



Department of Health Sciences

Fitness to Practise: A Guide for Students/learners

This guide explains what to expect in relation to your contact with the Fitness to Practise Committee and gives information about the support available to you.

What is fitness to practise?

Being fit to practise means having the skills, knowledge, character and health to practise your profession safely and effectively

As a student on a programme leading to professional registration you are expected to demonstrate that you will be able to meet the standards expected by your profession. [The Code](#) sets out these standards and can be used to help develop your understanding of what it means to be a registered professional.

Developing the skills, knowledge and professional values for safe and effective practise are part of your overall programme of education at the University of York. You receive feedback and are regularly assessed on these aspects, both in theory and during your practice experiences. However, Fitness to Practise is not just about your skills and knowledge, it also includes issues relating to your conduct & character. This involves anything that you do in your professional or personal life that may impact upon the public. Patients and members of the public must be able to trust and have confidence in you and your profession.

Your own health and well-being are another important part of your Fitness to Practise, therefore we have a role in supporting you to maintain sufficient health and well-being to practise safely and effectively. To achieve this, we work in partnership with you and our Occupational Health provider, OHWorks.

Why might I be referred to fitness to practise?

Most referrals to the Fitness to Practise Committee come from personal supervisors. Your personal supervisor will discuss the reason for their referral with you. In some circumstances referrals may be made by other members of staff who are involved in supporting your studies, however you will always be made aware of any referral.

The most common concerns that the Fitness to Practise Committee respond to include:

- Health or disability concerns
- Cheating or plagiarising
- Inappropriate use of social media sites
- Failure to comply with Programme Requirements (non-attendance, vaccination requirements etc.)
- Breach of confidentiality

- Dishonesty or fraud (NHS Student Bursary, falsifying qualifications or documents etc.)
- Drug, alcohol or substance misuse
- Persistent inappropriate behaviour or attitude
- Aggressive, violent, threatening or bullying behaviour
- Suspension or exclusion from practice placement
- Criminal conviction or caution

What happens once the Fitness to Practise Committee receives a referral?

We always start with an informal approach and the majority of concerns are successfully managed at an informal stage

The primary function of the Fitness to Practise Committee is protection of the public. This means we have a responsibility to carefully consider any concerns that are raised about your ability to practice safely and effectively. We recognise that you are still learning about the expectations of your profession and for this reason we use a staged approach to deal with any matters of concern.

Our process has three stages (see flowchart the end of this booklet):

1. Informal Stage (Stage One)
2. Investigation/Assessment Stage (Stage Two)
3. Formal Stage (Stage Three)

If you have been suspended from your Practice Experience, although we will be notified of the details of this, our first recommendation will be a meeting with your Personal Supervisor and/or Academic Assessor, usually with your practice supervisor to explore whether there are processes within the Practice Assessment process (e.g. Action Plan) that can be used.

Stage One: Informal Stage

Remember that we successfully deal with most concerns at this informal stage of our processes

All of our processes start with this stage. We review the information that we receive and decide how best to deal with the concerns raised. We deal with each case individually and take into account the stage of your professional development and the nature of the concern. Usually, we will invite you to an informal meeting with either the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Fitness to Practise Committee to discuss the matter. In our correspondence with you, we will briefly outline the nature of the concern so that you are aware of this. This gives you an opportunity to seek help and support before the meeting.

At this informal meeting we will listen to you and consider how best to deal with the concerns raised in the referral and how to proceed. We encourage students to reflect upon the circumstances that led to a referral and promote a learning culture. Very often the outcome of an informal meeting is for us to recommend steps that you can take to promote your learning and professional development. We may also direct you to other sources of support both within and outside of the University. This may include your personal supervisor, the Student & Academic Support Service, Disability Services and the Open Door Team.

Sometimes our processes recommend that there is additional monitoring of your progress. We will continue to liaise with your personal supervisor in order to do this and will agree a plan with you.

Stage Two: Investigation/Assessment Stage

At this stage of the process our goal is to gather more information about the concern

In some cases, we decide that we need further information in order to make a decision, and you will progress to Stage Two of Fitness to Practise process. This stage involves an investigation or an assessment (see flowchart at the end of this booklet). It allows us to gather more information from you and others about the concern.

If the concern about your Fitness to Practise is about your health or well-being, this will involve a referral to Occupational Health for assessment. If the concern is about your conduct or character we will recommend an investigation. In some cases, there

may be concerns about your conduct and character, as well as your health and wellbeing. If this is the case we may recommend an Occupational Health Assessment as part of an investigation.

We will always discuss progression to stage 2 with you at an informal meeting. The next steps will be explained and you will be provided with further information about this process. Once an investigation or an assessment is complete we will make a decision as to whether your case should progress to a formal stage.

Stage Three: Formal Stage

Very few referrals made to the Fitness to Practise Committee progress to the formal stage

Your case may reach a formal stage if it is decided that the concerns raised require further examination in formal hearing. We will explain our reasons for this decision and ensure that you understand what this stage involves. In a Fitness to Practise hearing, the evidence gathered during the investigation will be presented to a panel. The panel will then have the opportunity to ask questions of you and ensure that concerns are explored satisfactorily.

The purpose of a formal hearing is to make a decision about your fitness to practise and whether the concerns that have been raised mean that you are safe to continue your practice experiences without restriction.

There are a range of possible outcomes following a hearing.

Further guidance for students that progress to stage 2 or stage 3 of the Fitness to Practise process can be found in our Student Guide: Investigations and Hearings.

What help and support is available?

Remember that help and support is always available

It is important that you are supported with any involvement that you may have with the Fitness to Practise Committee. We recommend that you arrange for someone to help you prepare for and accompany you to any meeting with the Committee.

Under University regulations you are entitled to be accompanied by a representative to support and guide you through the process. This may be a member of University Staff or a member of the [York SU Advice and Support](#) team.

The [York SU Advice and Support](#) team is based in the Student Centre in James College. It gives professional, independent and confidential advice, guidance and information on student academic and welfare issues, assists and supports students at all stages of the Fitness to Practise processes and signposts to University Student Support Services.

- The service is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.
- You can contact the team by email to arrange an appointment or seek advice - advice@yorksu.org
- Please download and complete a [Confidential Advice Record](#) and email it to advice@yorksu.org Once you have sent your completed Confidential Advice Record, an adviser will respond to your query.
- You can ring the York SU Helpdesk on 01904 323724

For broader issues relating to student support, the [Student Support Hub](#) can also provide advice and guidance on practical issues including finance, housing and Leave of Absence and refer you to further student support services. The student support hub can be contacted on: (01904) 324140, student-support@york.ac.uk or visit in person between 09.00am – 5.00pm (term time) and 10.00am and 4.00pm (outside term time) in Market Square.

If you make contact with any of the services they are likely to want to meet you beforehand, and discuss the issues with you. It is vital that they have as much notice as possible.

How can I prepare for an informal meeting with Fitness to Practise?

If you have any queries or concerns please let us know by sending an email to the Fitness to Practise email account

In addition to seeking guidance and support, we recommend that you review [the Code](#) to help you understand what it means to be a registered professional and how keeping to the Code enables you to achieve that.

It is important that you are open and honest with the Committee. This allows us to make informed decisions about how to manage concerns, remembering our responsibilities to protect the public, as well as to support you in your professional

development. Acting honestly means more than simply answering questions truthfully. It would be dishonest of you to allow the Committee to gain a false impression of a situation even if you do not actually lie to do so. Acting honestly throughout the Fitness to Practise process demonstrates appropriate professional values and is likely to positively influence the decisions made by the Committee

If you have any queries or concerns regarding the informal meeting your point of contact should be by email to the Fitness to Practise email account: dohs-ftp@york.ac.uk

Confidentiality

You have a right to expect that information about you will be held in confidence

All information shared with the Fitness to Practise Committee is confidential. This means that any correspondence or discussions with members of the Fitness to Practise Committee remains private and is not shared or accessible to any other members of the Department.

If we feel it is important to share information with relevant others, we will always have this discussion with you.

Further Information

This booklet is only intended as a brief guide. Please visit the [Fitness to Practise webpages](#) where you can find full information about Fitness to Practise processes, as well as our [Fitness to Practise Policy](#).

The Core Fitness to Practise Committee

People you may meet or have contact with should you be referred to the Fitness to Practise Committee:



Sarah O' Reilly
Chair of Fitness to Practise



Elaine Whitton
Deputy Chair of Fitness to Practise

The Committee are supported by:



Sarah Thompson
Secretary to the Fitness to Practise Committee

FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE PROCESS

This flow chart outlines typical processes, however, as issues of Fitness to Practise are investigated and dealt with on a case-by-case basis, variations in this process may be applied to accommodate specific issues and requirements.

