



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

# **Fitness to Study Procedure**

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## 1. What to do if concerned about a student's mental health

Any person who has concerns that a student may need additional support should signpost the student to, or report concerns directly to, appropriate services as soon as possible. If you are unsure how to act in relation to concerns about a student, you can seek advice from the askUS team.

### Immediate concern about risk

If you are concerned that there is an immediate risk from a student towards themselves or others, you should contact the emergency services on 999 directly and the University Security team (Emergency 0161 295 3333) immediately afterwards.

### Support Services

askUS Enquiries (visit <https://www.salford.ac.uk/askus/contact-askus> for opening hours) 0161 295 0023 or [askUS@salford.ac.uk](mailto:askUS@salford.ac.uk)

Counselling & Wellbeing Service (core hours 9am-5pm, Mon-Fri excl. public holidays) 0161 295 0023 or [wellbeing@salford.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@salford.ac.uk)

Disability & Learner Support Service (core hours 9am-5pm, Mon-Fri excl. public holidays) 0161 295 0023 or [disability@salford.ac.uk](mailto:disability@salford.ac.uk)

Chaplaincy team (variable hours – for urgent enquiries contact askUS Enquiries) 0161 295 4432 [faithcentre@salford.ac.uk](mailto:faithcentre@salford.ac.uk)

Students' Union Advice Service (core hours 9am-4pm, Mon-Fri excl. public holidays) 0161 351 5400 [advicecentre-ussu@salford.ac.uk](mailto:advicecentre-ussu@salford.ac.uk)

### Who can students talk to?

If a student is worried about their own health or wellbeing or that of another student, they can talk to:

- a) A member of a relevant professional service, such as the Counselling & Wellbeing Service or Disability and Learner Support Service.
- b) A member of academic staff.
- c) An officer, student representative or staff member of the Students' Union.
- d) Another relevant person (such as a placement liaison or mentor or G.P.).
- e) Professional body or Union representatives.

## 2. Definitions and interpretations

- i) A reference in this policy or associated procedure to an office-holder includes that office-holder's deputy or nominee.
- ii) A 'friend' means a friend, relative or guardian, a fellow student at the University acting in a supporting capacity, or a member or staff member of the Students' Union. A friend may support and assist the student but should not represent them or act on their behalf, including in a legal capacity.

## 3. Roles within the Procedure

## **Fitness to Study Case Officer**

Each School is required to appoint an appropriate number of Fitness to Study Case Officers. The number of Case Officers may vary depending on the size of each School and the likely number of cases which may come forward for consideration. All Case Officers are required to undergo regular training to support the Fitness to Study Procedure.

## **Representatives from Student Experience and Support**

At each stage of the Procedure, Student Experience and Support may be called upon to offer support, guidance and advice or to help facilitate discussion. Representatives may be called upon from relevant teams within Student Experience and Support (e.g. Counselling and Wellbeing or Disability and Learner Support) depending on the nature of circumstances under review.

## **Associate Dean (Student Experience)**

Associate Deans (Student Experience) will be called upon as senior School representatives to consider concerns which may be serious enough to require the full range of actions available through this Procedure or where students do not comply with requirements set at an earlier stage of the Procedure. Associate Deans (Student Experience) are required to undergo regular training to support the Fitness to Study Procedure.

## **4. Stages of the Procedure**

### **Raising concerns/initial referral**

Any person who has concerns that a student may need additional support should signpost the student to, or report concerns directly to, appropriate services as soon as possible.

Concerns about a student's fitness to study should also be reported in writing to the School's Fitness to Study Case Officer (see Proforma available on the [staff hub](#)).

### **Exploratory stage**

A referral is made to the School's Fitness to Study Case Officer using relevant information and data relating to the concerns. The School's Fitness to Study Case Officer decides whether to:

- Take no further action;
- Arrange to meet with the student (a Fitness to Study Meeting – stage 1);
- Refer the concerns to the Associate Dean (Student Experience) (a Fitness to Study Meeting – stage 2);
- Initiate a different policy/procedure.

The person making the referral may also gather additional data, including from other services, to help develop an informed view.

### **Fitness to Study Meeting (Stage 1)**

The student should be invited to a meeting with the School Fitness to Study Case Officer and, normally, a representative from Student Experience and Support. They may be accompanied by a friend [Note Section 2.0 of the procedure]. A notetaker from the School will also be present.

In advance of the meeting all relevant papers will be circulated to all parties.

The Fitness to Study Meeting (Stage 1) will be led by the Fitness to Study Case Officer, with Student Experience and Support acting in a supportive/advisory role. The role of the Student Experience and Support representative is to help facilitate discussion, provide advice and give guidance on the support available.

During the meeting, the Fitness to Study Case Officer, with the representative from Student Experience and Support, should:

- Review the nature of the concerns that have been raised;
- Hear and consider the student's views;
- Explore with the student any explanations for the behaviour that has caused fitness to study concerns to be raised;
- Discuss which actions may be required following the meeting;
- Explain the process by which the student will be informed of actions which will be **required** of them and/or those which are **recommended**; and the actions which the University commits to take (if relevant);
- Explain the arrangements for holding a review of progress; and the consequences if the required actions are not achieved (as relevant).

### **Fitness to Study Meeting (Stage 1) outcomes**

Outcomes from a Fitness to Study Meeting (Stage 1) may include (but are not limited to):

1. No further action;
2. Creation of a Reasonable Adjustments Plan (RAP) for the student or enhancement of an existing RAP;
3. Arrangement of an assessment or additional support for a student;
4. Requirement or recommendation for the student to access specified support and/or show a pattern of engagement with specified forms of support;
5. Requirement or recommendation for the student to achieve a stated benchmark (e.g. for attendance) or a consistent achievement over a defined period of time or by a stated date (e.g. changes in behaviour).

At, or shortly after, the meeting, the School's Case Officer, guided by the representative from Student Experience and Support, should contact the student to explain:

- requirements and recommendations required by the students;
- actions which the University commits to take (if appropriate);
- arrangements for a review period, including required actions and the length of the review period (see Review Period section);
- recourse the student will have during the review period if e.g. the University does not fulfil its' commitments or the student's circumstances change and they wish this to be considered and incorporated into the requirements.

The outcome should also be provided in writing to the student along with notes from the meeting.

### **Fitness to Study Meeting – Stage 2**

Whilst cases would normally be considered in the first instance by the School's Fitness to Study Case Officer, if the Case Officer believes that the concerns to be addressed are

sufficiently serious as to require it, or the student does not comply with the requirements made following a Fitness to Study Meeting (Stage 1), then the matter should be referred to the School's Associate Dean (Student Experience).

The Associate Dean (Student Experience), and if appropriate with representation from Student Experience and Support (e.g. Counselling and Wellbeing, Disability) will arrange to meet with the student. A note taker from the School will also be present.

The Fitness to Study Meeting will be led by the Associate Dean (Student Experience), with Student Experience and Support normally in attendance. The role of the Student Experience and Support representative is to help facilitate discussion, provide advice and give guidance on support available.

The student may be accompanied by a friend [note section 2.0 of the Procedure].

In advance of the meeting, all relevant papers will be circulated to all parties.

If the student does not attend the meeting, this will proceed in their absence.

During the meeting, the Associate Dean (Student Experience) should:

- Review the nature of the concerns that have been raised;
- Hear and consider the student's views;
- Explore with the student any explanations for the behaviour that has caused fitness to study concerns to be raised;
- Discuss which actions may be required following the meeting;
- Explain the process by which the student will be informed of actions which will be **required** of them and/or those which are **recommended**, and the actions which the University commits to take (if relevant);
- Explain the arrangements for holding a review of progress; and the consequences if the required actions are not achieved (as relevant). See section on Review Meetings.

The Associate Dean (Student Experience) may request further information or evidence to assist decision-making (see section on Factors to consider in relation to outcomes below). This may mean deferring decision making; however, a decision should be reached as soon as practically possible.

### **Fitness to Study (Stage 2) outcomes**

Outcomes from a Fitness to Study Meeting (Stage 2) may include (but are not limited to):

1. No further action;
2. Creation of a Reasonable Adjustments Plan (RAP) for the student or enhancement of an existing RAP;
3. Arrangement of an assessment or additional support for a student;
4. Requirement or recommendation for the student to access specified support and/or show a pattern of engagement with specified forms of support;
5. Requirement or recommendation for the student to achieve a stated benchmark (e.g. for attendance) or a consistent achievement over a defined period of time or by a stated date (e.g. changes in behaviour).
6. Altering the student's mode of attendance (full-time or part-time)
7. Postponing part of the student's course (for example, a placement)

8. Transferring to a different course
9. Interruption of the student's studies
10. Requirement that the student is withdrawn from study

At, or shortly after, the meeting, the Associate Dean (Student Experience), guided by the representative from Student Experience and Support, should contact the student to explain:

- requirements and recommendations required by the students;
- actions which the University commits to take (if appropriate);
- arrangements for a review period, including requirements, recommendations and the length of the review period (see Review Meeting section);
- recourse the student will have during the review period if e.g. the University does not fulfil its' commitments or the student's circumstances change and they wish this to be considered and incorporated into the requirements.

The outcome should also be provided in writing to the student along with notes from the meeting.

### **Factors to consider in relation to outcomes**

Outcomes must be centred on the student's ability to become fit to study, and the potential for other impacts cannot be a primary consideration of the meeting. However, where there is the possibility to advise and support the student to mitigate these impacts, this should be attempted. Potential impacts to consider are likely to include:

- The student's visa status;
- The student's ability to progress on their course, either immediately or on return from suspension;
- The student's financial situation;
- Other consequential factors including right to remain in accommodation (note Section 5.0 of the procedure).

### **Review Meeting**

Where appropriate, students will be invited to attend review meetings. The purpose of the Review Meeting will primarily be to determine whether the student is now fit to study or is making acceptable progress against agreed milestones (depending on requirements agreed at the earlier meeting).

Review meetings will be conducted by the Fitness to Study Case Officer and where relevant, with a representative from Student Experience & Support.

If the student is not Fit to Study or requirements have not been met, the case will either be referred to the School's Associate Dean (Student Experience) or re-considered by the School's Associate Dean (Student Experience).

## **5. Appeal process**

An appeal may made only on one or more of the following grounds:

- 1) That new and relevant evidence is available which, for good and reasonable cause, was not available to a Stage 1 or Stage 2 Fitness to Study Meeting. Exceptional

circumstances are needed to explain why any evidence could not have been made available.

- 2) That there was a relevant and significant defect, error or mistake at Stage 1 or 2 of this Procedure which casts reasonable doubt on the decision reached by the in that the decision might have been different if the defect, error or mistake had not occurred.
- 3) That the decision reached at Stage 1 or 2 of this Procedure is manifestly unreasonable. In this context, unreasonable will be taken to mean perverse, i.e. the decision was not one that a similar process of consideration might have reached.

This Appeal must be made in writing to the Quality and Enhancement Office ([acaedmicappeals@salford.ac.uk](mailto:acaedmicappeals@salford.ac.uk)) within 10 working days of the written confirmation of the decision and must specify the grounds on which it is based.

The Dean of Students will consider all appeals.

The appeal will normally consist of a review of the documentation in the case. In exceptional circumstances the Dean of Students may decide to meet with the student or other people involved in making the case.

The appeal will normally be reviewed, and a decision reached, and communicated to the student within 15 working days of receipt. An officer from the Quality and Enhancement Office will support the review.

On consideration of an appeal, one of the following decisions will be reached:

- a) Reject the appeal;
- b) Fully or partially uphold the appeal and amend any actions or outcomes determined.

Where an appeal has been rejected, the letter will also constitute a 'Completion of Procedures' letter, outlining the scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The 'completion of procedures' letter will explain that if a student remains dissatisfied at the end of the University's internal Fitness to Study Procedure, they may ask the OIA to review their case. This will require completion of an OIA scheme application form upon receipt of the 'completion of procedures' letter. The scheme application form must be submitted within twelve months of the date that the completion of procedures letter was issued. The OIA website provides further information regarding the scheme and its eligibility criteria: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

## **6. Suspension/withdrawal and Campus Living Villages (CLV)**

If a decision to suspend/withdraw a student who is known to be a tenant in CLV accommodation, CLV will be informed (as tenancies are intended to be for current students).

Under the contract of tenancy with CLV, a student will usually continue to be liable for their contract for the remainder of the year, or until another tenant can be found to take over the tenancy. This will apply even if the student has become unwell and cannot continue with their studies and / or is excluded from the University premises either temporarily or permanently. Students should be advised accordingly by University staff.

If a decision to suspend / withdraw a student who is a resident of CLV accommodation is made, CLV should be advised in order that they can appropriately judge impact on other students in relation to having a non-student resident in the accommodation, as well as any other considerations which they need to take.

## 7. Assistance during suspension

Students who have interrupted their studies / been suspended may, subject to any restrictions, access several University services including money advice, accommodation advice and counselling and wellbeing services. [Link to list].

Students who have withdrawn from study / had their study terminated will not normally be eligible to access University services other than Careers and Alumni services.

## 8. Support for students using this Procedure

The Students' Union Advice Centre can provide independent support and advice relating to the Student Fitness to Study Procedure. Contact them via [advicecentre-ussu@salford.ac.uk](mailto:advicecentre-ussu@salford.ac.uk) or 0161 351 5400.

The University Counselling & Wellbeing team can provide support for emotional and mental health issues. Contact them via [wellbeing@salford.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@salford.ac.uk) or 0161 295 0023.

## 9. If the process is interrupted

It may become apparent that another procedure is more appropriate to address concerns which have been raised. In this case the student should be clearly and formally advised that the Fitness to Study process is being paused or terminated.

If a student elects to interrupt their study part-way through Fitness to Study procedure or does not re-register at an appropriate stage and wishes to return in the future, the procedure will resume at the university's discretion when the student decides to seek to return to study.

The University's Interruption Policy covers students interrupting / suspending:  
[http://www.salford.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/904573/StudentInterruptionsWithdrawalsPolicy.pdf](http://www.salford.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/904573/StudentInterruptionsWithdrawalsPolicy.pdf)

Guidance: <http://www.askus.salford.ac.uk/interruptions-and-withdrawals>

From time to time there may be a situation where a student finds themselves severely incapacitated, e.g. through injury or critical illness. If a student is incapacitated or detained for treatment, then the University may pause the Fitness to Study procedure and resume it, if appropriate, when the student is sufficiently recovered.

<b>Document Control Information</b>			
<b>Status and reason for development</b>			
Previously the Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure existed as one document. The Policy and Procedure now exist as separate documents. The new Procedure introduces the role of Fitness to Study Case Officer as well as enabling a more responsive approach for dealing with concerns about a student's Fitness to Study.			
<b>Revision History:</b> (most recent first)			
<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Authorised &amp; Date</b>
Polly Smith/ Annette Cooke		V1.0	Authorised on behalf of SELTEC on 11 September 2019
<b>Policy Management and Responsibilities:</b>			
Owner:	Head of Student Experience, Student Experience and Support		
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	Fitness to Study Case Officers Associate Deans (Student Experience) Dean of Students		
<b>Have you completed consultation / formal assessment with the following advisory teams:</b>			
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR)	In train		
Legal implications (LPG)	N/A		
Information Governance (LPG)	N/A		
Student facing procedures (QEO)	Yes – during development		
Staff Trades Unions via HR Students via USSU Relevant external bodies (specify)	Yes – during development and via SELTEC		
<b>Authorised by:</b>	SELTEC		
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<a href="http://www.salford.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/governance/policies-and-procedures">http://www.salford.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/governance/policies-and-procedures</a>			
<b>Document dissemination and communications plan: Sent to key admissions contacts across the University.</b>			
E.g. US Online article, In Brief strategic update, Student Channel.			