



**Higher Education Services
Fitness to Study
Policy**

July 2025

DOCUMENT INFORMATION AND VERSION CONTROL

Name of policy/procedure:	Higher Education Services Fitness to Study Policy
Document owner:	Academic Registrar
Date of creation:	28 th July 2025
Equality Impact Assessment date and reference:	28 th July 2025
Date of last review:	28 th July 2025
Reviewed by:	Prof. Dr Alison Watson
Date of next review:	28 th July 2028
Related documents:	Brunel University, Fitness to Study Roehampton University, Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

Version	Author	Date	Brief summary of changes
1	A. Watson	28/07/25	Original version

Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	4
2.0 Scope.....	4
3.0 When to Use the Policy.....	4
4.0 Principles.....	4
5.0 Support for Students.....	5
6.0 The Process.....	5
6.3 Stage 1.....	5
6.4 Stage 2.....	6
6.5 Stage 3.....	6
7.0 Appeals.....	8
8.0 Return to Study.....	8
9.0 Monitoring.....	8

Higher Education Services Fitness to Study Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 FutureLearn has a commitment to its students to ensure they are healthy and can complete their courses and programmes. The fitness to study policy addresses any concerns regarding a student's physical and mental wellbeing and puts in place a structured approach to managing this. FutureLearn is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe learning environment that provides learners with opportunities to learn, develop and grow.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy is intended for validated provision-only students. This policy does not include those students who are under an OPM sub-contractual arrangement, for example, Brunel University and Roehampton University.

2.2 Students should follow the university partners policies on fitness to study:

- Brunel University (BU), [Fitness to Study](#)
- Roehampton University (RU), [Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure](#)

2.3 The policy operates within a framework to scope out the ways in which FutureLearn can support students to continue with their studies. Levels of support are considered alongside the health and wellbeing of the student to ensure the student can continue studying in a safe environment.

3.0 When to Use the Policy

3.1 The policy may be used under the following circumstances:

- Where a health condition of a student has not been diagnosed or FutureLearn has not been notified.
- When a student's health situation is deteriorating.
- When all other support services have been exhausted to help the student, for example, extenuating circumstances and short-term extensions.
- When a resolution has not been found via the Cause for Concern.

4.0 Principles

4.1 The principles of the policy safeguard FutureLearn students in the following ways:

- FutureLearn will act in a fair and balanced manner when dealing with vulnerable students.
- FutureLearn will work in collaboration with university partners to determine the most appropriate and suitable course of action to support the student.
- FutureLearn will ensure the safeguarding of the student and wider FutureLearn students and staff as detailed in the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Safeguarding and Prevent Policy](#).
- FutureLearn will comply with any legal duties around the situation.
- Students will be kept up to date and fully informed of the impacts of breaks in study.

5.0 Support for Students

5.1 When conducting fitness to study interviews, students will be offered the right to be accompanied by a friend, relative or health or social care professional, or student representative. In advance of the meeting students must notify the Academic Quality Lead (AQL) of anyone accompanying them. Legal representation will not usually be allowed unless permission has been given in advance. The interview will be kept confidential in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the General Data Protection Act (UK) 2025.

5.2 Confidentiality will only be breached under exceptional circumstances, specifically when there is a significant and ongoing threat to life, personal safety, the safety of others, or in cases involving abuse, exploitation, or the commission of a criminal act that has not been disclosed. Where safeguarding concerns arise, the AQL must seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Officer/Lead. Wherever possible, the initial notification to the Safeguarding Officer should be made without including the student's name.

6.0 The Process

6.1 For those learners studying at a FutureLearn partner university, the university policy on fitness to study is to be followed and students will be signposted and supported accordingly by FutureLearn's student services team.

6.2 All other students through validated partnerships will follow the following process:

6.2.1 In the first instance referrals being made to the policy will go through the Cause for Concern Process. This process will assess the welfare, behaviour, safeguarding or prevent concern.

6.2.2 Definitions

- **Welfare** concerns consider health, financial and general wellbeing.
- **Behaviour** concerns include unacceptable conduct and rude behaviour.
- **Safeguarding and Prevent** concerns are considered an immediate danger from harm.

6.3 Stage 1

6.3.1 During this initial stage a referral is made to the AQL by the member of staff to quality@futurelearn.com. A chronological overview of events in support of the referral is requested and recorded within the Quality Department. During this initial stage the member of staff will communicate with the student and explore a resolution with the [Student Code of Conduct](#) as a reference point. This is an informal stage to resolve the situation.

6.3.2 If the welfare or conduct issues remain the member of staff will refer and report the issue to their line manager. A record of this following the process above will also be submitted to the AQL. The manager will discuss the issue with the learner, referring to the Student Code of Conduct as a reference point. The discussion will be supportive and will communicate the cause for concern. The student will be able to submit mitigating evidence. As an initial resolve the manager and student could agree on an action plan to improve the situation. A letter outlining the conversation and agreements between the student and manager will be sent to the student within five working days. After the actions and deadlines from the action plan are met, and if there are no more concerns, the matter will be closed. If the conduct or issue continues the concern will be raised to the next stage.

6.4 Stage 2

6.4.1 Where the action plan has not achieved its goals or where the behaviour or conduct becomes more serious, stage 2 will be implemented. Trigger for this level of concern could include:

- Poor programme performance in one or more indicators.
- Persistent inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour.
- Refusal to engage with support or FutureLearn staff.

6.4.2 The meeting will be chaired by the Head of Programmes, with the AQL and Student Services Team Leader present. The student will be given advanced notice in writing of the meeting and the offer to be accompanied by a representative. The invitation to the meeting will include the reasons for the meeting and the request to bring evidence to the meeting as appropriate, for example, medical evidence. If the student declines the meeting it will still be held and can consider any evidence submitted in advance by the student. The outcome of the meeting could include:

- No further action.
- Leave of absence.
- Change of study intensity.
- Escalation to other FutureLearn procedures.
- A further action plan being put in place.

6.4.3 The outcome of the meeting will be put in writing and shared with the student within five working days. If the student rejects the outcome or fails to meet the actions and deadlines on the action plan the case will then be moved to the final stage.

6.5 Stage 3

6.5.1 This stage is used for serious concerns relating to wellbeing or conduct. If the concern has been referred via the [Student Disciplinary](#) or [Prevent Procedure](#), then the concern will be reviewed at this stage only. The meeting will comprise of the learner, Director of Academic Affairs, AQL, Student Services Team Leader, Head of Programmes, and Academic Registrar. The student can be accompanied by a representative. Notification will be given to the student in advance and the evidence will be asked for. The meeting will still be held if the student declines or does not attend.

6.5.2 The panel will determine if a leave of absence is required, when it will begin and for how long. Specific dates and timings will be recorded. Any disciplinary issues will be referred to the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#). A nominated FutureLearn member of staff will be nominated to remain in contact with the student. The student will be notified in writing within five working days of the outcome of this stage.



Figure 1 Fitness to Study

7.0 Appeals

7.1 A student has the right to appeal the decision within ten working days of receiving confirmation in writing of the outcome of the stage 3 meeting. Appeals must be submitted in writing and sent to the Academic Registrar at quality@futurelearn.com detailing the following:

- Where the procedure has been incorrectly followed.
- Where there is further evidence of material circumstances which were not reasonably considered by the panel.

7.2 The Academic Registrar will establish consultation with the Director of Academic Affairs and Managing Director for consideration as to whether to dismiss the appeal or review the case.

7.3 If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they may wish to refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within three months of the conclusion of the procedure by FutureLearn.

OIA Third Floor, Kings Reach 38-50 King's Road QA 73, Reading RG1 3AA

Email enquiries: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Website: www.oiahe.org.uk

8.0 Return to Study

8.1 One month prior to the student returning from Leave of Absence, FutureLearn student services will contact the student to begin discussions and support for the student on re-entering their programme. In some instances where poor health has been the reason for leave, the student will need to submit a fit-to-work medical note. Any reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure the student can resume their studies. The AQL will liaise with programme teams to ensure the support is in place. Where medical evidence cannot be provided the issue may be addressed by one of FutureLearn's other policies.

9.0 Monitoring

9.1 Monitoring of this policy will be kept under review by the Quality Department and will be formally reviewed every three years through the Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee.