

Fitness to Study Guidance

Family:	Corporate Governance and Legal Frameworks
Reference Code	GOV13
Manager Responsible:	Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing
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Overview

Chesterfield College Group is committed to supporting student/apprentice wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the handling of both physical and mental health disclosures is crucial to student/apprentice learning and success. This includes having high expectations for **all** students/apprentices and encouraging them to embrace their own high standards regarding punctuality, meeting deadlines, behaviours, attendance, and longer-term achievements. This in turn has a positive impact on a student/apprentice's self-worth and self-esteem and can in some cases enable them to overcome perceived barriers to learning which may stem from mental ill-health, physical illness or disability.

This guidance aims to ensure a safe learning environment for all members of the College community, enabling the organisation to produce resilient and work-ready individuals who are able to recognise and achieve their full potential. It also ensures that a consistent approach can be adopted to enable the best outcomes, which includes the support and guidance of the Wellbeing Team in establishing the most effective plans to reduce the risk of any supportive actions inadvertently compounding an issue, or having a detrimental effect upon other established supports either outside of or within the wider organisation, i.e. additional learning support, counselling, or safeguarding interventions.

The guidance further aims to provide the College Group and its students/apprentices with the appropriate tools to facilitate a supported exit from College provision where appropriate, and without any sanctions which would otherwise result from College disciplinary procedures. It should not, however, become a substitute for general behaviour management or a response to student/apprentice commitment or engagement issues when applying themselves in their area of study, and staff should still take the appropriate action up to and including disciplinary where this is deemed appropriate and necessary.

What is Fitness to Study?

Fitness to Study relates to an individual's capacity to engage fully with their studies to achieve the desired learning outcomes of their programme, with reasonable adjustments where necessary and appropriate. It relies upon them being able to do so safely and without compromising the safety or wellbeing of others as well as themselves.

A student/apprentice's Fitness to Study may be considered at any point in the learner journey, from initial application through to completion. Concerns can be flagged as deemed appropriate during their studies, either following self-declaration of physical and/or mental ill health or concerning presentation.

Grounds for concern about a student/apprentice's Fitness to Study may include, but is not restricted to, the following:

- The student/apprentice poses a risk to their own or others health, safety and/or wellbeing.
- The student/apprentice's health and wellbeing appears to be deteriorating and negatively impacted by their studies.
- The student/apprentice's behaviour is, or is at risk of, negatively affecting the teaching, learning and/or experience of others within the College community.
- The student/apprentice's behaviour is, or is at risk of, negatively affecting the day-to-day activities of the College, work placement or apprenticeship employer.

How do I raise a concern and what happens next?

Concerns about a student/apprentice's Fitness to Study may be raised by the student/apprentice themselves or by a third party (i.e. other students, delivery staff, support staff, employers, other appropriate external agencies) via ccsafe@chesterfield.ac.uk.

Following a referral:

1. The Wellbeing Manager will make initial contact with the referrer and with the appropriate Curriculum Operations Manager (COM)/Work Based Learning Manager (WBLM) to review the concerns and determine the impact upon learning.
2. The student/apprentice will be invited to a supportive meeting with the appropriate COM/WBLM, facilitated by the Wellbeing Manager. They will be encouraged to be accompanied by a parent/carer if under 18 or an appropriate support person if 18 or over.

3. At the meeting it will be explained to the student/apprentice, in a supportive and empathetic way, that concerns around Fitness to Study have emerged. The student/apprentice will be made aware of the precise nature of the behaviour that has caused concern and will be encouraged to share any of their own concerns, before exploring appropriate solutions and support interventions to enable them to stay on track.
4. To ensure a holistic approach and full wraparound support for the student/apprentice they will be encouraged to provide consent to information sharing, for any other external supports to be incorporated into the support plan as appropriate. **The only exception to this will be where a safeguarding risk is identified, and external referral will take place without student/apprentice consent if deemed appropriate.**
5. It is anticipated that in most cases Fitness to Study concerns can be resolved through early support intervention with the full engagement of the student/apprentice in the support plan process.
6. The agreed support plan will be logged, monitored, and reviewed following the usual process of caseload management by the Wellbeing Manager.
7. At times, and with the full agreement of the student/apprentice, the most appropriate course of action will be to facilitate a supportive exit from the programme with onward signposting and referral to external organisations to enable recovery. There could also be an agreement whereby the student/apprentice takes a temporary break from their studies, in which case they will re-enter learning following a supportive interview to ensure that they maintain a full support plan to enable them to succeed and achieve.
8. If the student/apprentice refuses to engage in the Fitness to Study support process and/or follow agreements as reasonably expected to achieve the required learning outcomes and expectations of the course and Student Code of Conduct, they may be dealt with via the Student/Apprentice Disciplinary Policy (TLA03), which will be instigated by the COM/WBLM.
9. If the student/apprentice engages in the initial support plan but their situation does not improve and poses a risk to themselves or others in terms of safety and/or welfare, the concerns will be referred to the Risk Assessment Panel as per the Safeguarding Policy (GOV05).
10. If the student/apprentice wishes to appeal any decisions made they should do so via the procedure contained within the Student/Apprentice Disciplinary Policy or Safeguarding Policy.