

FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

Audience:	STUDENT
Requirement:	ESSENTIAL
Policy Owner:	Assistant Principal of Quality and Student Experience
Review Delegation:	C&Q Cttee
Review Cycle:	Every 2 years
Last Review:	Oct 2025
Due for Review:	Oct 2027

SOUTH HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUP

FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

1.0 Statement of Principles

- 1.1. South Hampshire College Group 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.
- 1.2. The Fitness to Study Policy should explicitly reference SHCG's commitment to delivering excellence in technical and professional education, supporting students and apprentices to be prepared for their 'next steps' through inspiring teaching, learning, and assessment, excellent support, and a culture of high expectations.
- 1.3. The policy should reinforce the importance of a positive, inclusive, and respectful learning environment, fostering individual accountability and safeguarding wellbeing, in line with SHCG's equity, diversity, and inclusion principles.
- 1.4. Fitness to study relates to an individual's capacity to participate fully as a student, in relation to academic studies and life generally at college.
- 1.5. The purpose of this policy is to provide a suitable, coordinated response by academic and support staff in circumstances where a student's fitness to study is a cause for concern.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1. The Fitness to Study Policy applies to all students and apprentices enrolled at South Hampshire College Group, including those participating in college-related activities, online and remote delivery, work placements, and Higher Education programmes. Where HE students are involved, relevant partner institution policies should also be considered.
- 2.2. The policy should acknowledge that some students or apprentices may have additional learning needs, disabilities, or extenuating circumstances affecting their ability to meet SHCG expectations (e.g., attendance, engagement, behaviour). Reasonable adjustments must be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.3. This policy is not intended for use during an applicant's interview or admissions process. The College Group's Admission Policy provides information relating to the assessment of individual needs on application to study at the College. The admissions policies can be found on the South Hampshire College Group website

Referral and Decision-Making

- 2.4. Where concerns regarding safeguarding, health, or wellbeing arise, and it is not considered appropriate to implement the Behaviour Management Policy, staff must consult with the Safeguarding Team and refer to the Fitness to Study Policy.
- 2.5. The Fitness to Study Policy should clarify that before initiating formal fitness to study proceedings, the College Group will seek to understand the wider context of a student's or apprentice's behaviour, including any personal, health, or wellbeing issues that may be contributing to the conduct in question.
- 2.6. If such factors are identified as the primary cause of the behaviour, and the incident is not deemed serious or gross misconduct, it may be more appropriate to address the matter through the Fitness to Study Procedure rather than progressing through the disciplinary process

3.1 Detail

3.2 Fitness to Study Concerns

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

- Where reasonable adjustments in relation to a student's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have not enabled full participation in college life, including attendance, engagement, behaviour, and progression.
- Where a student or apprentice with statutory external agency involvement (e.g. Social Services, Police, CAMHS) is unable to fully participate in college life.
- Where medical conditions require long periods of absence or treatment, or where there are doubts about a student's fitness to study due to a pre-existing medical condition.
- Where participation in a programme-related activity or assessment would jeopardise the long-term health and wellbeing of a student due to a pre-existing medical condition.
- When there is disruption to teaching, learning, or support of other students, or unreasonable demands are made on staff or students due to deterioration in the physical or mental health of a student.
- Where there is a potential risk to a student or others due to deterioration in the student's physical or mental health.
- Behaviour or academic performance that would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, but is known or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty

3.3 This policy is intended for use where concerns regarding safeguarding, health, or wellbeing mean it is not considered appropriate to implement other student processes such as the Behaviour Management Policy. However, there may be situations where it is appropriate to implement alternative procedures, and the College Group is not prevented from doing so, notwithstanding concerns regarding the student's health or wellbeing.

3.4 **Equity, Diversity and reasonable Adjustments** - In responding to and managing situations where a student's fitness to study is a concern, the College Group remains mindful of its duty of care and obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning, assessment, and other activities as appropriate. The College also remains mindful of its duties under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the College Group Data Protection Policy.

3.5 The College Group will offer and encourage students to seek appropriate support from the outset, for example by referring students to pastoral teams. All matters will be dealt with in a supportive manner and on an individual basis, involving the student and other relevant parties such as academic and support staff, parents or carers, and external agencies as appropriate. The College Group is committed to recognising and celebrating achievements, encouraging positive behaviours, and providing support to help students and apprentices succeed

3.6 South Hampshire College Group is committed to equal opportunities, and our aim is to make our procedures easy to use and accessible. We will take reasonable steps to accommodate any reasonable adjustments to enable access to this procedure or receive responses in other formats, and provide such assistance, as may be reasonably required.

4 Appeals

4.1 A student or apprentice may appeal against any fitness to study action taken against them by a fitness to study panel. Appeals will normally only be considered on the following grounds:

- Material administrative error in conducting the procedure or failure to follow published procedure.

- Other material irregularity.
- New evidence not available at the time of the hearing that could materially affect the panel's decision.

4.2 Appeals should be submitted to the College Principal within 5 working days of the date on which written confirmation of the hearing was sent.

4.3 If an appeal is received the College Principal or nominated person will confirm receipt of this within 5 working days.

4.4 The College Principal or nominated person will then carry out an appeal investigation.

4.5 The decision by the College Principal or their nominee will be confirmed in writing to the student normally within 10 working days.

4.6 The right to appeal in the case of a looked after student or a student with an EHCP will be in consultation with the Local Authority or other relevant agencies.