

# ***Fitness to Study Procedure: Higher Education***

*Issue 5*

*Date* 01-02-2024

*Owner* Nicola Mullarkey - Head of Adults Partnership &  
HE

Miki Evue - Head of HE and Professional

*Review Date* 01-02-2025

TO BE A BEACON OF **EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**,  
TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF THE **INDIVIDUALS**  
AND **COMMUNITIES** WE SERVE.

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## **1. Policy Statement**

The College has a “duty of care” for all its employees and is committed to ensuring that they are treated with consideration, dignity and respect, and that they enjoy a working environment free from any form of intimidation such as bullying and harassment. SCC Group accepts its responsibility to protect employees against such intimidation at work, and will not tolerate such behaviour.

## **2. Scope**

These arrangements apply to all employees and third-party providers (e.g.: contractors, agency staff)

## **3. Reference**

The Procedure complies with the principles detailed in the ACAS guidance and the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

## **4. Documentation**

The policy will be made available on the staff intranet and hard copies will be available from the Human Resources department. The policy is available in adapted formats on request.

This policy should not be read in isolation, but cross referenced with all relevant College employment policies.

## **5. Monitoring and Review**

The policy will be reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis in accordance with legislative developments and the need for good practice.

The monitoring of accurate implementation of the procedures will be undertaken by the Human Resources Department. Frequency of use will also be assessed.

**Last Review Date:** January 2024

**Next Review Date:** February 2025

**Responsibility for review:** Nicola Mullarkey - Head of Adults Partnerships & HE  
Miki Evue - Head of HE and Professional HE Partnerships and Operations Co-ordinator

**Endorsed by:** Group Principal  
Corporation  
Joint Consultative Committee

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**Owned and Authorised by:** Nicola Mullarkey - Head of Adults Partnerships & HE  
Miki Evue - Head of HE and Professional

**To ensure that:** Salford City College Group Higher Education students can successfully complete their programme of study.

**Which Applies to:** Higher Education Students on Pearson Higher National courses, University of Salford & University of Bolton courses.

**Role of HR:** HE and Access Student Support Officer.

<b>1.</b>	<b><i>Purpose and Scope:</i></b>
<b>1.1</b>	The procedure has been developed to support students who experience ill health (including mental health difficulties, psychological, personality or emotional disorders) whilst studying. In some instances, ill health can have an impact on a student's ability to successfully complete their programme of study. In some cases, it can also impair the ability of an individual to make informed decisions about their own fitness to study. In such cases, the pressures associated with studying and assessment can be detrimental to an individual's wellbeing.
<b>1.2</b>	The procedure should be utilised when there are significant concerns regarding a student's health and wellbeing and a risk of harm to themselves/or others
<b>1.3</b>	The aim of the procedure is to sustain the students learning experience in a supportive environment whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the student, their peers and College staff.
<b>1.4</b>	The procedure is designed to be supportive. The procedure should be used with reference to College Safeguarding Procedure. In instances where a student displays challenging behaviour linked to a health difficulty, it may be more appropriate to use the Fitness to Study Procedure rather than the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure.
<b>1.5</b>	The procedure can be used by anyone who has a sufficient level of concern about a student's health, safety and mental wellbeing. This can include all tutors and support staff. Concerns for the health or wellbeing of a student can also be raised by students. However, students will not be expected to manage these situations and should always refer concerns to a member of staff. A student can also make a self-referral under the procedure.

**Fitness to Study Procedure:  
Higher Education**

2.	<b><i>Fitness to Study – cause for concern</i></b>
2.1	<p>The following observed behaviour could raise concerns regarding a student's fitness to study.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. mood swings or unusual behaviour (e.g. aggressive, withdrawn, distressed, irritable)</li> <li>2. significant non-attendance or engagement</li> <li>3. a sudden deterioration in academic performance or motivation</li> <li>4. changes in appearance or obvious signs of ill health (e.g. dramatic weight loss or gain, ongoing lack of personal hygiene and care)</li> <li>5. inappropriate behaviour (e.g. inappropriate touching, invading personal space)</li> <li>6. withdrawal from social, cultural or sporting activities once considered important</li> <li>7. lethargy or signs of lack of sleep</li> <li>8. obvious signs of substance/ alcohol misuse</li> <li>9. information about specific episodes (e.g. self-harm/suicidal thoughts or attempts)</li> <li>10. changes in behaviour or health that make the student's use of equipment, etc, dangerous to themselves and/or to others.</li> </ol> <p>Please note the list is not exhaustive.</p>

3.	<b><i>Fitness to Study Procedure</i></b>
	<p>The procedure has three levels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Emerging concerns,</li> <li>2 Continuing/Significant concerns</li> <li>3 Serious/Persistent concerns</li> </ol> <p>These concerns will be based on the perceived level of risk to the health, safety and mental wellbeing of the student or others. The cause for concern can result in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. invoking the procedure at any of the 3 levels</li> <li>2. staying at a level or</li> <li>3. progressing through the levels, should the cause for concern not be remedied by recommended and agreed actions.</li> </ol>
<b>Emerging concerns</b>	
	<i>Action</i>
3.1	College staff or student(s) identify a concern about a student which may be a Fitness to Study issue.

**Fitness to Study Procedure:  
Higher Education**

3.2	<b>Initial meeting-</b> the HE and Access Support Officer or nominated member of staff should meet with the student to outline concerns. The meeting should be documented and include an action plan re. support from the College and agreed targets for the student. Set a date for a review (review period should be set according to individual need).
3.3	<b>Review meeting 1-</b> the HE and Access Support Officer should meet with the student to evaluate progress/impact of the action plan.
	<i>Outcome(s)</i>
3.4	Referral to the HE and Access Support Officer for initial assessment.
3.5	Not a Fitness to Study issue- identify if other policies such as Safeguarding, or Non-Academic Misconduct might apply. Safeguarding log if appropriate.
3.6	Identified as a Fitness to Study issue- agree an action plan and set a review date. Any further internal/external service referrals will be made as appropriate
3.7	The student is progressing satisfactorily/is appropriately supported- no other action- monitor on a need led basis.
<b>3.8</b>	At review meeting if there is a lack of improvement and/or continuing concerns about student's wellbeing, revise the action plan and set a further review meeting. (Review period should be set according to individual need). Any further internal/external service referrals will be made as appropriate.
<b>Continuing/significant concerns</b>	
	<i>Action</i>
3.9	<b>Review meeting 2-</b> continued concerns. The HE and Access Support Officer should meet with the student to evaluate progress/impact of the action plan.
	<i>Outcome(s)</i>
3.10	The student is progressing satisfactorily/is appropriately supported- set monthly monitoring meetings.
3.11	The student is making some progress but there are still concerns. Revise the action plan and set a further review meeting (review period should be set according to individual need). Any further internal/external service referrals will be made as appropriate.
3.12	At review meeting if there are serious concerns about student's wellbeing- Refer to a case review meeting with <b>Nicola Mullarkey</b> - Head of Adults Partnerships & HE
<b>Serious/Persistent concerns</b>	
	<i>Action</i>

**Fitness to Study Procedure:  
Higher Education**

3.13	<b>Case review-</b> led by the Head of HE Quality and a nominated Safeguarding officer. The student will be invited to take part in the review.
	Outcome(s)
3.14	Case review could result in Suspension, interruption/break in learning or enhanced action plan. Any further internal/external service referrals will be made as appropriate. The student will be informed of the outcome.
<b>Appeal</b>	<i>Action</i>
	<b>Appeal process</b> - the student can appeal the decision within 20 working days of the date of the outcome letter. Appeals will be reviewed by the Head of Higher Education and Professional or the Head of HE Quality
	<i>Outcome(s)</i>
	Appeal upheld or partially upheld - the case review will be revisited with the student and a revised action plan/outcome arranged.  Appeal not upheld- the case review decision will stand. The student will be sent guidance about lodging appeals with further agencies if appropriate
3.15	1.1. Anyone who has a sufficient level of concern about a student's health, safety and mental wellbeing should refer to this procedure for guidance.
3.16	Staff members can approach the HE and Access Support Officer for advice and guidance, or to make a referral.
3.17	Concerns should be acted upon promptly, and should be illustrated with either evidence that there has been a decline in the student's health and wellbeing over a period of time, or a legitimate reason for believing that the student is at risk of harm to self or others. Evidence may include reports from staff members or other students about situations which have arisen. Legitimate reasons for concern will include those highlighted in the list above.
3.18	When reviewing the perceived level of risk to a student's health and wellbeing, communication is paramount. Early intervention in issues and recommendations for support can avoid crisis situations from occurring.
3.19	In most situations it will be appropriate to start at stage 1 of the procedure. However, there will be some occasions when the level of risk requires a move straight to stage 2 or 3. The level of risk must be judged based on the risk to others as well as the student concerned.

***Fitness to Study Procedure:  
Higher Education***

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4.	<b>Immediate Serious Concerns</b>
4.1	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 999 and follow guidance set out in the College Safeguarding Procedure. The person witnessing the student's behaviour should not leave the scene until they have briefed the emergency services. All incidents should be reported to the HE and Access Support Officer or Head of HE Quality or a Safeguarding Officer.
4.2	In instances where a student's behaviour poses a risk to others, the College may suspend the student until safeguards can be put in place to mitigate against concerns. In serious cases, the College may go straight to Case Review.

5.	<b>Involving Others</b>
5.1	If a student is over the age of 18 and studying on a HE course, SCC Group may contact named next of kin if there are serious concerns over the student's wellbeing. The College may agree with a student to contact a named next of kin as part of a Fitness to Study action plan.
5.2	Information may be shared with external services (such as Social Services or the Police) in line with the College Safeguarding procedure and the PREVENT Strategy.