



# ***Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure: Guidance for Students***

*'Fitness to Study' relates to your ability as a student to take part fully and satisfactorily in your studies and university life in general.*

*This summary of the Fitness to Study policy and procedure aims to give you a breakdown of what the procedure involves. If you're involved in this procedure, a member of staff will talk you through the [full policy document](#).*

## ***Procedure***

*The Fitness to Study procedure is intended to be a supportive process which focuses on the welfare of students. A member of staff on your course or Faculty of Study may use this procedure if they have concerns around your welfare, behaviour and/or engagement with university life, which can't be resolved through other university policies and or procedures. If you are involved in the procedure, guidance and support are available to you from your Faculty and the Wellbeing Hub team at every stage of the process.*

*At all stages of the Fitness to Study process, students will be invited to participate. Where a student does not engage or is unable to attend meetings, the University may proceed in their absence, provided reasonable steps have been taken to facilitate their involvement*

### ***Level 1: Initial and or/ emerging concern***

*Concerns can be raised by a member of staff. Once a concern has been raised, staff in your School e.g. a member of staff who is known to you, such as your Personal Tutor or a module leader, will look to address the concern informally and supportively in the first instance. They will contact you directly and request a meeting. They will usually keep a written record of what is discussed at the meeting.*

*Your Personal Tutor, Programme Director, Dean and Faculty Registrar will usually be notified that a meeting has taken place to discuss a concern.*

### ***Level 2: Serious and/or continuing concern***

*Level 2 of the process is where there are further or ongoing concerns around your welfare and fitness to study, which have not been resolved through Level 1 of the process.*

*A Level 2 meeting is more formal than a Level 1 meeting. The meeting should involve people who have a direct link or support role to you, as well as a senior member of staff in your School to lead this stage of the process. See Annex A for an overview of this level.*

*You will be invited to a meeting by your Faculty Registrar to review and address any ongoing or emerging concerns. At this meeting, you and the relevant staff will agree an action plan, including clear timescales for review. The potential consequences of not meeting the agreed*

*actions or timelines will also be explained. In line with University processes, a member of the Wellbeing Hub will be notified, as such cases are typically discussed within Students of Concern (SOC) meetings; however, as outlined in the policy, the Lead Mentor will retain oversight of the process.*

*The Faculty Registrar will monitor your progress in conjunction with the Programme Director. If the concerns are not resolved by the recommended and agreed actions, the next level may be instigated.*

### **Level 3: Persistent and/or critical concern**

*Level 3 of the procedure will be instigated where there are serious/ ongoing concerns and significant risks to your own and/or other's safety, and or the University property, or its reputation, if you were to continue with your studies. See Annex B for an overview of this level.*

*Your Faculty and/or Dean will be responsible for this stage of the process. The Level 3 meeting will usually involve the Faculty and/or Dean, the Faculty Registrar, the Head of Student Services, your Personal Tutor and other representatives, as appropriate to the case. The aim of the meeting is to determine whether you can continue with your studies at that time or not.*

*In some cases, serious and ongoing safeguarding concerns may be identified through the Wellbeing Hub, Safeguarding processes, or external agencies, rather than through a Faculty-led process.*

*Where a formal risk assessment identifies a high and unacceptable risk that cannot be adequately mitigated within the University environment, the University may initiate or proceed directly under Level 3 of the Fitness to Study procedure, without prior progression through earlier levels.*

*In such cases, the decision-making, panel, and review arrangements applicable to Level 3 will apply in full.*

*Any decision to suspend or terminate studies will be made in accordance with the University's governance arrangements, including approval by the Registrar or Vice-Chancellor as appropriate*

### **Review of Level 3 Outcome**

- 1. Where the outcome of Fitness to Study Level 3 is termination of studies, the student has the right to request a review of that decision.*
- 2. A request for review must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of the date of the outcome letter and sent to [student.conduct@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:student.conduct@buckingham.ac.uk)*
- 3. A review will be considered only on the following grounds:*
  - a) Procedural irregularity which materially affected the decision;*
  - b) Bias or failure to reach a reasonable decision;*
  - c) New material evidence which could not reasonably have been provided at the time;*
  - d) That the decision was clearly disproportionate to the risks identified;*

4. *Council will first determine whether the request for review meets one or more of the stated grounds. Where no grounds are upheld, the review will be dismissed without further consideration.*
5. *Reviews of Level 3 termination decisions will be considered by Council, in accordance with the University's governance arrangements for expulsion decisions.*
6. *The reviewing body will consider the documentation generated during the Fitness to Study process and the student's written submission. Reviews will normally be conducted by way of a document-based review and will not involve a rehearing of the case*
7. *The reviewing body may decide to:*
  - a) *Uphold the original decision;*
  - b) *Uphold the decision with modification;*
  - c) *Overturn the decision;*
8. *The outcome of the review will be communicated to the student in writing. Once a decision has been reached, the University will normally notify the student of the outcome within 10 working days. Where the decision is upheld, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued, confirming that the University's internal processes have concluded and outlining the student's right to seek independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).*

### **Return to Study**

*If the outcome results in temporary time away from study, a further review meeting will be needed to determine your fitness to return.*

- *Before returning to study, you should demonstrate that there have been improvements relating to the original concerns.*
- *Where the outcome is suspension or temporary withdrawal due to significant physical or mental health difficulties, medical evidence that you are fit to return may be required.*
- *The Head of Student Services (or nominee) should be consulted as part of the return to study decision and will provide oversight to ensure appropriate wellbeing support and reasonable adjustments are in place, including alignment with any existing Students of Concern or Fitness to Study considerations.*

*The Wellbeing Hub can advise on the support available to help you transition back to study and on any impact on your student funding. The team can also support you throughout the process and can be contacted during office hours or at [wellbeinghub@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeinghub@buckingham.ac.uk).*

*In deciding when you can return, your Faculty or Dean will consider how much has already been covered on your programme and how much content or knowledge has or will be missed. In some cases, your re-entry may need to be deferred to the next academic year.*

**Annex A: Flowchart Level 2 (serious and/or continuing concerns)**

*Formal intervention to be used where Level 1 has not been successful, or the concern is sufficiently serious or persistent enough to be dealt with informally.*

*Start: Escalation from Level 1*

- *Ongoing or unresolved concerns identified*
  - *Formal Level 2 process initiated by Faculty*
  - *Student invited to Level 2 meeting (via Faculty Registrar)*
  - *Level 2 Meeting held with relevant staff*
  - *Concerns and support needs discussed*
  - *Action plan agreed (expectations, support, timescales)*
  - *Student engages with action plan*
  - *Progress monitored by Faculty Registrar and Programme Director*
- *Decision: Has the student met the action plan?*
  - **If Yes** → *Concerns resolved and case closed*
  - **If No** → *Escalation to Level 3*

NOTE: *Approved outcome(s) and notes of steps taken throughout the process to be kept by Faculty Mitigating Circumstances Committee for record keeping - see Fitness to Study procedure, section 3.2.*

### **Annex B: Flowchart Level 3 (persistent and/or critical concern)**

*Formal intervention where the University believes a student poses a significant risk to the health, safety and/ or wellbeing of themselves, others and or University property, or its reputation and a type of suspension or termination of studies is typically the recommended outcome.*

*Start: Escalation from Level 2, or direct progression due to immediate high-risk concern*

- *Significant risk identified (student, others, or University)*
  - *Level 3 process initiated by Faculty/Dean*
  - *Student invited to Level 3 panel*
  - *Where a student does not attend or engage, the panel may proceed based on the information available*
  - *Panel convened (Dean, Registrar, Head of Student Services, others)*
  - *Full case review (risk, history, engagement)*
  
- *Decision: Can the student continue safely?*
  - **If Yes** → *Continue with conditions and monitoring*
  - **If Temporary Withdrawal** → *Suspension with return conditions*
  - **If No** → *Termination of studies*
  - *Outcome communicated in writing*
  
- *Right to request review within 10 working days:*
  - *Review considers fairness, evidence, and proportionality*
  - *Final outcome: uphold, modify, or overturn*
  - *End of process (Completion of Procedures issued if applicable)*

NOTE: *Approved outcome(s) and notes of steps taken throughout the process to be kept by Faculty Mitigating Circumstances Committee for record keeping - see Fitness to Study procedure, section 3.2.*