



**UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMY 92**  
MANCHESTER

**Fitness/Support to Study  
Policy and Procedure**

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<b>REVISION HISTORY</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Revision description/Summary of changes</b>	<b>Author</b>
2	2 July 2021	Reviewed based on lessons learned from previous fitness to study cases. Changes include	Student Well-being & Disability Manager

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		change of procedure to include more significant student involvement in decision making process, amending panel membership, and more detail re return to study process, amending name of policy/procedure and addition of 'urgent situations' section.	
2.1	27 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Updating job titles and area categories. Addition of 'apprentices' into policy body.	Student Administration Assistant

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1 Outline what 'fitness to study' is.
- 1.2 Identify when the fitness/support to study procedure should be used.
- 1.3 Provide a clear and supportive procedure to address concerns relating to a student's or apprentice's fitness to study.
- 1.4 Provide clear guidance in relation to emergency and urgent situations where individuals may be at risk (please also see 'Safeguarding Policy').

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all registered students and apprentices registered on a UA92 course. Any reference to students from this point includes apprentices.
- 2.2 There is a potential overlap between this policy and other UA92 policies (see section 7; 'Related Documentation'). UA92 reserves the right to suspend action under this procedure if it considers that the matter would be more appropriately dealt with under another policy/procedure.
- 2.3 In this policy and procedure, any reference to named members of UA92 staff also includes reference to their nominee and named staff may delegate their responsibilities to other appropriate members of staff without invalidating the procedure. The identity of nominees or members of staff to whom responsibilities are delegated will be notified to the student or apprentice.
- 2.4 Advice on how to use this policy and procedure is available from the UA92 Student Well-being and Disability Manager.
- 2.5 UA92 will keep a record of any Fitness/Support to Study cases and evidence collated as part of the investigation into a student's fitness to study. Students or apprentices are advised to also keep their own records. Records will be retained in line with the UA92 retention policy.

## 3. Policy statements

- 3.1 UA92 is committed to supporting students and apprentices and recognises the importance of their health and well-being in relation to their academic progress and wider student experience.

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- 3.2 The fitness/support to study procedure is a supportive process, intended to be used when a student's health or well-being may be having a detrimental impact on the health, safety, well-being or learning of the student and/or others in the UA92 community.
- 3.3 UA92 is committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment for all and has a duty of care to respond appropriately where there are concerns relating to a student's fitness to study and the impact this may have on the student and/or others.

## 4. Definition

- 4.1 The term 'fitness to study' as used in this policy encompasses all aspects of student life (including student accommodation) and not just the student's ability to engage with their studies.
- 4.2 A student is considered 'fit to study' when they are physically and mentally well enough so that, with any necessary and reasonable support and adjustments in place;
- They can engage with their academic studies and submit assessments with a reasonable chance of obtaining the qualification they have registered for;
  - Their behaviour does not unreasonably disrupt other members of the UA92 community;
  - They do not put their own health and safety at risk, or that of others.
- 4.3 Consideration of fitness to study is not a disciplinary process; it is not intended to punish breaches of rules but rather to support students in difficulty.

## 5. Emergency and/or Urgent Situations

Although rare, there may be incidents where a student's behaviour is a cause for concern. In these instances, help may either be required urgently (but not imminently), or the situation will require immediate action. Within the UA92 opening hours, staff and students should follow the procedures as set out below. If the situation occurs out of hours, NHS or emergency services should be contacted as appropriate, as with the general population.

### 5.1 Emergency Situations

In extreme circumstances, where there is an imminent danger to the student concerned or to others, the most appropriate action is to contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), or the deputy

DSO in their absence, who will contact emergency services if necessary. If they are not available immediately, emergency services can be contacted directly (in emergencies only).

Situations that may constitute an emergency would include;

- If a student's behaviour is posing an immediate risk to themselves or others.
- There is a risk of a student attempting suicide.
- A student's behaviour is sufficiently out of the ordinary that the matter cannot wait until the next day e.g. severe agitation, disorientation, incoherence.

The UA92 Student Well-Being Service should then be informed so that appropriate follow up support can be offered ([well-being@ua92.ac.uk](mailto:well-being@ua92.ac.uk)).

## 5.2 Urgent Help Required

If there are concerns about a student's well-being, but it is not felt the situation constitutes an emergency;

- Advise the student to contact their GP or NHS 111 who will be able to determine the best course of action.
- Advise the student to contact the Student Well-being Service directly and/or request permission to share information with the service yourself (you are only able to breach confidentiality if there is a significant risk to the student or others)
- Contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or deputy DSO for advice.

5.3 Once imminent risk has been removed, the student should, as appropriate, be considered under the other sections of this policy/procedure.

5.4 In the event of an emergency and/or urgent situation, UA92 reserves the right to enforce a suspension with immediate effect for up to 21 days, to allow time for initiation of the Fitness/Support to Study process. Suspension may also include suspension from UA92 buildings, placement providers and/or systems.

## 6. Procedure

6.1 An individual can report concerns about a student's fitness to study directly to the UA92 Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and/or Student Well-being and Disability Manager via email or via the Student Well-being Service ([well-being@ua92.ac.uk](mailto:well-being@ua92.ac.uk)). The UA92 reporting tool can also be used but only in a 'non-anonymous'

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capacity, to enable us to contact the reporter for additional information/clarification, and to act on the information provided.

### Stage 1 – Information Gathering

- 6.2 The DSO and/or Student Well-being and Disability Manager should establish the exact nature of the concerns raised and gather any relevant information such as attendance records or evidence of what action has been taken already.

### Stage 2 – Case Conference

- 6.3 Once relevant information has been gathered, an initial case conference should be arranged to consider the information provided and to assess the anticipated risk to the student and/or others. The student would not typically attend this meeting. Membership at the case conference will be made up of the Fitness/Support to Study panel, typically;

- Director of Student Life or nominee
- Student Well-being & Disability Manager or nominee
- Representative from Registry Team
- Head of Learning and Teaching or nominee

- 6.4 Once the information provided has been considered, the panel will decide whether additional information is required and obtain this if necessary.

- 6.5 Possible outcomes of this meeting could include, but are not limited to;

- Sufficient concern/risk - progress to a Support to Study meeting (stage 3)
- No further action – fitness/support to study procedure should not be continued
- More information required before a decision can be made as to whether a Support to Study meeting is required

### Stage 3 – Support to Study Meeting

- 6.6 Following the case conference, a Support to Study meeting should be arranged. This is where the panel will meet with the student to discuss concerns raised, risks identified and possible ways forward.

- 6.7 At least three working days in advance of the Support to Study meeting, the student should receive information in writing from UA92 to inform them of:

- The initiation of the Fitness/Support to Study process.
- An invitation to the Support to Study meeting.
- Provision of date, time and location of the meeting.
- Their right to be accompanied and supported by one person and may be represented where they have expressly authorised a third party in writing to act on their behalf.
- Specific information about the nature of concerns raised. Information provided should include factual information e.g. times/dates of incidents, specific behaviour that has been witnessed, attendance records, concerns of others etc. This is to ensure the student is fully briefed about discussion points and can prepare adequately.
- Provide an alternative means to enable the student to respond to concerns raised if they would prefer not to attend the meeting in person e.g. option to respond in writing (email/letter), Teams call to panel, video submission etc. The panel should accommodate the student's request to provide feedback in an alternative way, as far as is reasonably possible.

6.8 This information can also be communicated to the student in person, if more appropriate, although it must also be provided in writing (either before or after discussion with the student).

6.9 Notes should be taken during the Support to Study meeting to ensure a clear and detailed record of discussion points.

#### Stage 4 – Panel Decision

6.10 Following the Support to Study meeting the panel should meet (without the student present) to discuss the concerns raised, in light of information and opinions presented by the student.

6.11 The panel may then agree a number of actions including, but not limited to;

- i. Developing an action plan for the student
- ii. Arranging for further assessment and/or support
- iii. Suspension of studies
- iv. Outlining a requirement for the student to access specified support.

6.12 The action plan will be communicated to the student in writing as soon as possible, and where appropriate the student will be invited to discuss the outcome with the most appropriate member of UA92 staff.

6.13 In cases where a suspension of studies has been agreed:

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- A student's upcoming assessments will automatically be deferred, and Registry will contact the student to confirm this.
- Student's status will change to intercalated and this will be formally notified to Student Finance England.
- Clear information should be provided to the student about UA92's expectations of them during the suspension period e.g. if they are required to access appropriate external support before a return to study can be considered.
- The UA92 Student Well-being Service should suspend any in-house support provided for the duration of the suspension. However, if appropriate, the Student Well-being and Disability Manager can contact the student periodically to see how they are progressing in relation to panel recommendations.
- Suspension may also include suspension from UA92 buildings, placement providers and/or systems.
- The suspension should not be time-limited; return to study should depend on the student's access to and engagement in recommended external support during their suspension. However, an indicative return date should be agreed and this should (a) be communicated to Student Finance England, and (b) act as a point for a formal review of the student's progress in relation to their fitness to study.

#### Stage 5 – Return to Study Evidence

- 6.14 In cases where a suspension of studies has been recommended, the student will be invited to contact the Student Well-being Service when they feel they have completed actions recommended by the panel and feel well enough to return to study.
- 6.15 For a return to study to be considered, the student must provide written medical evidence, in English, from a suitably qualified medical professional, who is presently licensed to practice in the UK, to confirm (a) the student has accessed recommended support e.g., a full mental health assessment, and (b) they deem the student 'fit' to return to study at UA92 in relation to their physical and/or mental health.
- 6.16 If the medical evidence does not provide sufficient information for the panel, the student will need to provide the required information before a return to study can be considered.
- 6.17 Once appropriate medical evidence has been obtained confirming the student's suitability to return to studies (in the professional's medical opinion), a 'Return to Study' case conference should be convened.

#### Stage 6 – Return to Study

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- 6.18 A Return to Study case conference should be arranged to provide an opportunity for the panel to reconvene and consider the medical evidence provided by the student. The student would not typically attend this meeting.
- 6.19 Once medical evidence has been considered, the student should be invited to a 'Return to Study' meeting with the panel to discuss their potential return to study in light of medical evidence provided. Discussion should include any support that may need to be arranged in order to support the student to return to study e.g. putting in place a Learning Support Plan, engagement with support services etc.
- 6.20 The student should be notified about the Return to Study meeting in the same way as the Support to Study Meeting and they should be offered the same provisions (please see point 6.6 for full details) e.g., an invitation to attend with someone as support, the option to submit their thoughts in writing (rather than attending in person).
- 6.21 Following the Return to Study meeting, the panel will decide (without the student present) whether they consider the student 'fit' to return to study, in light of evidence provided and discussion with the student.
- 6.22 If the panel considers the student 'fit' to return to study, they should communicate this to the student in writing (and in person, if appropriate). The information the student receives in writing should include;
- The decision made by the panel
  - Return to study date
  - Information relating to outstanding assessments and teaching. For example, new deadlines for deferred assessments, support available from academic staff, and provisional dates for returning to 'block teaching' provided the student passes outstanding assessments and teaching
  - Support offered/required in order to support the student's return to study e.g. disability support, counselling etc.
- 6.23 If the panel do not consider the student fit to study, they may agree a number of actions including, but not limited to;
- i. Recommending further assessment and/or support
  - ii. Extending a student's suspension of studies to allow more time for relevant support to be accessed or a longer period of stability before returning

- iii. Outlining a requirement for the student to access specified support before a return to study is re-considered
- iv. Withdrawing the student from their course if it is not deemed appropriate for the student to return to studies at UA92

6.24 The panel should communicate this to the student in writing (and in person, if appropriate). The information the student receives in writing should include;

- The decision made by the panel and clear reasons as to why
- Responsibilities of the student (if any) and the responsibilities of UA92 (if any) to allow for a re-consideration of the student's return to study

## 7. Appeals

- 7.1 The student may appeal against a decision made by the panel in writing to the UA92 Registry team ([registry@ua92.ac.uk](mailto:registry@ua92.ac.uk)) within ten working days of the decision being communicated to the student.
- 7.2 The decision will then be reviewed and the student will receive a response within one calendar month of UA92 having received the appeal.
- 7.3 If the student is not satisfied having completed UA92's appeals procedure, they will be entitled to request a review of the case under the rules of the scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) as set out in the Completion of Procedures letter. Information about OIA and its processes can be found at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

## 8. Related Documentation

- [Student Code of Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy](#)
- Safeguarding Policy
- [Summary of Terms and Conditions for Students](#)
- Exceptional and Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure
- [Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#)
- Data Retention Policy
- Student Well-being Policy