

1.6 FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

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V4.1	V4.2	April 11, 2026	Enhanced the appeals section and added the committee members to be a part of the FTSP

Policy Framework

IVY Academic Network recognises that a student's physical health, psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing or behaviour may, at times, affect their ability to participate safely and effectively in their studies.

IVY Academic Network is committed to providing an appropriate, supportive and fair educational environment in which students are able to continue their studies wherever reasonably possible. At the same time, the Institution has a responsibility to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of students, faculty, staff and visitors.

This Fitness to Study Policy establishes a fair and supportive framework for dealing with circumstances where a student's health, wellbeing or behaviour may significantly affect:

- their ability to participate effectively in their academic programme;
- their ability to engage appropriately with faculty, staff and other students;
- their own health, safety or wellbeing;



the health, safety or wellbeing of others; or
the normal functioning of the academic environment.

The purpose of the policy is not to penalise students because of a medical, psychological or emotional condition. Rather, it provides a structured process through which IVY Academic Network can identify concerns, provide appropriate support, make reasonable academic arrangements and, where necessary, take proportionate action to protect the student and others.

Fitness to Study matters are distinct from disciplinary matters. Where concerns arise primarily because of a breach of institutional rules or the Student Code of Conduct, the relevant disciplinary procedures may apply. Where behaviour appears to be connected to a student's health or wellbeing, this Fitness to Study Policy may also be considered.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear institutional framework for responding to circumstances in which a student's medical, psychological, emotional or other wellbeing-related circumstances may negatively affect their studies, behaviour or ability to participate safely in the academic environment.

For the purposes of this policy, "**fitness to study**" refers to a student's ability to:

- participate meaningfully and safely in their academic programme;
- attend and engage with learning activities to a reasonable extent;
- interact appropriately with faculty, staff and fellow students;
- comply with reasonable academic and institutional requirements; and
- participate in the educational environment without presenting a significant and unmanaged risk to themselves or others.

This policy applies to all students enrolled with or studying through IVY Academic Network, including students participating in:

- face-to-face classes;
- online or blended learning;
- assessments and examinations;
- academic activities;
- educational visits or activities organised by the Institution;
- student support activities; and
- other activities undertaken as part of, or representing, IVY Academic Network.

The policy may apply regardless of whether the concern arises at an IVY Study Centre, during an online activity or in another setting where the student's conduct or circumstances directly affect their participation in the Institution's academic activities.

Where a student is studying on a programme linked to a Partner University or Awarding Body, the relevant academic regulations and requirements of that Partner University or Awarding Body will also be considered.



Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this policy is to ensure that concerns regarding a student's fitness to study are dealt with **fairly, consistently, sensitively and proportionately**, while maintaining a safe and effective learning environment.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- identify students who may require support at an early stage;
- provide students with an opportunity to discuss concerns affecting their studies;
- encourage students to seek appropriate medical, psychological, counselling or other support where required;
- provide reasonable academic support or adjustments where appropriate and feasible;
- protect students, faculty, staff and others from significant risks to health and safety;
- provide staff with a clear procedure for responding to serious concerns;
- distinguish wellbeing-related concerns from disciplinary matters where appropriate;
- enable students to continue their studies wherever this can reasonably and safely be achieved;
- provide a structured process for temporary interruption, deferral or other academic arrangements where necessary;
- ensure that decisions are based on the circumstances of the individual student;
- provide students with an opportunity to present their views before significant decisions are made, except where immediate action is required to address an urgent risk; and
- ensure that decisions are documented and communicated appropriately.

Equality, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

IVY Academic Network is committed to providing an educational environment in which students are treated fairly, respectfully and without unlawful discrimination.

Fitness to Study decisions will not be based solely on the existence of a medical, psychological, emotional or physical condition. The Institution will consider the actual impact of the circumstances on the student's ability to participate in study and any relevant risks.

Where appropriate and reasonably practicable, IVY Academic Network will consider suitable academic or practical adjustments to support students with disabilities or other circumstances affecting their ability to study.

Such considerations may include, where appropriate:

- adjustments to academic arrangements;
- additional academic support;
- flexibility in attendance or submission arrangements where permitted;
- temporary reduction in academic activity;
- referral to appropriate support services; or



other reasonable measures consistent with institutional and partner university requirements.

Any adjustment must be considered in light of the student's individual circumstances, academic requirements, health and safety considerations and the regulations of the relevant programme or awarding body.

The Institution will also take account of the student's dignity, privacy and personal circumstances throughout the process.

Identifying a Fitness to Study Concern

A Fitness to Study concern may be identified through a number of sources, including:

the student themselves;

a parent, guardian or family member, where appropriate and with due regard to confidentiality;

faculty members;

academic or administrative staff;

fellow students;

a student support representative;

a counsellor or other support professional;

a registered medical practitioner or healthcare professional; or

another person who has a legitimate and reasonable concern about the student's wellbeing or ability to study safely.

Examples of circumstances that may give rise to a Fitness to Study concern include:

significant or prolonged illness affecting academic participation;

a physical or psychological condition substantially affecting the student's ability to study;

significant emotional distress;

behaviour suggesting that the student may be experiencing a serious health or wellbeing difficulty;

repeated or prolonged absence associated with health or wellbeing concerns;

behaviour that creates a significant risk to the student or others;

serious deterioration in a student's ability to manage their studies;

repeated disruptive behaviour where there is reason to believe that an underlying health or wellbeing issue may be contributing to the behaviour; or

any other circumstances where there is a reasonable concern regarding the student's ability to continue their studies safely and effectively.

Staff should not attempt to diagnose a student's medical or psychological condition. Their responsibility is to identify observable concerns and refer the matter through the appropriate institutional process.

Initial Response to a Concern

Where a member of faculty or staff becomes concerned about a student's fitness to study, the



concern should initially be reported to the **Head of Institute (HOI)** or the designated student support representative.

The Institution will consider:

the nature and seriousness of the concern;

the immediate risk, if any;

the effect on the student's studies;

the effect on other students and staff;

whether the concern appears to be health or wellbeing related;

whether immediate medical or emergency assistance is required; and

whether the matter should be addressed under this policy, another institutional policy, or both.

Where there is an immediate and serious threat to life, health or safety, the Institution may contact the appropriate emergency service, medical facility, police or other relevant authority without waiting for completion of the Fitness to Study process.

Where available and appropriate, emergency assistance may include **Rescue 1122, Police 15, the nearest hospital emergency department or other local emergency services.**

Levels of Fitness to Study Concern

IVY Academic Network will normally consider Fitness to Study concerns under three levels:

Level One – Emerging or Manageable Concern

The student's circumstances are affecting their studies or behaviour, but the concern can reasonably be managed through discussion, support and agreed actions.

Level Two – Continuing or Significant Concern

The concern is continuing, has become more significant, or requires formal intervention and involvement of senior academic or management representatives.

Level Three – Serious or Urgent Concern

The student's circumstances present a serious concern regarding their ability to continue studying safely or effectively, or there is a significant risk to the student or others requiring formal institutional intervention.

The level applied will depend on the individual circumstances. A matter may move directly to a higher level where the seriousness of the concern warrants it.

Level One – Emerging or Manageable Concerns

At Level One, the student will normally be invited to meet with an appropriate member of the Institution, such as the Head of Institute, academic representative or designated student support representative.

The student may bring a support person, such as a parent, guardian, family member or friend, to



this meeting if they wish.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- understand the student's circumstances;
- allow the student to explain any difficulties they are experiencing;
- identify appropriate support;
- discuss the potential effect on their academic progress;
- agree reasonable actions; and
- determine whether further intervention is required.

Following the meeting, one or more of the following actions may be agreed:

- no further action;
- referral to appropriate student support;
- referral to a medical practitioner or healthcare professional;
- referral to counselling or psychological support where available;
- development of an academic support plan;
- agreement on specific steps the student should take;
- reasonable academic adjustments, where permitted;
- a short period away from studies where appropriate;
- temporary flexibility in academic arrangements, where permitted by the relevant academic regulations; or
- escalation to Level Two.

Any agreed actions should be documented and communicated to the student.

This will normally be confirmed to the student in writing within five working days of the meeting.

The student's progress may be reviewed after an appropriate period. If the circumstances improve, the matter may be closed. If the concern continues or becomes more serious, the matter may be escalated to Level Two.

Level Two – Continuing or Significant Concerns

Level Two applies where concerns continue despite previous support, where the student's circumstances require more formal intervention, or where the impact on the student or the academic environment is significant.

The student will normally be invited to attend a meeting with the **IVY Academic Network Fitness to Study Panel (FSP)**.

The Fitness to Study Panel will normally comprise:

- Head of Institute;
- Head of Quality;
- Senior Academic Representative; and
- Independent Member nominated by Senior Management.

Where necessary, the Institution may invite an appropriate additional person to provide relevant



professional or academic information. Any such person's role will be clearly explained to the student.

The student will be informed of the concerns being considered and will have a reasonable opportunity to explain their circumstances and provide relevant information.

The student may request to be accompanied by **one support person**, such as a parent/guardian, family member, friend or other appropriate person, subject to the Institution's reasonable requirements.

The support person may provide appropriate support to the student but will not normally answer questions or make representations on the student's behalf unless the Panel considers this appropriate.

Following consideration of the matter, the FSP may decide on one or more of the following:
no further action;

referral to appropriate support services;

an agreed student support or action plan;

academic adjustments where permitted;

a requirement for the student to take specified steps;

a short period away from studies;

deferral of an assessment where permitted;

recommendation for temporary interruption of studies;

referral for appropriate medical or professional support;

continued monitoring and review; or

escalation to Level Three.

The student will receive a written outcome setting out the decision, the reasons for the decision and any actions expected of the student. This will normally be provided within ten working days of the meeting, subject to the complexity of the case.

Where the student's circumstances continue or deteriorate, the matter may be escalated to Level Three.

Level Three – Serious or Urgent Concerns

Level Three applies where the circumstances are considered sufficiently serious to require formal intervention by the Institution.

Examples may include circumstances where:

there is a significant risk to the student's health or safety;

there is a significant risk to the health or safety of others;

the student is unable to participate safely in the academic environment;

previous interventions have not adequately addressed the concern;

the student's circumstances have significantly deteriorated; or

urgent action is required to protect the student or others.



The student will normally be invited to attend a formal meeting with the Fitness to Study Panel.

The student will be given an opportunity to:

understand the concerns being considered;

explain their circumstances;

provide relevant information;

comment on any proposed action; and

identify any support or arrangements that may assist them.

Where immediate action is required because of a serious risk, IVY Academic Network may take temporary protective measures before the formal meeting. Such measures may include temporarily restricting participation in particular activities or temporarily suspending access to the Study Centre where necessary for health and safety reasons.

Such temporary measures will not, by themselves, constitute a final Fitness to Study decision.

Following the formal consideration, the Fitness to Study Panel may determine one or more of the following:

continuation of studies with specified conditions;

an appropriate student support plan;

reasonable academic adjustments, where permitted;

deferral of assessments or academic activity where permitted;

temporary interruption of studies;

temporary suspension from academic activities where necessary;

requirement to obtain appropriate medical or professional advice before returning to particular activities;

withdrawal from the programme where continuation is not reasonably or safely possible; or

any other proportionate action permitted under IVY Academic Network's regulations and the relevant Partner University or Awarding Body requirements.

The student will receive a written outcome of the Panel's decision, including the reasons for the decision, normally within ten working days of the meeting, subject to the complexity of the case.

Any decision to withdraw a student from a programme will be taken only after appropriate consideration of the circumstances and applicable academic regulations.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

IVY Academic Network will handle information relating to a student's health, wellbeing and personal circumstances with appropriate confidentiality and sensitivity.

Information will normally only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate need to receive it for the purposes of:

supporting the student;

assessing Fitness to Study concerns;



making academic arrangements;
managing health and safety risks;
fulfilling institutional responsibilities; or
complying with applicable legal, regulatory or awarding-body requirements.

The Institution will avoid requesting unnecessary medical or personal information.

Where medical or professional information is required, the student may be asked to provide appropriate documentation or obtain an assessment from a registered medical practitioner or relevant professional.

The Institution will respect the student's privacy as far as reasonably possible. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where disclosure is necessary to address a serious and immediate risk to the student or another person, or where disclosure is otherwise required or permitted by applicable law or institutional requirements.

Records relating to a Fitness to Study concern, including meeting notes, panel decisions and any medical or professional information obtained, will be stored securely and access will be restricted to individuals with a legitimate need to view them. Such records will be retained only for as long as reasonably necessary for the purposes set out in this policy, in line with the Institution's data retention requirements.

Involvement of Parents, Guardians and Family Members

IVY Academic Network recognises that family members may provide important support to students, particularly where a student is experiencing significant health or wellbeing difficulties.

Where appropriate, the Institution may encourage the student to involve a parent, guardian or family member in discussions about their support.

The student's consent will normally be sought before personal information is shared with family members.

However, where there is a serious and immediate concern relating to the student's safety or the safety of another person, the Institution may take appropriate action and, where necessary and legally permissible, contact an appropriate family member or emergency service.

The student's age, circumstances, preferences and right to privacy will be taken into consideration.

Medical or Professional Information

Where appropriate, IVY Academic Network may request relevant information from a registered medical practitioner, healthcare professional, counsellor, psychologist or other suitably qualified professional.

Any request for such information will be limited to what is reasonably necessary to understand: the student's ability to participate in study;



any relevant restrictions or limitations;

appropriate support or adjustments;

any immediate health and safety considerations; and

whether a temporary interruption or other academic arrangement may be appropriate.

IVY Academic Network does not diagnose or treat medical or psychological conditions. The Institution's role is to consider how the student's circumstances affect their participation in education and what reasonable institutional arrangements may be appropriate.

Temporary Interruption or Break from Study

Where a student's circumstances make continued study temporarily inappropriate, the Institution may consider a temporary interruption of studies, subject to the applicable academic regulations.

The purpose of an interruption is to allow the student reasonable time to address their circumstances and, where possible, prepare for a safe return to study.

The duration and conditions of an interruption will depend on the student's individual circumstances and the academic requirements of the relevant programme.

Where the programme is delivered in partnership with or leads to an award from another institution, the Partner University's or Awarding Body's regulations regarding interruption, deferral and progression will also apply.

Appealing a Fitness to Study Decision

A student may appeal a formal Fitness to Study decision where they believe that:

a significant procedural error occurred and affected the fairness of the process;

relevant new information is available which was not reasonably available when the decision was made;

the decision was disproportionate in light of the circumstances; or

there are other substantial grounds demonstrating that the decision should be reconsidered.

An appeal must normally be submitted **in writing within ten working days** of the date on which the student received the formal decision.

The appeal should clearly state:

the decision being appealed;

the grounds for appeal;

any relevant supporting information; and

the outcome the student is seeking.

The appeal should be submitted to the **Head of Institute**, who will arrange for the appeal to be considered by an appropriate Fitness to Study Appeal Panel.

The Appeal Panel will normally comprise:



Head of Institute;
Head of Quality;
Senior Academic Representative; and
Independent Member nominated by Senior Management.

The Appeal Panel will normally be composed of members who did not sit on the original Fitness to Study Panel, in order to preserve the independence of the appeal process.

Where a member of the original Fitness to Study Panel has a conflict of interest or where their participation would affect the independence of the appeal, an alternative suitably senior member may be nominated by Senior Management.

The Appeal Panel may:
confirm the original decision;
amend the original decision;
refer the matter back to the Fitness to Study Panel for reconsideration;
request further information before reaching a decision; or
uphold the appeal.

The outcome of the appeal will normally be communicated to the student **within ten working days** of the Appeal Panel meeting, subject to the complexity of the case and availability of relevant information.

The decision of the Appeal Panel will normally be final within IVY Academic Network's internal process, subject to any applicable rights or procedures under the regulations of the relevant Partner University or Awarding Body.

Returning to Study

Where a student has temporarily interrupted their studies or has been required to take time away from academic activities, IVY Academic Network will consider the circumstances required for their return.

The student will normally be informed of:
the expected date or conditions for return;
any documentation that may be required;
any academic requirements that must be completed;
any support arrangements available; and
any conditions that apply to their return.

Where reasonably necessary, the Institution may request appropriate confirmation from a registered medical practitioner or relevant professional that the student is able to participate safely in their studies.

The Institution will request only information that is reasonably necessary for the purpose of determining appropriate study arrangements.



Upon return, the student's progress may be reviewed to ensure that agreed support arrangements remain appropriate.

If significant concerns arise again, the Institution may review the matter under the relevant level of this policy.

Immediate Health and Safety Concerns

Where a student appears to be experiencing a serious medical emergency or presents an immediate and significant risk to themselves or others, the Institution will prioritise immediate health and safety.

Depending on the circumstances, IVY Academic Network may:

contact the student's nominated emergency contact;

contact local emergency services;

arrange or facilitate access to the nearest appropriate medical facility;

contact police or other relevant authorities where necessary;

temporarily restrict access to the Study Centre or specific activities where required to manage an immediate risk; and

take other reasonable steps necessary to protect the student and others.

Where emergency intervention is required, the normal Fitness to Study process may be temporarily suspended until the immediate risk has been addressed.

The formal Fitness to Study process may subsequently be initiated if appropriate.