

Student Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

Leeds Beckett University is committed to maintaining an inclusive and enabling environment, which is safe and conducive to learning, teaching and research and the wellbeing of all of its community. Fitness to study relates to an individual's capacity to participate fully and satisfactorily as a student, in relation to academic studies and life generally at the University.

2. Purpose

The Fitness to Study procedure is intended to be a supportive measure focussed on a student's welfare and used where complex issues require a response which is over and above that which may be given through day-to-day processes. The procedure encourages interaction between staff from all areas in support of students, supports appropriate decision-making and ensures that any outcomes are consistent with the University's responsibilities under the Equality Act, 2010.

3. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all registered students on all levels and modes of study, including postgraduate research students. It should be used for any student registered on a Leeds Beckett University award, irrespective of the location of delivery of that award.

Concerns regarding a student's fitness to study may arise from a variety of circumstances (including concerns raised by a third party). In cases of uncertainty, advice should be sought from your line manager, a member of the Student Wellbeing Team, or Governance and Legal Services.

This policy and procedure is separate to the [Fitness to Practise Policy](#) which applies to all Leeds Beckett University students who are registered on a programme of study recognised by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) for the purpose of attaining a professional qualification, future registration with the relevant body and for the entitlement to practise the particular profession. Essentially, the Fitness to Study procedure applies to all students whose programmes are not covered by the Fitness to Practise Policy. The policy is also distinct from the 'Fit to Sit' principle enshrined in the Academic regulations relating to extenuating circumstances and mitigation.

4. Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Action: School review

Fitness to Study concerns are often first raised by members of staff or by other students. If such a concern is raised, emphasis at this point should be on informal action and for the matter to be dealt with supportively at School level. The lead person (ideally someone that knows the student, such as the Academic Adviser or a module leader) should contact the student in a sensitive and understanding way to request a meeting.

In most cases, appropriate informal supportive strategies can and should be recommended and implemented at this stage. It is suggested that a follow up review meeting take place to consider

how things have progressed since the first meeting (at the discretion of lead person). The majority of cases would normally be resolved at this stage.

The Dean of School and the Course Director should normally be notified that a staff member has met with a student to discuss fitness to study concerns. A record of the meeting should be kept locally in the student record system.

Stage 2 - Fitness to Study Meeting: Ongoing and Persistent Concerns

Stage 2 of the procedure is to be used where:

- There is continued and on-going concern following Stage 1.
- Concern about a student's health, wellbeing, behaviour, safety and/or ability to study as a result has increased to the degree whereby action is required by the University.
- All other informal avenues have been unsuccessful in resolving the issues.

A Stage 2 meeting should include relevant people who have a direct link or support role with the student, and someone who holds an appropriate decision making authority for the relevant area within the student's School (the lead person for this stage of the process). It is a more formal meeting than Stage 1 and convened by the School's Academic Services Manager following the direction of the lead staff member. The School may choose to have a senior member of Student Services to lead the meeting.

The student should be informed of the meeting in writing. The letter should include the purpose of the meeting, a link or information about the Fitness to Study policy and procedure. The student should be informed they can bring someone in a supportive capacity, including a member of the Students' Union Advice Service.

If the Stage 2 meeting is following on from instigation of Stage 1 of the procedure, the meeting should include a review of how the student has been since the first meeting (if attended) as well as consideration of new or on-going relevant evidence. The Stage 2 meeting will determine whether a further action plan is necessary and the timescale for further review. The meeting will make explicit the consequences of failing to complete the agreed actions (action under Stage 3). A record of the meeting will be kept in the student record system.

Responsibility to monitor the process and ensure agreed review meetings take place should be undertaken by the lead person. The lead person will make the decision as to whether the issue or concern is resolved by the end of the agreed monitoring period or whether further action is required.

If the lead person is not satisfied the matter is resolved, they can request the Dean of School consider a Stage 3 case conference.

Stage 3 – Fitness to Study Case Conference: Serious persistent concerns

A Fitness to Study Case Conference should only be convened where there are serious or persistent fitness to study concerns, and continuing at University is deemed to pose a significant risk to the student's safety, or that of others. The responsibility for convening a Stage 3 meeting lies with the Dean of School. The case conference may be requested by a member of the School or the Director (or nominee) of Student Services. The student should be informed of the meeting

in writing. The letter should include the purpose of the meeting, a link or information about the Fitness to Study policy and procedure. The student should be informed they can bring someone in a supportive capacity, including a member of the Students' Union Advice Service.

Escalation to Stage 3 signifies real concern about the student's current ability to continue studying, and the purpose of the panel is to consider and make recommendations to whether it may be in their best interests to consider temporary withdrawal, suspension or exclusion. It is expected that a stage 3 meeting will bring together some or all of the following staff:

- Dean of School or nominee (Chair)
- Member of Governance and Legal Services
- Director of Student Services or nominee
- A representative from Student Wellbeing Team or Disability Adviser, where appropriate
- A representative from the Accommodation Team, in cases where the student lives in University accommodation
- Academic Adviser or other appropriate member of staff from the course team

In most cases, escalation to Stage 3 will have followed the stepped process. However, in some instances, the concerns may be so significant that it may be necessary to address them directly at Stage 3 of the procedure. This is likely to be when:

- There are significant concerns regarding risk to the health and safety of the student and/or where there is a perceived significant threat and risk to others (including their educational experience).
- Involvement of the Dean of School or designated nominee is needed in order for the full range of possible outcomes to be considered in one meeting.

A Stage 3 Fitness to Study case conference aims to determine:

- a) If the student's fitness to study is not substantially impaired and they may continue their studies. In this case, the School will be responsible for ensuring that all reasonable efforts are made to enable the student to continue on their programme. The ongoing fitness to study and academic engagement of the student should be monitored in the usual ways.
- b) If the student's fitness to study is seriously impaired. In this case, the Case Conference will determine an appropriate and proportionate action according to the extent to which fitness to study is impaired, the extent to and means by which that impairment might be addressed and, if applicable, any mitigating circumstances that are relevant.

Actions may include any of the following measures, alone or in combination:

1. Enhanced action plan;
2. Recommendation to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for: suspension, temporary withdrawal or termination of the current course. (If for suspension or temporary withdrawal, this will include consideration of conditions for re-admittance to the University.)

In cases where withdrawal of the student is the outcome of the Stage 3 meeting, this must be notified in writing, and information relating to rights of appeal given, as appropriate.

Documentation regarding the outcome of the Stage 3 meeting and arrangements for review will be held in a confidential location by Governance and Legal Services, in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.

University led withdrawal or suspension outcome

Where the outcome of Stage 3 of the procedure is University-led withdrawal or suspension, consideration will be given to the implications on student funding and accommodation contracts; Student Services will advise panels on this. Outcome letters will include relevant information and contact details for the Students' Union Advice Service, and offer to review the decision on the basis of any further independent assessment or evidence of fitness to study.

5. Appeals

Where the outcome of a Stage 3 Fitness to Study Case Conference is termination of registration, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Vice Chancellor. This appeal must be submitted in writing and be received by the Governance and Legal Services team within 10 working days of the decision. Appeal submissions must be sent to:

**Governance & Legal Services
Leeds Beckett University
Room 101, Old Broadcasting House
Woodhouse Lane
Leeds
LS2 9EN.**

6. Return to Study

If the outcome of any of the stages in this process results in time away from study (i.e. temporary withdrawal, suspension or deferral), then a further review meeting will be required so that a decision can be taken with regard to the student's fitness to return. At this stage, the student will be required to demonstrate that there have been improvements relating to the original concerns that resulted in the Fitness to Study decision.

In some cases, particularly if suspension or temporary withdrawal has resulted from significant physical or mental health difficulties, the review will request the student provide medical evidence that they are fit to return. Evidence will be required to demonstrate that there have been improvements in their physical, psychological or emotional health, or that they have engaged with recommendations resulting from the case conference outcome, and that they are able and ready to return to study and participate in university life again.

Relevant staff from Student Services should be contacted for advice about the support available to facilitate the transition back to study/student life, e.g. Student Wellbeing Team, Money Team, Disability Advice team. The Student Wellbeing team can provide support to the student during their period of absence from the University, where appropriate.

Any return to study will be subject to the student's co-operation with the process and adherence to any agreements made.

7. Conclusion of the Fitness to Study process

The University Secretary's Office will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures letter at the following points only:

- (i) an appeal has been refused
- (ii) the Appeal Stage has been completed

This concludes the Fitness to Study process within the university.

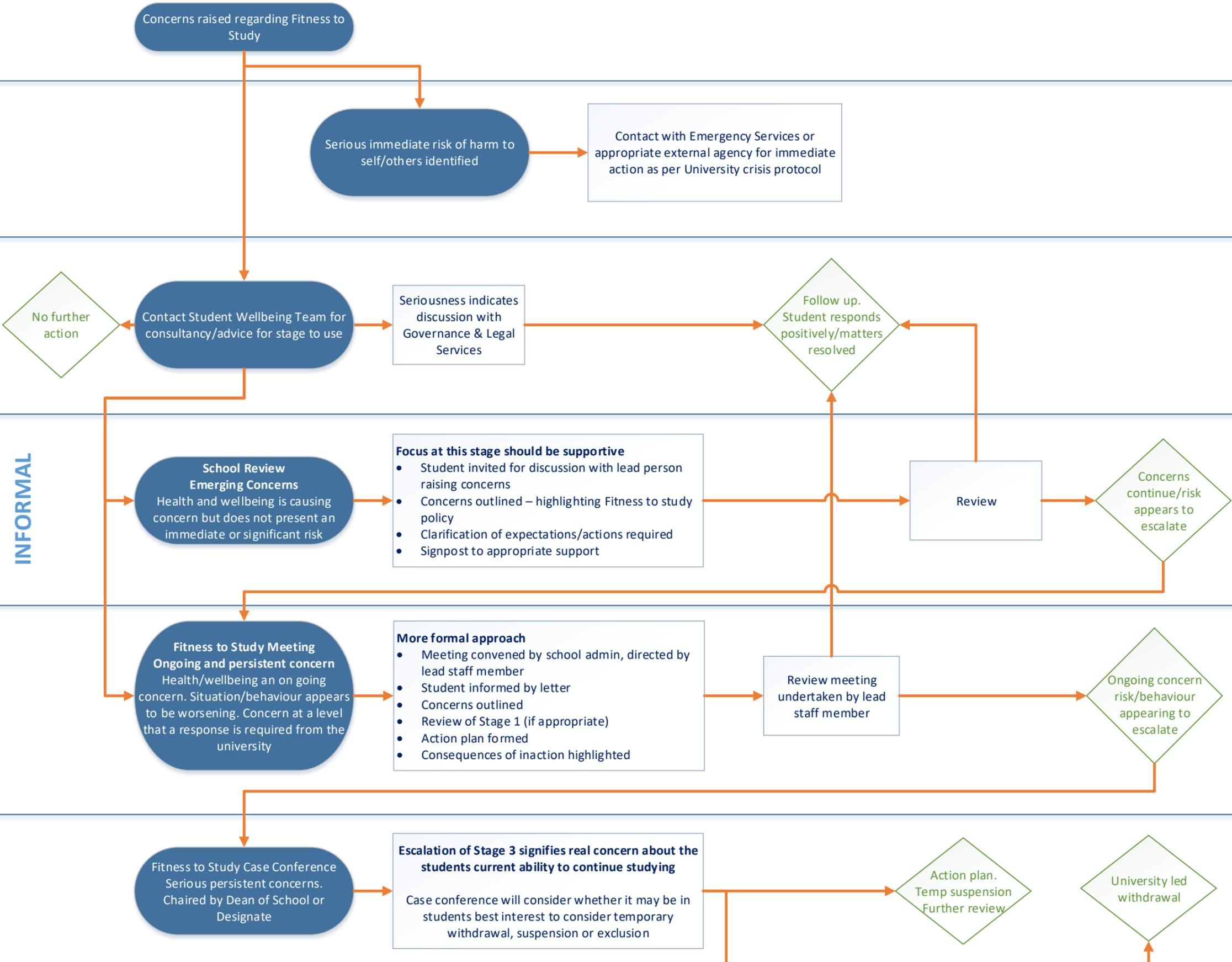
8. External Review

A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Fitness to Study process, or a decision not to allow the Appeal Stage, may seek to have this considered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). This is done through the Completion of a Scheme Application Form, which may be obtained from the OIA at www.oiahe.org.uk. The Scheme Application Form must be sent to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures.

Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure



STAGE 1
STAGE 2
STAGE 3



INFORMAL

School Review Emerging Concerns
Health and wellbeing is causing concern but does not present an immediate or significant risk

Focus at this stage should be supportive

- Student invited for discussion with lead person raising concerns
- Concerns outlined – highlighting Fitness to study policy
- Clarification of expectations/actions required
- Signpost to appropriate support

Fitness to Study Meeting
Ongoing and persistent concern. Health/wellbeing an on going concern. Situation/behaviour appears to be worsening. Concern at a level that a response is required from the university

More formal approach

- Meeting convened by school admin, directed by lead staff member
- Student informed by letter
- Concerns outlined
- Review of Stage 1 (if appropriate)
- Action plan formed
- Consequences of inaction highlighted

Fitness to Study Case Conference
Serious persistent concerns. Chaired by Dean of School or Designate

Escalation of Stage 3 signifies real concern about the students current ability to continue studying

Case conference will consider whether it may be in students best interest to consider temporary withdrawal, suspension or exclusion

SUPPORT FOR STAFF THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS FROM STUDENT WELLBEING TEAM

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS DURING PERIOD OF ABSENCE FROM STUDENT WELLBEING TEAM