication was in draft form.

34.1 Introduction

34.1.1 It is the aim of the University that all students will benefit fully from their higher education experience in terms of academic learning and personal development. However, it is recognised that at times students may face challenges which affect their studies and their wider participation in University life. This procedure is designed to support such students while ensuring that the wider student and staff University community is also able to carry on with its normal activities.

34.1.2 This procedure applies to any registered student of the University, including postgraduate research students.

34.1.3 If there are concerns that a student may not be fit to engage in study and to participate in University life more widely, action will be taken to identify the issues involved and to identify support available to the student which may help them to overcome any difficulties and ensure their fitness to study.

34.1.4 The University has other policies and procedures which relate to student support¹ and behaviour which can operate separately or in conjunction with this procedure (see Appendix 1).

34.1.5 The University has many services which offer support to students. Students can benefit from these with or without any reference to this procedure (see Appendix 2).

34.2 Circumstances under which a student's fitness to study may be brought into question

34.2.1 When students are fit to study the University can be confident that:

1. They are able to engage with and benefit from their academic studies with a reasonable chance of obtaining the qualification they have registered for;
2. Their behaviour does not disrupt any other members of the University community (students, staff or visitors) in their University business;
3. They do not put their own, or others', health and safety at risk.

34.2.2 A student's fitness to study may be reviewed if any of the above are called into question. This may happen if students experience physical or mental wellbeing difficulties which have a negative impact on their studies or the experience of others around them.

34.2.3 Circumstances where concerns may be voiced include:

- Lack of engagement with study² (poor attendance, lack of communication with staff, non-submission of assessments);
- Behaviour or disposition which leads to concerns of underlying problems;
- Disruption to the teaching and learning activities of other students, including placements;
- Unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students;
- Persistent behaviour which is unacceptable and appears to be caused by an underlying physical or mental health problem;
- Self-referral where the student advises a member of the University of difficulties they are experiencing;
- Concerns emerging through a third party outside the University.

34.2.4 If concerns arise when a student is on authorised study away from the University, there will be engagement and co-operation with the partner institution to identify the most suitable arrangements that can be made to address these.

34.2.5 Early intervention and support can help to avoid crisis situations. Any concerns should therefore be addressed through any one of the stages outlined below. In many cases an informal, supportive discussion with the student will resolve the matter. However, where significant concerns arise, a judgement will need to be made on whether action should be taken under Stage 2 or immediately referred to Stage 3; there is no need to work through the procedure sequentially.

34.3 Stage 1- Emerging Concerns

34.3.1 Where there are concerns about a student's physical or mental health, wellbeing, or safety, any member of staff with knowledge of the student can make an initial approach to them in order to discuss the situation. This should be done

¹ The University is mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 including the need to make adjustments for disabled students who may be substantially disadvantaged in their studies compared to students who are not disabled.

² This may apply in cases where a student has submitted a successful Good Cause Claim in relation to non-completion or underperformance in academic assessments.

in a supportive and understanding manner, clearly identifying the nature of the concerns to the student, and encouraging them to discuss the issues from their perspective. In some cases the student may not be aware of the impact of their actions on others. The student should be advised of any appropriate sources of support (see Appendix 2) and be encouraged to access them.

34.3.2 In most cases the student will respond positively, and will co-operate by modifying their behaviour and, where appropriate, seeking any available support. The member of staff may want to follow-up by acknowledging the positive response to the student, on an informal basis.

34.3.3 In some cases the student may acknowledge underlying difficulties and seek to suspend their studies by taking a Leave of Absence until matters are resolved. This may be agreed by the School/Research Institute or College which should, where possible, identify a provisional return date. Some degrees and other academic awards of the University specify a maximum duration of study – that is, a maximum period within which studies must be successfully completed, *including any suspension periods*. A student will be advised where there is a risk that a Fitness to Study Leave of Absence might lead to the maximum duration of study being exceeded.

34.3.4 Staff should be aware that there may be financial and welfare implications to taking a Leave of Absence, and should direct the student to appropriate sources of advice in order that the student may make an informed decision (e.g. SRC Advice Centre, Student Services Enquiry Team, Registry and other services listed in Appendix 2).

34.3.5 Where a Leave of Absence is agreed, the School/Research Institute or College must notify the Senate Office which will place a Service Indicator (Fitness to Study – Leave of Absence) on the student's MyCampus record.³ The Fitness to Study Leave of Absence should not be set indefinitely, so in requesting a Service Indicator, the School/Research Institute or College must identify either a provisional date for return, or a date for review of the Leave of Absence. The School/Research Institute or College shall make arrangements for the student's return to study and will advise them of any requirements for return, such as medical evidence or the requirement to engage with University support. The School/Research Institute or College must also notify the Senate Office of the date of return to allow the Service Indicator to be removed from the student's record. In cases where there are concerns about a student's request to return to study, the matter should be referred to the Senate Office for consideration at Stage 2 (see §34.4.11 - §34.4.12).

34.3.6 If the student is unable to respond positively to the concerns raised, the member of staff must ensure that the matter is taken forward and raised with the Senate Office. They may do so either by raising their concerns directly with the Senate Office, or through another local member of staff (such as a line manager or Head of School).

34.4 Stage 2 – Continuing Concerns (Referral to Fitness to Study Review Panel)

34.4.1 Where the nature of the issues appear to require a more formal supportive intervention and concerns about a student's behaviour continue, the matter will be referred to the Fitness to Study Review Panel ('the Panel'). This stage will focus on working with the student to address the concerns and to ensure that they can either continue their studies immediately, or take positive steps to work towards re-engagement with their studies if a suspension is an agreed course of action with the Panel.

34.4.2 In these circumstances, the student will be invited attend a meeting with the Panel⁴ and the purpose of the meeting will be to:

- allow the student to explain the situation from their perspective;
- ensure that the student is fully aware of the concerns and any impact their behaviour is having on others;
- agree on an action plan with the student to find a constructive way forward;
- ensure that the student understands the possible outcomes if difficulties remain or the action plan is not followed.

34.4.3 The student will be notified of the date and time of the meeting and provided with any associated documentation at least a week in advance of the meeting, although with their agreement a meeting may be held in a shorter timeframe. Where documents are not available within this timescale, the student will be advised of any items that are being sought and will be notified that all remaining items will be issued to them as soon as practicable.

34.4.4 In some cases a medical or other professional assessment may be sought in advance of a Panel meeting and it may be necessary to delay the meeting until this information is available.

34.4.5 The Panel will be convened by the Director of Student Services (or nominee) and will be clerked by a member of the Student & Academic Services Directorate. A representative from the Students' Representative Council (SRC) will normally be included on the Panel, and the Convener will determine the membership of the rest of the Panel which will include attendance from at least two members of staff as detailed below and any other members of staff as appropriate:

- Student Adviser or Supervisor (e.g. Adviser of Studies, Chief Adviser of Studies, International Student Adviser, or thesis/dissertation supervisor)

³ The Service Indicator allows the student to be identified as having a permitted absence, but does not alter the student's registration status, thus allowing flexibility in re-commencement of studies, continued access to University services such as the library, Moodle and support services, and continued administration of assessment results and progression arrangements.

⁴ With the agreement of the student the meeting may not include full attendance of the assigned Panel, but the Panel Convener will always be present.

- Counselling & Psychological Services
- Disability Service
- A representative from the student's academic programme
- School Disability Co-ordinator
- A representative from the School of Medicine

34.4.6 The student may choose to be accompanied, assisted or represented at the meeting by one of the following: a parent or guardian; a fellow student or other friend; a mental health advocate/supporter; an Officer of the SRC Advice Centre, or a member of University staff. It should be noted that legal representation is not appropriate and therefore not permitted at this stage of proceedings.

Outcome

34.4.7 After discussion with the student, the Panel will decide on the appropriate outcome of the meeting. The student will be asked to leave the room for this process and will be invited back to hear the proposed outcome, and will then be asked to confirm whether they agree with the proposed way forward. The outcome, and the detail of any agreed Action Plan, will be sent to the student in writing within 10 working days of the meeting.

34.4.8 If it is not possible to reach a consensus on the next steps for the student, this will be noted in the written outcome. The student will be advised of their current position and any options, and whether the case is being referred to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Action Plans

34.4.9 Action Plans will set out the responsibilities of both the student and the University. Dates for completion or a review of progress will be set. Any arrangements for suspension of studies will be included in the student's Action Plan. Action Plans will also identify any anticipated consequences, should there be insufficient progress.

Suspension of Studies – Fitness to Study Leave of Absence

34.4.10 If a Leave of Absence is agreed by the Panel the proposed period of time out from study will be set out in the student's Action Plan, which will identify the earliest possible date for resumption of studies. Any conditions for return to study will also be set out; for example, required medical evidence of fitness to study or the requirement to engage with University support.

34.4.11 In order to resume studies, the student will be required to apply for resumption of studies by submitting a Return to Study Application form which will include a self-assessment, along with any professional evidence of fitness required for return. Application should be made to the Senate Office at least 20 working days prior to the proposed date of return. Later applications will be considered, but the date of return may be delayed if there is insufficient time to process the application.

34.4.12 On receipt of a Return to Study application, the Convener of the Panel will determine whether studies may be resumed by either: (i) consulting with at least one member of the relevant School or Research Institute; or (ii) by calling a meeting of the Panel, which the student will be invited to attend.

34.4.13 Some degrees and other academic awards of the University specify a maximum duration of study – that is, a maximum period within which studies must be successfully completed, *including any suspension periods*. A student will be advised where there is a risk that a suspension might lead to the maximum duration of study being exceeded.

34.5 Stage 3 – Significant or Persistent Concerns (Referral to the Code of Student Conduct)

34.5.1 Where there are concerns that a student's behaviour is having a serious impact on their ability to study or the ability of other members of the University to carry out their normal activities, it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Senate Student Conduct Committee. This is done by making a referral under the Code of Student Conduct (Regulation 33). Such a referral may happen when:

- the student's behaviour appears to be in breach of the Code of Student Conduct;
- the student has not engaged with the Fitness to Study Review Panel at Stage 2 of this procedure;
- the student has not engaged with an Action Plan agreed with the Fitness to Study Review Panel.

34.5.2 Any matters of concern should be raised with the Senate Office in the first instance. The Director of the Senate Office, or their nominee, will refer the matter to the Senior Senate Assessor for Student Conduct, who will decide whether to refer the matter to the Senate Student Conduct Committee or the Senate Assessors for Student Conduct. In cases where the student has been considered under Stage 2 of this procedure, the Director of the Senate Office will consult with the Convener of the Fitness to Study Review Panel to obtain details of the case before referring it to the Senior Senate Assessor for Student Conduct.

34.5.3 The Senate Office will advise the student in writing of any referral under the Code of Student Conduct. Thereafter the procedures of that Code will be followed. It is recognised under the Code of Student Conduct that behaviour may be affected by some health conditions, and where health or disability may be a contributing factor in the concerns raised, the Committee will take into account any reports or evidence of the student's condition.

34.5.4 The University may suspend a student from studies pending investigation under Code of Student Conduct.

34.6 Right of Appeal

The student has a right of appeal against a decision of the Senate Assessors for Student Conduct or the Senate Student Conduct Committee, this is set out in §33.44 - §33.77 of the Code of Student Conduct.

34.7 Confidentiality and Data Protection

At all stages of the procedure due consideration will be given to issues of confidentiality and data protection. Further information on the University's policy in this area is available at <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/guidanceforstudents/>. In cases where a student's health and safety is considered to be at risk the University may share information with external parties such as next of kin, medical professionals or the police (see <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/a-ztopics/sensitivepersonaldata/>).

34.8 Appendix 1

Relevant Policies and Procedures

There are a number of policies, procedures and regulations which may also apply or be of relevance to students being considered under this Fitness to Study Procedure.

- [Equality & Diversity Policy](#)
- [Dignity at Work & Study Policy](#)
- [Student Carers' Policy](#)
- [Student Maternity, Maternity Support & Adoption Policy](#)
- [Student Mental Health Policy](#)
- [Absence Policy](#) – *sets out absence reporting requirements for students*
- Code of Student Conduct (Regulation 33)
- Fitness to Practise Procedure – *applies to certain professional degrees and awards. Referrals under Fitness to Practise relating to concerns over student behaviour will take precedence over any review under Fitness to Study.* (Regulation 36)

Assessment

- Regulations on Incomplete Assessment and Good Cause (see Regulation 16 - Code of Assessment §16.45-§16.53)
- Examination and Other Assessment Arrangements for Students with Disabilities (Regulation 24)

A 24 hour Crisis Team operates in the University to respond to critical situations involving our students and staff. In an immediate emergency dial 999 first, and then Campus Security (Gillmorehill Campus 4444; Garscube Campus 2222).

34.9 Appendix 2

Links to student support and advice services

- [Counselling & Psychological Services](#)
- [Disability Service](#)
- [Interfaith Chaplaincy](#)
- [International Student Support](#)
- [International Family Network](#)
- [Helping Distressed Students: A Guide for University Staff](#)
- [Student Learning Service](#)
- [Student Services Enquiry Team](#)
- [Pastoral support in student accommodations](#)
- [Health, Safety & Wellbeing](#)
- [SRC Advice Centre](#)