



Fitness to Study Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Christ the Redeemer College recognises that the transition to College life involves developmental and cognitive challenges that for some students may become overwhelming. This can affect both those students who have a pre-existing recognised mental health condition and those who do not. A student's engagement with academic study may be impeded and/or the student may exhibit behaviour that causes concern for fellow students, academic or other College staff.
- 1.2 A student's behaviour may also breach acceptable standards of conduct and the College reserves the right to decide the appropriate procedure to use in any given student case.
- 1.3 As a general rule, this policy is only intended for use in cases in which the behaviour, disruption, or risk presented by the student is perceived to be of a serious or potentially serious nature. Where possible, the support services available to students should be used in the first instance and prior to taking any formal action. It should be remembered that a mental health condition may meet the legal definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010. The College is mindful of its obligations to avoid discrimination on the grounds of disability.
- 1.4 Fitness to study, as a term, relates to the entire student experience, encompassing ability to engage with studying, to live independently and harmoniously with others, and not to have an adverse impact on others.
- 1.5 A student's fitness to study may be questioned if any of the following arise:
- Health problems disrupt a student's own study;
 - Health problems affect the study of other students;
 - Health problems place unreasonable demands on staff or other students.
- 1.6 The College has a duty of care to its community and is bound by health and safety legislation, which means it is obliged to take action if a student presents a risk to themselves or others.
- 1.7 The College's fitness to study procedure has three stages. Depending upon the perceived severity of the situation and seriousness of any perceived risks, action may be initiated at any of these three stages. They reflect the seriousness of the risk presented by the student and their responsiveness to interventions from the College. If the student fails to co-operate or absents themselves from engaging with the College at any point in the procedure, the College may continue with the process in their absence.
- 1.8 If concerns are raised whilst a student is undertaking work-based learning, where the College's ability to engage with the student may be limited, the College will discuss with the work-based learning provider alternative arrangements that might address any concerns. If concerns raised are of a serious nature, the College may recommend to the work-based learning provider that the student is removed.
- 1.9 A student will be given 7 calendar days' notice of any case review meetings and will have the right to be accompanied by an appropriate individual. They will also be provided with copies of the relevant documentation.
- 1.10 In cases where the College requires a specialist medical opinion on the student, a student may be asked to submit themselves for a medical examination by a doctor/specialist nominated by the College. A medical assessment will seek to establish the following:

- The nature and extent of any medical condition that the student is experiencing;
- The prognosis of their medical condition;
- The extent to which it affects their ability to study within the College community;
- The impact or risk it may have on others;
- The level and type of support a student requires to enable them to continue to study effectively.

1.11 In the informal stages, the College may keep a student under review and require them to access / engage with the support provided.

1.12 In the formal stage of the procedure, the College may:

- Require the student to suspend their studies;
- Withdraw the student where the risk posed by the student to themselves or others is considered serious enough; or
- Take other action the College deems appropriate to the circumstances.

1.13 A student will have the right of appeal against any decision to suspend or withdraw them from the College, using the standard College appeals procedure.

1.14 The College acknowledges that, as a result of implementing this policy, it will receive personal data of a confidential nature pertaining to the student and it undertakes that all data will be handled, processed and stored appropriately in accordance with the College's Data Protection Policy.

1.15 When an action plan or other measure taken under this procedure has come to an end, the College will decide whether further steps should be taken or whether the fitness to study procedure is no longer required in respect of the student. The procedure may be re-invoked if concerns arise again.

1.16 Return to study after a period of suspension of studies will be subject to a satisfactory outcome from a return to study case review.

2. Stage 1 – Emerging Concerns

2.1 At this stage, concerns will have been raised about an individual student's health, safety and/or mental wellbeing. Examples of this could include the following:

- A member of staff notices signs of an individual student's behaviour changing in the context of learning, teaching and/or assessment;
- Friends of a student may have approached College staff to raise concerns about a student's behaviour;
- A student's academic performance has deteriorated suddenly and significantly;
- Problems arise within a work-based learning environment and are noticed by work-based learning staff.

2.2 At this stage, the emphasis should be on approaching the student in a supportive manner. It is preferable that a member of staff with primary responsibility or knowledge of the individual student such as a tutor or student support officer should approach them for an informal interview.

2.3 The nature of the concerns should be clearly identified to the student and the student should be encouraged to discuss the issues. Information regarding sources of support, both internal and external to the College, may be discussed and the student encouraged to access this. College staff more widely will usually only be informed that the student is currently subject to the Fitness to Study procedure, with the details remaining confidential.

2.4 A nominated member of staff should informally review the case within a specified timeframe and monitor the student's response to the intervention. If the student responds positively and there are no further

concerns, the staff member may decide not to proceed any further action under the Fitness to Study procedure.

2.5 In light of the student not responding positively, the nominated staff member will discuss the situation with the relevant programme leader and the Rector or Academic Director and/or other senior members of staff as deemed appropriate. At this point stage two of the procedure will be invoked.

2.6 At this initial stage, student behaviour that is a matter of concern may be more appropriately dealt with under one or more of the College's other policies, such as the Prevent Policy, the Bullying and Harassment Policy and/or the Code of Discipline and Student Disciplinary Policy. If the behaviour that is causing concern relates to poor participation and/or unsatisfactory academic performance, the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy may be used. At this stage the matter shall be referred to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with.

3. Stage 2 – Continuing / Formal Concerns

3.1 At this stage, continuing concerns about the student's health, safety or mental wellbeing will be considered more formally.

3.2 The student will be asked to meet formally with at least two of the following staff members: the Programme Leader, the Rector or Academic Director, another senior member of staff. At this meeting, the student's self-perception of the impact of their ill health and/or behaviour is having upon themselves or the general College community should be ascertained.

3.3 A Fitness to Study Agreement and Action Plan shall be put in place to address the situation. The Action Plan shall specify the actions, dates for review and consequences for non-engagement with the agreement. It shall include expectations for future behaviour. This will not affect the rights of the College to determine appropriate standards for the academic performance of the individual student.

3.4 A record of the meeting shall be made and copies of the meeting notes, the Fitness to Study Agreement and Action Plan shall be provided to the student and the members of staff concerned.

3.5 Should the student not respond positively to the Action Plan and problems continue, the matter will be referred for a Formal Case Review.

4. Stage 3 – Formal Case Review

4.1 If significant or persistent concerns are raised about an individual student's actions or behaviour(s) that put the student's own health, safety, wellbeing, academic progress, and/or those of other members of the College community at significant risk, the Rector or Academic Director or another senior member of staff shall convene a Formal Case Review Panel to assess the student's fitness to study.

4.2 The panel will consist of some or all of the following (or their nominees):

- Rector
- Academic Director
- Programme Leader
- A medical representative
- Relevant professionals as advised by the College's Prevent Officer (where applicable)
- A representative from a student's work-based learning provider (where applicable)
- Other relevant College staff members (e.g. tutor)

- 4.3 This panel may request medical evidence from the student that confirms they are fit to study. The student is entitled to bring a representative with them when they attend the meeting.
- 4.4 The Formal Case Review Panel will determine the most appropriate course of action to take, which is likely to include one of the following options:
- An enhanced action plan to support the student, with agreed review dates;
 - A temporary suspension of the student's studies;
 - Withdrawal from study; or
 - That no further action is required.
- 4.4 The Panel may also decide to refer the matter to an external body or agency, and/or to make recommendations to a work-based learning provider where appropriate.
- 4.5 Following the review, the student will be invited to meet with the Rector or Academic Director and/or Programme Leader and other appropriate people to discuss the recommended actions from the fitness to study case review. The student will be able to bring another person for support to this meeting.

5. Return to Study

- 5.1 Any suspension of studies will be subject to periodic review in the light of further developments or improvements in the student's situation and their ability to re-engage with their programme of study.
- 5.2 Where there is a request from a student to return from a period of suspension of studies, a further case conference will be convened to determine whether or not the student is fit to return to study. The panel membership will be on the same basis as that set out for the Formal Case Review. Sufficient evidence will be required to verify that the student is fit to return to study.

6. Appeal

- 6.1 Students may appeal any decision taken under this policy through the College academic appeals procedure.

7. Approval and Review

Title: Fitness to Study Policy

Approved with reference to: QAA Quality Code, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher Education – The Good Practice Framework: Handling Student Complaints and Academic Appeals.

Version: 2020.1. **Approved:** January 2021. **Implementation from:** January 2021. **Next review:** August 2021.

Approving body: Academic Board. **Member of staff responsible:** Rector.