
**Queens' College
Fitness to Study Procedure**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Fitness to Study procedure may be applied as an alternative to disciplinary procedures when there is concern that a student's behaviour or health has the potential to disrupt or threaten the welfare or academic progress of the student themselves or of others in the academic community.
- 1.2 Decisions made concerning a student's fitness to study are made through a supportive process, after consideration of the student's ability to study, learn effectively, and complete their course successfully.
- 1.3 The purpose of this document is to set out procedures to be followed by the College when there are concerns about the fitness to study of one of its students either undergraduate or postgraduate. This procedure is at [Annex A](#).
- 1.4 The procedure to be followed in a crisis situation is at [Annex B](#).

Benefits of the Fitness to Study Procedure

- 1.5 Having this procedure set out enables students to obtain information about support services and fitness to study procedures at the College in an easily accessible format.
- 1.6 Tutors can initiate the procedure when concerns for a student are raised, following a meeting with the student allowing for issues to be detected and addressed in a structured manner as early as possible. If a concern arises, steps taken will be limited to those necessary to protect the best interests of the student and other members of the College community.
- 1.7 The approach is objective-oriented, allowing a student to focus on action plans agreed with the student and geared to achievable aims, which are clearly documented and come from a supportive perspective rather than to be seen as a disciplinary measure.

Availability of Support Services

- 1.8 In advance of fitness to study procedures being initiated there are other support services in College and in the University to which students may be directed. The first port of call for students may be the Student Support Team, contact details for which are available [here](#) and at Annex C below.
- 1.9 Contact details for other support services available in the College and in the University more generally such as the [University Counselling Service](#) and the [Disability Resource Centre](#) are also set out at [Annex C](#).

2 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 All students should be able to study and perform to the best of their ability in a safe and comfortable environment.
- 2.2 The term 'fitness to study' as used in this document relates to the entire student experience, and not just a student's ability to engage with their academic studies.
- 2.3 A student's fitness to study may be questioned if health problems are disrupting their own studies or the studies of others. Individuals are primarily responsible for their own health but the College also has a duty of care to its community which means that appropriate action may be taken if a student presents a risk to themselves or to others.
- 2.4 The level of risk to themselves, or others, posed by a student will be measured by the use of a risk assessment process with regard to the student, other individuals, and the institution. This process is led by the Senior Tutor in close collaboration with the rest of the Student Support Team and health professionals.
- 2.5 Once this procedure has been used the student will normally be considered solely under this procedure rather than under a disciplinary procedure.

Circumstances in which a Student's Fitness to Study may be Considered

- 2.6 A student's fitness to study may be brought into question as a result of a range of circumstances. These include (but are not restricted to) the following:
- 2.6.1 Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party (e.g. friend, other student, department, faculty, placement provider, member of the public, medical professional etc.), which indicate that there is a need to address their fitness to study.
 - 2.6.2 The student has told a member of the College that they have a problem and/or they have provided information, which indicates that there is a need to address their fitness to study. Care should be taken, if the student discloses sensitive personal data, that the student's explicit consent is sought before information is passed on to others unless another ground for lawful processing of such sensitive personal data exists.
 - 2.6.3 Behaviour that would normally be dealt with under disciplinary procedures but for the fact it might indicate an underlying physical or mental health concern.
 - 2.6.4 The student's academic performance is not acceptable and this is thought to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health concern.
- 2.7 If the Student Support Team, tutors or staff have concerns regarding a student's fitness to study they should discuss these with the Senior Tutor so that consideration may be given to implementing Stage 1 of the procedure.
- 2.8 The Fitness to Study Procedure contains stages which are appropriate depending on the perceived level of risk, the severity of the problem and the student's engagement with efforts to respond to it. When a member of College raises concerns, the relevant member of College staff (usually a member of the Student Support Team) has a duty to investigate and recommend this policy as part of the duty of care owed to College members.

- 2.9 The Student Support Team and Tutors should note that there may be a more appropriate formal College or University procedure available and consideration should be given as to whether the matter could more appropriately be managed under one of the following:
- 2.9.1 **Student Disciplinary Procedure.** This will apply in the majority of circumstances where misconduct may have occurred except for where behaviour is caused or may be caused by an underlying physical or mental health concern.
- 2.9.2 **Academic Assessment and Monitoring Procedures.** The Fitness to Study Procedure is not designed to address academic performance issues (which should be dealt with under the normal academic assessment and monitoring procedures, which can be found [here](#)) except where poor academic performance is resulting from an underlying physical or mental health concern.
- 2.9.3 **Fitness to Practise.** Where a student is on a professional course with professional suitability, conduct and fitness to practise requirements (e.g. medical or veterinary students) fitness to practise will normally take precedence over fitness to study procedures. The College's Fitness to Study Procedure set out below does not supersede or replace the [Fitness to Study](#) or [Fitness to Practise](#) procedures in place at the University as a whole. The College may have to refer a student to the University's Fitness to Practise proceedings at Stage 2.
- 2.10 If concerns are raised while a student is on authorised study away from Cambridge (e.g. is on a Year Abroad, has leave to Work Away, or is on a placement) the Senior Tutor shall liaise with the host institution and the student's Cambridge faculty or department, where appropriate, to determine suitable arrangements to address concerns.
- 2.11 If any person has been or is liable to be prosecuted for an offence under the criminal law giving cause for concern about a student's fitness to study, or where such

conduct warrants referral to an external agency, the Fitness to Study procedure may be suspended for such period or periods as the College may think fit, taking account of all relevant circumstances.

3 Principles

- 3.1 The Fitness to Study procedure should not be initiated until all appropriate avenues of local support have been explored.
- 3.2 Any action taken under this procedure will be limited to that necessary and proportionate to protect the best interests of the student and other members of the College.
- 3.3 In cases where the Fitness to Study Procedure has been invoked, the Senior Tutor may decide whether the student's emergency contact needs to be informed and discuss with the student whether any other services should be contacted.
- 3.4 The College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this procedure it will receive sensitive personal data and data of a confidential nature pertaining to the student and other third parties, and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, other relevant legal obligations and the general rights and expectations of a student of confidentiality.
- 3.5 The College shall take account of all relevant legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments to assist students with a disability.

4 Emergency Action

- 4.1 In cases where a student's condition or conduct gives rise to a need for immediate action, the Senior Tutor may take the decision to exclude the student from the College's facilities and premises, or their access to such facilities and premises may be made subject to specified conditions, for successive periods of up to 14 days, at

which point the Senior Tutor must reconsider the situation and whether continuing to suspend the student is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

- 4.2 Consideration must be given to what alternative arrangements and support may be provided in the circumstances and, if the student has a disability, whether any reasonable adjustments need to be put in place.
- 4.3 Suspension of the student may include compulsory vacation of College accommodation, providing that the College may provide alternative accommodation in appropriate circumstances where the student is not able to secure accommodation.
- 4.4 The Senior Tutor should consult with the student's Tutor before they take action. Any subsequent renewals and/or variations of the arrangements will be determined by the Senior Tutor, who can invite the student to make written representations regarding their temporary exclusion.
- 4.5 In cases in which the student is excluded under these provisions, the matter will be referred to Stage 2 of the Fitness to Study Procedure by the Senior Tutor.
- 4.6 If the student disagrees with the decision to temporarily exclude them, the student may apply to the President of the College for a review. The President can invite the student to make written representations regarding their temporary exclusion and will issue a decision within 7 days of the student's request for a review.

Annex A: Queens' College Fitness to Study Procedure

1 Stage 1 - Informal Action by the College

- 1.1 Stage 1 is appropriate where emerging or initial concerns about an individual student's health, safety or mental wellbeing are raised and where the nature of concerns suggest that if prompt and relatively informal action is taken, the student may be able to respond well and take on board steps recommended.
- 1.2 It is not advisable in cases of serious or imminent risk of harm to the student themselves or any other person, in which case it may be more appropriate to suspend the student concerned under the [Emergency Action](#) procedure above and/or progress the matter directly to Stage 2 of this procedure.

Initial Meeting with Student Support Team

- 1.3 In the majority of cases, should preliminary action in terms of support and guidance be unsuccessful, the Student Support Team should approach the student and explain to them, in a supportive and understanding manner, that concerns about their fitness to study have emerged. The Student Support Team shall attempt to resolve the matter by means of a supportive and informal meeting with the student.
- 1.4 The Student Support Team should notify the student of the date, time and place of the meeting. They should do so by sending a note asking the student to contact the Student Support Team to the student's pigeon-hole at least 5 days in advance of the meeting, unless there is a good reason for giving a shorter amount of notice in which case a reasonable amount of notice of the meeting should be given.
- 1.5 The student may, if they wish be accompanied by a nominated member of the College, either junior or senior, who will have the right to speak on behalf of the student. The student should notify the Senior Tutor at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting if they are to be accompanied and by whom. In addition, a support worker may also accompany students with a disability.

- 1.6 In the meeting, the student should be made aware of the precise nature of the behaviour that has caused these concerns to be raised. The student should be given the opportunity to explain their own views on the matter and be encouraged to think about using one or more of the support services offered by the University. It may also be appropriate to look into the possibility of applying academic arrangements or support to enable the student to study effectively.
- 1.7 It is hoped that most issues can be resolved at this level and that the student will respond positively, co-operating fully with the process and taking advantage of the support available. It may be necessary to obtain independent corroboration as to whether support offered is being taken up. The responsibility for providing this shall lie with the student.

Review Meeting

- 1.8 A review period should be determined by the Senior Tutor upon the recommendation of the Student Support Team. This period is granted to allow the student to consider their own behaviour and seek advice from the support services available.
- 1.9 At the end of this period the Student Support Team shall meet the student to discuss any steps taken by the student to address the concerns. The procedure for arranging the review meeting shall be the same as the initial meeting.
- 1.10 In the review meeting, if the concerns have been addressed satisfactorily, this will be noted. Further meetings may be scheduled to continue to monitor the situation/progress and help ensure that continued support is provided to the student to enable them to study effectively. If, however, the concerns have not been addressed, a further review period may be agreed, or the case will move to Stage 2 of the procedure. If a student is unable or unwilling to co-operate with the above process or modify their behaviour, they are to be informed that more formal action under Stage 2 of this procedure may be considered appropriate.

Recordkeeping & Letters

- 1.11 In all meetings, the Student Support Team should make it clear to the student that a written record of the discussion will be kept and placed on their College file normally for the duration of their current course at the College. The informal discussions, advice and any action plans made by the College or University and/or the student should be documented, and all records kept confidential. These records are kept for the purpose of monitoring if existing issues re-emerge or new issues arise during the student's time at the College and should ordinarily only be accessible to the Senior Tutor and the Student Support Team save for in an emergency situation.
- 1.12 The Student Support Team should write a letter setting out what has been agreed and this should be given to the student within 7 days of each meeting.

2 Stage 2 - Formal Action by the College

- 2.1 If the action taken under Stage 1 has not been successful, or it is felt that the case is too serious to be dealt with informally, Stage 2 of the procedure may be invoked and a Fitness to Study Group will be convened.
- 2.2 This stage of the procedure shall be implemented for example following a referral from the Student Support Team under Stage 1, or following the decision of the Senior Tutor. It will arise where initial concerns are raised which are sufficiently serious as to warrant the consideration of the student's suspension or expulsion from the College or for referral on to the University's procedures (e.g. for intermission or expulsion from the University).

Emergency Action

- 2.3 As a first step in this stage the Senior Tutor shall consider whether interim suspension of the student, pending further action, is appropriate (for which, see [Emergency Action](#) above). Suspension of the student may include compulsory vacation of College accommodation, providing that the College may provide alternative accommodation in appropriate circumstances where the student is not able to secure accommodation.

Meeting of the Fitness to Study Group

- 2.4 A meeting of a Fitness to Study Group shall be convened by the Senior Tutor, made up of:
- 2.4.1 A Fellow selected by the Governing Body on an annual basis and appointed to manage Fitness to Study cases;
 - 2.4.2 The student's Tutor;
 - 2.4.3 The Senior Tutor;
 - 2.4.4 The meeting may also include if appropriate: the DoS; supervisor in the case of a postgraduate student (or the course director if there is no supervisor); and/or a member of the Student Support Team as appropriate;
 - 2.4.5 Representatives such as the University Mental Health Advisor or a member of the Disability Resource Centre may also attend for information and advice if felt appropriate by the Senior Tutor.

Medical Assessment

- 2.5 Before the meeting, with the consent of the student, a medical assessment may be sought from a qualified General Medical Practitioner familiar with the Cambridge University system, or from the University Occupational Health Service. This will ultimately enable the College to address any concerns in the most effective manner possible and for an accurate risk assessment to be undertaken. The medical assessment will be used to determine the following matters:
- 2.5.1 the nature and extent of any relevant medical condition from which the student may be suffering that may affect fitness to study;
 - 2.5.2 the student's prognosis;
 - 2.5.3 the extent to which it may affect his/her fitness to study;
 - 2.5.4 any impact it may have or risk it may pose to others;

- 2.5.5 whether any additional steps should be taken by the College, in light of the medical condition, to enable the student to study effectively;
- 2.5.6 whether the student will be receiving any on-going medical treatment or support.
- 2.6 The student shall be asked for their consent to disclose to the College the results of any relevant medical examination. The College recognises that any such information disclosed will be sensitive personal data for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be handled, processed, and stored accordingly.
- 2.7 Should the student refuse to undertake a medical examination, or disclose results, the College may continue this procedure based on the information already in its possession.

Attendance of Student

- 2.8 The student will be given at least 7 days' notice of the meeting of the Fitness to Study Group and informed of the purpose of the meeting. This period may be shortened where there are good reasons on the advice of the Senior Tutor.
- 2.9 The student will be written to in advance and informed of date, time and location of the meeting, the purpose of the meeting and the possible range of actions which the Committee could take, including suspension or referral on to University procedures (e.g. for intermission or expulsion from the University). The student will also be informed that they can be accompanied. The student will be provided with any documents to be considered at the meeting, and asked to provide any documentation they may wish the Fitness to Study Group to consider in good time for the meeting.
- 2.10 The student will also be provided with a copy/copies of any document(s) to be considered by the Group, and asked to provide any documentation they may wish the Group to consider at least 24 hours before the meeting.
- 2.11 The student may, if they wish be accompanied by a nominated member of the College, either junior or senior, who will have the right to speak on behalf of the

student. The student should notify the Senior Tutor at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting if they are to be accompanied and by whom. In addition, a support worker may also accompany students with a disability.

- 2.12 If the student cannot attend the meeting, the Fitness to Study Group should attempt to ascertain the reasons for the student's non-attendance and, in appropriate circumstances, adjourn the meeting to another date. However, it is within the discretion of the Fitness to Study Group, upon considering all the circumstances and only in an appropriate case, to proceed in the absence of the student. If they do this, they should make clear their reasons for doing so in their decision letter.

Procedure for the Group Meeting

- 2.6 The purpose of the meeting will be to ensure that:
- 2.12.1 the student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns that have been raised;
 - 2.12.2 the student's views are heard and taken account of and the best way to proceed is agreed upon;
 - 2.12.3 the student is fully aware of the possible outcomes if difficulties remain.
- 2.13 The Fitness to Study Group shall order its proceedings at its own discretion and may call witnesses and institute enquiries to assist its deliberations, including Student Services staff working with the student, e.g. the University Mental Health Advisor.
- 2.14 The Group shall make such decisions in respect of a student's fitness to study as it considers necessary and proportionate. These decisions may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:
- 2.14.1 **To decide that no further action is required.**
 - 2.14.2 **To formally monitor the student's progress for a specified period of time.**

- (i) An action plan shall be agreed with the student, outlining any steps, which the student will need to take, and/or any support to be provided to the student, to address the concerns identified.
- (ii) Regular review meetings with the student will need to be arranged with a nominated member of College staff, to ensure that the action plan is being appropriately followed and/or that reasonable support to enable the student to study effectively is being provided.
- (iii) The student shall be informed of the consequences of any breaches of the action plan.

2.14.3 To recommend that reasonable adjustments, special academic arrangements or support are put in place.

- (i) Such recommendations should be agreed with the student's department/faculty and by any disability adviser and the student and approved by the relevant University authority.
- (ii) The student shall be informed of the consequences should these arrangements fail to remedy the concerns identified to the College's satisfaction.

2.14.4 To refer the student on to other procedures in the University or College, such as to the University's Fitness to Practise policy.

2.14.5 To recommend that the student's access to College facilities and premises shall be subject to specified conditions; Where the Group decides that a student's access to facilities and premises shall be subject to specified conditions, the Group shall stipulate arrangements for monitoring the student's compliance with those conditions and for dealing with any alleged breach of those conditions on the part of the student.

2.14.6 To recommend that the student is suspended temporarily from the College and to determine the minimum period after which the

College will consider an application to resume study, and what conditions, if any, must be met before an application to resume study may be made; any decision regarding suspension should be communicated by the Senior Tutor to the University and to any support services who have been involved with the student.

2.14.7 **To refer the student on to other University Procedures (e.g. for intermission or expulsion).**

2.14.8 **To recommend the expulsion of the student from the College by the Governing Body.**

2.14.9 **To take or to recommend any other action considered to be necessary and proportionate in all the circumstances.**

2.15 The Fitness to Study Group may make a decision by a simple majority.

2.16 If the Fitness to Study Group's decision affects the student's membership of the College, the Group's recommendations shall be referred to the Governing Body.

Recordkeeping & Letters

2.17 The decision of the Fitness to Study Group, together with a concise record of the meeting, should be sent to the student within 7 days from the date of the meeting, and a copy kept on the student's personal file.

2.18 In all meetings, the Fitness to Study Group should make it clear to the student that a written record of the discussion will be kept and placed on their College file normally for the duration of their current course at the College. The informal discussions, advice and any undertakings made by the College or University and/or the student should be documented, and all records kept confidential. These records are kept for the purpose of monitoring if existing issues re-emerge or new issues arise during the student's current course at the College and should ordinarily only be accessible to the Senior Tutor and the Student Support Team save for in an emergency situation.

3 Review of decision of the Fitness to Study Group

- 3.1 A student may seek the review of a decision in relation to that student made by a Fitness to Study Group (or, in the case of students seeking to Return to Study, the Senior Tutor).
- 3.2 A request for review shall be made in writing and sent to the President within 14 days of written notification of the Group's decision (unless, in exceptional circumstances, the President permits a longer period). The request for review shall specify the grounds for review which may be only one or more of the following:
 - 3.2.1 that there was material procedural irregularity in the consideration of the student's case;
 - 3.2.2 that there was bias or prejudice on the part of the Group;
 - 3.2.3 that the decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable Group could have reached on the available evidence; and/or
 - 3.2.4 that fresh material evidence is available, which was not available and/or presented for good reason at the time of the original meeting.
- 3.3 The request for review of a Fitness to Study outcome should be accompanied by supporting documentation.
- 3.4 The President will appoint a reviewer chosen from the Governing Body within 7 days of receiving a request for review, preferably a Fellow who has had no previous involvement in the case. Exceptionally, a panel of three reviewers may be appointed. If so, references below to the reviewer shall be construed accordingly.
- 3.5 The reviewer will consider the request for review, the documentation available to the Group and (where appropriate) the procedure of the Group.
- 3.6 The reviewer, at her or his discretion, may hold a hearing and regulate arrangements for the conduct of the hearing. The hearing will occur within 14 days of the reviewer being appointed to the case.

- 3.7 The reviewer shall have power to confirm, quash, or amend the decision of a Group or refer it back to the same Group or to a different constituted Group.
- 3.8 The reviewer's decision is final and the reviewer will notify the Senior Tutor of the outcome. The Senior Tutor will issue a "Completion of Procedures" letter to the student within 7 days of the hearing recording the outcome of the review.

4 Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

- 4.1 If, following receipt of the Reviewer's decision, the student remains dissatisfied it is open to the student to make an application to the OIA. The Completion of Procedures Letter provided in accordance with paragraph 3.8 will indicate how to make such a complaint, and details are also available at the OIA's website (www.oiahe.org.uk).

5 Return to Study

- 5.1 After a break in study, the student may make a request to the College for permission to return to the course. The decision whether or not to apply to the University for permission for the student to return into standing shall be made by the Senior Tutor, after consultation with the Student Support Team and medical specialists as appropriate and with the student's consent.

Medical Assessment

- 5.2 If appropriate, the Senior Tutor shall contact the relevant medical professional for an assessment of the student's ability to manage the demands of returning to study at Cambridge University, drawing attention to the nature and extent of the student's previous problems and the College's concerns about them.
- 5.3 The student shall only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical advice, the College and relevant University authority are satisfied that the individual is fit to study and able to comply with any conditions imposed on their return. The decision to return to study is made by the University Applications Committee which must be

satisfied of the student's fitness to return to study and of the availability of support upon return.

- 5.4 Fitness to study is an ongoing responsibility of the College and the student returning to study, and will be considered throughout the remaining period of study. Regular review meetings with the student should be arranged to ensure that support for study is effective and to enable Tutors to have an agreed context in which to provide ongoing pastoral care.
- 5.5 In cases where the College has any continuing concerns about the individual's fitness to study, it may require a second medical opinion. In this case a student may be asked to submit themselves for medical examinations by doctors / specialists, including the University Mental Health Advisor, nominated by the College, at the College's expense to allow the situation to be properly evaluated.

Initial Return to Study Meeting with Student Support Team

- 5.6 In any case where a student returns to study following the implementation of the fitness to study procedure, the Student Support Team shall hold an initial meeting with the student to discuss what support measures need to be put into place for the student's return and establish a return to study plan. The arrangements for convening the return to study meeting shall be the same as for Stage 1 of the Fitness to Study Procedure.
- 5.7 For students who are disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, the College will give consideration to what reasonable adjustments may be required to help the student in their return to study. If reasonable adjustments are recommended, these should be discussed at the initial meeting with the student and implemented if appropriate.

Return to Study Review Meeting

- 5.8 At this meeting it may be decided that there should be regular review meetings with the student that can be used to monitor and support a return to study plan. If so, the

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

Recordkeeping & Letters

- 5.9 There shall be a written record of what is agreed for the return to study plan and a copy given to the student within 7 days of the return to study meeting. The Senior Tutor shall ensure that, where appropriate, a copy of the plan is sent to the relevant support agencies, who have agreed to help implement the plan and that any necessary support from agencies external to the College is put in place.
- 5.10 The Senior Tutor shall make arrangements for monitoring compliance with the support plan. It should be made clear to the student that a written record of the meetings will be kept and placed on their College file normally for the duration of their course as a student at the College. These records are kept for the purpose of monitoring if existing issues re-emerge or new issues arise during the student's time at the College and should ordinarily only be accessible to the Senior Tutor and the Student Support Team save for in an emergency situation.

Annex B: Crisis Situations

It is possible that a student may pose such an extreme risk to themselves and/or others and that they will require emergency assistance outside these procedures.

In a situation where it is believed that a student's behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or others, the Emergency Services should be contacted by dialling 112.

The College Porters' Lodge should be informed, and the Duty Tutor notified as soon as possible.

The person witnessing the student's behaviour should not leave the scene until they have briefed the Emergency Services, bearing in mind the primary necessity to ensure their own safety.

The Porters Lodge will keep a record of the action taken by the Emergency Services and pass this on to the Duty Tutor. The Duty Tutor shall ensure that contact is made at the appropriate level of detail with the Student Support Team and that appropriate arrangements are made in conjunction with the Senior Tutor for follow-up action.

In the case of medical and veterinary students, consideration will be given by the Senior Tutor as to whether the matter should be reported to the relevant University Fitness to Practise procedure for advice as to whether there might be Fitness to Practise issues to consider.

Annex C: Details of Support Services available in the College and University

[Queens' Student Support Team](#)

[University Counselling Service](#)

[College Nurse Clinics](#)

[Cambridge University Students Union – Student Advisory Service, Drop in sessions etc.](#)

[Disability Resource Centre](#)