

Fitness to Study Policy and Procedural Guidance

September 2025

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Approved by the Board of Governors

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1. Introduction

1.1 UK Business College (UKBC) is committed to supporting the wellbeing of all students as they strive to achieve their academic, professional, and personal potential. This policy provides clear guidelines and procedures for interventions required to support students who may cause significant concern and/or present a risk to themselves or others, which may adversely impact their academic progress, engagement, or success.

1.2 There is growing recognition among higher education providers and professional bodies of the importance of responding effectively and compassionately to situations where indicators of illness, mental health difficulties, psychological distress, or personal crisis have a serious effect on a student's ability to function or participate safely and productively within the College community. Such challenges can also affect the wellbeing of peers and staff.

1.3 UK Business College is committed to fostering an inclusive and transparent learning environment that supports access, participation, and achievement for students from diverse backgrounds. This policy aligns with that commitment, ensuring that appropriate support, adjustments, and interventions are implemented when a student's health or behaviour gives rise to significant concern.

2. Principles and Scope of Policy

2.1 UKBC has a statutory and moral duty of care to respond appropriately when substantial concerns arise regarding a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour that may affect their own safety, their ability to study effectively, or the safety and wellbeing of others in the College community. This policy complements the College's Reasonable Adjustment Policy and supports an inclusive, fair, and consistent approach to managing such circumstances.

2.2 This policy provides guidance for staff on managing situations that fall outside other College policies yet require sensitive and coordinated action. It applies to cases where a student's physical or mental health, or a deterioration in an existing condition, results in behaviour that negatively affects their engagement, academic performance, or relationships within the College.

2.3 The Fitness to Study Policy should be invoked when there are serious concerns that a student's ability to participate in the academic lifecycle (including attendance, assessment, and progression) is significantly impaired by health or wellbeing issues. It may also be applied as an alternative to disciplinary procedures in cases where the underlying cause of concerning behaviour is linked to a medical, psychological, or disability-related condition.

2.4 This policy must be read in conjunction with related institutional frameworks, including the Student Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

3. Rationale for the Policy

3.1 It is essential for staff to distinguish whether behaviour that causes concern is linked to a diagnosed illness, disability, or a deterioration in physical or mental health, rather than viewing it as purely behavioural or disciplinary.

3.2 This policy enhances existing student support mechanisms by ensuring a consistent, proportionate, and compassionate response to complex situations. It is designed to guide staff in identifying when intervention is necessary, what form that intervention should take, and how best to engage the student and relevant support services.

3.3 The aim is to ensure that all actions are non-judgmental, transparent, and supportive, prioritising both the welfare of the individual student and the wellbeing of the wider College community.

4. Objectives of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is:

4.1 To provide clear guidance to staff on how to manage situations that cause significant concern regarding a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour.

4.2 To enable academic and professional support staff to determine an appropriate response in situations where disciplinary procedures are not suitable, and where a supportive rather than punitive approach is required.

4.3 To promote a coordinated, cross-departmental approach when a student's physical or mental health prevents them from engaging effectively with their studies, or adversely affects others.

4.4 To help academic staff, support services, and Personal Academic Tutors recognise the boundaries of the support they can provide and when it is appropriate to refer the student to internal or external specialist services.

4.5 To provide clear signposting for staff to relevant sources of advice, guidance, and support.

4.6 To ensure reasonable adjustments are identified, implemented, and reviewed in line with the student's individual needs.

4.7 To safeguard the wellbeing of both students and staff involved in managing or supporting students under this policy.

4.8 To ensure that interventions and outcomes are justified, evidence-based, and aligned with the procedures of relevant academic partners and professional standards.

5. Safeguarding and Emergency Situations

5.1 While emergency situations are rare, UKBC adopts an anticipatory approach to ensure that its duty of care is exercised consistently, sensitively, and effectively.

5.2 This policy does not replace immediate safeguarding or emergency procedures. If a student's behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or others, staff must follow the College's Safeguarding and Emergency Response Procedures without delay. The relevant senior leadership team must be informed, and emergency services should be contacted where necessary.

5.3 Examples of emergency situations include:

- A student expressing suicidal intent or self-harm ideation.
- Behaviour posing an immediate physical threat to others.
- Severe psychological distress resulting in a crisis situation.

5.4 In such cases, priority should be given to the immediate safety of the individual and those around them.

6. Ongoing and Emerging Concerns

6.1 When a member of academic staff, Personal Academic Tutor, Course Leader, or a third party becomes concerned that a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour is affecting their academic engagement, attendance, or progress, the matter should be referred promptly to Student Support Services.

6.2 Student Support Services will coordinate appropriate interventions, which may include:

- Assessment of existing support arrangements.
- Review of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) and Reasonable Adjustments.
- Implementation or revision of a Personal Learner Support Plan.

6.3 The Personal Academic Tutor and Student Support Services will jointly monitor the situation and ensure the student is aware of available internal and external support. 6.4

Ongoing communication with the student will be maintained to monitor progress and review the need for further intervention.

7. Fitness to Study Panel

7.1 In most cases, Fitness to Study concerns will be resolved informally at campus level through coordinated support and regular progress meetings. Only in exceptional or serious circumstances will a Fitness to Study Panel be convened.

7.2 Before convening a panel, the student may be invited to discuss a voluntary temporary suspension of studies to enable recovery or access to medical support. This discussion will involve the student, Course Leader, and a member of Student Support Services.

7.3 If issues remain unresolved, or if there are escalating concerns regarding a student's health, safety, or engagement, a Fitness to Study Panel may be convened. Supporting evidence (e.g., medical reports, academic records, incident reports) must be compiled before this decision.

7.4 The decision to convene a panel rests with the Associate Dean, who will notify the student in writing within three working days. The panel will be convened and chaired by the Associate Dean within ten working days of the decision.

Panel membership may include:

- The Associate Dean (Chair)
- A representative from Student Support Services
- The student's Course Leader or Academic Tutor
- A member of academic or professional services staff with relevant expertise
- (If required) a member of the Executive Committee or their delegate

7.5 External professional advice (e.g., from medical or mental health specialists) may be sought where appropriate.

7.6 The student has the right to attend the meeting and may be accompanied by a friend, student representative, or member of the Students' Union (but not a legal representative acting in a professional capacity).

7.7 The panel will consider all available information and may decide on one or more of the following outcomes:

- Implementation of an enhanced support plan.

- Temporary suspension of studies (defined or undefined period).
- Return-to-study conditions.
- Permanent withdrawal or exclusion in exceptional circumstances.

7.8 The student will receive the panel's decision in writing within five working days.

8. Right to Appeal

8.1 If a student disagrees with the Panel's decision, they have the right to appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Head of Registry within ten working days of receiving the decision.

8.2 The Associate Dean will convene an Appeals Committee comprising three independent members drawn from academic and support staff, who were not involved in the original decision. The Appeals Committee will meet within fifteen working days of receiving the appeal.

8.3 The committee may invite relevant individuals to attend for clarification. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be communicated in writing to all relevant parties within three working days and will represent the final stage of the process.

9. Data Protection

9.1 UKBC is fully committed to protecting personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). All information shared under this policy will be treated confidentially and only disclosed on a strict need-to-know basis.

9.2 Data will be processed fairly, transparently, and securely, and in accordance with existing institutional policies on confidentiality, information sharing, and safeguarding.

10. Monitoring

10.1 The UKBC Registry is responsible for maintaining records of Fitness to Study cases that are formally reported, including the nature of concerns, actions taken, and outcomes.

10.2 An annual summary of cases will be compiled at the end of each academic year and reviewed by the Quality Manager or designated officer. Trends, lessons learned, and recommendations for policy improvement will be reported to the College's Board of Governors for review and approval.

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