

Fitness to Study Policy

Purpose

The Inspire Education Group (IEG) seeks to ensure that all its students are able to study and take advantage of the educational opportunities on offer to the best of their abilities in a supportive and inclusive environment. The IEG recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that it makes reasonable adjustments to address any substantial disadvantages that students with disabilities may face in accessing the services, facilities and benefits the Group has to offer.

Fitness to Study relates to a student's capacity to engage satisfactorily with study, including in relation to academic matters and life generally on campus. This policy is intended for use in cases in which the health and wellbeing or risk presented by the student is perceived to need initial support, or of a serious or potentially serious nature.

Early intervention in a student's mental health and wellbeing can avoid a crisis situation. This policy has three formal stages depending on the perceived level of risk, the severity of the circumstances and the student's engagement with efforts to respond. Based on the perceived level of risk to the health, safety and mental wellbeing of the student or others, this policy may be invoked at any of its three levels.

Students should be involved in the management of their own mental and physical well being wherever possible. However, there may be times when a student is unwilling or unable to work within these procedures. Lack of engagement with this policy may lead to the Group invoking disciplinary procedures.

This policy may also be applied if there are concerns about a student prior to admission to the Group, which may result in a refusal of a place on application or during the induction period if it is identified that the student's needs cannot be met.

Scope

All students. The only exception is where a student is on a course of study at University Centre Peterborough which has a separate policy.

The Policy Statement

The aim is to enable a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health issues and act to support a student's learning, academic achievement and the enhancement of the student experience.

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy

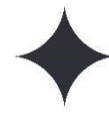
Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 Page 1 of 2

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

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The Group will undertake to support a student if they present a health concern, risk to themselves or a risk to others.

A student's fitness to study may be questioned if their health problems are:

- Disrupting their own studies or the studies of others
- Resulting in unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students
- Prohibiting them from coming onsite or engaging satisfactorily in their studies.

This policy is not designed to be used to address academic performance or issues relating to attendance, poor behaviour or individual mitigating circumstances. It is intended to be used as an alternative to any disciplinary procedure where there is sufficient concern that a student's well being could be as a result of disability, ill health or have an impact on the health and safety of the student or other persons. Any decision 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 programme of study.

Responsibilities

Individual responsibilities are described under the procedural stages. Although support staff working with individual students can provide evidence of the student's fitness to study, it is the responsibility of the curriculum staff member to ensure this policy and procedure is implemented when a concern arises.

Fitness to Study cannot lead to withdrawal for students with an EHCP as at tribunal it would be considered an unlawful exclusion. They can be on Fitness to Study as it is a supportive measure and to re-engage a student into their studies.

Related Documentation

- SAF001 – Safeguarding for All Policy
- STU004 - Student Positive Behaviour Policy
- Appendix 1 – Indicators of Concern and Procedures

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 Page **2** of **2**

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



Fitness to Study Policy

Indicators of concern regarding fitness to study

A student's fitness to study may be brought into question as a result of a wide range of circumstances. These include, but are not limited to:

- Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party e.g. friend, colleague, placement provider, member of the public, employer, multi-agency partner, or parent which indicates that there is a need to address fitness to study
- A student has told a member of the College's staff that they have a problem and/or has provided information which indicates that there is a need to address their fitness to study
- The student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying mental health issue. For example, if a student has demonstrated mood swings or wellbeing concerns, shown signs of depression become withdrawn/aggressive/distressed/irritable, or is becoming intimidating to others
- Behaviour, otherwise dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which is considered may be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem
- Where a student has been hospitalised as a result of an attempt on their own life as part of their return to College plan

Procedure

Stage	Action	Who
Initial discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss with student emerging concerns• Refer to Wellbeing/Welfare/ALS for any support needs	Student Mentor/Tutor/Wellbeing/Welfare Team
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain concerns with the student around F2S and Policy• Agree actions• Inform Wellbeing/Welfare ALS Safeguarding Team who may consider weekly welfare meetings/check-ins• Record details on ProMonitor	Head of Faculty / Curriculum Lead/Assistant Head of Faculty/Welfare team
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up a case meeting with the Wellbeing/Welfare ALS/Safeguarding Team and relevant external services	Head of Faculty / Curriculum Lead/Assistant Head of Faculty/ Deputy DSL

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy - Appendix 1

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 Page 1 of 8

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree support plan and timeframe• Set up a follow up meeting. Involve relevant internal/external agencies/ parents/carers, where relevant• Record details on ProMonitor, including the support plan.	
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Case Meeting with relevant professionals/emergency case meeting depending on severity• Set up a follow up meeting involving relevant internal/external agencies/ parents/carers, where relevant• Record details on ProMonitor	Deputy DSL/ Head of Faculty/ Assistant Principal Curriculum/Student Experience and Support

Initial support and guidance to students

In advance of this policy being invoked, informal discussion(s) between the student and their Student Mentor may be initiated by either the student or the member of staff, where initial emerging concerns about the student's wellbeing and/or health warrants this. The informal discussion(s) should give the student the opportunity to explain their perception of the matter.

The Student Mentor should refer the student to the Welfare team if their behaviours relate to an ongoing or emerging mental health concern.

If a student has made an attempt on their life that has resulted in a hospital visit, then a return to college meeting should be held. This should include, where practicably possible, the student, Student Mentor/member of Curriculum, a member of the Welfare team, and parents/carers. A member of the ALS team should also be present if appropriate.

The student should automatically go to Stage 1 of the Fitness to Study.

The student should be referred to one or more of the support services offered by the College, appropriate. It should be made clear to the student that concerns relating to their mental and/or physical health may need to be referred to specialist support as appropriate (including multi-agency partners).

It is hoped that in most cases issues can be resolved at this informal stage, and that students will respond positively, taking advantage of the support available.

Where it is suspected that a student's behaviour may be related to an on-going or emerging mental health problem, the Wellbeing/Welfare team must be consulted. In cases of emergency the Colleges Safeguarding processes must be implemented. Any informal discussions, advice and undertakings made by the staff concerned and/or the student should be documented and recorded on Pro-monitor.

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy - Appendix 1

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 **Page 2 of 8**

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



Stage 1

Where concerns remain following informal intervention, the following action is required:

- The Curriculum Lead/Head of Faculty/Assistant Head of Faculty should approach the student and explain that concerns about their fitness to study have emerged and explain the fitness to study policy. The student should be given the opportunity to outline their views on the concerns. A member of the Welfare team may also be involved in this discussion where appropriate
- The various sources of support open to the student to address the concerns should be outlined, and the student encouraged to utilise them. These may include the Wellbeing/Welfare team including safeguarding designated staff, Additional Learning Support (ALS) or external agencies
- It should be made clear to the student that it is their responsibility to be fit for study and that there is a recognised concern within the College.

At the end of any discussion:

- The Curriculum Lead/Head of Faculty/Assistant Head of Faculty shall record any mutually agreed actions and timeframe as a support plan and ask the student to sign
- If the student declines to sign the support plan, the member of staff shall note that fact on the plan as well as confirming that the plan is, in their belief, an accurate reflection of the actions agreed
- Inform the relevant Wellbeing/Welfare/Safeguarding/ALS who are involved that this policy is being invoked
- Inform parents/carers of the discussion and outcome. This should be sensitively considered and in agreement with the student.
- The student should be made aware that any actions will be reviewed after a 2 weekly period, or another, mutually agreed time frame.
- Ensure a copy of the plan is recorded on Pro-monitor

If the student is unable, or unwilling, to cooperate with the above process they 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 Stage 2 of this Policy.

Stage 2

Continuing or significant concerns about an individual student's health, safety, mental well-being and/or ability to study as evidenced by a significant deterioration in health, appearance, attitude and/or wellbeing might require a further/initial response from the College and will be noted as a Stage 2 case under this policy.

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy - Appendix 1

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 Page **3** of **8**

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



Case Meeting

- The Head of Faculty/Assistant Head of Faculty should liaise with the Wellbeing/Safeguarding/ALS staff member who has been informed and or involved as outlined in Stage 1. They will support the coordination of a case meeting involving relevant internal and external representation of those who can best provide expert and specialist advice
- The case meeting will advise or make recommendations on how to best support the student and confirm who the member of staff with primary responsibility for managing the case going forward will be.

Follow Up Meeting

- It is expected that, following the initial case meeting, the student and parents/carers will be invited to a follow-up meeting to discuss and agree the implementation and support recommended at the case meeting
- The student will be asked to authorise full disclosure to the College of the results of any related medical history. The student should be informed of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may need to bring
- Where relevant and appropriate internal and external professionals will be invited to the meeting in order to support the student and process.

The purpose of the meeting will be to ensure that:

- The student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns which have been raised
- To hear and consider the student's views and to ascertain the student's perception of the issues identified and also to ensure that the student clearly understands the College's expectations regarding fitness to study
- The best way to proceed is agreed upon
- The student is fully aware of the possible outcomes if difficulties remain
- The parent(s)/carer(s) will be fully informed about the concerns, support process, procedures and likely outcomes

A Support Plan should be negotiated and agreed, to include:

- Support for the student, where appropriate.
- Agreed academic/conduct related expectations for the student to observe
- Agreed review of study programme to support the student to achieve parts or all of their studies
- Agreed actions with review dates
- Consequences of not adhering to the agreed actions
- Consequences of continuation of the causes for concern
- If the student declines to sign the Support Plan, the Head of Faculty shall note that fact on the plan as well as confirming that the plan is in their belief an accurate reflection of the actions agreed

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy - Appendix 1

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024

Page **4** of **8**

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



- A copy of the record should be recorded on Pro-monitor.

The Head of Faculty/Assistant Head of Faculty is responsible for checking that the steps agreed in the support plan are implemented and reviewing progress against the plan.

Lack of engagement with any part of this procedure may lead to immediate escalation to Level 3 of this policy, or to formal disciplinary measures being invoked.

Students may remain at Stage 2 for the duration of their study providing it is having a positive impact and is regularly reviewed.

Stage 3

Stage 3 may be initiated due to:

- Serious or unresolved concerns about a student's actions, health, safety, mental wellbeing and/or ability to study that have not been resolved during Stage 2
- Persistent and/or serious significant concerns raised about a student's actions, health, safety, or mental well-being that are putting the health, safety, well-being and/or academic progress of his/her self or themselves or other members of the College community at significant risk will, exceptionally, cause Stage 3 to be initiated without reference to Stages 1 and 2

Stage 3 Final Case Meeting

A case meeting will be convened by the Deputy DSL in consultation with the support team, inviting those who can best provide expert and specialist advice on the case being considered and those who need to be there because of their relationship with the student, including their personal tutor or designated staff member. The case meeting will make recommendations on the most appropriate course of action.

The Deputy DSL will notify the Head of Faculty and Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support of the decision reached and recommendations by the members of the case meeting.

If emergency action is required:

Exceptionally, where it is felt that a student's well being is deteriorating quickly, immediate emergency action may be taken. An emergency case meeting with the Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support/Assistant Principal Curriculum must take place, and immediate action agreed. The case meeting will consider holistically and, as immediately as possible, the concerns raised, including the student's perception of these concerns, and will seek to ensure that immediate support, as appropriate, is put in place for the student. It may consider various

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy - Appendix 1

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 Page 5 of 8

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



options including recommending additional support strategies, action plans, or referral to other agencies.

Stage 3 Follow Up Meeting

Following either the immediate emergency action or the initial referral to Stage 3 case meeting, the student and parent(s)/carer(s) will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss options of support in relation to their study programme and review:

- Agreed academic/conduct related expectations for the student to observe
- Agreed review of study programme to support the student to achieve parts or all of their studies
- Agreed actions with review dates
- Consequences of not adhering to the agreed actions
- Consequences of continuation of the causes for concern

If, despite the College's best endeavours, the student is unable to attend the case conference, face to face, or remotely the meeting may take place in their absence with the outcome being communicated to the student subsequently.

In reaching a decision about the case, the College must be satisfied it has obtained and reviewed all possible relevant guidance about the student's condition to ensure that no reasonable alternative exists and that no reasonable adjustments would affect the position. Where there is doubt on these points the meeting will be adjourned to allow for further investigation.

Assistant Principal Curriculum/Student Experience and Support/ Assistant Principal Curriculum may decide to:

- Take no further action
- Require an enhanced action plan, which should include the steps to be taken and the required timescales
- Require the student to temporarily interrupt their studies
- Exclude the student

In cases where it is apparent that an individual student's present support needs are beyond the containment of the College for the time being and the limits of reasonableness have been reached in line with current legislation, a decision will be made that the student should be required to withdraw from full-time studies, subject to review on a specified date.

The outcomes and actions arising out of the meeting will be documented and sent to the student/parent/carers, if not in attendance. All actions should have specific timeframes where appropriate and adherence to such timeframes will be a condition of any re-entry to programmes of study.



Appeal

The student shall have the right of appeal against any decision to require the student's studies to be temporarily interrupted or to exclude the student. **Any Appeal must be made in writing to the Vice Principal within 12 working days.**

The grounds for Appeal are:

- New evidence
- Procedural irregularity

The Appeal Panel which will include the Vice Principal for Student and Staff Experience shall have the power to determine its own procedures for the hearing, but generally:

- The student should indicate whether they will be attending the Panel Hearing and the names of those who will be accompanying them
- If the student and/or their representative fail to attend, without good reason, then the hearing may proceed without them

Return to Study

After a period of suspension on health grounds reached by mutual consent, the decision as to whether to permit the student to return to study will be made by the Assistant Principal Curriculum/Student Experience and Support, Deputy DSL and Head of Faculty.

Each student's case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context out of which concern arose and, in some cases, return to study will be dependent upon

satisfactory medical advice/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.

A return to study plan will be drawn up highlighting what support is needed to enable the student to return to education and, if appropriate, a risk assessment may be put in place to consider the experiences that gave rise to the suspension, and to minimise the risk of recurrence.

The student must provide their continued cooperation in this respect and such review meetings may continue for part or all of their remaining time on programme.

If returning to study is deemed not to be an option and the student is dissatisfied, then they should follow the Group's usual complaints procedure.

Policy Name: STU003 - Fitness to Study Policy - Appendix 1

Policy Author: Assistant Principal Student Experience and Support

Issue: September 2024 **Page 7 of 8**

Approved by: Policy Approval Group

Review Date: September 2026

Site: Inspire Insights



FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE



**INITIAL
DISCUSSION**

Responsibility –
Student Mentor/Tutor

- Discuss any emerging concerns with the student.
- Refer the student to Wellbeing/Welfare/ALS for any support needs, if required.

STAGE 1

Responsibility –
**Head of Faculty/Assistant
Head of Faculty/Curriculum
Lead/Welfare Team**

- Discuss emerging concerns with the student, explain the Fitness to Study policy and process.
- Agree actions.
- Inform the Wellbeing/Welfare/ALS/ Safeguarding Team who may consider weekly welfare meetings or check-ins.
- Record all details on ProMonitor in the Fitness to Study section of 'manage learner meetings.' This should include the agreed support plan.

STAGE 2

Responsibility –
**Head of Faculty/Assistant
Head of Faculty/Curriculum
Lead/Deputy DSL**

- Set up a case meeting with the Wellbeing/ Welfare/ALS/Safeguarding Team and any relevant external services.
- Agree a support plan and timeframe.
- Set up a follow-up meeting, and include relevant internal or external agencies/parents/ carers where relevant.
- Record all details on ProMonitor in the Fitness to Study section of 'manage learner meetings.' This should include the agreed support plan.

STAGE 3

Responsibility –
**Head of Faculty/ Assistant
Principal Curriculum/
Deputy DSL/Student
Experience and Support**

- Final Case Meeting with relevant professionals or emergency case meeting depending on the severity of the situation.
- Set up a follow-up meeting, and include relevant internal or external agencies/parents/ carers where relevant.
- Record all details on ProMonitor in the Fitness to Study section of 'manage learner meetings.' This should include the agreed support plan.