

C5. FITNESS TO STUDY

Key Concepts

The **primary purpose of Fitness to Study is to provide support to undergraduates** who are experiencing health problems (physical or mental) which are impacting their ability to maintain their academic performance. In some cases, students will transfer to the Fitness to Study pathway from a stage of **Academic Performance Monitoring and Support (C6)**.

Fitness to Study means an undergraduate or graduate student's fitness:

- to commence a distinct course of academic study, or
- to continue with their current course of academic study, or
- to return to their current or another course of academic study

and their ability to meet:

- the reasonable academic requirements of the course or programme, and
- the reasonable social and behavioural requirements of a student member (whether resident in college or not) without their physical, mental, emotional or psychological health or state having an unacceptably deleterious impact upon the health, safety and / or welfare of the student and / or other students and / or University or college staff.

The process is supportive and collaborative in nature and aims to ensure that all students are aware of their academic position and are given every opportunity to meet expectations and complete their course successfully.

There are three stages:

1. Initial Action and Informal Meeting
2. Formal Case Review Meeting
3. College Fitness to Study Decision Making Panel

At each stage, students will have the opportunity to explain their circumstances and access appropriate support.

Students who have any questions about any aspects of the processes outlined in the Academic Monitoring Policy are welcome to contact the [Academic Registrar](#) or [Senior Tutor](#) for clarification. If students are invited to attend meetings or panels as part of the Academic Monitoring Procedures they can be accompanied by a member of the College or a representative of Oxford University Student Union.

Stage 1 – Initial Action and Informal Meeting

Purpose

The Informal Meeting is an opportunity for the student to hear and discuss the concerns that have led to a Fitness to Study referral. This meeting is collaborative to create a plan of next steps for the student and the College.

When this stage is used

The Fitness to Study pathway can be triggered when the College is alerted to any of the following concerns:

- A significant deterioration in the apparent health or welfare of a student which may be

evidenced by or which may impact on the student's ability to meet the reasonable academic requirements of their course of study (for example, a persistent inability of a student to submit work or to attend tutorials, classes, lectures, seminars or meetings) or to participate in other normal aspects of the life of a student;

- A student's behaviour causing concern in relation to their own health, safety and welfare;
- A student's behaviour adversely affecting the learning environment or the health, safety and welfare of others.

What happens

The Student Welfare Lead arranges a meeting with the student, usually with a group consisting of:

- The Senior Tutor/Assistant Senior Tutor
- One of the student's academic tutors
- A tutor from the same division
- The Academic Registrar

The meeting will discuss the concerns that led to a referral, and the next steps and timeframe will be agreed.

After the meeting the student will be sent an email confirming:

- Any steps that were agreed
- The responsibilities and expectations of the College, the student and others, including support services
- A timetable for the agreed steps
- The date of a follow-up meeting after a review period.

The student will confirm that the email represents their understanding of what was agreed during the meeting.

At the end of the review period the student will be invited to a follow-up meeting.

What to expect

Agreed next steps for the student may include contacting university support services (e.g. DAS), engaging with health professionals, and meeting regularly with the Senior Tutor.

Support available

Students may be required to engage with the following:

- Regular meetings with the Senior Tutor
- Disability Advisory Service
- Referral to relevant College or University services

Engagement with support may be advisory or required, depending on the situation.

Key points

- If the student is unable or unwilling to engage with the process, they will move to Stage 2 (Formal Case Review Meeting)
- Where there are severe and/or urgent concerns regarding a student's welfare then a student can be progressed to Stage 3 (Fitness to Study Decision Making Panel)
- Should a student consider themselves no longer fit to study, and therefore seek suspension on medical grounds, they should discuss this with the Senior Tutor and/or the Academic Registrar

- If a student was on any stage of Academic Progress Monitoring and Support prior to being placed on Fitness to Study they will continue to receive informal monitoring during the Fitness to Study process.

Possible outcomes

- No further action
- No further action, but additional support arrangements put in place
- Moved to Informal Monitoring under Academic Progress Support and Monitoring (C6)
- Remain at Stage 1 with further steps and timeframes specified
- Progression to Stage 2 (Formal Case Review Meeting)

Stage 2 – Formal Case Review Meeting**Purpose****When this stage is used**

This stage occurs when a student is unable, for whatever reason, to engage with the informal meeting, or when the steps agreed at the informal meeting have failed to improve the situation. What happens

This is a formal meeting held in college arranged by the Senior Tutor. In attendance are:

- The student
- The Chair (someone who has not had significant involvement with the student)
- Members of staff with significant interest in the student's academic progress, health and welfare, typically: the college Welfare Lead, one or more of the student's academic tutors, the Senior Tutor, the Academic Registrar
- The student can choose to be accompanied by a member of the Oxford SU Student Advice Service, a fellow student, or another supporter or advisor. The supporter should not be a member of the student's family unless agreed in advance. Legal advisors are not permitted.

The student receives written notice of the Case Review Meeting, outlining the purpose of it and what referral/request has led to it; and any documents that will be considered at the meeting. The student provides any documents they wish to be considered at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

The student may be asked to undergo a specialist assessment from a qualified practitioner, such as a college doctor or student counsellor. Alternatively, the student may wish to provide the college with specialist advice from their own qualified practitioner. Should the student choose not to undertake a specialist assessment or to disclose the contents of the same, the college may continue based on existing information that they hold.

What to expect

During the meeting the Chair will seek information and opinions from those present to assist discussion.

- The nature and extent of the Fitness to Study concerns will be discussed;
- the student's views and wishes will be heard and taken into account;
- the best way to resolve the Fitness to Study concerns are identified and preferably agreed;
- the likely outcomes if the Fitness to Study concerns are not resolved are identified and

made clear.

An action plan will be agreed to outlining:

- any steps which the student will need to take;
- any support to be provided to the student;
- responsibilities for the steps to be taken and timeframes;
- provision for regular review meetings with the student for the duration of the action plan including at the end of the period agreed;
- the identity of the college and/ or University staff who will undertake the reviews;
- likely consequences of the failure of the action plan to resolve the FtS concerns – this will normally involve a student's FtS being considered at a stage 3 panel.

The Senior Tutor will send the student the recommendations and a concise record of the Formal Case Review meeting within 7 working days from the date of the meeting.

Support available

Students may be required to engage with the following:

- Regular meetings with the Senior Tutor
- Disability Advisory Service
- Referral to relevant College or University services

Key points

- Where there are severe and/or urgent concerns regarding a student's welfare then a student can be progressed to Stage 3 (Fitness to Study Decision Making Panel)
- Should a student consider themselves no longer fit to study, and therefore seek suspension on medical grounds, they should discuss this with the Senior Tutor and/or the Academic Registrar
- If a student was on any stage of Academic Progress Monitoring and Support prior to being placed on Fitness to Study they will continue to receive informal monitoring during the Fitness to Study process.

Possible outcomes

- No further action
- Moved to Informal Monitoring under Academic Progress Support and Monitoring (C8)
- Recommend that reasonable adjustments and/or support are put in place, in the form of a Student Support Plan prepared by the DAS and/or other measures
- Recommend that the student suspend for a period of time
- Recommend to Governing Body that the student withdraw from their course of study.

Stage 3 – College Fitness to Study Decision Making Panel

Purpose

A Decision Making Panel is empowered to decide whether or not the student is fit to study; it may also make a decision or recommendation that the student's continued access to University and college facilities and premises should be subject to certain conditions, or that they should be suspended for a specific, or for an indefinite, period.

When this stage is used

This will happen when there are serious, urgent concerns regarding the student's welfare, or

where the previous stages of Fitness to Study have failed to resolve the concerns.

What happens

The fitness to study Decision Making Panel will comprise of the Chair, and two additional Governing Body Fellows. A Secretary to the fitness to study Decision Making Panel will be required. No member of the Panel should have had significant involvement with the student prior to the referral or request. The student's college tutor/s, the Senior Tutor, and Dean are therefore precluded from participating as one of the three members of the Fitness to Study Decision Making Panel, although they may be asked to attend part of the meeting, as may the college Welfare Lead and Academic Registrar.

The Panel will consider evidence in the form of any documentation previously submitted to stages 1 and 2 of Fitness to Study, and will review any other relevant documentation. The college welfare lead, the Chair of a formal Case Review Meeting and those who have advised orally or in writing at informal or formal meetings may be required to attend a meeting of the Panel as witnesses.

What to expect

The student will receive written notification of the meeting, and can choose to be accompanied by a member of the Oxford SU Student Advice Service, a fellow student, or another supporter or advisor. The supporter should not be a member of the student's family unless agreed in advance. Legal advisors are not permitted.

The student should inform the Chair of the Decision Making Panel who they will be accompanied by at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting.

A Decision Making Panel is empowered to decide whether or not the student is fit to study; it may also make a decision or recommendation that the student's continued access to University and college facilities and premises should be subject to certain conditions, or that they should be suspended for a specific, or for an indefinite, period.

Possible outcomes

- Recommend that the student suspend for a period of time
- Recommend to Governing Body that the student withdraw from their course of study.

Key points

- The decision of a Panel is final and marks the completion of the procedure concerning fitness to study. The student will receive a Completion of Procedures letter from the College, which will be required should they decide to take this final decision to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
- If a student was on any stage of Academic Progress Monitoring and Support prior to being placed on Fitness to Study they will continue to receive informal monitoring during the Fitness to Study process.

Flowchart

The chart below summarises the Academic Monitoring Procedures. Please note that, where it is deemed appropriate, stages outlined in the chart can be 'leap-frogged' rather than progressing in order.

