

Fitness to Study Policy

Version 2022

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Reviewed By:	Jo Lawrence
Related Documents:	Attendance & Punctuality Policy; Student Positive Behaviour Policy; Safeguarding Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Equality & Diversity Policy

1) Introduction

Joseph Chamberlain College recognises that students may face a variety of challenges which may impact on their chances of success and positive progression. Joseph Chamberlain College will put in place a package of support to meet the needs of students including learning difficulties, disabilities, mental health and medical conditions to remove or reduce barriers to learning and success.

2) Scope and Purpose of the Policy

This policy provides an effective framework for situations when a student's performance requires considered and sensitive management. Appropriate intervention for students with physical, mental health and medical concerns can avoid a crisis situation.

This policy has three formal stages depending on the perceived level of risk and the severity of the concern. Based on the perceived level of risk to the health, safety and mental/emotional wellbeing of the student or others, this policy may be initiated at any of its three levels.

The level of risk posed by a student will be measured by the use of a risk assessment process, which will be used throughout the procedure to provide a consistent means of assessing the risk to the student, other individuals and the college.

Students should be involved in the management of their own mental and physical wellbeing, however, there may be times when a student is unwilling or unable to work within these procedures. Lack of engagement with this policy may lead to the College invoking disciplinary procedures or being unable to continue to support the student in their studies.

This policy is intended to be used as an alternative to the college disciplinary procedure where there is sufficient concern that a student's poor performance, could be as a result of medical, physical or mental health concerns. Any decision made on a student's fitness to study will be made through a process of consideration of their ability to study, learn and achieve their programme of study.

This policy applies to all 16-18-year olds at the college.

3) Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities associated with this policy are outlined below;

A Personal Progress Tutor will;

- Monitor their tutees attendance, punctuality and progress to ensure that they are achieving in line with their abilities.
- Liaise with parents and students to ensure that the college is in possession of the relevant information regarding a student's emotional, physical and mental health.
- Provide appropriate support around emotional, physical and mental health needs.
- Liaise with the college nurse to ensure that appropriate support is in place and where relevant a healthcare plan is completed and uploaded to Promonitor.
- Liaise with the Inclusive Learning Support team as appropriate.
- Conduct the Level 1 fitness to study meeting.

- Arrange the level 2 and 3 fitness to study meetings ensuring that the appropriate staff are present to support the student.
- Implement, monitor and review the recommendations of the fitness to study meeting.

The **College Nurse/Student mental Health Adviser** will;

- Provide a student with medical and emotional support which meets their needs.
- Complete a health care plan for a student and upload this to Promonitor.
- Request information from a student’s medical practitioner where appropriate to support the fitness to study process
- Provide medical information, advice and guidance to parents, students and member of staff as part of the Fitness to Study process.

The **Progression Manager/Student Support & Development Manager** will;

- Support the Personal Progress Tutor to ensure that a student has all reasonable adjustments in place to enable them to succeed on their study programme
- Chair the level 2 fitness to study meetings and ensure at clear recommendations and communicated to the appropriate staff and student.

The **Inclusive Learning Support Manger** will;

- Provide information, advice and guidance to staff students and parents on individual learning difficulties and disabilities where appropriate.
- Provide a student with emotional and learning support which meets their needs.
- To attend all level 2 and 3 fitness to study meetings for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and other students where the chair of the meeting deems this appropriate and relevant.

The **Vice Principal Welfare & Progression** will;

- Chair the level 3 fitness to study meetings and ensure at clear recommendations and communicated to the appropriate staff and student.

4. Linked Policies

This policy links to the following policies (not an exhaustive list);

- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Positive Behaviour Policy
- Attendance & Punctuality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy the College will;

- Identify students that may benefit from early help and ensure that the most appropriate support is in place for them.
- Review this policy every 2 years, and in response to major changes in legislation or significant events and submit this policy to the corporation for approval.
- Ensure that this policy is displayed on the College website and is accessible to all staff, students and parents.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1	Indicators of Concern Regarding Fitness to Study
Appendix 2	Initial Support & Guidance for students
Appendix 3	Stage 1 Fitness to Study
Appendix 4	Stage 2 Fitness to Study
Appendix 5	Stage 3 Fitness to Study
Appendix 6	Returning to Study

Appendix 1 - Indicators of Concern Regarding Fitness to Study

A student's fitness to study may be brought into question as a result of a wide range of circumstances. These include but are not limited to:

- Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party (e.g. friend, colleague, placement provider, member of the public, employer, multi-agency partner, or parent) which indicates that there is a need to address fitness to study issues.
- A student has told a member of the College staff that they have a problem and/or has provided information which indicates that there is a need to address their fitness to study.
- A student has not engaged with study for a period of time without any reason being given.
- A sudden decline in attendance and punctuality may be a cause for concern.
- The student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying mental/emotional health issue. For example, if a student has demonstrated mood swings or unusual behaviour, shown signs of depression, become withdrawn/aggressive/distressed/irritable, or is becoming intimidating to others.
- A change in behaviour or behaviour which is out of character for the student.
- The student's academic performance, physical behaviour or demeanor is not acceptable and this is thought to be the results of an underlying medical, emotional or mental health concern.

Appendix 2 - Support and Guidance for Students

- In advance of this policy being initiated, informal discussions between the student and their Personal Progress Tutor should be initiated by either the student self-referring or by referral from a member of staff.
- Where initial emerging concerns about the student's behaviour and/or health warrants, informal discussions the tutor should give the student the opportunity to explain their understanding of the matter.
- The student should be referred to appropriate student support services internally or externally.
- It may also be appropriate to consider the possibility of applying special academic arrangements to enable the student to study effectively (e.g. providing in class support or exam access arrangement assessments).
- It should be made clear to the student where there are concerns relating to their mental and/or physical health and the impact upon the individual and/or other members of the College community, that such concerns exceed any usual pastoral support they will need to be referred onto specialist support (including multi-agency partners).
- It is hoped that in most cases issues can be resolved at prior to the formal fitness to study process is evoked and that students will respond positively by taking advantage of the support available.
- In cases of emergency/or where there is risk of potential harm the College's Vice Principal Welfare & Progression will be notified as soon as practicable.
- Any informal discussions, advice and undertakings made by staff and/or the student should be documented on Promonitor in a sensitive manner. Safeguarding concerns should be referred to the designated safeguarding team via the My Concern database.

Appendix 3 – Stage 1 Fitness to Study

- The Personal Progress Tutor will approach the student in an empathetic and understanding way, indicating that there are concerns about their fitness to study.
- The nature of the concerns should be clearly identified and it should be made clear to the student that there is now a recognised concern.
- A package of support (internal and/or external) will be provided to the student as soon as the concern has been identified and if appropriate should be put in place ahead of the fitness to study meeting in discussion with the college nurse and/or safeguarding officer.
- The student and the Personal Progress Tutor should agree on a date when they will meet to review the situation and discuss what is in place to address the concern.
- This meeting should take place in a quiet and confidential space that will enable the student to feel comfortable.
- This discussion should be recorded by the Tutor and the notes of the meeting along with the associated actions should be uploaded to Promonitor within 2 working days of the meeting.
- The Personal Progress Tutor will call the student's parent/ guardian and inform them of the outcome of the meeting.
- The Personal Progress Tutor should arrange a follow up meeting within 4 weeks of the initial discussion to review the targets set and assess progress.
- The student should be informed that continuation of the same or any additional cause for concern could result in their fitness to study being more widely considered by moving to Level 2 fitness to study process.

Appendix 4 – Stage 2 Fitness to Study

- Stage 2 of the fitness to study process should be invoked when there is a continuing or significant concern about a student's physical or mental health, or their ability to study as evidenced by a significant deterioration in appearance, attitude and/or behaviour.
- Students that have not engaged in Stage 1 of the fitness to study process will automatically move to stage 2 of the fitness to study process after a period of 4 weeks.
- The Personal Progress Tutor will inform the Progression Manager/Student Support & Development Manager of the continuing or escalating concern who will convene a stage 2 fitness to study meeting and invite the appropriate staff including the following to ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment can be completed;
 - College Nurse
 - Student Mental Health Adviser
 - Student Relationship Manager
 - Safeguarding Officer
 - Inclusive Learning Manager
 - Learning Support Assistant
 - External Support Worker
- The student will be provided with 5 days' notice of the meeting and the Personal Progress Tutor will invite the student's parent/guardians to attend.
- Documents that will be reviewed at the meeting will be shared with the student in advance of the meeting.
- Should the student not be able to attend this meeting they must inform their Personal Progress Tutor and an alternative date will be provided. If the student is absent with no reason the meeting will proceed in their absence.
- As part of this meeting the Progression Manager may ask the College Nurse to seek medical information to inform the discussion and agreed actions. The student will be encouraged to consent to this, as it will ultimately enable the College to address the student's difficulties in the most effective manner possible, and to make an accurate assessment of risk. The medical assessment will be used to determine the following;
 - The nature and extent of any medical condition from which the student may be suffering
 - Their prognosis
 - The extent to which it may affect their fitness to study and manage the demands of college life
 - Any impact it may have or risk it may pose to others
 - Whether the student will be receiving any on-going medical treatment or support
- The purpose of the stage 2 fitness to study meeting will be to ensure that;
 - The student (and where appropriate their parents) is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns which have been raised
 - The student's views are heard and considered
 - The best way to proceed is agreed upon with an action plan and where appropriate a risk assessment completed
 - The student is fully aware of the possible outcomes if difficulties remain
- An action Plan should be negotiated and agreed, to include;
 - Appropriate support for the student,
 - Academic/conduct related expectations for the student to observe
 - SMART Actions with review dates
 - Consequences of not adhering to the agreed actions
 - Consequences of continuation of the causes for concern

- The discussion should be recorded and the notes of the meeting along with the action plan should be uploaded to Promonitor within 2 working days of the meeting.
- The Progression Manager/Student Support & Development Manager will arrange a follow up meeting within 4 weeks of the initial discussion to review the targets set and access progress.
- The student should be informed that continuation of the same or any additional cause for concern could result in their fitness to study being more widely considered by moving to Level 3 fitness to study process.

Appendix 5 – Stage 3 Fitness to Study

- Stage 3 of the fitness to study process should be invoked when there is a continuing or significant concern about a student's physical or mental health, or their ability to study as evidenced by a significant deterioration in appearance, attitude and/or behaviour.
- Students that have not engaged in Stage 2 of the fitness to study process will automatically move to stage 3 of the fitness to study process after a period of 4 weeks.
- The Progression Manager/Student Support & Development Manager will inform the Vice Principal Welfare & Progression of the continuing or escalating concern who will convene a stage 3 fitness to study meeting and invite the appropriate staff including the following to ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment can be completed;
 - College Nurse
 - Student Mental Health Adviser
 - Safeguarding Officer
 - Inclusive Learning Manager
 - Learning Support Assistant
 - External Support Worker
 - Student Relationship Manager
 - Assistant Principal Vocational/Academic
- The student will be provided with 5 days' notice of the meeting and the Personal Progress Tutor will invite the student's parent/carer to attend. The student will be made aware that as a result of this meeting the student could be withdrawn from the college and their programme of study on the basis of not being fit to study.
- Consideration should be given as to whether the meeting should be conducted face to face or online depending on the presenting concern.
- The Personal Progress Tutor and the Progression Manager/Student Support & Development Manager will attend the meeting and will be asked to present the college's evidence relating to the student's fitness to study.
- Should the student not be able to attend this meeting they must inform their Personal Progress Tutor and an alternative date will be provided. If the student is absent with no reason the meeting will proceed in their absence.
- The student may ask the Vice Principal Welfare & Progression to consider the case in their absence on the basis of written reports which may include a written statement from the student or their representative.
- As part of this meeting the Vice Principal may ask the College Nurse/Student Mental Health Adviser to seek medical information to inform the discussion and agreed actions. The student will be encouraged to consent to this, as it will ultimately enable the College to address the student's difficulties in the most effective manner possible, and to make an accurate assessment of risk.
- The discussion should be recorded and the notes of the meeting along with the agreed outcome will be communicated to the student in writing within 5 working days of the meeting.
- If as a result of the stage 3 meeting the decision is taken to withdraw the student from the college the student has a right to appeal. This appeal must be made in writing to the Principal within 10 working days of the date of the stage 3 outcome letter. The decision of this appeal will be final.
- Exceptionally, where it is felt that a student's behaviour is deteriorating quickly, an immediate emergency case conference may be called without the usual 5 days' notice. This meeting will be chaired by the Vice Principal Welfare & Progression and appropriate staff will be invited to join the panel. Any decision arrived at by the emergency case conference must be agreed collectively. An emergency case conference must be followed by a stage 3 fitness to study which will be held within 4 weeks of the emergency case conference, to review the situation.

Appendix 6 - Returning to Study

- Each student's case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context but, in all cases, return to study will be dependent upon satisfactory medical evidence of fitness to study and the engagement in appropriate support.
- Evidence submitted should be from a recognised health professional that has sufficient knowledge of the nature and extent of the student's condition and the College's concerns about them to be able to make an informed judgement of the student's renewed ability to manage the demands of studying.
- Students will only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical advice, the College is satisfied that the student is fit to study and able to comply with any conditions imposed on their return.
- In any case where a student returns to study following the implementation of the fitness to study policy, the College may decide that there should be regular review meetings with the student. If so, the student must provide their continued co-operation in this respect and such review meetings may continue for part or all of their remaining time at the College.