

## FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

### Purpose and Scope

This Policy is intended to be used as an alternative to other disciplinary procedures. It should be used when there is sufficient concern that a student's behaviour and/or progression, which could result with a disciplinary response could be because of disability, ill health or have an impact on the health and safety of the student or other people. Any decisions made on a student's fitness to study will be made through a collective process of consideration of the ability to study, learn and complete their course of study. Academic or support staff may initiate use of this procedure if concern for the student is sufficient. It may be that there are similar concerns in other sections of the College community that may be collected for use of this process. It is important that all those sections of the College with whom the student is in regular interaction are kept fully informed of the outcome of these processes, whilst keeping in mind the legitimate concerns around confidentiality, data protection and professional guidelines. This Policy may also be applied if there are concerns about a student pre-admission to the College which may result in refusal of a place on application.

Concerns about a student's health/behaviour should be acted on promptly. Early intervention in student health/behaviour and recommendations for support can avoid a further deterioration in the situation.

The procedure has 3 levels based on the perceived level of risk to the health and safety, progress and wellbeing of the student or others posed by their behaviour, or health, caused by ill-health or disability. The cause for concern can result in entering the procedure at any of the 3 levels, stay at a level, or can progress through the levels should the cause for concern not be remedied by recommended and agreed actions resulting from a meeting at level 1 or 2.

Staff should be aware of other support services available within the College to which students may be signposted if it is felt this may be of benefit in advance of any procedure being initiated. Members of staff providing support in college should be involved in the Fitness to Study process when appropriate.

Staff who have any level of concern about a student's health or behaviour should consider use of this procedure. If there is a concern of this nature, it is appropriate to explore the student's health/behaviour and agree supportive action rather than enter into a disciplinary procedure. If staff are unsure about whether to implement this procedure, they can seek advice and discuss their concerns with their Head of Curriculum or the Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser.

Instances where it may be appropriate to use Fitness to Study because of ongoing physical or mental health concerns rather than using disciplinary procedures include, but are not limited to:

- The student has told a member of staff they have severe issue with health or mental wellbeing, a problem which questions their fitness to study;
- A student suffers from severe anxiety which leads to missing classes and failing to complete work;

- A student has regular medical appointments, often not evidenced, which lead to regular absences from class;

- A student is having regular absences following the break-up of a relationship.

Note, that any meeting can be held remotely using Microsoft Teams, ensuring that Grantham College protocols are followed regarding virtual meetings.

## Level 1

- Fitness to Study Level 1 is the most common starting point due to emerging concerns about an individual's health and safety, wellbeing and /or ability to study, e.g. significant deterioration in an individual's health, attitude and/or behaviour might require a response from the College;
- The member of staff with primary responsibility (e.g. Student Progress Mentor or Course Tutor) should in the first instance, approach the student in a sympathetic and understanding manner and indicate that there are concerns about the individual's fitness to study, hence the need for a meeting to explore how things can improve by using the College's Fitness to Study process;
- The nature of the concerns should be clearly identified and, if appropriate, information should be provided about sources of professional support and advice available within the College. It should be made clear to the student that it is their responsibility to be fit to study, and that there is a recognised concern about this within the College and that College staff are here to help the student complete their course of studies;
- The Head of Curriculum, or Curriculum Co-ordinator, should agree that Fitness to Study should be initiated. The Head of Curriculum, or Curriculum Co-ordinator may choose to be present at any meeting. If not initiating the procedure, the Student Progress Mentor and/or Course Tutor may also be invited;
- The student and all other interested parties should agree on a date when they will meet to review the situation and discuss what is being done to address the concern about fitness to study. Due consideration should be given to whether to involve NOK, carer or guardian at this stage of the process with the agreement of the student involved. The aim of this first meeting is to clearly identify College's concern, identify the needs of the individual, explore how things can improve and identify what support is available, and to set targets in agreement with the student;
- A review date should be set at the meeting. The targets should then be monitored by the tutor. If it becomes apparent early in the process that these targets are not being achieved, then the student should be informed and the review date can be brought forward. Normally a review date will be 2-4 weeks after but the meeting may be sooner if targets are not being met or if there is another reason for close monitoring;
- The student should be informed that continuation of the same, or any additional cause for concern, could result in their fitness to study being more widely considered by moving to Level 2 or 3;
- Records of meetings held at this level should be held in the Student Progress Mentor Confidential files and a note placed on ProMonitor that a meeting has taken place;

- At the review meeting with the student, progress against previously agreed targets should be checked. Additionally, students and staff can raise other concerns to changes to circumstance. If the student has achieved the targets set then the Fitness to Study can be suspended, or the student can come off the process. Alternatively, the student may elect to remain on the Fitness to Study provided this is acceptable to staff. If the targets are not achieved, then the Course Leader will need to consult with the Head of Curriculum or Curriculum Co-ordinator to see if the Fitness to Study Level 1 should be extended or move to Fitness to Study Level 2. It will be the Curriculum Co-ordinator who will generally chair the next review if moved to Level 2.

**Note – the Head of Curriculum can be involved at this stage.**

- If at any point the student decides that they wish to withdraw from their course of studies due to Fitness to Study, then the Head of Curriculum should discuss this with the Vice Principal: HR and Student Services.
- After the meeting a letter should be sent to the student and NOK, carer or guardian if the student agrees, outlining details of the meeting, appropriate support, agreed targets set, the date and purpose of the next review.

## Level 2

- It is possible to start at this level, though, it is generally initiated after not achieving targets set at Level 1. The primary difference between Level 1 and Level 2 is that the meeting will be chaired by the Curriculum Co-ordinator or Head of Curriculum. Ideally the student's NOK, carer or guardian should attend the meeting unless the student specifically asks for them not to attend. There is always the option for the student to have someone else in the meeting. This could be a family member, friend or support worker to advocate for them. The student should be informed of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may need to bring.
- There may be occasions when the student is unable/unwilling to attend the meeting personally due to illness or mental health issues. Wherever possible an alternative date should be arranged for the meeting to allow the student to attend. However, this should not result in the process being delayed for an extended period. Where appropriate these meetings will still proceed in the student's absence, though NOK, carer or guardian can still attend the meeting.
- If the Fitness to Study is being initiated at Level 2 then a letter should be sent to the student informing them of the forthcoming meeting and outlining the purpose of the meeting and concerns College has in relation to their fitness to study.
- The procedure to be followed for the meeting are the same as those for Level 1 regarding targets and review date.
- At the end of the meeting where targets have been set it must be emphasised to the student the seriousness of the matter and the consequences of not achieving the targets by the review date.

- Any records of meetings held at this level should be held in the Student Progress Mentor Confidential Files and a note placed on ProMonitor that a meeting has taken place.
- Level 2 review should take place between 2 to 4 weeks after the meeting. At the review meeting progress against the previously agreed targets should be reviewed with the student. Additionally, students and staff can raise other concerns or changes to circumstance. Note a record of the meeting should be completed on the Fitness to Study paperwork attached to this policy.
- If the student has achieved the targets set at the previous meeting then the Fitness to Study can be suspended or the student can come off the process, however, the student may choose to remain on the Fitness to Study provided this is acceptable to staff.
- If targets achieved for Fitness to Study Level 2 then the next review should drop to Fitness to Study Level 1.
- If the targets are not achieved, then the Curriculum Co-ordinator/Head of Curriculum need to confirm if the Fitness to Study Level 2 should be extended for a period up to 4 weeks or there is a need to move to Fitness to Study Level 3. Any progress to Fitness to Study Level 3 needs to be agreed with the relevant Head of Curriculum who in turn should inform the Vice Principal - HR and Student Services. It will be the Head of Curriculum who will generally chair the next review if moved to Level 3.
- If at any point the student decides that they wish to withdraw from their course of studies due to Fitness to Study then the Head of Curriculum should discuss this with the Vice Principal - HR and Student Services.
- After the meeting a letter should be sent to the student and NoK/guardian/carer, if student agrees, outlining details of the meeting, appropriate support, agreed targets set, the date and purpose of the next review.

## Level 3

- It is possible to start at this level though it is generally initiated after not achieving set targets at Level 2. Direct entry at Level 3 is due to serious concerns that a student's progress, caused by ill-health or disability, may pose a significant threat to the Health and Safety, wellbeing and/or ability to study of the student or others.
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- The primary difference between Level 2 and Level 3 is that the meeting will be chaired initially by the Head of Curriculum and if appropriate the Vice Principal HR&SS. Ideally the students NoK/guardian/carer should attend the meeting unless the student specifically asks for them not to attend. There is always the option for the student to have a Grantham College Student Union representative, support worker, friend or family member to advocate for them. The student should be informed of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may need to bring.
- There may be occasions when the student is unable/unwilling to attend the meeting personally, due to illness or mental health issues, these meeting will still proceed in the student's absence, though NOK, carer, guardian can attend accordingly.

- If the Fitness to Study is being initiated at Level 3 then a letter should be sent to the student informing them of the forthcoming meeting and outlining the purpose of the meeting and concerns College has in relation to their fitness to study.
- The procedures to be followed for the meeting are the same as those for Level 1 regarding targets and review date.
- At the end of the meeting where targets have been set it must be emphasised to the student the seriousness of the matter and the consequences of not achieving the targets by the review date, specifically that this may lead to their withdrawal from their course of studies.
- Any records of meetings held at this level should be held in the Student Progress Mentor Confidential Files and a note placed on ProMonitor that a meeting has taken place.
- The Vice Principal – HR&SS should be kept informed of any Level 3 meetings and the outcome.
- At Level 3 a review should be held between 2 and 4 weeks after the meeting. At the review meeting progress, against the previously agreed targets, should be reviewed with the student. Additionally, students and staff can raise other concerns or changes to circumstance. Note a record of the meeting should be completed on the Fitness to Study paperwork attached to this policy.
- If the student has achieved the targets set at the previous meeting then the Fitness to Study can be suspended or student can come off the process. However, the student may elect to remain on the Fitness to Study provided this is acceptable to staff.
- If targets achieved for Fitness to Study Level 3 then the next review should drop to Fitness to Study Level 2.
- If the targets are not achieved then the next review should be held with the Vice Principal – HR & Student Services to see if the Fitness to Study Level 3 should be extended or if the individual should be withdrawn.
- If at any point the student decides that they wish to withdraw from their course of studies due to Fitness to Study then the Head of Curriculum should discuss this with the Vice Principal – HR & Student Services.
- After the meeting a letter should be sent to the student and NOK/guardian/carer, if student agrees, outlining details of the meeting and outcome of the review. If not being withdrawn, then the letter should include details of agreed targets set, appropriate support, the date and purpose of the next review.

## **Returning to Studies after being withdrawn following Fitness to Study**

- Students should be informed of the purpose of the procedure and the responsibilities on the part of the College and themselves on facilitating effective return to study.
- Each student's case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context out of which the concern initially arose, but in all cases return to study will be dependent

upon satisfactory medical evidence of fitness to study and the provision of information about appropriate support services, with a recommendation of the benefit of continuing to study with support. Evidence submitted should be from a recognised health professional who has sufficient knowledge of the student to be able to make an informed statement of wellbeing. Specific reference should be made to the student's renewed ability to manage the demands of studying at College.

- The decision to permit a return to study will be made by the Vice Principal – HR & Student Services who will be satisfied of fitness to study, compliance with any conditions imposed and availability of support upon return.
- Fitness to study is an on-going responsibility of the College and the student and will be considered throughout the remaining period of study to ensure that they succeed, have the appropriate support and for staff to have an agreed context in which to work with the student. Regular review meetings with students should be arranged with a College contact to ensure that support for study is effective.

## **Right of Appeal**

- Students and prospective students have the right of appeal within 5 working days. If a student is refused admission on the grounds of Fitness to Study they should use the appropriate procedure within the Admissions Policy;
- If a student wishes to appeal about the outcomes of the Level 3 intervention or their withdrawal from the College, they should address their appeal, in writing, to the Principal who will make the final decision.

## FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE RECORD OF CONCERN FOR A STUDENT'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

<b>STUDENT'S NAME:</b>	<b>Mr/Mrs/Miss/ Ms/Other</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>
<b>ID NUMBER:</b>			

<b>Level 1</b>
<b>People present (names and designation):</b>
<b>Brief outline of concern:</b>
<b>Feedback following meeting with student:</b>
<b>Agreed targets:</b> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<b>Date:</b> 
<b>Review date:</b> 



## FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE RECORD OF CONCERN FOR A STUDENT'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

<b>STUDENT'S NAME:</b>	<b>Mr/Mrs/Miss/ Ms/Other</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>
<b>ID NUMBER:</b>			

<b>Review or Level</b>
<b>People present (names and designation):</b>
<b>Review progress against targets:</b>
<b>New or revised targets:</b> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<b>Date:</b> 
<b>Review date:</b> 

Quality Assurance			
Review Period:	Annually	Review carried out by:	Student Services Manager
Approved by:	SLT	Date approved:	September 23
Equality Impact Assessment date:	September 23	Last review date:	September 23