

Fitness to study, complaints and appeals

Fitness to study

'Fitness to study' means an undergraduate or graduate student's fitness:

- to commence a distinct course of academic study, or
- to continue with their current course of academic study, or
- to return to their current or another course of academic study.

And their ability to meet:

- the reasonable academic requirements of the course or programme;
- the reasonable social and behavioural requirements of a student member (whether resident in college or elsewhere) without his or her physical, mental, emotional or psychological health or state having an unacceptably deleterious impact upon the health, safety and/or welfare of the student and/or other students and/or University or college staff (not withstanding adjustments required by law).

The University has a common framework across departments, faculties and colleges to support students and take action where questions arise as to whether a student is fit to study or to return to study after a period of leave on medical or personal grounds.

It is envisaged that these procedures will be used very rarely. Student health matters, including disability, will normally be dealt with satisfactorily via the available medical and Student Welfare and Support Services, and academic progress may be managed alongside these provisions. However, where it is apparent that the student continues to make insufficient progress despite this support and that this is having an unacceptably deleterious impact upon the health, safety and/or welfare of the student and/or other students and/or University or college staff, referral to the fitness to study procedures may be warranted.

Cases will normally be dealt with under local (college, faculty or department) procedures, but there is also a University-level Fitness to Study Panel, to which serious and difficult fitness to study cases can be referred if all other normal procedures at local level have been exhausted or are inappropriate.

Colleges and departments will give due regard to the needs of disabled students, and make necessary reasonable adjustments, during the course of fitness to study procedures.

Further information

[Information about the University Fitness to Study Panel](#)

[Process for departments to follow in the case of postgraduates](#)

[Information from the student handbook on fitness to study](#)

These procedures are set out in detail in [Statute XIII](#), Part B and [Council Regulations](#) 1 of 2012.

Complaints and Appeals

Colleges and departments will give due regard to the needs of disabled students, and make necessary reasonable adjustments, during the course of any complaint procedures, either made by the student, or when the student is the subject of a complaint. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator has issued good practice guidance on dealing with complaints from disabled students, which is part of its [Good Practice Framework for Supporting Disabled Students](#), pp. 23-27.

Appeal against dispensations and alternative arrangements requests

If students wish to appeal against an alternative arrangements or major adjustment decision, they should follow the process outlined for [appeals to Education Committee](#). This also applies where the student wants to appeal a Proctors' decision not to send a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners.

Academic Appeals

Appeals against the examiners' decision relating to a notice of mitigating circumstances can be made using the [Academic Appeals process](#).

Complaints relating to the implementation of reasonable adjustments

Usually, the initial fielding of a complaint or concern from a student is successful in resolving a problem. The Disability Coordinator and Disability Lead in the college and department should work together with the student and with the Disability Advisory Service to identify a solution to meet the student's needs which is reasonable in the context of the programme of study, and a case meeting is often a useful means to come to an agreement. If the student feels that the problem has not been resolved, then they can make an informal complaint to the Departmental Administrator or Head of Department. Advice can also be sought from the College Senior Tutor, College Advisor, or a case worker in the Proctor's Office. If the issue remains unresolved, or there's a wider systemic problem that needs to be addressed, then the student can make a formal complaint to the Proctors, following the [University's complaints procedure](#).

If the student wishes to pursue the complaint once the University's complaints procedure has been completed, they can complain to the Office for the Independent Adjudicator. [The Office for the Independent Adjudicator](#) publishes [case summaries](#) of some of the cases it reviews. These, and the website more generally, can be a useful resource for those providing disability support, or those working with a student to resolve an informal complaint.