

Fitness to Study Policy

SUMMARY

The Fitness to Study Policy defines what constitutes 'Fitness to Study' and outlines the necessary actions to be taken when students are identified as not fit to study.

PART 1: Preliminary Information

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Fitness to Study Policy at OELS is designed to assist students facing challenges with their academic responsibilities due to health, well-being, or personal issues. It works alongside the Attendance and Engagement Policy, highlighting OELS' commitment to student well-being and academic success. While the Attendance and Engagement Policy outlines general expectations for attendance and participation, the Fitness to Study Policy addresses situations where a student's ability to study is affected. It ensures early identification and structured management of these issues, providing a comprehensive support framework to help students overcome their challenges and achieve academic success.

2. SCOPE

2.1 OELS is dedicated to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. The institution aims to address any fitness to study concerns arising from health, well-being, or personal issues that may impact a student's ability to fully engage with their educational programme.

2.2 The support provided under this policy is tailored to the individual needs of each student and adheres to current governmental regulations. The OELS Special Education Needs Coordinator (SEN Coordinator) oversees the development and implementation of support plans, ensuring they are responsive to evolving needs and circumstances. The SEN Coordinator is appointed annually by the Academic Board.

2.3 This Policy adheres to the Equality Act 2010.

2.4 This Policy applies to all students and should be read in conjunction with the Attendance and Engagement Policy, Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Student Welfare and Wellbeing Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, the Mitigating Circumstances Policy, the Student Privacy and Data Protection Policy, and other relevant policies to provide a comprehensive support system. Our goal is to ensure that every student is well-supported, enabling them to thrive academically and personally during their time at OELS.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

- **Support and Inclusivity:** The institution is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive environment for all students.
- **Early Intervention:** Encourages early identification of issues to provide timely support.

- **Confidentiality:** Ensures that all information shared by students is treated confidentially.
- **Collaborative Approach:** Involves a coordinated approach between academic staff, health professionals, and support services.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. OELS SEN Coordinator collects and collates all necessary information available in the support plan of the student to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the support and facilities that will be provided during their studies.

4.2. The SEN Coordinator will make sure that the student has given written consent before sharing any information with the lecturer.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

5.1 Students may choose to restrict the disclosure of their information. If a student decides to limit the disclosure of their information to specific individuals or groups, it is important to understand that this may affect the type of support and adjustments that OELS can provide. OELS may be unable to communicate with the relevant parties to request reasonable adjustments or make necessary recommendations

PART 2: POLICY and PROCEDURE

1. POLICY

1.1 OELS is committed to fair and equal treatment for all OELS members. The disclosure of any health issue, whether physical or mental, is treated confidentially and this will not impact the student's rights/status.

1.2 OELS is committed to supporting students whose studies have been disrupted due to fitness-related issues. Upon registration or upon determination that a student is ready to resume their studies, a comprehensive Student Support Plan will be developed. This plan includes academic support, such as modified coursework or deadlines, if necessary, alongside wellbeing support, which may involve OELS suggesting counselling or medical follow-ups. The Student Support Plan is tailored to each student's specific needs and includes regular review meetings with a designated support advisor to ensure the student's transition back into academic life is smooth and sustainable. The goal is to support the student's successful engagement with their studies and the OELS community, while monitoring their ongoing fitness to study. All Student Support Plans are prepared carefully by a qualified OELS SEN Coordinator upon assessment.

1.3 Student Support Plans are for students who have special education needs that fall under the Equality Act 2010. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

1.4 Such support is not available to students with temporary illnesses, injuries or conditions which fall outside of the Equality Act (2010) definition of disability, but they can of course access usual channels of support. If need be, students should refer to our Mitigating Circumstances Policy and submit [a Mitigating Circumstances form](#).

2. PROCEDURE

2.1. The Student Support Plan is established by their home school. Both the home school and OELS are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any health-related information.

2.2. The SEN Coordinator liaises with all parties involved to ensure smooth implementation of the Student Support Plan and only shares the support arrangement with those concerned.

3. EMERGENCY AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

In situations where a student's behaviour poses an immediate risk to themselves or others, OELS has established protocols for emergency and immediate responses. This includes the authority to temporarily suspend the student from academic activities, where necessary, to manage the immediate risk. The decision for such an action is taken by a senior panel comprising the School Director, a mental health professional, and the Registrar/the Academic Service Officer. All decisions are made with the utmost consideration for the safety and well-being of all community members. Students affected by such decisions will be given clear information about the process, support available, and the steps required for them to return to their studies. This includes the right to appeal the decision, and details of the appeal process are communicated clearly at the time of suspension.

To ensure transparency and track the effectiveness of support mechanisms, a summary report of the implemented Student Support Plans is presented during the Academic Board meetings. This summary includes relevant data without disclosing the names of the students or the nature of their disabilities, thereby maintaining their privacy.

4. APPEAL AND COMPLAINT

4.1. OELS is committed to providing a fair and transparent process for students to appeal decisions made under the Fitness to Study Policy. This process is designed to ensure that all concerns are addressed in a structured and timely manner. Students who wish to contest decisions related to their fitness to study should follow the established procedures outlined in the OELS Appeals and Complaints Policy.

4.2. This appeals process applies to all students who wish to contest decisions made under the Fitness to Study Policy.

4.3. Students may appeal decisions on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity: If the procedures were not followed correctly during the decision-making process.
- New evidence: If new, relevant information has become available that was not considered initially.

4.4. Appeal Submission:

Informal Resolution: before submitting a formal appeal, students are encouraged to seek an informal resolution by discussing their concerns with the SEN Coordinator or the relevant support staff.

Formal Appeal: if the issue is not resolved informally, students can submit a formal appeal by following the steps outlined in the OELS Appeals and Complaints Policy. The completed form, along with any supporting documentation, must be submitted to the Quality Manager within 10 working days of the decision notification.

For detailed procedures on submitting and handling appeals, students should refer to the OELS Appeals and Complaints Policy, which provides comprehensive guidance on the appeal process, including timelines, review procedures, and possible outcomes. This ensures that all students have access to a fair and transparent process for addressing their concerns related to fitness to study, maintaining a supportive and equitable academic environment.

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