



FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

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Author: Lubna Hussain (APSS)

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Fitness to Study Policy

This Policy is to inform you of Frontier Learning Trust's (FLT/ the Trust) approach when a student is unable to meet course requirements or standards of behaviour due to a physical or mental health condition or personal circumstances, which place the student, or others at risk.

Scope

This *Fitness to Study policy* applies when students face issues which are not primarily of their making, and which are impacting on their academic progress. These are instances when a student's needs are such that their remaining in College and completing the course successfully are in doubt. Assessing fitness to study will involve forming a judgement about the level and likely duration of a student's need in relation to the demands of their course and the resources available in the College. These are elaborated in the next sections.

The Fitness to Study (FtS) Policy can be implemented during their course or reenrolment and supports the student's academic progress. This policy will, therefore, come into effect in circumstances where it is appropriate to take this route.

We want to ensure we show due care and diligence with our students, but we also recognise that the support available is more limited in a post 16 environment than that of a school setting.

The Trust 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.

The Trust aims to provide an outstanding education for all students whatever their individual needs but there are cases when this is not possible, and this policy seeks to clarify these situations and how decisions are made.

Trust provision

Our provision is circumscribed by its funding, its delivery model, and its mainstream (i.e. non-specialist) nature. It only offers full time A level courses, and these are delivered mainly through classroom-based group tuition, set assignments and self-directed work outside the classroom. These current demands on students include a high level of attendance (usually a minimum of 95%) on site for 22 months, five days a week. The curriculum demands an ability to learn in a variety of ways and at pace. Students must devote a lot of time, concentration, and energy to their learning. At the same time, post 16 life involves working and developing socially with other people as part of a busy community. Our 1500 students are not supervised as they move around the campus and are free to enter and exit the site according to their commitments. These are core aspects of being a student at the Trust and whilst every effort is made to meet each student's needs there are times when this is not possible.

Most students complete their courses and achieve highly despite all the rigours outlined above and the many challenges which can arise during a two-year period in anyone's life. This is because the Trust has well trained teachers and specialist support staff who are experienced in helping students progress in a wide variety of circumstances. The availability of this support means that almost all students remain 'fit to study' throughout their time at the Trust. Regardless of cause, the 'symptoms' of a student who is struggling manifest in issues regarding their academic progress, attendance and behaviour, and the Trust has a well understood system for providing academic support, setting targets, and reviewing individual progress where this is the case.

The Trust comprises of two 16-19 academies.

At Woodhouse, approximately 750 students join us each year from around 200 different schools across North London. ICLMS has approximately 40 students (rising to 200 students over the next few years) who join us each year from across the Southeast region. Contextual information, including LAC and EHCP status, are considered as part of our admissions process.

All students admitted meet our minimum GCSE grades for the subjects they wish to study. Students are only required on site when they have lessons and enjoy a high level of independence. All students are expected to have a high level of attendance (above 95%)

Students who have conditions which may impact on attendance are placed on a Fitness to Study Plan with reduced targets but attendance below 80% will prevent students fully accessing the curriculum. We do not currently provide any hybrid or remote learning. All students are encouraged to attend classes and catch up on any work missed if they are absent from class. If a student is failing, it may be necessary for them to change their options if they do not meet these requirements.

Aim

This policy is in place to ensure that the Trust 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, for example due to:

- **a medical condition**
 - Injuries
 - Disabilities
 - Physical illness
- **a diagnosed 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
 - Homelessness or living conditions
- **behaviour(s) reported and/or observed which are considered to be putting the student or others at risk.**
 - Some behavioural issues linked to learning differences, mental health difficulties and/or diagnosed behavioural issues
- **Academic and attendance concerns**
 - When these are present, an academic contract is also put in place if a student needs this additional support to get back on track.

This is not an exhaustive list but where FtS may be the most appropriate route, we will take it into consideration.

How Fitness to Study is determined

The concern can be raised by the Head of Year (HoY) at Woodhouse / Deputy Head (DH) at ICLMS (with tutor input), Safeguarding or ALS teams. A student on FtS is recorded on 'My Class Profile' and 'My Concern'.

In all cases, the initial consideration to implement the FtS Policy will be as a result of a significant cause for concern based around the student's medically diagnosed condition or circumstances. The arrangements of the FtS Policy should be explained clearly to the student and parent and a copy of this policy is shared. 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 engage with their learning to ensure they are not negatively affecting their own success with academic or attendance concerns
- Assist the student to significantly improve attendance
- Assist with academic adjustments which are affecting the success, participation, and wellbeing of the student where intervention is required. This would work alongside the academic support policy

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 Learning Support or Safeguarding team (SG). Once the students, parents and students circle have discussed the FtS, following assessment, and if we are able to support the student, FtS may be considered.

The process

Information gathering from professionals involved.

We endeavour to get this information from medical professionals in a timely manner to enable us to put the FtS in place. We ask for support from parents/carers in getting this information back to us within a short period of time.

This information will help us determine the recommended level and move the process on within an appropriate timescale. We will ask for a consent form to be signed to approach the appropriate health professional. To hold a meeting as outlined on page 11, we would follow this procedure.

Timeline for information request

- We send questions to medical professionals asking for a response (two weeks before meeting) within a week.
- Reminders sent out alongside phone calls where appropriate – for a 48 hour reply to our request if information has not been received.

If we do not receive the requested information, it can affect the ability to put a student on a Fitness to Study Plan (FSP).

This is the first stage of the process which leads to the correct level on FSP being agreed.

Fitness to Study Plans (FSP)

Where teachers and/or the personal tutor have concerns about a student with medical, mental health or other significant issues, FtS may be considered. This may be because that student has ongoing poor attendance and/or is unable to make sufficient progress due to these issues, staff will alert the Safeguarding team (SG) and the Head of Year (HoY). The HoY/DH and the team consider FtS and review whether the threshold has been met with APSS/DH. The APSS/DH finalises the decision or an SLT member in their absence.

An FSP will be produced and put on Dashboard, covering the main points of investigations, observations and meetings, and will include interim support offered including looking at

- Student review with medical professionals' feedback
- Reasonable adjustments where possible
- Referral to Student Services interventions for wider support where possible
- External referrals where necessary

Plans to support a student will depend on their needs and should be recorded in the student's pastoral log.

Target Setting in the FtS context.

Academic targets will be reviewed as part of the process, and differ case by case and are only set in subjects the student is struggling in. As we cannot adjust the academic expectations due to the nature of the A level programme, we would approach extra support with

- Attendance to subject tutorials
- Extra time (short appointment) with teacher where possible if a subject tutorial is not available.
- Access to online materials
- Set work in Directed Study (DRS) if that is helpful or the removal of DRS for a period of time.
- Meeting with a Student Progress Manager
- One-to-one support from teacher(s) to help catch up with work

Adjusted targets could include:

- Attendance targets determined on a case-by-case basis.
- Achievement targets
- Homework/NEA deadlines if it doesn't affect chance of successfully completing the course

We cannot adjust:

- Public exam/ test dates
- Homework completion where it affects progress in the subject and knowledge
- External NEA deadlines, including required practicals.

Other aspects which may be considered:

- Information and signposting offered about support on the College intranet
- Referral to the College counselling service or to external sources of support
- Changes in timetable
- Reduction in subjects studied
- Restart of the lower or upper sixth year, if appropriate, possible and agreed
- Consideration of other post 16 study options with a careers interview

Typical elements of such a plan could include reasonable adjustments and supportive measures on a case-by-case basis such as:

- Referrals to external agencies
- Referral to the internal counselling service
- Reduced timetable and adjusted hours under medical guidance for a short period of time (up to two weeks)
- Leave class cards
- Exam Access Arrangements (EAA) and/or an ALS referral
- Work being sent home via teams and/or emails for a short period of time
- Study skills (Additional Learning Support)

The examples where FtS have been appropriate.

Example 1.

If there is an external cause of low attendance such as caring responsibilities at home, then there could be a discussion about what the alternatives might be, a phone call home or signposting to voluntary groups for help. Consideration will be given to sensible adjustments in terms of the Trust requirements but there is only limited and short-term flexibility about the requirement to attend overall.

Example 2.

Where a student's mental health is the issue, the Trust can 'triage' the urgency and level of need and provide limited direct access to counselling on site. The safeguarding team also refer students to relevant outside agencies and recommends they seek access to external medical services via their General Practitioner (GP). If a student is receiving support from Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the Safeguarding Team may liaise with the CAMHS Worker, to seek guidance on the student's fitness to study and to request a safety plan if appropriate. Beyond that, the nature of the support plan will depend on the likely duration and severity of the situation. Some of these issues are short term and amenable to therapies and within a two-year programme the difficulties they pose can often be overcome. The Trust Safeguarding team and wider staff members are trained Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) but are not trained counsellors/ therapists/ mental health professionals.

Example 3.

In the case of injury or illness, the Trust will try to be flexible around attendance and work completion in the short term. Lessons can be arranged in ground floor rooms for example where students have reduced mobility and staff can be included in discussions about other flexibilities during lessons.

As can be seen from these examples, the support plan will, where relevant involve documented medical evidence being received and discussed, referral to outside agencies such as the student's GP, to CAMHS, or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and at times the Trust may be directly involved with these organisations in the best interests of the student.

Levels and the support available

We acknowledge that there are students with long term and well managed physical and/or mental health conditions. These are noted in their medical section on Dashboard. We will support the student through the FtS process if the condition significantly affects their studies. Students, otherwise, will have appropriate support where needed. These conditions could include:

- Eating Disorders
- Crohn's
- IBS
- Sickle Cell
- Thalassaemia
- Other long-term conditions

Parent/carers are involved at each level. Once the APSS/DH has agreed that FtS is the right supportive measure to consider for the student, a meeting and discussion is held with the parent/carer to explain the process.

Level 1

This is when initial concerns are raised and an FSP has been implemented. The FSP will have reasonable adjustments pertaining to the student's ability to engage with the Trust.

If there are still concerns while the student is on Level 1, the team will meet with the student, parent/ carer to discuss concerns and establish whether there have been any changes in the student's condition, medication, or personal circumstances. It may be possible to address concerns through this meeting and to further adapt the Level 1 FSP. This is reported back to APSS/DH. If the APSS/DH is not available to attend meetings, a member of SLT will support the process.

Monitoring steps (Six-week review)

When a student has been on a Level 1 but no further action is needed and there are no current concerns, the student will be moved to being monitored for six weeks. After six weeks, if there are no concerns, the student will be removed from the FtS process.

There may be a need to put a student on a higher level than 1 if recurrence of the condition is serious and requires a higher level of engagement and monitoring.

Level 2

If the Level 1 FSP has not been successful and there are still concerns, then the safeguarding team should arrange a Level 2 Fitness to Study meeting with themselves, the student, parents, HoY/DH and any other professionals working with the student. Support and adjustments may be made at this level and a further set of targets will be created and a review date set. This will run alongside the Academic Support measures in place.

Should it be clear before the review date that the Level 2 FSP is not working, the team may recommend to the APSS/DH that the student move to Level 3 at that point.

When the Level 2 plan is reviewed, where the initial cause of concern has been allayed the student can either remain on Level 2 or be moved down after review and discussion.

This stage may be considered as there is more support and focus on the student. We would give that additional support according to the needs of the student. This is a dynamic process so is adjusted where possible around the student.

If there are significant concerns about the student and we feel that they would benefit from the further adjustments and support at this level, and we are recommending that a student is placed straight into this level, we would seek family involvement, medical and teaching staff input to help us determine if this level is correct and that there is a majority consensus.

Level 3

If after consideration, there is no change or prospect of change in circumstances at Level 2 with significant concerns around the ability to succeed on the course, then Level 3 will be implemented.

Consideration will be made as to whether the student's health can be accommodated in the interim and whether it serves the student's and the Trust's best interest. The APSS/DH recommends 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.

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

In situations of a significant concern, or when emergency interventions appear necessary, a Level 2 or even 3 in the most serious of circumstances may be immediately implemented. This will be after an initial FSP meeting where the appropriate level is determined by all parties involved in the student's education and wellbeing.

At Level 3, the student may be asked to interrupt their attendance and studies until recovery is sufficient and improves. The APSS/DH will make this decision and may seek advice from the team and other members of staff around the student. This may take the form of an agreed period of authorised absence to allow for recovery or a formal withdrawal from the course.

This can become a point where it is no longer in the wellbeing interests of the student to continue with a subject or their studies. The APSS/DH will discuss the best ways forward with the student and their family.

When a student is deemed unlikely to succeed in their studies, owing to absence, they will normally be asked to consider leaving in discussion with all parties.

If any of the following points apply to the causes for a student being asked to leave, then a restart will normally be considered:

- Causes were due to circumstances outside the student's control, such as health.
- Evidence is available to show that causes, such as health, are not likely to trigger a repeat of the problems which occurred (for example because there is a decrease in their acuteness or causes can be better managed).
- Causes are not linked to attitude to learning, motivational or disciplinary problems.

This will all be with a view to a possible re enrolment on an appropriate course in the next academic year subject to the discretion of the Principal/CEO once they have the medical evidence of the student's improved health. Returning students will automatically be subject to FtS.

Please note that only the Principal/CEO can authorise a re-start or a repeated year.

Fitness to Study reviews at each stage

There will be a six weekly review to check the effectiveness of the support and plan. At each review, advice and consultation is sought. We would review support measures at each stage to check if there is anything further in our reasonable adjustments that could help the student.

When the FtS plan (known as FSP) is reviewed, the two outcomes are;

- where the initial cause of concern has been allayed, no further actions under the FtS Policy are required. If the student has managed their condition well, as with all levels, they can be moved down a level including to being monitored as described on page 8.
- if the student is still not able to make progress, in the review it may be deemed to have been unsuccessful and the student will move to a higher level.

Emergencies

The FtS 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 SG team must be informed immediately. If neither is available, the APSS/DH must be contacted by phone or in person.

Examples include:

- unreasonable or dangerous behaviours.
- suicide intent, and or
- significant issues relating to immediate wellbeing.

Tutor involvement and liaison

- The tutor will stay in touch where it doesn't add to the mental or physical health pressures for the student.
- This communication may, at times be led by safeguarding if we feel the student will find it easier.
- This will happen as soon as we have confirmation from the medical / external services that we can do this safely.

This could lead to suspending a student on medical grounds.

Absence due to Medical/ Mental Health

Where a student is in a medical facility with teachers, we would consider ways to support and send work to the teachers following clear assurances that this will not be to the detriment of the student's wellbeing.

Meetings

The Safeguarding team will set a date for review of the FSP and will oversee the progress of the student alongside the HoY. Teachers/tutors will create academic contracts and send information about the student's progress directly to the HoY who will review the FSP. Should it be clear before the review date that the FSP is not effective, the HoY may choose to move to a higher level at that point.

It is important that this flow of information continues, and that the student is closely monitored as well as supported. Therefore, review meetings are held every six weeks unless a more urgent review is required, for example a change in student circumstances which may require a move to a higher level.

Initial Fitness to Study meeting

We send an FSP out to the parent/ carer. This is also reviewed by all professionals involved in the care of the student for comment. An initial FSP meeting is held where the level is agreed and set.

The first meeting can be 45 minutes long in duration and is in person to allow us to discuss the rationale behind our decision to place the student on the FtS process and discuss and agree the level we place them on.

As a guideline, the participants of a FtS meeting will typically be:

- the student
- relevant HoY/DH
- someone to support the student e.g. parent/ carer must attend.
- medical or external professionals supporting student (in person or online)
- member of the Safeguarding team
- ALS if needed

The Trust will not be prescriptive regarding who else attends, but reserves the right not to agree to a particular person's attendance.

Possible and Usual Outcomes of a Fitness to Study Meeting

The desired outcome of all FtS 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 student's wellbeing.

The decisions, effectiveness, and outcomes of all levels of the FtS 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, other relevant procedures may be invoked. Any implementation of the most appropriate procedure will be done in such a way as to place health and welfare concerns at the centre of decision making. The team around the student will be involved with this.

It is essential that parents/ carers alongside medical and external professionals supporting the student are involved in the development of support plans and this is actively encouraged.

Review meetings

These are categorised and booked in accordingly.

No further concerns – 10 -15 minutes via video link

- From Level 1 to a monitoring period of six weeks is led by SG or HoY/ DH. If after six weeks this remains the case, the FtS is removed. The team around the student are informed and it is marked as closed on MyConcern.

Moving up a level – 30 minutes in person

- From Level 1 to Level 2 is led by the Safeguarding team
- From Level 2 to Level 3 is led by HoY
- Direct entry to higher level than 1 is led by HoY/ Safeguarding and supported by APSS/DH

Please note these will be discussed and agreed with the team around the student.

The Trust reserves the right to revert to the Disciplinary Policy where appropriate.

Appeal

The parents/ carers have the right of appeal against any decisions made.

The appeals procedure for the FtS Policy will follow the same guidelines as the Trust.

Complaints Policy

Managing responsibilities within the Fitness to Study Policy

APSS Woodhouse and Trust wide DSL

DH ICLMS

ALS Coordinator

Safeguarding team

Relevant HOY

Data Protection and Confidentiality

The Trust 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.

There may be occasions where The Trust 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 The Trust would be liable to civil or criminal penalty for failure to disclose.

Equal Opportunities

The Trust's commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated through its determination that every student receives a high-quality learning experience which will bring success.

The FtS Policy will be implemented in a manner which maintains everyone's attendance, if possible. If a student is required to interrupt his/ her studies, the Trust will seek to make available opportunities for the student to continue at an appropriate Level in the following year. This could be a repeat year 12 or entry to year 14.

Safeguarding

The Trust will ensure that the FtS processes promote safeguarding of young people.

Related Documents

Academic Support Policy
Attendance Policy
Disciplinary process
Student Code of Conduct
Health and Safety Policy
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Data Protection Statement
Complaints Policy

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