



Fitness to Study Procedure

1. Introduction

SOAS is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to his/her academic progression and wider university experience. SOAS recognises it has a responsibility to support students to function well in order to maximize their potential while at university.

SOAS recognises that the use of any formal procedure may cause stress, particularly if the role and purpose of the procedure is not understood. In order to minimise the risk of causing additional stress, the procedure should be used sensitively, ensuring that any student subject to the procedure understands the focus on his/her best interests, and that all possible steps are taken to minimise additional concerns and anxieties experienced by the student.

Scope and purpose

The Fitness to Study Procedure is intended as a **supportive and protective procedure** which can be used when a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour has a detrimental impact on his/her ability to progress academically and function at university. It is intended to ensure that students who cause concern can expect a considered and consistent response. This procedure should be used for any student whose ability to cope with university life, to study or progress on their course is significantly compromised as the result of their health, wellbeing or a disability and where intervention **beyond normal support mechanisms** is deemed necessary and/or where the student **has not engaged with support mechanisms offered**.

It is expected that the procedure will be applied only to a small number of students. It is intended to be limited to those students who are:

- hard to reach;
- have not accessed existing support mechanisms;
- potentially at physical, psychological or academic risk, or whose behaviour is putting other students at significant academic risk.

The procedure may be used for all levels and modes of study: foundation, undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, and for full-time and part-time study. This procedure applies to Full programme, Visiting and Associate students. It does not apply to validated students, for whom the policies and procedures of the partner institution would be applied.

The procedure aims to ensure that:

- Staff from Departments and from Professional Services work together where appropriate so that students experience a consistent and fair process.
- The best interests of the student are considered in relation to their personal situation, their health, wellbeing and/or any disability they may experience.
- Students are supported to study to the best of their ability, and wherever possible to meet the required learning outcomes and complete their course.
- Students who are experiencing difficulties in relation to their health, wellbeing and/or disability are supported to address their difficulties at the earliest appropriate point.
- Students are able to make informed decisions regarding options available.

Any reasonable adjustments that the student may be entitled to are considered and where appropriate put in place.

How the procedure should be used

Concerns should be acted on promptly as early intervention and support can result in better outcomes for the student and may avoid the situation becoming more complex.

The procedure may be started by anyone with regular contact with the student concerned. If staff are unsure about whether to implement this procedure, they should seek advice and discuss their concerns with the people listed below. In order to work within the boundaries of confidentiality and data protection, these initial concerns need to be discussed without using the student's name.

Monitoring

It will be the responsibility of the Head of Student Advice and Wellbeing to monitor the effectiveness of this policy/procedure by:

- assessing the nature and frequency of cases and identifying any patterns which need to be addressed;
- monitoring individual complaints or cases to ensure that they are effectively resolved.

Training

Appropriate training and development to be made available to all staff to support the Fitness to Study Procedures.

For advice about use of this procedure please contact:

- Student Advice and Wellbeing: studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk
- Diversity Advisor
- Academic Registrar

This procedure should be read in conjunction with and is intended to work alongside existing School policies/procedures, in particular

- [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#)
- [Student Charter](#)
- [Respect@SOAS Policy](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#)

2. Summary of Stages

(a) Stage 1: Emerging concerns

1. Identifying the concern
2. Approaching the student
3. Informal meeting with student with agreed outcome

(b) Stage 2: Continuing concerns

1. Confirmation that concerns at Stage 1 not resolved
2. More formal meeting with agreed outcome

(c) Stage 3: Severe and/or persistent concern

1. Confirmation that previously identified concerns not resolved
2. Formal meeting with confirmed outcome

In severe cases Stage 3 may be instigated immediately.

(d) Appeal

3. Detail of Procedure

Stage 0	<u>Initial concern</u> Student causes concern (e.g. not attending, not completing work, disruptive in class, causes concern to other students).	Normal referral to support services: academic advisor, , Student Advice and Wellbeing	Student uses support services.	No further action required.
Stage 1	<u>Emerging concern</u> Student continues to cause concern, has not used normal referral process, is absent or says there is no problem.	Programme Convenor arranges informal meeting with student (or where appropriate Head of Department can request the meeting be arranged by another appropriate academic e.g. Academic Advisor, module leader etc.). Student has option to meet with Head of SAaW instead.	Discussion of concerns, plan of action if appropriate with date for review. Record of meeting for student and for Department Learning & Teaching Coordinator.	No further action if meeting and/or review is satisfactory If continuing concern proceed to Stage 2.
Stage 2	<u>Continuing concern</u> Student has not responded to agreed action and concern continues or student does not agree to meeting at Stage 1.	Student asked to attend meeting with Programme Convenor and Head of SAaW. Student can ask to be accompanied by friend, a SOAS Disability or Mental Health advisor or SOAS SU representative.	Discussion of concerns, plan of action if appropriate with date for review. Record of meeting for student, Department Learning & Teaching Coordinator and HoD.	No further action if meeting and/or review is satisfactory If continuing and severe concern proceed to Stage 3.
Stage 3	<u>Severe or persistent concern</u> Student has not responded to agreed action and concern continues, student does not agree to meeting at Stage 2 or the concern is so severe that immediate action at Stage 3 is required.	Student asked to attend meeting with HoD, Programme Convenor and Head of SAaW. Student can ask to be accompanied by a friend, family member, a SOAS Disability or Mental Health Advisor or SOAS SU representative.	Discussion of concerns, plan of action if appropriate with date for review. Record of meeting for student, Department Learning & Teaching Coordinator and HoD.	No further action if meeting and/or review is satisfactory If outcome of meeting and/or review is not satisfactory student may be required to suspend studies for a specified period with re- admission subject to appropriate professional advice.
Appeal	If student is unhappy with Stage 3 outcome.	Appeal to be heard by Associate Director Student Welfare and Senior Tutor from another Faculty.		

4. Guidelines for Conduct of Meetings

NB: If student does not attend, the meeting will continue in the student's absence.

Stage 1	Before meeting	During meeting	After meeting
Lead: Programme Convenor (or other designated academic more familiar with/to the student)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify concerns. 2. Collate relevant information e.g. missed attendance, missed deadlines, reports of disruptive behaviours. 3. Clarify action taken so far including support offered to student. 4. Discussion with Head of SAaW to consider most appropriate action (may lead to Stage 0 intervention). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outline of concerns raised with specific examples. 2. Student to give their perspective and any clarification or explanation. 3. Consideration of what would be helpful and likely to make a difference. 4. Reference to any relevant School policies and procedures and student's own responsibility for their wellbeing. 5. Agree options and actions including signposting to support services. 6. Agree date for review meeting and possible consequences of non-attendance or failure to carry out agreed actions. 	Written report for student and copy to Department Learning & Teaching Coordinator to be kept for an agreed time, normally the duration of the student's course.
Review Meeting Lead: Programme Convenor (or other designated academic more familiar with/to the student)	If relevant, collect any information about student's conduct and performance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review how student has been since previous meeting. 2. Record actions completed. 3. Identify any further or continuing concerns. 4. Explore further or ongoing support needed. 5. Agree if any further action needed. 	Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action. • Further period of review with same or new actions. • Proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2	Before meeting	During meeting	After meeting
<p>Lead: Programme Convenor to include: Head of SAaW</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide student with a statement of the purpose of the meeting, web link to the procedure, request for any particular documents, names of those present at the meeting, statement of confidentiality, invitation to bring a friend, family member, a SOAS disability or mental health advisor or SOAS SU representative, date, time and venue for meeting. 2. Provide all participants with record of Stage 1 meeting. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outline of concerns raised with specific examples. 2. Record of any Stage 1 meeting. 3. Clarification of agreed actions and support options to change and improve the current situation such as deferral of deadlines, leave of absence, part time study, referral to support services. 4. Student to provide their perspective as at Stage 1, but also any new difficulties or new relevant factors. 5. Clarification of the consequences of failing to complete agreed actions and/or continuation of the cause for concern. 6. Agreement of next steps and follow up. 7. Agreed date for review meeting. 	<p>Report of the meeting and agreed actions to be sent to the student and to the Head of Department.</p>
<p>Review Meeting Lead: Programme Convenor</p>	<p>Collect information about student's conduct and performance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review how student has been since previous meeting. 2. Record actions completed. 3. Identify any further or continuing concerns. 4. Identify any new or ongoing mitigating evidence. 5. Explore further or ongoing support needed. 6. Agree if any further action needed. 	<p>Options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action. • Further period of review with same or new actions. • Proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3	Before meeting	During meeting	After meeting
<p>Lead: Head of Department to include: Programme Convenor, Head of SAaW</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student informed of the date, time and venue of the meeting and of the opportunity to be accompanied (as at Stage 2). 2. Student recommended to gather all relevant documentation including medical reports if appropriate. 3. Provide all participants with record of any Stage 1 or Stage 2 meetings. 4. Gather any additional information required. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarise the previous and current concerns, relevant information from procedures to date. 2. Provide student with an opportunity to summarise the situation from their perspective including earlier and current issues, current or previous support arrangements. 3. Clarification of School policies and regulations 4. Summary of options available. 5. Identification of any further information required. 6. Emphasise consequences of failure to adhere to agreed actions and/or continuing cause for concern. 7. Agreement of next steps and follow up. 8. Agree follow up date to review and if this is after a period of leave of absence, agree requirements to be met for a return to study. 	<p>The decision, which is final, will be communicated to the student.</p> <p>In case of appeal, if the appeal is upheld, the options will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer back to Stage 2 or Stage 3 meeting for reconsideration. • Appoint new Stage 2 or Stage 3 meeting to consider case afresh. <p>If the appeal is not upheld, the original decision will stand.</p>

Appeal of decision at Stages 2 or 3	Grounds for appeal	Before the appeal meeting	After the appeal meeting
<p>Lead: Associate Director Student Welfare with Learning & Teaching Coordinator from another Department and a representative of the Students' Union. All of whom must have had no previous contact with the case.</p> <p>Timescale: Request for appeal must be made to the Associate Director Student Welfare within 4 weeks of notification of the Stage 3 decision.</p>	<p>Procedural irregularity. Evidence of relevant circumstances which the student could not have provided at a previous stage.</p>	<p>Student to be informed of the date, time and venue of the meeting and of the opportunity to be accompanied by a member of the University. All relevant documentation to be circulated in advance of the meeting to all parties to be present.</p>	<p>The student to be informed of the outcome of the appeal and that the decision of the appeal panel is final. The appeal procedure must be completed within 3 months of notice of appeal. Student to be informed of availability of Student Complaints Procedure and Respect@SOAS Policy, if unsatisfied.</p>

Appendix A – Form to be Completed after Initial and Review Meetings

FITNESS TO STUDY PROCEDURE

STAGE 1/2/3 (delete as appropriate)

DATE OF MEETING: Click here to enter text.

MEETING CONDUCTED BY: Click here to enter text.

MEETING ATTENDED BY: Click here to enter text.

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS: Click here to enter text.

OPTIONS/ACTIONS AGREED: Click here to enter text.

DATE OF REVIEW MEETING: Click here to enter text.

REVIEW MEETING

DATE OF MEETING: Click here to enter text.

MEETING CONDUCTED BY: Click here to enter text.

MEETING ATTENDED BY: Click here to enter text.

AGREED OPTIONS/ACTIONS: (delete as appropriate)

completed – partially completed – not completed

OUTCOME OF REVIEW: (delete as appropriate)

no further action – proceed to next stage

Document Version

Valid from	Author	Changes	Published
2015/16	Alison Barty, Head of Student Advice and Wellbeing	---	September 2015
2018/19	Rebecca Harrison, Academic Registrar	Terminology updates in line with restructuring. Clarification of applicability. Clarification of appeals stage. Approved by LTQC 03.05.2018.	