



Fitness to Study Procedure – St. Edmund's College

Background

The Fitness to Study Procedure for St. Edmund's College is a procedure to deal with academic and non-academic issues regarding student's fitness to study. This procedure has three stages depending on the perceived level of risk, the severity of problem and the student's engagement with efforts to respond to it. These stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Informal action by the College

Stage 2: Tutorial Committee

Stage 3: Board of Discipline

These stages are explained further later in this document. The basis of this procedure is to provide all students the possibility to study and perform to their best ability in a safe and comfortable environment whilst at the University. In order to maintain and enhance the College community, students need to conform to certain standards of behaviour.

A student's fitness to study may be questioned if health problems are disrupting their own studies or the studies of others, or result in unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students. The College has a duty of care and hence is obliged to take action if a student presents a risk to themselves or to others. This level of risk will be measured by use of a risk assessment process, led by the Senior Tutor together with relevant professionals. Even when no risk is involved the fact that a student has a problem does not in itself justify or excuse inappropriate behaviour. A student's fitness to study may be brought into question under circumstances such as the following:

- Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party
- The student has told a third party that he/she has a problem
- The student's behaviour or disposition is such that it indicates that there may be an underlying problem
- The student's academic performance is causing concern.

If there are concerns regarding the student's fitness to study the matter should be brought to the Senior Tutor who may call for the Dean of Discipline to investigate and initiate this policy.

Stage 1: Informal Action by The College

Should preliminary action in terms of support and guidance be unsuccessful the designated member of College staff should approach the student and explain to them, in a supportive and understanding manner, that concerns about their fitness to study have emerged. The student should be made aware of the nature of the behaviour that has caused the concern. There should be an attempt to resolve the matter by informal discussions at first and the student should be given a chance to explain their views and to think about using the support services offered by the University. It is hoped that in most cases this informal action would solve the issue and that the student will respond positively and co-operate fully.

A review period should be determined after which a meeting should be held to discuss any steps taken by the student. Further meetings may be scheduled to continue to monitor the situation. If the concerns have not been addressed, a further review period may be agreed, or the case will move to the next stage of the policy.

The informal discussions, advice and any undertakings should be documented.



Stage 2: Tutorial Committee

If the action taken under Stage 1 has not been successful or it is felt that the case is too serious to be dealt with informally, Stage 2 of the procedure can be invoked.

A meeting of the Tutorial Committee shall convene a case review group. In addition to representatives of the usual Tutorial Committee the meeting may include the Dean of Discipline and the student may nominate a friend or representative to support them. Before the meeting a medical assessment may be sought. This will be used to determine the nature and extent of any condition the student may be suffering and the prognosis, the extent to which the condition may affect the student's fitness to study, any impact it may pose on others and whether the student will be receiving any on-going medical treatment. The student will be asked to authorise full disclosure to the College. Where possible, the student should be given at least 7 working days' notice of the meeting and be informed of the purpose.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the student is fully aware of the nature of the concerns; that their views are heard through their Tutor and that they are aware of any possible consequences. The Tutorial Committee will order its proceedings at its own discretion and may call witnesses.

The Tutorial Committee may decide that:

- a. No further action is required.
- b. The student's progress will need to be monitored for a period of time.
- c. Special academic arrangements of support are put in place.
- d. The student should suspend their studies for a period of time with their agreement.
- e. The case should be reviewed under Stage 3 of this process.

The decision of the Tutorial Committee should be sent to the student within 7 working days and a record kept in their file. Where necessary an action plan will need to be agreed with the student and regular review meetings held to monitor the progress. The student also needs to be aware of any consequences of any breaches to the action plan.

Stage 3: Board of Discipline

This stage of the procedure should only be implemented following a referral from the Stage 2 or if the initial concerns are sufficiently serious to warrant consideration of suspension, expulsion or exclusion. As a first step of this stage, the Master in consultation with the Senior Tutor shall consider whether interim suspension is appropriate, including from College accommodation. The Chairman of the Board of Discipline will then convene the Board of Discipline. A date for the meeting shall be fixed, and the student in question should be notified at least seven days in advance where possible. The student will be informed of the purpose of this meeting and provided with any documents considered by the meeting. They can also provide any documentation they wish the Board to consider. The purpose of this meeting is to consider the evidence available and to reach an appropriate decision, action plan or other outcome. The Board can call any witnesses, and will also consider any previous risk assessments.

The decision of the Board can be any of the following:

- a. To monitor formally the student's progress for a specific period of time.
- b. That specific academic arrangements are put in place or interruption of studies is agreed.
- c. To recommend the student to be suspended or excluded.
- d. Any other appropriate and proportionate action.



FROM THE SENIOR TUTOR

Where suitable, an action plan with regular review meetings needs to be put in place and the student needs to be informed of the consequences of any breach to such a plan. The student needs to be informed in writing of the decision as soon as practically possible.

Return to Study

After a break in study, the student may make a request to the College for a permission to return to the course. The Senior Tutor, after consultation with appropriate authorities, will decide whether to support this request and request authorisation from the relevant University authority through appropriate process.

To this end, the Senior Tutor in consultation with other relevant organisations will identify the issues of concern that the College may have in respect of the student's fitness to study and will contact relevant medical professional for an assessment of the student's ability to manage. The student will only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical advice, the College and relevant University authority (e.g. Applications Committee or the Board of Graduate Studies) are satisfied that the individual is fit to study and able to comply with any conditions imposed on their return. Upon return to study, an initial meeting should be held with the student to discuss what support measures need to be put in place and establish a study plan. It may be decided that there should be regular review meetings, and that the student must continue to cooperate. Written record should be kept for students failing to re-engage.

Notes and Resources

If the student is not satisfied with any decision made in accordance to this procedure, they should follow the College complaints procedure with 14 days of receiving a note of the decision.

In both stage 2 and stage 3 the student's Tutor should be the point of contact with the student and should ensure that the Senior Tutor and the Dean of Discipline are kept informed of all communications.

Advice available from Tutors and in the self-help leaflets from the University Counselling Service (www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/leaflets.html) will be useful, as may be advice from one or more of the following:

- University Mental Health Advisor
- University Counselling Service: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk
- College Nurse Clinic
- Cambridge University Students Union: www.cusu.cam.ac.uk/welfare/
- Graduate Union: www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk
- Disability Resource Centre: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/>
- Occupational Health: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/oh/>
- Student Advice Service: www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk
- Adult eating disorder service: www.cambsadulteds.nhs.uk/
- Drinksense: www.drinksense.org/
- CAMEO: www.cameo.nhs.uk/
- Alcoholics anonymous: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/
- Cocaine anonymous: www.cauk.org.uk/