

Procedure 6.11

Fitness To Study

1. Introduction

Fitness to study relates to a student's capacity to perform fully and satisfactorily as a student, in relation to their academic studies at London Film Academy (LFA). LFA is committed to supporting student wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health is crucial to student learning and academic achievement.

The purpose of this procedure is

- to provide a suitable and coordinated response by academic and student welfare staff in circumstances where it is considered inappropriate to apply disciplinary procedures.
- to encourage early intervention and active collaboration between all staff in managing situations where there are concerns regarding fitness to study.
- to provide a non-judgmental, consistent and sensitive approach to the management of situations which may require different levels of response according to the perceived level of concern.

A student's fitness to study may be a cause for concern as a result of a wide range of circumstances, including (but not limited to) the following:

- The student has told a member of staff that they have concerns about their fitness to study
- Concerns about a student's fitness to study are raised from a third party i.e. a friend, relative, housemate, colleague, employer, staff or medical professional either whilst the student is at LFA or whilst engaged in LFA outside activities such as placements or field trips
- The student's academic performance or personal conduct is not acceptable and is thought to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem
- The student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying health issue
- A student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety or wellbeing of others
- Behaviour which would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which may be known to be or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.

2. Fitness to study procedure stages

The process can be entered at any stage depending on the level of concern and urgency.

Stage One - Informal

Once concerns have been raised about the student, a member of staff such as the Personal Tutor or Course Leader should approach the student and explain to them, in a supportive and understanding way, that concerns about their fitness to study have emerged. The student will be made aware of the precise nature of the behaviour that has caused the concern. The member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the student. The student should be encouraged to explain their views on the matter.

The member of staff should discuss with the student whether any specific academic arrangements or other types of support could be applied to help the student to study more effectively. It is anticipated that in most cases the concerns can be resolved informally at this stage and that the student will engage with this process and access the support services that are available to them.



Any plans agreed between the member of staff and the student should be confirmed in writing to the student, so it is clear what has been agreed. A review period should be established by agreement between the student and member of staff if possible. Sufficient time should be given to allow the student to consider their behaviour and seek support. At the review meeting the steps taken to address the concerns should be discussed. Further meetings may be scheduled to monitor the situation and progress made by the student. The member of staff should help the student access the support available to them to enable them to continue with their studies and engage in their studies. The general expectation is that the student will take personal responsibility and fully engage with the support recommended by staff.

If the concerns have not been addressed, support has not been sought and the member of staff feels that the progress has not been made, the case can move on to the next stage of the process.

Stage Two – Case Review Panel

If action taken under stage 1 has not been successful or if the concerns raised are too serious to be dealt with informally, stage 2 should be invoked.

A meeting of the Case Review Panel can be convened by the Head of Courses who will chair the Panel, usually consisting of the following members:

- The student's Course Leader
- The student's Personal Tutor
- Other support staff involved in the case

Before the Case Review Panel meeting, medical assessment may be sought, usually from the student's GP or medical practitioner. The student will be encouraged to consent to the assessment. The student will be able to submit documents for the Panel to consider and will be given a copy of the documents seen by the Panel.

The student may request to attend all or part of the Case Review Panel meeting. The Panel will make a reasoned decision regarding whether the student should attend. If the student does attend, they will have the right to bring a friend or representative to the meeting. A letter will be sent to the student after the meeting setting out any decision made and the reasons for the decision. The Panel will order its proceedings as it sees fit and may call witnesses if necessary.

The outcomes available to this Panel are:

- no further action required
- to recommend a specific academic arrangement to be put in place which may include a suspension of studies. Such recommendations should be agreed by the faculty where appropriate and the student. If the student does not agree, the case will move on to stage 3
- to monitor the student formally for a specific period of time. An action plan will be agreed with the student detailing any steps the student will need to take and the support to be provided to the student. Regular review meetings will be arranged with the student and a nominated member of staff. The student should be made aware of what will happen if the action plan is breached, which will normally involve their case moving to stage 3
- to refer a case to a Fitness to Study Panel, under stage 3 of this procedure. This will be appropriate in serious cases, for example, where there is evidence of a serious risk to the health and safety of the student or others in the LFA community. This course of action would be used when it is considered that suspension, temporary exclusion, permanent exclusion or withdrawal may be the appropriate course of action or if the student has not agreed to a recommendation or action plan made under stage 2.



Stage 3 – Fitness to Study Panel

This stage will only be invoked following a referral from the Case Review Panel or if the Head of Courses, in consultation with the Head of Academic Governance, decides the case is sufficiently serious and urgent to warrant an immediate referral without consideration of stage 1 and 2.

Head of Academic Governance can convene a Fitness to Study Panel to consider the case and will act as chair of this panel. The members of the Panel will usually consist of:

- Student's Course Leader
- Student's Personal Tutor
- Head of Courses
- HR Coordinator

The student will have the opportunity to submit documents for the Panel to consider and will be sent a copy of any documents seen by the Panel. The Panel may order the proceedings at its discretion and may call witnesses if required. The Panel may request further medical evidence. The Student will not be invited to attend but may send a representative to observe the process.

The Panel will make a recommendation to the Principals. Possible recommendations may include:

- A short-term exclusion to allow the student to be assessed by a medical professional, access support services both within and outside of LFA to obtain further information. The exclusion will be reviewed within three weeks.
- Suspension with conditions for a period up to twelve months. A student who is suspended from LFA may be prohibited from participating in school activities and may either be prohibited from entering the premises or have restricted rights to enter the premises. The terms of the suspension will be notified to the student in writing, depending on the circumstances of the case. The decision to suspend a student shall be reviewed as necessary by the Panel.
- Exclusion or requirement to withdraw – if the Panel concludes, taking into account the individual circumstances of the case and any supporting medical evidence, that there is no reasonable prospect of the student re-engaging with their course in the short to medium term a recommendation will be made to the Principals that the student is permanently excluded or required to withdraw. This recommendation should only be made in the most serious cases.
- Any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

3. Returning to study

The Panel that made the recommendation regarding a suspension or temporary exclusion, or as many members of the original Panel as possible, will be reconvened to consider whether the student is fit to return to study.

Further medical evidence will be requested from the student which considers their ability to fully engage with their studies and meet the requirements of the programme. A student will only be permitted to return if, after receiving the medical evidence or advice, the Panel is satisfied that the individual is fit to study.

If a student agreed to suspend studies under stage 2, the Case Review Panel that originally considered the matter can make the decision regarding a return to studies without referral to the Principals if it is satisfied that the student is fit to return.

If the Principals made the decision to suspend or temporarily exclude under stage 3 on the recommendation of the Fitness to Study Panel, the Panel should reconvene to consider whether the student is fit to return to study and make a recommendation to the Principals. The Principals will make the final decision based on the Panel's recommendation.

Where a student returns to study after a temporary exclusion/suspension under this policy the relevant panel will consider any support that the student may require to support a return to studies, such as



regular review meetings or a return to study action plan. The general expectation is that the student will take personal responsibility for fully engaging with this support.

4. Appeals

The student may appeal to LFA against a suspension or requirement of withdraw. A letter or email setting out the grounds of appeal should be address to the Chair of the Governance Board
LFAgovernance@londonfilmacademy.com

The letter should be received within 21 days of the date on which the order for suspension or the requirement to withdraw was made. The procedure of an appeal will be the same as that set out under the LFA Complaints Policy.

At the end of this process a Completion of Procedures (COP) Letter is issued to the student. This letter lets the student know they have reached the end of the LFA's internal process and there is no further avenue for the student internally.

5. Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

If students remain dissatisfied with the final outcome and all above are complete, they may request an independent review of their case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Second Floor Abbey Gate,
57-75 Kings Road,
Reading
RG1 3AB

Telephone: 01189 599813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk,

Website: www.oiahe.org.uk

Normally a student cannot complain to OIA without a COP letter.

