



DOWNING COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

STUDENT HEALTH - PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSMENT OF FITNESS TO STUDY ON THE GROUNDS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY (Post Entry)

What does this document do?

The purpose of this document is to set out the procedure which the College follows when concerns are raised about the fitness to study of one of its students. It outlines the steps already taken by the Tutorial system (as an alternative to disciplinary procedures) where there is concern that a student's behaviour or health has the potential to result in a possible disciplinary response or threatens academic progress. Decisions made concerning a student's fitness to study are made through a collective process, considering the ability to study, learn and graduate.

What are its benefits?

Having this procedure written down enables students to have a document they can refer to, providing them with a clear understanding of their full responsibilities and expectations related to their commitment to study and life within the College community.

If and when a problem arises, steps taken are seen to be limited to those necessary to protect the best interest of the student, ensuring a consistent and sensitive approach to managing situations.

Tutorial, academic or support staff can initiate the use of the procedure if concern for the student is sufficient, allowing for early detection of issues. Shared concerns in other sections of the University and College community can be formally collated by the use of this process.

The problem-solving approach is objective-oriented, allowing a student to focus on agreed actions to achievable aims which are clearly documented and come from a supportive perspective rather than a disciplinary one.

Background knowledge

In advance of this policy being initiated there are other support services in the College and the University to which students may be signposted if it is felt that this may be of benefit. The 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 will knowledge of:

University Counselling Service: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

College Nurse Clinics: Room O5, Tel: 01223 334817

Cambridge University Students Union: www.cusu.cam.ac.uk/welfare/

Disability Resource Centre: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/>

Introduction

Early intervention in student health/behaviour and recommendations for support can avoid a crisis situation. This policy has three stages depending on the perceived level of risk, the severity of the problem and the student's engagement with efforts to respond to it.

If there is any level of concern Tutorial, Academic or Support staff should discuss this with NHS support services and consider implementing Level 1 of the procedure.

1 Level 1

- 1.1 Emerging or initial concerns about an individual student's health, safety or mental wellbeing are raised. This concern, and salient points from all future discussions with the student, should be recorded for the student's file by a member of staff with primary responsibility (e.g. Tutor, Senior Tutor, College Nurse).
- 1.2 A member of staff with primary responsibility (e.g. Tutor, Senior Tutor) confers with the student in a supportive and understanding way, indicating that there has been concern raised about his/her fitness to study which has been registered by invoking the use of this policy.
- 1.3 It is made clear to the student that it is his/her responsibility to be fit to study. The nature of the concern is clearly identified to the student and s/he is gently but firmly encouraged to discuss the issue (it is possible that s/he will not have realised the impact of his/her actions). If appropriate, information is provided about sources of support within the College.
- 1.4 The student and Tutor involved agree on a date when they will meet to review the situation and discuss what is being done to address the concern. This is formally communicated to the student.
- 1.5 The student is likely to respond co-operatively and access any suggested support and/or modify unwelcome behaviour. If the student is unable to respond positively then the situation is discussed with supporting services. Level 2 may then be invoked.

2 Level 2

- 2.1 Continuing or initial serious concerns about an individual student's health, safety or mental wellbeing are raised. This concern, and salient points from all future discussions with the student, should be recorded for the student's file by a member of staff with primary responsibility (e.g. Tutor, Senior Tutor, College Nurse).
- 2.2 The student is invited to attend a meeting with two of the following: his/her Tutor, Senior Tutor, Director of Studies or the College Nurse. Together they assess the student's perception of the impact his/her behaviour is having. The student is informed of the purpose of the meeting and may be accompanied by a junior member representative, it being up to the student to decide whether or not he or she wishes to have student representation at the meeting.

2.3 An Action Plan is negotiated and formally written down, to include:

- support for the student, where appropriate
- agreed academic/conduct-related expectations for the student to observe
- agreed actions with review dates
- consequences of not keeping to the agreed actions
- consequences of continuation of the causes for concern

2.4 Review dates are formally communicated to the student. A copy of the Action Plan is submitted to the Senior Tutor and the student's Tutor.

3 Level 3

3.1 Persistent or significant concerns are raised about a student's health, safety or mental wellbeing that pose a risk to academic progress. This concern, and salient points from all future discussions with the student, should be recorded for the student's file by a member of staff with primary responsibility (e.g. Tutor, Senior Tutor, College Nurse).

3.2 Case meeting to include: student, student representative, Senior Tutor, Tutor, Director of Studies, College Nurse.

3.3 An Action Plan is negotiated and formally written down, to include:

- support for the student, where appropriate
- agreed academic/conduct-related expectations for the student to observe
- agreed actions with review dates
- consequences of not keeping to the agreed actions
- consequences of continuation of the causes for concern

The case meeting may consider various consequences/options.

3.4 The above will be agreed, documented and communicated to all in attendance and to the student, if not in attendance. All actions will have specific time frames where appropriate. These will be reviewed by the Senior Tutor.

3.5 Outcomes:

- Application to degrade.
- Leaving College permanently.

4 Returning to Study

4.1 Students are informed of the responsibilities on the part of the College and themselves to facilitate effective return to study.

4.2 Each student's case depends upon the specific circumstances and context out of which the concern initially arose but in all cases return to study is dependent upon satisfactory medical evidence of fitness to study and the provision of information about appropriate support services. Evidence submitted should be from a recognised health professional who has sufficient knowledge of the student to be able to make an informed statement of wellbeing. Specific reference should be made to the student's renewed ability to manage the demands of studying at the University of Cambridge.

- 4.3 The decision to return to study is made by the University Applications Committee which must be satisfied of the student's fitness to return to study and of the availability of support upon return.
- 4.4 Fitness to Study is an ongoing responsibility of the College and the student returning to study, and will be considered throughout the remaining period of study. Regular review meetings with the student should be arranged to ensure that support for study is effective and to enable Tutors to have an agreed context in which to provide ongoing pastoral care.

5 Student Complaint

- 5.1 If the student is not satisfied with any decisions made in accordance with the Fitness to Study Procedure, they should follow the Downing College complaints procedure within 14 days of receipt of a letter at any stage.