



FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE

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STUDENT REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

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UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE

FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

The University is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of their health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progress and university experience. The Fitness to Study (FTS) procedure is a supportive process used when a student's health or wellbeing is having a detrimental impact on their (or others') ability to progress academically and/or function in the university community effectively.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to any student of the University, and forms part of the Regulations for the Conduct of Students (the "Regulations").

This procedure will be used to deal with instances which have led to:

- concerns about a student's fitness to study at the University and/or ability to meet the learning outcomes of the course, notwithstanding reasonable adjustments;
- a negative impact on the health, safety, wellbeing and/or learning of the student and/or others with whom they have contact.

There is a potential overlap between this procedure and other University policies (see Appendix). The University reserves the right to suspend action under this procedure if it considers that the matter would more appropriately be dealt with under another procedure.

3. The process

This procedure has three stages, based on the level of support needed by the student and/or the seriousness of risk. Depending on the concern raised, it may be appropriate to move straight to a higher stage. A student's willingness to engage with the process will also inform actions and decisions taken by the University. If a student chooses not to engage, then this procedure may continue without their involvement. At any stage in Fitness to Study process, the student may be suspended from the University on an interim basis in accordance with Section C2 of the Regulations.

If it is not possible or practicable to convene the meetings required under this procedure, discussions may take place by correspondence or by video conference. A meeting may proceed in the student's absence if the Chair is satisfied that the student was given proper notice of the date and time of the meeting but has not provided a reasonable explanation for their non-attendance.

Students will normally be given copies of documents considered under this procedure and will have a reasonable opportunity to submit written representations and supporting documents for consideration. The Chair has the power to adjourn any meeting, for example to obtain additional evidence, including medical evidence.

At all stages, the student is entitled to be accompanied and/or represented by a person of their choosing, who may be a friend, family member or a representative from the Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre, but who may not be a lawyer acting in a professional capacity.

4. Stage 1 – Emerging Concerns

When a concern about a student's health, safety or wellbeing is raised, the concerned member of staff (or School/Service nominee) should seek advice from Student Services.

Once the Fitness to Study Procedure has been agreed as the appropriate way forward, an informal meeting should be arranged by the member of staff or representative of Student Services, with the student, to discuss the concerns and agree a way forward.

The outcome of the meeting should be confirmed in writing to the student, setting out agreed actions and arrangements for a follow-up meeting. The follow up meeting can be used to either:

- a) agree that the concerns have been addressed and the Fitness to Study process can now be closed, or
- b) agree that the concerns have not been addressed and further meetings are required, or that escalation to stage 2 or 3 of the Fitness to Study Procedure is appropriate.

5. Stage 2 – Continuing Concerns

Where continuing or serious concerns about a student's health and wellbeing are raised, the member of staff should contact Student Services. Normally a stage 2 meeting would take place, involving Student Services, the student and the staff member who raised the concerns. The student will be notified in advance of the purpose of the meeting. Alternatively, Student Services can also instigate this meeting.

The meeting will include a discussion and assessment of the concerns raised and the impact this is having on the student and/or the wider University community.

If the student is on a professionally regulated course, there will be consideration of any implications for professional practice and, if so, whether the Fitness to Practise Procedure should be invoked.

An action plan will be drawn up, setting out support measures, follow-up deadlines/meeting dates and any conditions that the student is required to adhere to. The action plan will include a review date, and it will be made clear that failure to adhere to the action plan may result in Stage 3 being invoked.

6. Stage 3 – Significant or Persistent Concerns

This stage will be invoked when significant or persistent concerns are raised about a student that are putting them or others at risk. These may be continuing concerns or a new significant concern which the University deems appropriate for immediate stage 3 action.

A Case Conference will be convened with the student to establish the facts and discuss an appropriate course of action. The Case Conference will be chaired by a Student Services representative not previously involved in the case, and appropriate members from other areas of the University e.g. Course Leader (or nominee), Student Support and Wellbeing staff, Accommodation Manager (if the student is living in Halls) etc. will also attend the Case Conference. The Case Conference will consider all reasonable options to enable the student to continue with their studies.

The student will be invited to attend the Case Conference and will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the date and time of the meeting. The student may submit any documents they wish to the Case Conference for consideration.

The Chair of the Case Conference will decide how the meeting will be conducted, ensuring in particular that the student's views are heard.

If the student is unable to attend, the Case Conference panel may choose to suspend the student until they are deemed well enough to engage.

The student will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the Case Conference within 10 working days and will be required to comply with any actions agreed by the Case Conference panel. If actions are not followed, a further case conference will be convened.

The outcome of the Case Conference will be one of the following:

- that no further action is required; or
- to agree an enhanced action plan with an agreed review date; or
- to agree a voluntary interruption of the student's studies, in line with section C9.2 of the Academic Regulations; or
- to invoke a suspension of the student's studies for a specified period, in line with section C1 of the Regulations; or
- to invoke a withdrawal of the student from the course and the University, in line with section C1 of the Regulations; or
- any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

7. Appeal against the outcome of the Case Conference

The student may appeal against the outcome of the Case Conference by writing within 10 working days to the Director of Student Services (or Academic Registrar if the Director of Student Services has been involved in the case conference), who will review the matter and respond to the student within 10 working days of receiving the appeal. The decision of the Director of Student Services or Academic Registrar is final.

8. Returning to study following suspension or interruption as an outcome of a Case Conference

The student will be required to provide or co-operate with the University in obtaining satisfactory evidence that they are fit to return to study and be part of the university community. The Case Conference panel will be reconvened, with the student present, to consider the information received and may decide:

- the student is fit to participate in University life and can resume their course. If the student is fit to return, a Return to Study meeting will be held and a support plan agreed.
- the student is not fit to return to study at this time and should be suspended for a further specified period.
- that the student be withdrawn from the course and the University in line with section C1 of the Regulations.

A copy of the decision and associated reasons will be provided to the student in writing within 10 working days of the meeting of the Case Conference panel.

Students should note that it may not be possible for them to return to exactly the same course following a long period of suspension or interruption, as the course may have been discontinued or significantly modified.

9. Appeal against a decision on returning to study

In the case of a decision by the Case Conference panel that the student should be suspended from the University for a further specified period or that the student should be withdrawn from the course and the University, the student may appeal against the decision in line with section F of the Regulations.

10. Monitoring of this Procedure

The University will collect aggregated data about fitness to study cases and will submit an annual report to the relevant Academic Board Sub-committee for the purpose of quality assurance and enhancement. The effectiveness of the Fitness to Study Procedure also be reviewed at this point and, where appropriate, changes will be made.

Appendix

Related UCLan policies and procedures

Extenuating Circumstances

Some students face significant unplanned and unforeseen events in their personal life that occur after their course has started, which have a greater impact on their studies than can be solved by the use of an extension. This includes a sudden or unpredictable relapse in a previously diagnosed condition, but does not include examination stress or panic attacks (unless this is related to a disability, in which case specific exam arrangements can be put in place). Extenuating Circumstances are only a short-term solution to an immediate problem, so if you recognise that a student is repeatedly asking for extensions or extenuating circumstances, it may be appropriate for their Academic Advisor to meet with them and more fully investigate the reasons for this. More details of the Extenuating Circumstances process can be found at:-

https://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/study/examinations_and_awards/extenuating_circumstances.php

Interruption to Study

Student with ill health may need to interrupt their study. A student may apply for an interruption to study if they feel this will be beneficial to them. The student's Course Leader can provide information as to the academic requirements of the course and possible dates for the return to study.

https://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/study/files/Interruption_to_study_leaflet.pdf

Other UCLan policies that might be relevant include:-

- Disability Policy
- Regulations for the Conduct of Students
- Fitness to Practise procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Students with Caring responsibilities
- Children on campus policy
- Student pregnancy, maternity, adoption and paternity policy
- Student Attendance Monitoring Policy

http://www.uclan.ac.uk/study_here/student-contract-taught-programmes.php

Related web resources

Student Support general student web pages - http://www.uclan.ac.uk/study_here/student_support.php

Headroom – this UCLan site, summarises all the external help available

<http://www.uclansu.co.uk/headroom>