



Fitness to Study Policy & Procedure

2025- 2027

Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. City of Wolverhampton College is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes the mental health and well-being of all students and apprentices.
- 1.2. The College recognises that it has a duty of care for its students and apprentices and takes a positive approach to supporting students and apprentices' health and wellbeing in relation to their learning, academic achievement and wider student and apprentice experience. The overarching approach of this policy and procedure is to promote a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and study. This procedure links with other policies and procedures of the college and in particular our Student Positive Behaviour Policy, Student Attendance & Punctuality Policy and Procedure, and Safeguarding Policy & Procedures.
- 1.3. Fitness to study relates to a student's or apprentices' capacity to participate fully as in relation to all aspects of their academic studies and student or apprentice life in the context of their health or wellbeing.
- 1.4. The purpose of this policy is to support the College to take a fair and consistent approach in circumstances where students are unable to meet course requirements, including in terms of attendance, participation in class or completion of work, or the expectations of the College's student code of conduct due to their health and wellbeing. This process is intended to allow the College to manage concerns fairly and transparently, in cooperation with students and apprentices where possible, under a published process and as an alternative to other College processes.
- 1.5. The procedures will apply in situations where a student or apprentices' health or wellbeing will have or is having a detrimental impact on their ability to progress academically and function effectively at college. It is intended to ensure an appropriate and co-ordinated response in situations where:
 - Concerns arise over a perceived fitness to study
 - Prompt action/intervention is deemed necessary
 - Other internal procedures (e.g. those relating to academic performance or the Student Code of Conduct) are considered to be less appropriate or have already been exhausted.

2. Scope

- 2.1. In the context of this policy the term Fitness to Practice encompasses both conduct and good health in determining a student's or apprentices' suitability for the particular programme or qualification.
- 2.2. This policy applies to relevant students and apprentices throughout their period of registration on their programme or qualification with City of Wolverhampton College. Programmes or qualifications require students and apprentices to demonstrate not only academic ability but appropriate commitment to their chosen profession at the point of admission.
- 2.3. Those studying these programmes or qualifications must be aware that their actions and behaviour whilst at College, or on placement/setting, and in their personal and social lives may have an impact on their fitness to practice their chosen profession.
- 2.4. Fitness to practice refers to a student or apprentices' suitability to engage in professional practice, considering their conduct, health, and ability to meet the professional standards expected by relevant regulatory bodies. This will be assessed continuously.

3. Invoking Fitness to Study Procedures

- 3.1. This policy should be used in circumstances where a student or apprentices fitness to study gives cause for concern and other procedures are not considered appropriate at that time or have already been exhausted. Withdrawing the student or apprentice from their programme or qualification or a break in learning, will be a last resort and will only be considered after all mechanisms for support have been exhausted.

Examples of such situations (but are not limited to) include:

- When a student or apprentice support needs exceed the type or level that the College can reasonably provide.
- When a student or apprentices' behaviour adversely affects College activities or a placement provider, suggesting potential underlying mental health concerns.
- When medical or health conditions prevent a student or apprentice from participating in essential active learning.
- When a student or apprentice poses a risk to their own or others' health, safety, or well-being.
- When there are indications that a student or apprentice may be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- When a student or apprentices' behaviour negatively impacts their own academic progression, that of their peers, or the overall teaching and learning environment.
- When serious concerns regarding a student or apprentice arise from a third party, indicating a need to assess their fitness to study.
- When a student or apprentice communicates concerns to a member of college staff, signalling a need to address their fitness to study.

- When there is evidence of significant non-engagement with studies that has not been resolved through other interventions.
- When prior applications of the Fitness to Study Policy have resulted in a recurrence or escalation of behavioural concerns.
- When offers of welfare and well-being support have not been accepted, and concerning behaviours persist or escalate.
- When a student or apprentices' engagement with the College counselling service reveals a serious risk of harm to themselves or others, which cannot be adequately managed through internal support frameworks, and the student or apprentice does not pursue external assistance.
- When disciplinary procedures have previously been enacted for related concerns.

3.2. In taking action under these procedures, the College will be mindful of the sensitive and confidential nature of fitness to study matters and its obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and Equality Act 2010.

4. General Principals

- 4.1. Students or apprentices' are encouraged to seek appropriate practical and specialist support to manage and where possible, mitigate the matters which give rise to concerns actioned.
- 4.2. All matters will be dealt with according to the individual circumstances. Whilst seeking to ensure consistency of approach and application, the College reserves the right in exceptional cases to vary from the prescribed procedures where it deems it necessary to do so in the interests of fairness and/or health and safety.
- 4.3. When a student or apprentice is asked to attend a meeting which has been called to discuss or consider their fitness to study, they are entitled to be accompanied or represented by another person, supporting their specialist support needs. The College does not permit students to be legally represented at such meetings.
- 4.4. In the event that a student or apprentice is unwilling or unable to attend a meeting or participate in any other aspect of the procedure, the College may still follow the procedure and/or reach decisions in connection with the fitness to study where it is reasonable to do so and having taken account of the reason for non-engagement. The College may also deal with concerns based on written reports and/or statements in the absence.

5. Initial Actions

- 5.1. This policy sets out three distinct stages and at any point in the fitness to study procedure, the College may need to consider a break in learning for a student or apprentice where there are serious concerns about the health, safety and wellbeing or those around them, or serious harm to the College's reputation. This decision will be formed by a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 5.2. At all stages, a member of college Safeguarding Team will act as the Case Officer.
- 5.3. The timeframes outlined in the Student Positive Behaviour Policy and Conduct Procedure for Students will be used to invoke this policy.

6. Emergency Situations

- 6.1. In situations where a student is displaying extreme distress, immediate action should be taken to contact the College's Safeguarding Team aligned to the Mental Health First Aid Team. For apprentices, the apprentices line manager and the employers Safeguarding Lead should be contacted. For students with partners, it would be their Safeguarding Lead.
- 6.2. If emergency assistance is required due to a student or apprentice posing an extreme risk of harming themselves or others, the Emergency Services should be contacted and College's Safeguarding Team informed to ensure that follow-up contact is made as appropriate

7. Procedures

7.1. Stage 1: Informal

Upon the identification of concerns regarding fitness to study, the Curriculum Manager or Sector Lead for Apprentices shall convene a meeting to discuss the nature of these concerns, supported by a Progress Coaches for students on a study programme or an assessor for apprentices.

The student will be informed of the specific concerns raised and will be encouraged to articulate their perspective on the matter.

The Curriculum Manager will pursue informal discussions aimed at resolving the identified issues. Support services offered by the College may be suggested, including but not limited to:

- Referral to external organisations or healthcare professionals, if deemed appropriate.
- Discussion of potential academic arrangements or additional support mechanisms to facilitate effective study.

- For those aged 16-18, the Curriculum Manager will notify the student parents/carers to inform them of the concerns and any subsequent (if consent is given by the student).
- A review period shall be established, with a duration not exceeding two college weeks from the date of the meeting, to assess progress.
- Depending on the severity of the concerns, the Curriculum Manager may either continue with the informal resolution process or escalate the matter to Stage 2

7.2. Stage 2: Formal

If the issues raised are of sufficient concern, and/or if informal actions have not resulted in the improvement needed, the Curriculum Manager, will raise a Learning Contract as outlined in the Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedure for Students Procedures. This contract will be recorded formally on the learner's EBS profile and will contain:

- Details of the concerns around the learner's fitness to study.
- Current actions by the college, learner, parents/carers, healthcare professionals or other relevant bodies in relation to the current fitness to study concerns.
- A timescale for review and resolution. This should be no more than 4 College weeks from the date of the meeting.

Additional interim meetings may also be scheduled to monitor the situation and progress made. The Curriculum Manager and other relevant College staff should help the student access the support available to enable them to continue with their studies as agreed. The expectation is, however, that the student will take personal responsibility and fully engage with the support plan put in place by all parties.

If the concerns have not been addressed and support not sought, or sufficient progress has not been made, this will move to the next stage of the process.

7.3. Stage 3: Fitness To Study Review

Whilst every effort will be made to follow through the three distinct stages, the College will use its own discretion, depending on risks, to move to stage 3 straightaway. This decision will be reached by a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT). If concerns remain despite previous stages of intervention, a review panel meeting will be held to determine the next course of action. Attendees at this meeting may include:

- Head of Curriculum
- Safeguarding Practitioner
- Any external organisations (agreed in advance)
- In addition for apprentices, the Employers Safeguarding Lead

- In addition for learners with partner provision, the Partners Safeguarding Lead

The purpose of the review panel is to assess the students or apprentices' fitness to study their programme or qualification and decide on the next course of action in the best interest of all parties. The College may seek additional information in the form of assessments from medical professionals or other relevant bodies. If appropriate the student or apprentices' parents/carers may be invited to attend the meeting.

The outcomes of the meeting will be communicated to the student and apprentices and/or parents/carers or to professionals supporting the students. On occasions the College may apply discretion to only inform parents/professionals.

Outcomes, but not limited to:

- No further action required
- To recommend specific further academic or pastoral support arrangements are put in place to assist with on-going support
- To implement a revised programme of study
- To recommend a specific academic arrangement be put in place which may include an agreed break in learning with a time set restart or a view that the student should be required to withdraw.

The review panel will endeavour in the first instance to reach agreement with the student or apprentice on such arrangements.

8. Right Of Appeal

- 8.1. If a student or apprentice wishes to appeal the outcome of a Stage 3, they need to appeal within 5 working days of the outcome. The appeal will outline the reason/s why they are appealing and supply new additional evidence to support their appeal against the decision made. Any appeal that does not clearly state the grounds or has additional evidence to take into account, may be denied and concluded.
- 8.2. The appeal is submitted in writing to quality@wolvcoll.ac.uk and is acknowledged. The role of an investigator will be assumed by an Executive Management Team member.
- 8.3. The investigator has 10 working days to complete the investigation. The time period may need to be extended, however the individual will be kept informed.
 - If the **appeal is not upheld** – an outcome letter is sent. This concludes with the appeal and fitness to study process.
 - If the **appeal is upheld** – the Executive management Team member will form suitable actions for the student/apprentice with the relevant Head of Curriculum.