

Fitness to Study Policy

The National Film and Television School (the School) is committed to supporting all students to fulfil their potential. Occasionally, a student may be adversely affected by difficult personal circumstances, health issues or by the behaviour of others. The following procedures are designed to outline the action that the School will take in such instances to ensure that issues can be dealt with in a clear and transparent fashion. This Policy may be used as an alternative to the Student Misconduct Policy where a need for enhanced support is identified.

This Policy applies to all students including those apprentices receiving training from the School.

1. Duty of Care

At all times, the School aims to support individual students and allow them to make their own decisions as to when to engage with their studies if full and effective engagement and attendance is not possible due to their personal situation. However, the School owes a duty of care to all members of the School community to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all of its students, staff and visitors. Fitness to Study refers to the impact of an individual student's health and wellbeing on their capability to participate fully and appropriately in the learning environment at the School. In exceptional cases the School may determine that where a student exhibits unacceptable behaviour, conduct or fails to attend or submit work satisfactorily and where that is considered to be the result of known or suspected underlying health and or wellbeing issues, the provisions of this Policy will be followed.

2. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure the provision of a consistent, appropriate, non-judgemental and sensitive response to the management of situations relating to any cause for concern about any student's fitness to study. This Policy should be applied if students' health problems (which may include physical, emotional / psychological, or behavioural problems), or an inability to manage their own health or wellbeing and safety or that of others, are disrupting their own studies or the studies of others, or result in what are perceived to be unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students.

3. Procedure

This procedure has two levels, level 1 (Support) and level 2 (Acute Concern). Depending on the nature and seriousness of the concern, the procedure may be entered at level 2 without the earlier Support level having been commenced.

4. Level 1 – Support

Where a student's behaviour, attitude, or expressed views first raises concern about their ability to engage effectively with their studies or to attend regularly, or where their behaviour is negatively impacting the learning experience of others, these will be discussed at a meeting with the student by their Head of Department or Senior Tutor. The advice of Student Support and Wellbeing and the feedback of an apprentice's employer may also be sought.

Details of the concerns will be recorded by the member of staff identifying the concern. Where possible, the record will include specific incidents and dates and may relate to individual or isolated incidents or a series of issues.

In instances where a student has concerns about another student, these should be raised with a member of staff such as their Head of Department or the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager. The member of staff will then decide how to follow up the concerns.

In the meeting with the student about whom the concern has been raised, the member of staff should make clear the basis for the concerns using clear examples where possible. The student should be advised that their situation is being considered at Stage 1 of this procedure. A Student Support and Wellbeing Adviser may be invited to attend the meeting. The student may be accompanied by another NFTS student, a Students' Union representative or any other supportive person as agreed with the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager.

The student should be offered the opportunity to disclose any contextual information, which may include an underlying physical or mental health condition, or other personal circumstances. If appropriate, the student should be advised to speak to Student Support and Wellbeing and provided with information about sources of professional support and advice.

The student will be asked to agree an action plan to bring about changes in the behaviour causing concern. This may include:

- i.. requiring the student to attend weekly appointments with a nominated member of staff for regular support; or
- ii. requiring the student to seek help from support services within the School or from external professionals, such as the student's GP.

The Head of Department or Senior Tutor, or Student Support and Wellbeing Adviser, will set a

date for review of the student's progress against the action plan. The student will be advised that if they do not adhere to the action plan, or should the concerns identified not be addressed satisfactorily, this may lead to action being taken under Stage 2 – Acute Concern.

5. Stage 2 – Acute Concern

If concerns about a student have not been resolved by the actions in Stage 1 of these procedures, or a student's behaviour raises serious and immediate concern, the member of staff who has identified or recorded the concerns should inform the Registrar and the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager as soon as possible.

Where practicable, the student should be told at a meeting with their HoD or Senior Tutor that they are being considered under Stage 2 of this procedure and advised to seek advice and support from the Students' Union, or from another NFTS student.

The Student Support and Wellbeing Manager, in conjunction with the Registrar, will carry out a risk assessment to identify formally the level of risk to the student and/or others and to consider whether continued study may put the student and/or others at unacceptable risk or exacerbate the student's difficulties. In addition to the student's course-related activities, their level of engagement with their studies and the quality of social interactions, consideration should also be given to the student's domestic situation. In respect of an apprentice, the views of their employer will also be taken into consideration. All available evidence should be included in the risk assessment.

The risk assessment will result in one of two possible outcomes:

- i. The level of risk to the student and/or others currently posed by the student is within acceptable levels. In this case, Stage 1 of these procedures should (continue to) be followed. Or
- ii. If the risk assessment highlights an unacceptable level of risk, the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager will call an urgent case conference. Attendees at the conference will include the Registrar or their nominee (acting as Chair) and other staff as are necessary and appropriate to consider the case (e.g. the student's Head of Department or Senior Tutor, or Coordinator).

Where practicable, the student should be advised that a case conference is being held, and should be invited to submit a written statement giving any context or information that might be relevant to their situation.

The members of the case conference may consider various options in relation to the student, including additional support strategies, voluntary or enforced suspension from study for a defined period of time with conditions set for their return, or in the most extreme cases a recommendation to the Director of the School that the student be withdrawn from the School. In instances of behaviour reasonably regarded as extremist, a decision of referral to the regional Prevent Co-Ordinator will be made, if such a referral has not been made at Stage 1.

Where the concern relates to 'Prevent' matters and a referral has been made to an external body, the members of the case conference will have regard to any reports or information provided by 'Prevent' bodies in respect of the student, if available.

Where the Registrar is satisfied that there exists a serious and immediate threat to the safety of others or any criminal activity has occurred or, in the view of the Registrar, criminal activity may occur, he or she shall consult with the Director and, after approval from the Director, a referral shall be made to the Police.

The most appropriate and supportive manner for the outcome of the case conference to be communicated to the student will be considered in advance of notification to the student. Wherever possible, the written notification detailing the decision will be given to the student in person, by the Registrar or Student Support and Wellbeing Manager who will explain the contents. The student may be accompanied by another NFTS student, a Students' Union representative or any other supportive person as agreed with the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager. The written notification will advise the student of their right to appeal (see below).

In respect of an apprentice, their employer will be advised of the outcome of the case conference.

6. Support during suspension

Whilst a student is in a voluntary or enforced suspension from the School they will be provided with a key point of contact who they can liaise with to offer ongoing support and in order to facilitate a smooth return to study once their personal circumstances have improved. If the student's circumstances do not improve, OR if they choose to withdraw from the School then the

key point of contact can liaise with Registry who will withdraw the student from their course and inform relevant parties.

A student who is suspended may not come on to the School site or participate in School-related activities without the written permission of the Registrar. In most cases, access to Workplace will also be suspended.

7. Return to study

Return to study following a period of voluntary or involuntary suspension is not automatic and will depend upon the student providing evidence that they are fit to study and that any conditions set have been met.

Prior to the end of the agreed period of suspension, the Head of Department and the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager will arrange a meeting with the student to discuss their return to study. The evidence, if any, required to demonstrate their readiness to return to study will be discussed and a 'return to study plan' will be agreed. Medical evidence of a student's readiness to return to study will be required. Evidence submitted must be from a recognised health worker such as a mental health professional, doctor or psychiatrist who has sufficient knowledge of the student and the demands of higher education in order to make an informed decision regarding return to study. In particular, specific reference should be made to the student's capacity to return to study.

In respect of an apprentice, their employer will be advised that a return to study plan has been agreed and the date that they will be returning to their course.

Following the meeting or receipt of medical evidence, should the Head of Department and Student Support and Wellbeing Manager still have concerns regarding the student's fitness to study, a further risk assessment will be undertaken. If the risk assessment highlights an unacceptable level of risk, a further case conference will be called. Attendees at the conference will include the Registrar and other staff as are necessary and appropriate to consider the case (e.g. the student's Head of Department, or Senior Tutor, or Coordinator).

The student should be advised that a case conference is being held, and should be invited to submit a written statement giving any context or information that might be relevant to their

situation and which might support a return to study.

The case conference may consider various options in relation to the student, including additional support strategies, a further period of suspension from study, or a recommendation to the Director of the School that the student be withdrawn from the School if the case conference decides that there is no reasonable prospect of the student re-engaging with their studies.

Following the case conference, the student will be notified in writing of the decision by the Registrar and of their right to appeal (see below). In the case of an apprentice, their employer will also be notified of the outcome.

Once a student has returned to study, failure to comply with the Return to Study Plan will result in the student being considered further under stage 2 of this procedure- Acute Concern.

8. Appeal

Students have the right to appeal against any decision taken under Stage 2 of these procedures (save in instances where suspected criminal activity leads to a police referral). Appeals will only be accepted if there is evidence of procedural irregularity, bias on the part of the members of the case conference or if the student submits further material circumstances which could not reasonably have been expected to be submitted for consideration at the Stage 2 case conference.

Appeal information should be submitted to the Director of the School, and submitted no later than within 10 working days of the notification of decision. The School Director will appoint a member of the Management team with no prior involvement with the case to consider the appeal.

9. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

Decisions taken under this procedure may be eligible for review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), which is an independent body set up to review student complaints. More information about the OIA can be accessed at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/> The OIA can be contacted at 0118 959 9813 or enquiries@oiahe.org.uk. Where applicable, students will be provided with a Completion of Procedures Letter and information about how to apply to the OIA for a review of a decision taken under this procedure.

10. ESFA

An apprentice can complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) about decisions taken under this policy. The ESFA does not deal with complaints about employment issues (for example, a problem with an apprenticeship employment contract).

Apprentices must contact the ESFA within 12 months after the issue happened.

Complaints can be sent by email to: complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk or by post to:

Complaints team
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Updated September 2023

Initial Concerns

- Concerns recorded
- Meeting with student
- Action plan agreed

Acute concern

- Risk assessment undertaken
- Then EITHER - continue with stage 1 action plan
- OR hold case conference
- Agree new action plan which may include suspension or withdrawal

Return to study

- Student should submit appropriate evidence if requested
- Agree new action plan
- Ongoing support offered

