

Fitness to Study Procedures

These procedures are the part of the College Life Handbook that indicate how the College handles situations where a student's fitness to study is in question (note that in some programmes fitness to study includes within it fitness to engage in a placement). These procedures' primary aim is to promote student welfare though they also facilitate the maintenance of the community of the College and safeguarding of the College's reputation.

These procedures are informed by equivalent procedures of the University of Gloucestershire, contextualised for Moorlands College, and the expectations of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. They enable the College to provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and to ensure that students have all the support they need to succeed in and benefit from their studies.¹ They reflect guiding principles of fairness, impartiality, accessibility, clarity, transparency, preservation of dignity, respect, supportiveness, proportionality, timeliness, and confidentiality and enable the College to improve the student experience.²

Fitness to Study Procedures are conducted by the Welfare Panel, currently composed of a member of the College's Executive Leadership Team (chair), one other member of academic staff, and a member of the administrative staff of the College, who facilitates the panel. This membership is supplemented by the relevant Course Leader for cases involving postgraduate students or the relevant Regional Centre Senior Tutor for cases involving undergraduate students studying at Regional Centres. If any of these people is a personal tutor for the student, they are normally replaced. For specific cases, additional members may be co-opted from the tutor team and/or the Executive Leadership Team. The panel has a quorum of three.

Distinctions should be made between three systems of the College, which run separately:

- (1) pastoral care (described in section 2 of this handbook, and relating to personal, relational and/or emotional issues that impact the student),
- (2) Conduct Review Procedures (described in section 4 of this handbook, and initiated by allegations of misconduct, and
- (3) Fitness to Study Procedures (described here, and initiated when there are serious concerns over a student's ability to study given reasonable amounts of support).

¹ The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Quality Code (QC), Quality Expectations 1, 2.

² QC, "Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals", Guiding Principles (all), cf. QC, Quality Practices 6, 10.

It is possible, though unusual, for a student to be involved in more than one of these systems at the same time.

These Fitness to Study procedures have two levels, based on the seriousness of risk posed by the situation and the response of the student to any previous intervention. Depending on the situation, it is possible to commence the procedures at either Level 1 or Level 2. Should a student be unwilling to play a part in these procedures, then the process continues in their absence, with the potential of suspension of studies still able to be invoked in the most extreme cases.

At either level, certain data, not including the student's name, may be given to the facilitator of the Pastoral Strategy Team to support monitoring and improvement of the College's activities.

Level 1: Progression Plan

This level is invoked to support a student when there is a concern that their physical or mental health may

- negatively impact their studies or wellbeing, or
- disrupt the teaching, learning or support of other students.

The student is invited to meet with their Personal Tutor and another member of staff to discuss the issues. Together they can assess the student's perception of the impact of their ill-health and/or behaviour on the student, their studies and/or the College community.

A Progression Plan is devised to put in place support for the student and formally agree expectations for the student to observe. The Progression Plan may cover a broad range of topics, including clarifying expectations of behaviour, and encouraging/requiring the student to access medical chaplaincy services. It may include a referral to the chaplains to perform a "counselling needs assessment": personal tutors do not directly refer students for professional counselling. The plan specifies a review date, and the consequences of not adhering to the Progression Plan will be made clear. The tutor sends a copy of the plan to both the student and the Admissions and Registry Manager, who will (a) file it, (b) forward it to the members of the Welfare Panel, (c) pass it to the facilitator of the Pastoral Strategy Team so that information can be included in data analysis processes, and (d) if the plan includes an expectation of accessing the College's chaplaincy services, pass it to the chaplains.

Level 2: Case Conference

This level is invoked when

- there is a concern that a student may not be able to continue with their studies,
- there is a concern that continuing with studies may be detrimental to the student's wellbeing,
- a Progression Plan has not been followed or otherwise has been unsuccessful.

The Welfare Panel conducts a "Case Conference" to discuss the situation, including considering any appropriate medical evidence that it has access to. The Case Conference is attended by the student's Personal Tutor, and, normally, a trained member or appointee of the Student Representative Association. At the conclusion of the Case Conference the panel either:

- determines that no further action is required;
- creates a new Progression Plan;
- withdraws the student from modules for up to twelve months, identifying appropriate further review mechanisms, including medical and academic advice, to be considered by another Case Conference.

In the case of the establishment of a new Progression Plan or withdrawal from modules, the student is informed in writing within five days, with a copy of the letter sent to the Registry, the student's Course Leader and the Principal. In many circumstances, it may be helpful for the letter to be given to the student in person, so that it can be explained, with a personal tutor present.

Appeal

If the student wishes to appeal against the outcome from the Case Conference, they should do so by making a formal complaint. This will be handled at stage 3 of the College's Complaints Procedures. It should be noted that, once this appeal/complaint process is completed, there may be appropriate avenues to take the issue further, either with the University of Gloucestershire or the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (see the Complaints Procedures for details).