

FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY
Woodhouse College
Students and Parent/Guardian Guide

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1 Fitness to Study Policy

To inform you of Woodhouse College's approach when an applicant or student is unable to meet course requirements or standards of behaviour due to a health or mental health condition or personal circumstances, which place the applicant, student, or others at risk. This policy applies to learners. The Assistant Principal Student Services is responsible for this policy and is responsible for the monitoring of the policy.

1.1 Aim

This policy is in place to ensure that Woodhouse College takes a fair and consistent approach where students are unable to meet course requirements in terms of attendance; participation in class; adherence to targets and academic deadlines or meet expectations within Woodhouse College's Student Code of Conduct, due to:

- **a medical condition;**
 - Injuries
 - Disabilities
 - Physical illness
- **a mental health concern;**
 - Mental health difficulties
 - Addiction
 - Specific learning needs
- **aspects of the student's personal life significantly impacting on participation;**
 - Financial responsibilities
 - Caring responsibilities
- **behaviour(s) reported and/or observed which are considered to be putting the student or others at risk;**
 - Some behavioural issues

1.2 Three paths learners can be placed on;

- **Academic and attendance contracts** - as per original process
- **Additional Needs Individual Support Plan** - pre-Fitness to Study formal level where adjusted targets and support are put in place and will be put on dashboard
- **Fitness to Study** - when Additional Needs Individual Support Plan is having no effect/ situation is untenable

2 Scope

The Fitness to Study Policy can be implemented at pre-entry, transition and during their course.

The Fitness to Study Policy and Procedures supports the Disciplinary Procedure. Woodhouse College recognises that there may be circumstances where a student is unable to determine that they are placing unreasonable demands on themselves, staff, resources or the learning of others and are endangering their own wellbeing or success.

This Policy will, therefore, come into effect in circumstances where it is more appropriate or the usual support, actions undertaken via student review, reasonable adjustments, referral to Student Services and the curriculum team have exhausted appropriate avenues to maintain the student's attendance and academic targets.

Measures under consideration at Level 1 are temporary and SMART and are considered reasonable adjustments. Level 2 is implemented to monitor interventions and review progress and participation. If after consideration, there is no change or prospect of change in circumstances then Level 3 will be implemented. At this point the student will be advised to consider interrupting their study temporarily or voluntarily withdrawing from study with a view to possible re-enrolment in the future.

In situations of significant concern or when emergency interventions appear necessary, the student may be asked to suspend attendance and Level 3 is immediately implemented.

Woodhouse College reserves the right to revert to the Disciplinary Policy where appropriate.

3 Implementation of the Fitness to Study Policy

3.1 Admission and enrolment processes to Woodhouse

Woodhouse College recognises that for certain courses there is a need to ensure that learners are emotionally and physically fit and able to undertake all aspects of study including field trips.

The admissions and enrolment process takes every reasonable step to ensure that learners are supported and given appropriate information regarding the demands of the course and the support available. However, in doing this the College must also consider its duty of care in relation to Health and Safety and Safeguarding.

Where a member of staff has concerns that, by making an offer to study, the course demands may have a detrimental effect on either the applicant and/or others, then a referral will be made to Assistant Principal Student Services (APSS) directly, to determine whether the Fitness to Study Policy needs to be implemented.

Where there is insufficient information to decide then the APSS will request further evidence in writing from the GP, health professional or relevant external agency. The applicant will be asked to provide historical details of relevant support services that can be contacted, current medical status and external support the applicant accesses. If the applicant declines to co-operate, or after investigation, information is not available to enable risk management procedures to be put into place, then a decision may be made to withdraw the offer of study. The applicant will be formally advised of the decision and the applicant may be offered the opportunity to apply for a different course or offered a Careers Advice and Guidance appointment, arranged with the careers team at Woodhouse College to assist the applicant in making an informed choice.

Where after consideration of all the information available, it is considered that an Individual Support Plan (outlining reasonable adjustments), an assessment of risk and in some instances capacity to study are deemed not viable then reasons for the decline or referral of the offer will be explained.

3.2 On Programme

In all cases, the initial consideration to implement the Fitness to Study Policy will be as a result of a significant cause for concern. The arrangements of the Fitness to Study Policy should be explained clearly to the student and a copy of the Fitness to Study Policy given. Staff raising the cause for concern must ensure that it is made clear that this is a supportive measure to:

- ensure that the demands of study are not impacting negatively on overall wellbeing or recovery from ill health;
- ensure that changes are made and the student is supported, to adjust behaviours that are negatively affecting their own success or that of others;
- assist the student to significantly improve attendance, and
- assist with changes regarding personal life, which are affecting the success, participation and wellbeing of the student and intervention is required.

3.3 Concerns due to a Student's Medical or Mental Health Status

Initially, the curriculum team should follow the process for flagging concerns and implement appropriate support via a referral to Student Services, Additional Needs or Safeguarding. Following assessment and if we are able to support the student, an Individual Support Plan will be put in place by the Student Services team.

3.4 Concerns due to Unacceptable Conduct or Unreasonable Behaviours

The student may already have an Additional Needs Individual Support Plan in place. Where every endeavour has been made to ensure that support is provided, but unacceptable conduct or unreasonable behaviours are still apparent, Assistant Principal Student Services may decide to implement the Fitness to Study Policy at a higher level.

3.5 Emergencies

The Fitness to Study Policy should not distract from acute situations where it is believed a student's behaviours or health presents an immediate risk to self or others.

In such circumstances a Safeguarding Officer must be informed immediately. If neither is available the Assistant Principal Student Services must be contacted by phone or in person.

Examples include:

- Unreasonable or dangerous behaviours;
- Suicide intent; and / or
- Significant issue relating to immediate wellbeing

4 The Fitness to Study process

4.1 Level 0 - Additional Needs Individual Support Plan

Where teachers and/or the personal tutor have concerns about a student with medical or mental health issues because that student has ongoing poor attendance and/or is unable to make sufficient progress due to these issues, they will alert the Senior Tutor. The Senior Tutor and safeguarding team will create an Additional Needs Individual Support Plan. This should include all reasonable adjustments for example:

- Supportive measures such as:
 - Referrals to external agencies
 - Referral to the internal counselling service
 - Reduced timetable and adjusted hours
 - Time out cards
 - Exam access arrangements
 - Work being sent home
 - Meeting with a Student Progress Manager
 - Directed study if appropriate/helpful
 - Adjusted homework/coursework deadlines

- Adjusted targets such as:
 - Adjusted attendance targets
 - Adjusted achievement targets
 - Adjusted homework completion targets

The Senior Tutor will set a date for review of the Support Plan and will oversee the progress of the student. Teachers/tutors will not create academic/attendance/behaviour contracts but will instead send information about the student's progress directly to the senior tutor. Should it be clear before the review date that the Support Plan is not working, the senior tutor may choose to move to Level 1 at that point. Generally these would be reviewed every six weeks.

4.2 Level 1 Fitness to Study Support Plan

If the Level 0 Additional Needs Individual Support Plan has not been successful and there are still concerns then the Senior Tutor should arrange a Level 1 Fitness to Study meeting at which parents and tutor should be present. The Senior Tutor will review the concerns with the student's Personal Tutor alongside a member of the Safeguarding team, if applicable, and determine whether it may be possible to offer further 'exceptional' support within Student Services.

The Senior Tutor will set a date for review of the Level 1 Fitness to Study plan after 3 weeks and will oversee the progress of the student. Teachers/tutors will not create academic/attendance/behaviour contracts but will instead send information about the student's progress directly to the senior tutor. It is important that this flow of information continues and that the student is closely monitored as well as supported.

If, there are still concerns while the student is on Level 1, the Senior Tutor will meet with the student to discuss concerns and establish whether there have been any changes in the student's medical condition, medication or personal circumstances. It may be possible to address concerns through this meeting and to further adapt the Level 1 Individual Support Plan. This is reported back to APSS.

Should it be clear before the review date that the Level 1 Fitness to Study Plan is not working, the senior tutor may choose to move to Level 2 at that point.

When the Level 1 plan is reviewed, where the initial cause of concern has been allayed no further actions under the Fitness to Study Policy are required. However, if the student is still not able to make progress then the Level 1 plan will be deemed to have failed and the student will move to Level 2.

4.3 Level 2 Fitness to Study Support Plan – Senior Tutor

If the Level 1 Fitness to Study Plan has not been successful and there are still concerns then the Senior Tutor should arrange a Level 2 Fitness to Study meeting with the student, parents, tutor and safeguarding team. Further support and adjustments may be made at this stage and a further set of targets will be created and a review date set within 3-6 weeks.

The student must understand at this stage that they are nearing the point where the college can no longer support them as all reasonable adjustments have been made, support put in place, and there is still no improvement in the student's ability to make progress.

Should it be clear before the review date that the Level 2 Fitness to Study Plan is not working, the senior tutor may choose to move to Level 3 at that point.

When the Level 2 plan is reviewed, where the initial cause of concern has been allayed no further actions under the Fitness to Study Policy are required. However, if the student is still not able to make progress then the Level 2 plan will be deemed to have failed and the student will move to Level 3. They will be referred to the Assistant Principal Student Services who will implement Level 3 of the Fitness to Study Policy or implement the Disciplinary Procedure, as appropriate.

4.4 Level 3 Fitness to Study - Emergency or Persistent and Continuing Significant Concern – Assistant Principal Student Services

Consideration will be made as to whether the student's behaviour, health or wellbeing cannot be accommodated in the interim and it serves the student's and the College's best interest for Assistant Principal Student Services to recommend that the student be required to stay at home and not attend his/her course. It will be stressed to the student that this step is not a disciplinary action and will not be recorded as such.

In the case of significant health or behavioural concerns, Assistant Principal Student Services will arrange a Level 3 Fitness to Study Meeting with the student, their representative(s) and Senior Tutor to inform the student and relevant parties that the student cannot attend until agreement has been made on next steps.

A formal Level 3 Fitness to Study Meeting will be arranged and it will be determined, and the student informed, who will be attending the meeting.

At Level 3, the student may be asked to interrupt their attendance and studies until recovery is sufficient or behaviour improves. Assistant Principal Student Services will make this decision and may seek advice from other members of team around the learner. This may take the form of an agreed period of authorised absence to allow for recovery or a formal withdrawal from the course with a view to a possible re-enrolment on an appropriate course in the next academic year subject

to the discretion of the Principal. Please note that the Principal must authorise a re-start or a repeated year.

Coming back after a prolonged period of absence back into the same year cohort needs two criteria:

- the learner must be fit for study
- learner has a chance of academic success (If they are so far behind that they are beyond catching up, then we may not allow the learner back into that same year group even if they are medically fit for study.)

At each level, the ANISP will be reviewed, adjusted and monitored. Further information will be sought from professionals who are involved in the learner's wellbeing.

5 Appeal

The student has the right of appeal against any decisions made.

The appeals procedure for the Fitness to Study Policy will follow the same guidelines as the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

Appeals must be made in writing within 10 days to the Vice Principal.

6 Returning to Study

At the point at which a return to study might be viable, Assistant Principal Student Services may seek evidence regarding medical interventions sought, what external professional support is in place for the student and will determine what other reasonable adjustments are required.

A revised Individual Support Plan and/or Risk Assessment will be implemented to highlight what support will be provided by Woodhouse College to enable the student to return to study.

Where appropriate the student may be required to agree to and sign a Behaviour Contract highlighting interventions and actions required for managing risks to self or others.

If a return to study is not considered appropriate, or there is a lack of information regarding interventions undertaken by the student, the options will include postponing a decision pending the receipt of further information and extending the period of voluntary withdrawal to a later date.

If return to study is deemed not to be an option, and the student is dissatisfied, the College's usual complaints procedure should be followed.

Appendices

APPENDIX A - Fitness to Study Policy meetings, Support Plans and Future Considerations

Assistant Principal Student Services will invite appropriate members of staff to act on behalf of the APSS to implement, monitor or advise during the actions instigated in the Fitness to Study Policy process.

Fitness to Study meetings can include:

- Additional Learning Support Co-ordinator
- Head of Department (s) if needed
- Safeguarding Officer/Student Progress Manager
- Senior Tutor

Possible and Usual Outcomes of a Fitness to Study Meeting

The desired outcome of all Fitness to Study meetings and actions is to promote wellbeing and success.

Initial actions, reasonable adjustments and support are implemented to enable the student to continue attending, participating and succeeding without affecting the wellbeing of themselves or others.

The decisions, effectiveness and outcomes of all levels of the Fitness to Study process will be formalised in writing and will, where possible, be with the agreement of the student. If the student declines to enter into the agreement, the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked. Any implementation of the Disciplinary Procedure will be done in such a way as to place health and welfare concerns at the centre of decision making.

Support Plans

At each level a Fitness to Study Support Plan (an abbreviated version of the ANISP) will be produced and put on Dashboard, covering the main points of investigations, observations and meetings, and will include interim support offered, further reasonable adjustments made, actions the student is required to undertake, the expectations for future behaviour and the consequences if the student fails to engage or the behaviour does not improve.

Future Considerations

Where concern reappears after intervention of the Fitness to Study Policy at all levels, the matter will be referred again to APSS, who will ensure that the following steps are followed:

- Liaise with external agencies; and / or
- Convene a Fitness to Study meeting to discuss withdrawal and next steps.

APPENDIX B - Data Protection, Policies and Responsibilities

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Woodhouse College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this policy it will receive personal data of a confidential and sensitive nature and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Sensitive personal data and confidential information will only be disclosed to third parties with the express, informed consent of the student. However, there may be occasions where Woodhouse College is obliged to disclose and/or request information, notwithstanding that the student has refused consent, these include:

- Where the student's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety of others; and / or
- Where a member of staff of Woodhouse College would be liable to civil or criminal penalty for failure to disclose.

Equal Opportunities

Woodhouse College's commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated through its determination that every student receives a high-quality learning experience which will bring success. The Fitness to Study Policy will be implemented in a manner which maintains each individual's attendance, if at all possible. If a student is required to interrupt his / her studies, Woodhouse College will seek to make available opportunities for the student to continue at an appropriate level in the following year.

Safeguarding

Woodhouse College will ensure that the Fitness to Study Policy processes promote safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults.

Managing Responsibilities within the Fitness to Study Policy

Assistant Principal Student Services
ALS Coordinator
Relevant Senior Tutor

Related Documents

Admissions Policy
Attendance Policy
Academic support and disciplinary process
Student Code of Conduct
Health and Safety Policy
Single Equality Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Data Protection Statement
Fitness to Study Action Plan (new document)