

Higher Education Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

2023-2024

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Contents

Introduction	3
Scope.....	4
Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
Support Available.....	7
Policy principles	8
What does Fitness to Study mean?	8
Health Concerns.....	8
Conduct Concerns	9
Actions that may be taken	10
Students in a Secure Environment.....	11
Raising a Complaints	11
Fitness to Study Procedure	11
Stage 1: Initial Concern	12
Stage 2: Continuing and/or Serious Concern.....	13
Stage 3: Fitness to Study Panel	14
Students on Partner University Programmes	15
Methods of Appeal	15
Review and Monitoring.....	16
Confidentiality & Record Keeping	16
Commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion	16
Feedback.....	17
Glossary.....	17
Related documents	17
Appendix 1: University Partner Conditions	18

Introduction

- 1.1. Tameside College (we) are committed to supporting our students' (your) study goals and helping you to engage positively in your academic studies and student life.
- 1.2. This policy and procedures apply to all Higher Education (HE) students at Tameside College. If you are studying with one of our collaborative provision partners (University of Chester, Huddersfield University) please see [Appendix 1 – Collaborative Partners Fitness to Study policies](#).
- 1.3. We are a community and, as such, each member of the College community has a responsibility to behave in ways that allow all members to thrive and reach their full potential. These responsibilities are outlined in our HE College Charter.
- 1.4. This policy and procedure are to be used in situations where your conduct has:
 - raised concerns about your health, safety, or wellbeing and where this is impacting on your academic progress, engagement with study or college life in general; and/or
 - adversely impacted on other members of the Tameside College community (including staff and students).
- 1.5. This policy explains the role of the advocate, if appointed by you, in the Fitness to Study process.
- 1.6. The focus throughout the Fitness to Study process is on early intervention, support plans and active collaboration. Whilst we seek to work in a supportive, co-operative way with you, cases may arise where it is deemed that you are not fit to study and your enrolment will be suspended or revoked, following the formal stage of the Fitness to Study Procedure.
- 1.7. We hope that you will engage with the Fitness to Study process if requested to do so by us. However, if you do not engage with the policy and procedure when requested to do so, we may need to follow the procedure outlined in this policy without your agreement.
- 1.8. This policy and procedure should be read alongside the following policies:
 - Extenuating Circumstances and Extensions Policy,
 - Acceptable Behaviour Policy and Procedure,

- Customer Care Policy and Procedure,
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy,
- HE College Charter.

Scope

- 2.1. This policy and procedure cover student conduct during all teaching and learning activities, whether that be on or off campus, or online. It covers student conduct whilst on College premises, including but not limited to:
 - Contact with staff, students, or visitors via telephone, digital or physical means.
 - Tutorials.
 - Tameside College-hosted in person events.
 - Work placement activity, trips, or visits.
- 2.2. It also covers student conduct on College monitored online spaces, including but not limited to:
 - Tameside College hosted online forums.
 - Tameside College monitored social media sites. Where Tameside College does not monitor the social media site, we can only act if concerns are brought to our attention.
 - Tameside College-hosted online events.
- 2.3. This policy and procedure have been written in accordance with the College's statutory obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#).
- 2.4. This policy does not cover matters that concern your professional abilities, ethics and conduct necessary for the practical application of knowledge in a specific field e.g., teaching, nursing, etc. This is covered in the [Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure](#), which assess if a practitioner's conduct, health, or competence is in line with the standards expected by their profession.

Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1. The implementation and management of the fitness to study policy and procedures requires the support of college staff members and cooperation from our students. Below are the roles that play a part in ensuring each student who goes through this process is treated fairly and given the support to help them continue with their studies.
- 3.2. Assistant Principal with responsibility for HE
- Responsible for developing and implementing the fitness to study policy ensuring the policy is clear and transparent for students, staff, and relevant stakeholders.
 - May be part of the Fitness to Study Stage 3 panel.
- 3.3. Teachers
- Provide support and guidance to students prior, during and after the fitness to study procedures.
 - Offer advice or signpost students to college services and by engaging with this support it is hoped to have a preventative outcome.
 - Raise concerns to the Head of Department if a student is not engaging with their studies and further support is required to ensure the student's health and wellbeing is being monitored. This information will be recorded on ProSolution and stored and shared in line with our [Data Protection Policy](#).
- 3.4. Head of Department
- Responsible for ensuring the fitness to study procedure is followed by staff and recorded correctly.
 - Provide support and guidance to staff prior, during and after the fitness to study procedure.
 - Will be part of the escalation process at Stage 2.
- 3.4. Safeguarding Officer
- Ensure the Fitness to Study policy and procedure is followed and promotes safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults.

- Communicates with members of staff and students to ensure support and appropriate interventions are provided.

3.5. HE Quality Officer

- Provide guidance to students and staff on the Fitness to Study policy and procedures.
- Identify and refer students who may be experiencing difficulties that are impacting their fitness to study.
- Collaborate with members of staff and relevant services to develop appropriate interventions or support to students.
- Take minutes at all meetings relating to the Fitness to Study procedure.
- Monitor and track student's progress and compliance with the policy in partnership with the student's teacher and support network.

3.6. Fitness to Study Panel

- Review and evaluate student cases referred for fitness to study by assessing the evidence put forward by the student and college.
- Determine appropriate outcomes and actions based on the policy guidelines.
- Ensure fairness, objectivity, and confidentiality throughout the review process.

3.7. Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Annual review of the policy and procedures to ensure a fair and objective process for assessing and determining fitness to study.

3.8 Students

- Students are encouraged to engage in this process and access all support available to them.
- Raise concerns by self-referral where they feel they are having difficulties due to physical or mental health or wellbeing.
- Raise concerns about other students they feel may be experiencing difficulties due to physical or mental health or wellbeing.

3.9 Apprenticeships provider/ employer

- Students attending college as part of an apprenticeship programme and/or employment, the apprenticeship provider or employer will engage with the college staff and student in this Fitness to Study process.
- The apprenticeship provider or employer can initiate a Fitness to Study process through the College to raise concerns.

Support Available

- 4.1. We acknowledge that health concerns can have an impact on your ability to study and this policy is in place to ensure that you have equal opportunities to succeed academically while considering your unique health-related circumstances. We do this by providing appropriate support, reasonable adjustments, and safeguards to promote inclusive and conducive learning environment for students facing health challenges.
- 4.2. Throughout all the stages of the Fitness to Study process, you can nominate someone to be your [advocate](#) and to speak and deal directly with us on your behalf. You will need to contact us in writing by emailing the HE Quality Officer at helen.booth@tameside.ac.uk to confirm who your advocate is and that you give us permission to share data relevant to your Fitness to Study process with them. The fitness to study procedure is an internal college process and is not a formal legal processing, therefore [legal representation](#) is not required.
- 4.3. The College considers cases of extenuating circumstances, where a student suffers some unforeseen illness or misfortune that adversely affects their ability to fully engage in their studies. See the [HE Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) for further details.
- 4.4. We work closely with other internal support teams to ensure that you have the best possible personal support and information available. We also work with other external agencies such as:
 - [Positive Steps](#)
 - [Tameside Multi Agency Hub](#)
 - [Pennine Care NHS Talking Therapies](#)
 - [Greater Manchester Police](#)
 - You Think Sexual Health Team [Health \(tameside.gov.uk\)](http://Health.tameside.gov.uk)

Policy principles

- 4.5. All reports of fitness to study concerns will be taken seriously because your wellbeing is our main concern. All staff will deal with these reports sensitively and non-judgmentally and in a coordinated manner across the College.

What does Fitness to Study mean?

- 4.6. Fitness to study means a student's fitness to continue or return to academic study by their ability to meet reasonable:
- Academic requirements; and
 - Social and behavioural requirements without their physical, mental, emotional, or psychological health or state having an unacceptable adverse impact upon the health, safety, or welfare of themselves or others.

Health Concerns

- 4.7. In the consideration of fitness to study health concerns play a crucial role in assessing your ability to engage in educational activities. You may face physical, mental or emotion health challenges that can significantly impact your academic performance and overall wellbeing.
- 4.8. You are encouraged to disclose any health concerns that may affect your ability to study, so that we can advise you about support options and so you receive the right support and reasonable adjustments, in line with our [Learning Support and SEND Policy](#) to enable you to carry out your studies.
- 4.9. We have a statutory obligation under our [Safeguarding Policy](#) to inform our Safeguarding Team or Progress and Welfare Team Leader (0161 908 6767) or email us safeguarding@tameside.ac.uk of specific behaviours of concern and may need to share relevant information with external parties. For more information on how we might need to share your data, please see the [Data Protection Policy](#)
- 4.10. Under our [Safeguarding Policy](#) and Prevent Policy, we cannot assure confidentiality throughout this procedure as we may need to share your information with others to keep everyone safe. Your personal information will only ever be shared with a limited number of people who need to know. This may include the NHS or police if we

believe you are at risk to yourself or others. We will inform you of our intentions and/or actions, unless we believe you are a risk to yourself or others.

- 4.11. If your health or conduct presents a serious and immediate risk to yourself or to others, we will be required to invoke emergency actions such as contacting the emergency services. These emergency actions may be undertaken without your consent or agreement. When taking such actions, we will seek to ensure they are proportionate according to the circumstances.

Conduct Concerns

- 4.12. We will use this policy and procedure if we believe that your conduct or decisions relating to your study are not in your best interests of your health and wellbeing.
- 4.13. We recognise that when going through difficult times, whether mentally, physically, or emotionally, you may find it harder to fully participate in study or meet the expectations of the [HE College Charter](#).
- 4.14. If you feel your circumstances are adversely affecting your ability to study, you may also self-refer to the Fitness to Study process and we will be able to review the right level of support required to help your engagement with your studies and college life. In the first instance, you can contact the HE Quality Officer (helen.booth@tameside.ac.uk, 0161908 6763) to discuss your concerns.
- 4.15. The Fitness to Study procedure may not be appropriate for your specific circumstances, which will be discussed with you. It might be more appropriate for you to apply for extenuating circumstances or a deferral (break in study). For full details see the [HE Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)
- 4.16. If your conduct is contrary to those expected behaviours outlined in the HE College Charter, we will advise you of our concerns and offer support, whilst also protecting other members of the College community who may be impacted in line with our [Safeguarding Policy](#). Examples of the type of behaviour that considered contrary to the HE College Charter are given in [Appendix 2: Behaviour Contrary to the College Charter](#).
- 4.17. Where contrary behaviour is persistent, we will use this policy to advise you of our concerns and put appropriate reasonable adjustments and/or support in place to

help you address and resolve these concerns so that you can continue to study and achieve your academic goals.

Actions that may be taken

- 4.18. In exceptional circumstances we may need to consider suspending your studies. This may be where:
- We have serious concerns about your health, safety, and wellbeing.
 - We have serious concerns about the health, safety, and wellbeing of other members of the College community as a consequence of your behaviours.
 - You have committed a criminal act (including, but not limited to, violence, harassment, risk of harm).
 - Your behaviour is severely impacting our teaching, support, or administrative processes.
- 4.19. In such circumstances, you will be notified by the HE Quality Officer (helen.booth@tameside.ac.uk 0161908 6763) that your studies may be suspended until a formal stage review panel can be convened and a decision reached at Stage three of the Fitness to Study Procedure. Please note that this action will only be taken if the relevant authority believes it is urgent and necessary to do so given the nature of the concerns. Written reasons for the decision will be recorded and communicated to you.
- 4.20. In some circumstances, it may become apparent that you need more support than we can reasonably provide. In this case, we may suggest you seek external support, such as from your General Practitioner (GP) and/or other professional services/bodies alongside the procedures set out below.
- 4.21. If your conduct continues to cause concern despite the provision of Fitness to Study support, or if you are abusive towards a member of the Tameside College community, we may need to follow alternative process including referring the matter to the [HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#).
- 4.22. If concerns about your fitness to study have arisen and have led to a referral to the [HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#), these procedures will be put on hold while the fitness to study procedures are conducted. In cases where your condition or conduct gives rise for immediate action, the Principal or Deputy Principal is

empowered to suspend you from the college pending consideration by the Fitness to Study Panel.

Students in a Secure Environment

- 4.23. If you find yourself in a secure environment, you may have to suspend or withdraw from your studies. This matter will be reviewed under the Fitness to Study procedures depending on the length of time you will be away from your studies.
- 4.24. If you are studying under a Collaborative Provision arrangement, we will contact your university provider to see if alternative methods of study are possible for you.

Raising a Complaints

- 4.25. If you would like to raise or discuss any concerns about how we are applying this policy to you, or someone you are advocating for, please refer to the [HE Customer Care Policy](#).

Fitness to Study Procedure

- 5.1. Our Fitness to Study procedures consists of three stages, initial concern, continued or serious concern and persistent or critical concern. These stages are set out below.
- 5.2. Where there is no critical concern of immediate risk to self or others, this fitness to study procedure will have 3 stages. You would usually enter the process at stage 1. However, if the College considers the level of concern to be serious and immediate it may decide that it needs to enter the process at stage 2 or 3, as appropriate. In all cases, the initial consideration to implement the Fitness to Study Policy will be as a result of a significant cause for concern.
- 5.3. Staff raising the cause for concern must ensure that it is made clear that this is a supportive measure to:
 - ensure that the demands of study are not impacting negatively on overall wellbeing or recovery from ill health.
 - ensure that changes are made, and the student is supported, to adjust behaviours that are negatively affecting their own success or that of others.
 - assist the student to significantly improve attendance, and
 - assist with changes regarding personal life, which are affecting the success, participation and wellbeing of the student and intervention is required.

Stage 1: Initial Concern

- 5.4. The initial concern may be raised by a variety of people including your subject or personal teacher, other staff such as Head of Department or Student Support staff, other students, placement providers and Apprentice partners (where appropriate).
- 5.5. Concerns at this stage may include deterioration in health, behaviour, attendance, or the ability to meet deadlines, succeed academically or participate in normal student life.
- 5.6. Your teacher/course leader will inform you that a meeting is required either verbally or via email, to discuss initial concerns with you. You will be informed prior to the meeting what these concerns are. This meeting will be arranged within 10 working days of the initial concerns being raised. You will be notified of this date by your College email. During this meeting, your teacher will discuss their concerns with you and the procedures of the Fitness to Study Policy will be explained clearly to you. A copy of the Fitness to Study Policy will be given at this point.
- 5.7. At this meeting, any support needs you may have will be discussed and you will be able to respond to the concerns and/or disclose any health concerns you may have.
- 5.8. The staff member may refer you to support services offered by the College, e.g., student support. Specific academic arrangements, or reasonable adjustments, may also be considered. You may also be referred to the HE Quality Officer if you are experiencing an extenuating circumstance ([HE Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#))
- 5.9. The details of this meeting will be recorded on ProSolution by the member of staff and your Head of Department and the HE Quality Officer will be informed. This information will be held until the end of the academic year. You will have access to this information via your student portal log in.
- 5.10. Your case will be reviewed by your teacher over a 4-week period and if the initial cause for concern is addressed and your teacher is happy with your progress at Stage 1 no further actions will be required.
- 5.11. If you are unwilling or unable to respond positively, the teacher from Stage 1 will discuss the situation with the Head of Department, Head of Learner Support, and the Student Services Manager. The College may then decide to invoke Stage 2 of the Procedure without your consent.

Stage 2: Continuing and/or Serious Concern

- 5.12. If no improvements are seen or if you need further support you will be invited to a formal meeting, via your college email address, to discuss continuing or serious concerns.
- 5.13. This meeting will take place within 10 working days of the email. This will give you reasonable notice and time to prepare a response and submit any supporting evidence you wish to be considered for the meeting to address these concerns. Any supporting evidence will have to be emailed to HE Quality Officer before 3 working days ahead of the meeting.
- 5.14. You may bring an advocate to support you at this meeting such as a friend, relative or student Representative.
- 5.15. The meeting attendees will include your teacher, a member of the student welfare team and any Additional Learning Support staff you work with, and your Head of Department. The HE Quality Officer will also be present to record notes of the meeting.
- 5.16. You will work together to assess your perception of the impact that your health and/or behaviour is having upon you and/or the wider College community and ensure that you understand the College's expectations regarding fitness to study.
- 5.17. You will work together to determine whether your fitness to study has been impacted and identify any support measures that need to be implemented.
- 5.18. Potential support arrangements or reasonable adjustments that need to be put into place will be discussed with you at the meeting. These will be put in place in agreement with you. This will include an action plan, how the matter will be managed, how long the monitoring period will last, and a date will be set for a review meeting, consisting of the same people as the original meeting as far as possible.
- 5.19. Within 5 working days of the meeting, you will be contacted by email to your College email address, setting out any agreed actions and, if appropriate, arrangements for a follow-up meeting with you at a later date.
- 5.20. Your progress will be monitored by your teacher or programme lead. They will record any significant information on ProSolution during the monitoring period. The monitoring period is likely between 2-4 weeks, depending on your study intensity.

- 5.21. Review Meeting: At the review meeting it will be decided if the action plan and monitoring period should be extended, amended or if significant progress has been the process will end.
- 5.22. If you have not engaged with the process, or no improvement has been made we may refer you to Stage 3 of the Procedure without your consent.
- 5.23. You will be informed that you have been referred to Stage 3 by email to your college email address within 5 working days of the review meeting.

Stage 3: Fitness to Study Panel

- 5.24. Stage 3 will be invoked when the conditions at Stage 2 have not been met or critical concerns are raised about your actions or behaviour that is putting yours or others health, safety, wellbeing, or academic progress at significant risk.
- 5.25. You will be informed via your College email address that you have been referred to Stage 3 of the Fitness of Study process.
- 5.26. A Fitness to Study Panel meeting will take place within 10 working days of the email informing you that you have been referred to Stage 3 of the process. You will be provided with copies of any documentation that will be considered at the Fitness to Study Panel.
- 5.27. If you wish to submit any supporting evidence to be considered in response to these concerns, this must be submitted before 3 working days ahead of the Fitness to Study Panel meeting.
- 5.28. You will be invited to attend the Fitness to Study Panel to put forward your case, you can choose to provide a written statement or be accompanied, either by an advocate, or by someone to provide emotional support. You could choose to send an advocate in your place should you not want or be able to attend in person.
- 5.29. The Fitness to Study Panel will be formed of your Head of Department, member of the Learner Support team and a senior member of staff from college such as an Assistant Principal. These members of staff will not have been involved in Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Fitness to Study procedure.
- 5.30. The purpose of this is to discuss the concerns and an appropriate course of action. They will consider records of previous Fitness to Study meetings with you, any action plans, medical reports, and other relevant documentation that have been submitted.

They will then determine whether your fitness to study has become impaired and any actions that we need to take. They will consider all reasonable options to enable you to continue with your studies.

- 5.31. If additional medical or sensitive evidence is required permission will be sort from you or from the relevant institution to obtain this. It must be noted that this could cause a delay in the process, which you will be kept informed of any time delays.
- 5.32. The outcome of the Fitness to Study Panel may be one of the following:
- that no further action is required; or
 - referral to an earlier stage of this procedure
 - to agree an enhanced Action Plan; or
 - to agree to a voluntary break in learning of your studies; or
- 5.33. to recommend an interim suspension if we feel that your behaviour may put yourself or others at risk. Arrangement will be made to allow you to carry on with your studies and received support remotely pending a final decision of your Fitness to Study case. You will be notified of the outcome by email to your college email address within 5 working term time days of the review meeting.

Students on Partner University Programmes

- 5.34. If you are studying on one of our Partner University programmes, the university will be informed of any actions taken under Stage 2 and Stage 3 of these Fitness to Study procedures.
- 5.35. The information shared with the Partner University will only consist of the outcome of the Stage 2 and Stage 3 if relevant. Your personal information involved in to the process (medical, health, teacher reports etc.) and documentation relating to this process will not be shared unless there is a safeguarding concern and then we will follow our [Safeguarding Policy](#) .

Methods of Appeal

- 5.36 If you wish to appeal the outcome given by the Fitness to Study Panel you may do so within 10 working days of the outcome decision by following the [HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) Stage 2 Formal procedure.

Review and Monitoring

- 6.1. We will provide an annual report on our feedback processes, including surveys, focus groups, suggestions, and complaints, in addition to any compliments received, to the College Corporation for monitoring and evaluation. An evaluation of feedback by relevant demographics will be undertaken to evidence the impact of the College's Equality Scheme.
- 6.2. We work closely with our university partners to ensure that our procedures are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. If we need to make a change to this policy and procedure it will be reviewed and signed off by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and these changes will be noted in the version log displayed on the front page of this document.
- 6.3. A regular report will be provided to Senior Leadership Team by the Head of Quality and an annual report will be presented to the Governors as part of the College's quality assurance arrangements.

Confidentiality & Record Keeping

- 7.1. You have the right to access all the material presented in during this process, if you like a copy of this information, it will be available to you on request. Please contact the Quality team at quality@tameside.ac.uk and they will arrange this for you.
- 7.2. We recognise the importance of maintaining confidentiality throughout the Fitness to Study process, sensitive information may be shared. However, this information will be treated as strictly confidential, and we will limit its disclosure to only those directly involved in the process.
- 7.3. All materials relating to your case will be managed and stored in line with our Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy ([links](#)).

Commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- 8.1. Policies are inclusive of all Tameside College Students and Learners, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion,

pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, or trades union membership status.

Feedback

- 9.1. Comments and feedback about this policy and how it might be improved are welcomed. Please submit these to the HE Quality Officer
helen.booth@tameside.ac.uk.

Glossary

Advocate: An advocate for an internal college process is a person who supports and represents the interests of the student in the college's internal procedures. This advocate can be a fellow student, member of staff or family member.

Legal Representation: College internal processes are typically administrative proceedings conducted within the college. Unlike formal legal proceedings, these internal processes are governed by the college's policies and procedures rather than by the legal system. While students can seek support from an advocate who is knowledgeable about the college's policies, legal representation is generally not part of the process.

Related documents

[HE Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)

[Learning Support and SEND Policy](#)

[HE Customer Care Policy](#)

[Tuition Fees and Refund of Tuition Fees Policy.](#)

[HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#)

[HE College Charter](#)

[HE Terms and Conditions](#)

[Acceptable Behaviour policy.](#)

[HE Fitness to study Policy](#)

[Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

Appendix 1: University Partner Conditions

Course code	University	Link to regulations	Section
MHF018MQ MHF019MQ MHF020MQ MHF027MQ	Huddersfield	https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/regs-taught/	Fitness to study section 6
MHF009MQ MHF017MQ MHF021MQ	Chester	https://www.chester.ac.uk/sites/files/chester/PSP_Sept2013_oia_0.pdf	Professional Suitability Procedure