



Fitness to Study Policy

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1. Introduction

The University is committed to supporting and responding to student needs and to seeking to ensure a positive experience which assists students to engage with their studies and with the Glasgow Caledonian University community.

The University seeks to maintain an environment which is safe and conducive to teaching, learning and research and the wellbeing of all. There may be instances where a student's health or wellbeing causes the University concern regarding the student's fitness to study on a course, including within a placement. The University has a duty of care to respond appropriately to situations where there are concerns relating to visible signs of illness, mental health difficulties, psychological, personality or emotional disorders and the detrimental impact on the functioning of the individual student and/or other members of the University community. Certain professional programmes have Fitness to Practise procedures which operate outside the scope of this policy.

This may arise where, for example, the University is concerned that:

- A student's ability to study is neither manageable nor achievable in relation to specific tasks and/or activities and is out with what would be considered a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010;
- A student poses a risk to their own health, safety and/or wellbeing and/or that of other persons;
- The student's behaviour is, or is at risk of, negatively affecting the teaching, learning and/or experience of other students;
- The student's behaviour is or is at risk of negatively affecting the day-to-day activities of the University and/or a placement provider.

2. Equality and Diversity Statement

GCU is committed to providing a culture and environment which is inclusive of all sections of society and responsive to the needs of individuals. We do this by promoting equality, valuing diversity and ensuring that our University community adheres to our [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#).

In implementing this policy, the University will at all times remain mindful of its duty of care and its obligations to students under the Equality Act 2010, including in appropriate cases its obligation to make reasonable adjustments. It will also remain mindful of the confidential and sensitive nature of fitness to study matters and of its obligations under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

3. Purpose and Scope

This policy is not disciplinary in nature and is concerned with the wellbeing of the student and the University community. The purpose of this policy is to provide suitable and co-ordinated support to GCU students if they fall into all of the below categories:

- the situation is deemed to be urgent; and
- other internal procedures such as the Code of Student Conduct are not appropriate; and
- all other avenues within schools have been exhausted. This policy differs from Fitness to Practise – certain professional programmes have fitness to practise procedures which may operate alongside this policy.
- the student is not engaging with support services or acknowledging suggestions and advice made by their school

This policy links closely to other policies/processes of the University such as, [Fitness to Practise](#), [Dignity at Work and Study](#), [Code of Student Conduct](#), [Mitigating Circumstances](#), [Guidelines for Supporting Students in Distress](#) and Recommended Adjustment Pages for Disabled Students.

Where a student is subject to disciplinary investigation under the Code of Student Conduct but is considered unfit to engage with the process, the investigation should be suspended. The Fitness to Study procedure should be applied until the student able to engage with the process. It may also be appropriate, depending on the circumstances, to suspend any complaint investigation initiated by the student. The student should be notified of this suspension of complaint or disciplinary procedure by the Department of Governance or academic department as appropriate.

A student's fitness to study may be a cause for concern as a result of a wide range of circumstances, including (but not restricted to) the following:

- Behaviour which would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which is known to be or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.
- A student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others.
- The student's academic performance or personal conduct is not acceptable and is known to be or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health condition.

4. Informal Actions within Schools

It is vital that all other options are investigated before the Fitness to Study procedure is used. It is expected that schools will approach students once concerns regarding fitness to study have been raised and attempt to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the student. The student should be encouraged to use one or more of the support services offered by the University ([Wellbeing Service](#), [Advice Centre](#)). Specific academic arrangements should be considered and an action plan agreed with the student, which is regularly reviewed. The majority of cases can be resolved this way (see Appendix 3).

5. Initiating Fitness to Study Procedure

This policy and procedure should only be referred to if there is a significant concern for a student's wellbeing and their capacity to study (see Appendix 3). All other avenues of support should be explored before initiating action under this policy. Generally, the student will not be engaging with any support offered when this policy and procedure is initiated. However, there may be specific circumstances where the policy is used, regardless of a student's engagement with services. The student can access advice, guidance, and independent representation from the [Students' Association Advice Centre](#) at all stages of the procedure.

A staff member with concerns should contact their Programme Leader to arrange a meeting with the student. If the student does not attend or serious concern is raised, the Programme Leader should alert the Head of Department. The Head of Department should contact the Head of Student Wellbeing who will convene a Fitness to Study Panel meeting (please see Appendix 1 for procedure).

6. Outcomes of Fitness to Study Panel Meeting

Possible outcomes of a Fitness to Study Panel meeting are continuation of studies (with or without adherence to an Action Plan), suspension or withdrawal.

The Head of Department (or their nominee) should be responsible for communicating the outcome of a Fitness to Study Panel meeting to the student.

If the Panel agrees to suspend a student, this will be communicated to them in person by the Programme Team with any conditions associated with eligibility to return. They will also be informed of the support and plan in place to assist with their return to study. In the event of withdrawal, the student will be invited to meet with an appropriate academic staff member (normally Head of Department) and then this will be followed up in writing.

If relevant, medical evidence can be requested to ensure that the student is fit to resume their studies.

It should also be considered that certain programmes/courses must be completed within a restricted time frame; however, in the instance that there is a concern around a student's Fitness to Study, the department should aim to be as flexible as is possible. Please see relevant [Assessment Regulations policy](#).

With regards International Students, advice will be sought from VISA and will be supported on a case by case basis.

7. Appeals Process

Grounds for Appeal

A student appeal may be made against the outcomes of a Fitness to Study procedure on the following grounds:

- evidence becomes available which was not available, or could not reasonably have been made available, at the time of the original decision;
- there was a procedural irregularity which was prejudicial to the student; and
- the decision was unreasonable and/or the sanction was unduly harsh.

Appeals against decision

A student may lodge an appeal in respect of any decision made. An appeal must be lodged with the Director of Student Life and must detail the grounds for appeal and include any relevant evidence. This must be lodged within 20 working days of the receipt of the written outcome following the Fitness to Study Panel meeting.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic will convene a Fitness to Study Appeal Panel, which will review the information and inform the student of their decision in writing no later than 10 working days after the date of receipt of the appeal. The Fitness to Study Appeal Panel should consist of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, Dean of the School and Head of Department from a department in a different school. The panel will be coordinated by the Director of Student Life.

The decision of the Fitness to Study Appeal Panel is final.

Appendix 1 - Fitness to Study Procedure

This should be initiated when all other avenues of support have been explored and no satisfactory outcome has been agreed by all parties involved.

Stage 1:

- A Fitness to Study Panel meeting should be convened including all staff involved in the student case (see Appendix 2). The student would not attend this meeting.

Fitness to Study Panel:

- If the Panel agrees that the student is able to continue their studies, then consideration should be given to whether an Action Plan is required.
- If an Action Plan is required, this will be recorded by the Student Wellbeing Representative. The Action Plan will set out terms for continuation of studies, including attendance requirements, required standards of behaviour, requirement to engage with support services, University Occupational Health Service and/or medical professionals/community support etc.

- Copies of the Action Plan should be distributed to those involved in the meeting by the Student Wellbeing Team.
- If continuation of studies is not appropriate, then consideration should be given to suspending the student for an appropriate period of time. This time period should take account of the academic calendar and the student's circumstances.
- In extreme circumstances, or where the student has not adhered to an Action Plan or there is no change in circumstances following a period of suspension, then the Panel may agree to withdraw a student.

Stage 2:

- Student is invited to attend a meeting with the Head of Department or nominee to be informed of the outcome of the Fitness to Study Panel. The student may bring a representative/advocate to the meeting e.g. family member or friend. The student can also access advice, guidance, and independent representation from the [Students' Association Advice Centre](#).
- Provide student with a copy of the Fitness to Study Policy and procedure in advance of the meeting
- Head of Department or nominee informs student of the Panel decision, provides a copy of the Action Plan if applicable and confirms decision in writing enclosing this policy and reminder of the right to appeal.
- If an Action Plan has been agreed, a date for a follow up review meeting must be agreed with the student and relevant parties.

Stage 3:

Fitness to Study Review meeting

- Convened by the Head of Student Wellbeing and attended by the original members of the Fitness to Study Panel if possible
- If there has been no improvement in the situation, further discussions will take place regarding appropriate action.
- If issues are fully resolved the procedure may be concluded
- If issues are partially resolved, a further Panel review meeting may be scheduled or an amended Action Plan agreed
- Outcomes from this meeting will be recorded and distributed to all relevant parties after the meeting
- Head of Department or nominee should notify the student of decision in writing and arrange follow up meeting(s) with student to discuss actions or outcomes.

Stage 4:

Return to study following suspension

Requirements of return should be communicated to student by Head of Department or nominee

- May include request to submit medical evidence
- May include referral to University Occupational Health Service
- May require engagement with relevant support services in advance of return to study
- May make explicit reference to Student Code of Conduct or Dignity at Work & Study Policy as required standards of behaviour on return

The University will work collaboratively with the student in respect of any support arrangements put in place for a return to study. Before or on their return, the student will be invited to attend a meeting with appropriate members of academic staff and the Wellbeing Service. At the meeting, actions will be agreed to support the student's successful transition back to study. Within five working days, the student will be sent a summary of the meeting and any actions agreed.

Appendix 2 - Fitness to Study Panel

The following is a suggested list of staff for the Fitness to Study Panel and each Panel membership will be determined by the circumstances of each individual case. There should be a minimum of three staff in attendance.

Role	Responsibility
Director of Student Life	Chair of the panel
Student Wellbeing Representative (s)	Co-ordinate the Fitness to Study Meeting. Provide professional advice and support as required.
Academic Department Representative(s) (HoD, PL, PT)	Provide professional advice and support on academic matters as required.
Governance Representative	Provide professional advice and support as required.
Campus Services Representative	Provide professional advice on security issues as required.
Visa & Immigration Support and Advice Representative	Provide professional advice on UKVI requirements as required.
Students' Association Full Time Officer Representative	Provide representation and advice from the Students' Association

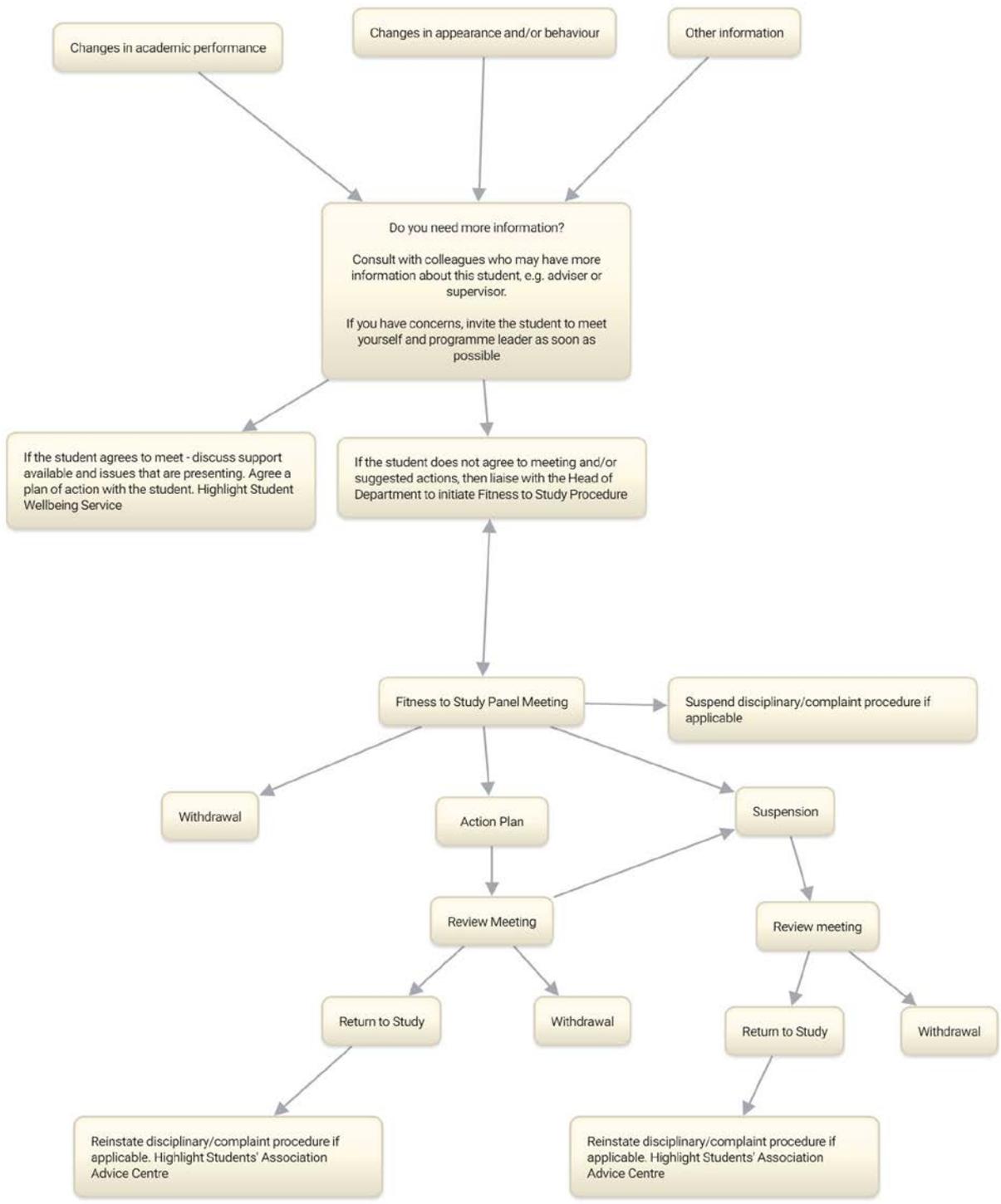
Action Plan

Name of Student		Student ID	
Organiser		Department	
Date		Time	
Attendees			
Reason for Formal Meeting (detail any incidents/evidence) Concerns Why policy initiated? Other avenues explored?			
Implications for student/others?			
Notes of Discussion			
Recommendation/ Action taken -terms for continuation of studies -attendance requirements -required standards of behaviour -requirement to engage with support services and/or medical services -Timescales for review			
Review date			

Appendix 3

Informal Procedure and Escalation Process

Concerns about a student's wellbeing should be acted upon promptly. Early intervention may prevent situations developing into crises at a later stage. If you have concerns regarding a student's health and consider that it is posing a risk to their own health, safety or wellbeing, or that of others, contact the [Student Wellbeing Service](#).



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