

Guidance for Students on Fitness to Practise programmes: What happens if there is a concern about my health and wellbeing?

1. The University is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of a Student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progression and wider University life (such as living with other Students, socialising and participating in University sports and activities).
2. In most cases, any health conditions or disabilities you have will not affect your fitness to practise as long as you:
 - Demonstrate appropriate insight
 - Inform and update your Programme regarding any changes in your condition
 - Seek appropriate medical advice and support
 - Comply with the appropriate treatment and support
 - Meet the competency standards of the programme
3. Where any health, disability or behaviour issues arise, you may access appropriate support to help manage these issues. Early intervention can prevent these issues from becoming more serious and a greater cause for concern. Appropriate support may include:
 - Disability Support Services (including mental health)
 - Counselling & Wellbeing Services
 - GP/registered health specialists
 - Occupational Health Services
 - Personal and/or Welfare Tutors
 - The Guild of Students
 - Programme or profession specific support
4. The University has an obligation to provide a safe learning environment for all students, but ultimately each Student is responsible for managing their own health and wellbeing.
5. Students registered on a fitness to practise programme are required to ensure that their own health and wellbeing does not put themselves or others at risk, and to report any issues that they may have with their own health and/or well-being to an appropriate person.
6. The University will not normally start fitness to practise procedures just because you are ill, even if the illness is serious. However, fitness to practise concerns may need to be investigated if you are not following medical advice, if you may be a risk to yourself or others, or do not have insight into the impact of your condition.

Indicators

7. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of circumstances that may give rise to a concern about a Student's health and wellbeing, but some indicators may include:
 - A significant deterioration in your physical or mental health;
 - Changes in your appearance, or behaviour, which suggests a significant deterioration in your mental or physical health;
 - A pattern of behaviour or communication which appears irrational or extremely inconsistent;
 - A pattern of unreasonable demands which appear irrational, inappropriate or inconsistent;
 - Unprofessional behaviour which is out of character such as poor attendance or failure to engage with your studies;
 - Reports from your placements, for example, relating to absences;
 - Repeated requests for extensions or absences;
 - Failure to follow medical advice.

There may be other programme-specific circumstances which may give rise to concerns.

Guidance

8. The programme's first step should be one of support, to identify the concerns and see if there are any measures which can reasonably be put in place to support you.
9. A relevant member of staff will normally discuss the concern with you, and allow you an opportunity to respond. In some cases, particularly if the concern raised is serious, then the School/programme may convene a meeting to discuss the concern with you or without you. If you are invited to a meeting, you will normally be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a Friend (as defined in Regulation 1). In order to resolve the concern, you may be:
 - Advised to apply for extensions or deferrals through the Extenuating Circumstances process
 - Advised to engage with any relevant support services provided by the University
 - Advised to see your GP/health care specialist as appropriate
 - Asked to provide medical evidence regarding your health/fitness
 - Referred to Occupational Health or an independent specialist for their opinion
 - Advised to take a Leave of Absence

In rare but serious cases, you may be advised to consider a transfer to another programme of study or withdraw from the programme with an alternative award.

10. A further meeting (or more) may be held with you after you have been given sufficient time to access any support and/or address the concern, to ascertain whether this has resolved the issue or whether you require any further support.
11. Decisions about health concerns are considered on a case-by-case basis, and should be based on whether the health concern calls into question either your ability to continue on the programme or your fitness to practise. In some cases, the University may suspend you from attending placements, your programme, or the University, in accordance with the suspension procedures outlined in Regulation 8: Student Conduct:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/regulations/index.aspx>
12. The University may instigate Fitness to Practise procedures in relation to concerns once reasonable measures to support you and address the concerns have been explored and exhausted. Further information on this process is available:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/policy/conduct/documents/public/guide-students-ftp-investigation.pdf>

Disability

13. It is important that you tell us about (disclose) any disabilities you have so that the University is able to give you best advice about the range of support available to you. Where you disclose a disability, reasonable adjustments (if appropriate) can be made to ensure that any support needs can be identified and appropriate provision discussed. Information about disclosing a disability to the University is on this webpage:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentsservices/disability/about/disclosing.aspx>
14. Adjustments cannot be made to competency standards (which may include professional capability outcomes standards). It is good practice for any reasonable adjustments to be subject to regular review with appropriate staff, as outlined in the Code of Practice on Reasonable Adjustments for Students:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/legislation/codesofpractice/index.aspx>

Fitness to Practise concerns

15. A health concern could be treated as Fitness to Practise concern if:

- Your health/or wellbeing is adversely affecting, or is a possible danger to, the health, or wellbeing of yourself or others with whom you come into contact;
- You have failed to recognise that you have a health problem;
- Your ill health appears to be uncontrolled
- There is evidence that you have failed to seek medical treatment or are not following recommended treatment or advice;
- You have failed to accept the reasonable adjustments the University has made for you;
- You have failed to recognise the limits of your own abilities;
- You cannot demonstrate the necessary competencies and all of the options for support and adjustments have been exhausted
- Where there are significant misconduct issues linked with a health condition e.g. misuse of drugs

Return from temporary suspension from placement or the University

16. If you have been temporarily suspended from your placement or the University on health grounds, you may need to provide evidence that you are well enough to resume your placement/studies. If you fail to provide such evidence, then the suspension will remain in effect until such evidence is provided.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

17. Those supporting to you might consider that it would be helpful or appropriate for information about you to be shared with others, either within or outside the University, but they should normally discuss this with you before taking any action. Disclosure of information about your health condition without your consent should only occur in exceptional circumstances, usually in order to protect you or other people from risk of serious harm.

18. All cases will be recorded by the Principal Academic Unit and this information will be retained securely in accordance with the departmental record retention policy. The School may need to contact members of staff, placement providers or other relevant parties as necessary, in accordance with data protection legislation.

Help and Support

19. For information about advice and support services please access the following link:
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/student-services/index.aspx>

Information on accessing support for mental health conditions can be found on the NHS Choices and MIND websites:

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/mental-health-services-explained/Pages/accessing%20services.aspx>

<http://www.mind.org.uk/?qclid=CPny-dbEp84CFQq3Gwodfw0K1Q>

You can also contact Guild Advice for advice:

(<https://www.guildofstudents.com/support/guildadvice/who-we-are-guild-advice/>)