

William
College

Fitness To Study Procedures

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1. Introduction

William College is committed to adopting a supportive academic environment that promotes the health, wellbeing, and safety of all students. This procedure outlines the ways for managing situations where a student's fitness to study is in question due to serious concerns about their physical or mental health, behavioural issues, or capacity to engage in academic and/or professional demands.

2. Purpose

This document provides a clear and supportive framework for identifying and responding to concerns regarding a student's capacity to engage safely and effectively with their academic studies and wider college life. It exists to protect student wellbeing, ensure academic standards are maintained, and uphold the safety and integrity of the William College community.

This applies when a student's physical health, mental wellbeing, behaviour, or engagement raises serious concerns about their ability to continue with their studies or to comply with the expectations of their programme and/or the professional standards required for certain disciplines.

3. Scope

This document applies to all enrolled students at William College.

It encompasses situations where disciplinary measures may not be suitable, such as instances of bullying, health issues, safety concerns, or learning difficulties.

For students studying on Birkbeck, University of London (BBK) courses at the William College Leeds Campus, BBK's Wellness and Support Policy applies: [Wellness and Support Policy](#)

William College will:

- Conduct Stage 1: Informal Support
- Liaise with the partner university regarding the concern and proposed course of action
- Ensure compliance with any agreements or dual assurance processes

For students studying on Bath Spa University (BSU) courses at the William College Stratford Campus, this Fitness to Study Policy applies.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Fitness to Study	A student's capacity to engage safely and effectively with their academic studies and college life.
Support Plan	A structured set of actions agreed with the student to support their continuation in study.
Study Break	An agreed pause in studies to allow a student to address health or personal issues.
Panel	A formal group convened to assess a student's fitness to study.

5. Policy Aims

The primary aim is to support students while ensuring the integrity and safety of the wider College community.

William College endeavours to collaborate with students to navigate challenges they may encounter, promoting an environment grounded in support, care, transparency, and respect for diversity and equality.

The objectives are to:

- Establish a transparent and equitable process for assessing a student's fitness to study, prioritising the student's welfare and educational needs.
- Ensure early identification of concerns through informal and supportive mechanisms that prioritise intervention over sanction.
- Provide a structured response that allows for both informal resolution and formal panel review, depending on the severity and persistence of concerns.
- Maintain a safe and inclusive learning environment by balancing the needs of the individual student with those of the wider student and staff community.
- Set clear standards for documentation, decision-making, communication, and appeals processes.
- Align with safeguarding obligations, professional regulatory body requirements, and the policies of validating or awarding institutions where applicable.

6. Guiding Principles

William College is committed to supporting students' academic progress and personal development in a way that promotes dignity, respect, and wellbeing. The College recognises that students may face health-related or personal challenges that affect their ability to study and aims to respond in a compassionate and proportionate manner.

This document outlines how concerns related to a student's fitness to study are addressed through a staged approach that prioritises early support and collaborative intervention. It is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Holistic Support:** The College takes a whole-person approach, recognising the interplay between academic engagement, personal wellbeing, and mental and physical health.
- **Non-Punitive Response:** Where appropriate, the College will seek to support rather than discipline students facing difficulties.
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Compliance with the Equality Act 2010, with reasonable adjustments where required.
- **Safeguarding:** Alignment with safeguarding procedures where risk is identified.
- **Collaboration with Partners:** Liaison with awarding institutions where applicable.

7. Responsibilities

Department/ Individual	Responsibilities
Student Wellbeing Team	Lead on managing concerns, coordinating support, and overseeing procedures.
All academic staff	Identify concerns and refer students appropriately.
Student Experience Manager	Oversee formal stages and panel processes.
Provst	Provide oversight in high-risk and escalation cases.
Students	Engage with the process and support plans.

8. Procedure

8.1 Indicators of Concern

Concerns about a student's fitness to study may arise from a range of observable behaviours or patterns. These indicators do not automatically trigger formal action but are used to guide early support and decision-making. Examples include:

- Persistent non-attendance or disengagement from academic activity.
- Marked deterioration in academic performance.
- Signs of mental health deterioration or distress (e.g. erratic behaviour, low mood, anxiety).
- Physical health concerns that interfere with the ability to attend or participate in study.
- Difficulty managing self-care or independent living.
- Substance misuse or self-harm.
- Disruptive, threatening or concerning behaviour impacting others safety or wellbeing.
- Reports of vulnerability or safeguarding risks raised by peers or staff.

All concerns should be reported in writing to the Student Wellbeing Team via:

- For Stratford: wellbeing.stratford@williamcollege.ac.uk
- For Leeds: wellbeing.leeds@williamcollege.ac.uk

8.1.1 Stage 1: Informal Support and Early Intervention

The Student Wellbeing Team will lead informal discussions to address emerging concerns and offer support. This stage may involve:

- Supportive meetings with action plans.
- Referral to internal/external services.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Update/report from Student Success Team.

8.1.2 Stage 2: Formal Support Meeting

A Stage Two Support Meeting is triggered by significant concerns regarding a student's ability to engage safely with the College, often resulting in an agreed action plan, restrictions, or referral to a higher stage of the policy. The procedure requires active student participation, allowing for a companion, with outcomes typically finalised within five working days

Stage 2 is triggered if there are continued or additional concerns post Stage 1 informal meeting and support.

8.1.2.1 Members of the Support Meeting

- Student Wellbeing Officer
- Student Experience Manager or nominee
- The student
- Someone to accompany the student (a fellow student, friend or family member).

Anyone accompanying the student in the meeting is there to provide support to the student but should not answer questions or actively contribute to the panel discussion.

8.1.2.2 The Process of the Meeting

Prior Notice: Students should be sent written notice (via student email) outlining the concerns and the evidence gathered. The notice should be sent at least five (5) working days before the meeting. If

the student has not replied three (3) working days before the meeting, the student should be contacted by phone.

Review of Concerns: The members will present information outlining how the student's health and/or wellbeing is impacting their academic progress or the wellbeing of other students.

Collaborative Discussion: The student will be given the opportunity to present their perspective, explain what they are going through, and share their ideas for what support they need.

Action Plan: The meeting will conclude by agreeing on a formalised Action Plan with clear, time-bound targets and review dates.

8.1.2.3 Potential Outcomes

Depending on how the meeting goes and the severity of the concerns, the likely outcomes include:

- **Continued Support with an Action Plan:** The student continues their studies with specific, agreed-upon support and regular follow-ups.
- **Referral to Stage 3 (Panel Hearing):** If the concerns are critical, and/or the student is unable to engage with the process, or if the initial plan fails to improve the situation, the case may be escalated to the formal Fitness to Study Panel.
- **Voluntary Study Break:** In cases where the student's health requires time to improve, the option of a Study Break will be discussed with the student.

8.1.3 Stage 3: Formal Fitness to Study Panel

When concerns persist beyond the initial informal discussions, the procedure advances to a formal assessment stage, involving the convening of a Fitness to Study Panel. The panel will typically include:

- Student Experience Manager (Chair)
- Academic Dean or nominee
- Student Wellbeing Officer

Ordinarily, two out of three of the panel members will be Safeguarding Officers.

The student concerned will be invited to attend the meeting and will be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a fellow student representative, friend or family member ensuring they feel supported throughout the process. Anyone accompanying the student in the meeting is there to provide support to the student but should not answer questions or actively contribute to the panel discussion.

Before the meeting, the student will be:

- Informed in writing, notified at least seven (7) working days in advance, of the panel's purpose and logistics.
- Given access to evidence and an opportunity to submit their own evidence.
- Invited to attend the panel with a supporter.

Attendance is not mandatory, and the meeting will proceed in the student's absence if they choose not to attend.

During the panel meeting, concerns are thoughtfully examined and discussed with transparency and care. The panel seeks a holistic understanding of the student's situation by taking into account various factors, including academic progress, class attendance, mental health, and behavioural patterns.

Through compassionate dialogue and thorough evaluation, the panel strives to uncover any underlying challenges, consider appropriate support strategies, and determine the best path forward in the student's overall interest.

Ultimately, the Fitness to Study Panel serves as a collaborative forum dedicated to promoting the student's wellbeing and academic success within the William College community.

Possible outcomes of the panel meeting include:

- Continuation with a support plan.
- Option for study break.
- Suspension pending further evidence or medical assessment.
- Suspension with conditions.
- Withdrawal from the College (in the most serious cases).
- Other proportionate actions.

Panel decisions will be communicated within five (5) working days. Failure to engage with the process, or selecting a nominee on your behalf, will result in withdrawal process.

8.1.4 Stage 4: Emergency (Precautionary) Suspension

When a student's health, behaviour, or conduct presents an immediate and significant risk to themselves or others, Stage 4 of the Fitness to Study process is initiated. At this point, the staff member raising the concern must promptly notify the Provost. In such high-risk situations, the College may proceed directly to Stage 4 without following the earlier stages.

The College may also implement emergency measures or immediate risk management actions without delay. These may be taken in response to:

- Serious safeguarding disclosures.
- Sudden deterioration in mental health.
- Behaviour that suggests the student cannot safely engage in College's activities.
- Detention under the Mental Health Act.

A risk assessment meeting will be convened by the Student Experience Manager (or a designated senior officer), involving relevant academic staff and key stakeholders, including senior leadership and representatives from the Student Wellbeing and Student Support teams. The purpose of the meeting is to evaluate:

- The immediacy and severity of the risk.
- The student's ability to participate in learning and College life safely.
- The impact on other students and staff.

All available evidence is carefully reviewed to determine whether continued enrolment may worsen the situation or present an unacceptable risk. Outcomes may include precautionary suspension or referral to emergency services. If the Fitness to Study Panel deems precautionary suspension to be the appropriate measures, a member of the panel will get in contact with the Link Tutor at the relevant Partner University to review the evidence and make the decision.

Students will be informed of decisions in writing, by the panel and reasons clearly explained. Emergency measures are temporary and subject to ongoing review.

9. Return to Study

Returning from a period of suspension will involve a structured re-entry process:

- The student must provide official medical or professional evidence confirming their ability to resume studies, live independently, and meet academic and/or professional demands.
- Evidence should be submitted at least **three (3) weeks** before the proposed return date.
- A Fitness to Study Panel may be convened to assess the evidence and decide on appropriate support or conditions (e.g., ongoing review meetings, personalised learning plans).

Return to study will only be approved where the College is confident that the student's wellbeing and academic progress can be sustained. In cases where a return to study is approved, appropriate conditions may be set based on the individual circumstances. These may include the creation of a personalised return-to-study plan and a requirement for the student to attend regular review meetings. Such measures are put in place to provide ongoing support and monitoring, helping to ensure the student's successful reintegration into the academic community while safeguarding their wellbeing and academic progress.

10. Appeals

Students may appeal decisions made under this document based on the following grounds:

- **New Material Evidence:** Previously unavailable evidence which may have significantly affected the outcome.
- **Procedural Irregularity:** A failure to follow College procedures that may have affected the outcome.
- **Unreasonable Decision:** A decision no reasonable person or panel, properly directed, could have reached on the available evidence.

Appeals must be submitted in writing within ten (10) working days of the decision to:

- For Stratford: wellbeing.stratford@williamcollege.ac.uk
- For Leeds: wellbeing.leeds@williamcollege.ac.uk

Appeals will be reviewed by a senior leader not previously involved. The reviewer may request additional information or clarification from the student or relevant staff before reaching a decision. Appeals will normally be considered based on submitted documentation unless the College determines that further investigation is required.

The outcome of an appeal may include:

- The original decision being upheld.
- The appeal being upheld in full or in part.
- The case being referred back for reconsideration with appropriate recommendations.

Students will receive a written outcome within ten (10) working days, including the reasons for the decision.

This decision concludes the College's internal appeals process.

Completion of Procedures letters are issued automatically where a complaint or appeal is not upheld. Where a complaint or appeal is upheld in full or in part, the letter is not issued automatically; however, students may request one if they wish to refer their case to Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

Requests for a Completion of Procedures letter should be made by email to the appropriate Student Wellbeing Team.

11. Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

Students who remain dissatisfied after completing the College's internal procedures may request an independent review by OIA.

- A complaint to the OIA must be submitted **within twelve (12) months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.
- The OIA reviews whether the College has followed its procedures correctly and acted reasonably; it does not normally re-investigate the case.

For more information, students should consult: www.oiahe.org.uk.

12. Procedures Review

These Procedures are reviewed by the EDI committee annually, or earlier if there are changes in partners' policies or the regulatory framework. Any amendments require the approval of the Academic Board.

13. Related Policies and Documents

- Bath Spa University [Fitness to Study Procedure](#).
- Birbeck University [Wellness and Support Policy](#).
- Student Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Engagement Policy and Procedures
- Student Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy