



University of  
St Andrews

## Fitness to study

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<b>Key terms</b>	Academic policies/Student progression/Fitness to study
<b>Purpose</b>	This policy relates to serious concerns about a student's health or behaviour which is impacting the student and/or others and which may indicate they are not currently fit to study.

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Purpose / changes</b>	<b>Document status</b>	<b>Author of changes, role and school / unit</b>	<b>Date</b>
01	Changes to titles/contact details to reflect decanal restructuring	Updated	-	February 2021

# UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## POLICY ON FITNESS TO STUDY

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to respond to and manage concerns regarding a student's health or behaviour that is seriously impacting on themselves and/or others, and indicating that they may not be currently fit to study. The University aims to support such students through to successful completion of their studies where possible.

This policy encompasses concerns relating to currently registered students, prospective students, and summer students, and will be used when a concern is raised.

### 2. Raising a Concern

The University may become aware of a concern regarding a student's fitness to study by a number of channels including self-referral and referral by third parties. These concerns should be communicated to an appropriate senior member of staff, who will normally be one of: a School Director of Teaching; a School Director of Postgraduate Research; or the appropriate Associate Dean (Students)/Associate Provost Postgraduate (Taught/Research) for the student's programme of study. The senior member of staff may recommend or reinforce appropriate interventions, judge that there is no need for further intervention or refer the student to student services for a fitness to study assessment. However, if the concerns about the student are urgent or serious – or in case of any doubt – the staff member who becomes aware of the concern should contact the Advice and Support Centre (ASC) immediately for advice in the first instance.

Where Referral to Student Services for a Fitness to Study assessment is considered to be the appropriate action, this should be enacted by completing the form provided below. This should be sent to the Advice and Support Centre (ASC) in the first instance. ASC staff will pass the completed referral form to the appropriate member of Student Services staff (usually a Support Adviser) who will respond to the individual/s raising the concern; contact the student, and inform any academic staff who may need to know about the concerns.

During the Fitness to Study process, Student Services will liaise with the referring person, as appropriate, and will produce a report which will be sent to the referring person once the Fitness to Study process is complete.

### 3. Early Intervention prior to consideration of Fitness to Study

Student Services will assess the concern/s raised, check the student's academic status and determine whether the situation can be resolved under academic regulations, or non-academic misconduct regulations. If there is a relevant academic or non-academic process, this will be implemented, alongside offering support and reasonable adjustment to the student to navigate this process, and monitor their health.

Where there are no relevant regulations, Student Services will inform the student of the concern/s raised, offering guidance and any available appropriate support. As a result of this guidance, the student may choose to consider taking a Leave of Absence. If this is being considered, the student should meet with the Registry Support Officer to discuss the implications and process for requesting such a leave. Some students choose to continue their studies if the relevant support and monitoring (University or external) can be put in place, and the student agrees to engage with this. Student

Services will discuss with the student what types of support and monitoring would be appropriate to their situation, which may include:

- Regular meetings with Student Services;
- Engaging with relevant external health professionals;
- Reviewing suitability of current accommodation situation;
- Set points for review of the situation to ensure agreement is being complied with

If concerns re-emerge at any point, including where the student ceases to engage with support and monitoring, the situation will be re-assessed. This may result in decisions previously made being overturned (i.e. decision to allow to remain within a residence reviewed and student rehoused).

#### **4. Fitness to Study Case Conference**

Student Services will notify the student that their case will be considered at a Fitness to Study Case Conference where ongoing concerns remain. For example:

- The student does not engage satisfactorily with the Early Intervention Process or subsequent monitoring and support and does not wish to take a Leave of Absence;
- The student is engaging satisfactorily with support and monitoring, however concerns remain regarding their fitness to study;
- There are other ongoing concerns regarding a student's fitness to study

Student Services will liaise with relevant University staff, and the student, in order to establish a suitable date and time for the Case Conference. Additionally, Student Services will compile the relevant available information for the purpose of generating a report and recommendation to inform this case conference. This would include:

- Any interaction with Student Services, including any existing disability record and medical documentation previously provided by the student;
- A summary of academic concerns, as raised by the referring person or school;
- Reports from any concerned individual witnesses (which may include academic staff, other students, parents);
- Any report from a University commissioned General Practitioner or specialist healthcare practitioner (such as an independent Psychiatrist). These professionals would have a greater understanding of the University context than an external health professional might, and be able to make a more informed analysis of the student's ability to engage with their studies

The student will be given the opportunity to submit their perspective, either in person, or by a written statement. If support is required for attending or submitting a statement, the student may approach Student Services or the Education Advocate within the Students' Association. Students should be aware that in the event that they do not attend or engage, the Proctor reserves the right to proceed in their absence.

At the Case Conference, the Proctor along with the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning & Teaching) will review the report from Student Services, and any information presented by the student.

Outcomes of a Fitness to Study Case Conference are:

1. The student can continue their studies with appropriate support;
2. The student chooses to take a Leave of Absence;

3. The student cannot currently continue their studies, and a compulsory Leave of Absence is required.

The outcome will be communicated to the student in person by the Director of Student Services, followed by written confirmation from the Proctor and then a meeting with the Registry Support Officer to activate the administrative process. Where a Leave of Absence is the outcome, the student will normally still retain the fee liability.

## 5. The University's Complaint Handling Procedure

Any student who is dissatisfied with the University's procedures following the conclusion of the Fitness to Study process should consult the University's Complaints Policy at <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/administration/complaints>. Complaints should be directed in the first instance to the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning & Teaching).

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