



Policies & Procedures

Fitness to Study Policy & Procedure

Version	V2 September 2026
Policy Author:	Deputy Principal
Approved by:	Senior Leadership Team
Date of approval:	September 2026
Date for Review:	September 2027
Senior Manager responsible:	Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing

Alternative Formats:

If you require this document in an alternative format,
please use the following contact information:

welcome@coastland.ac.uk

Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

Contents Table

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Purpose and Scope	3
3.	Definitions	4
4.	Related Policies	4
5.	Roles and Responsibilities	5
5.1	Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing and DSL	5
5.2	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL)	5
5.3	Heads of Curriculum / Course Leaders / Apprenticeship Manager	5
5.4	Safeguarding & Welfare / Wellbeing / Learning Support (SEND)	5
5.5	Students, Apprentices, Parents / Carers, Employers and External Professionals	5
6.	Information Consent and Sharing – Considerations	6
7.	Support and Involvement	6
8.	Levels of Concerns and Procedure	7
8.1	Level 1 – Initial Concerns (Low Risk)	7
8.2	Level 2 – Ongoing and / or Further Concerns (Medium Risk)	8
8.3	Level 3 – Serious, Persistent and / or Critical Concerns (High Risk)	9
9.	Return to Study	10
10.	Independent Review / Appeals	11
Appendices:		
1	Procedure Grid (Summary)	12
2	Template Letters	
A	Invitation to Fitness to Study Meeting (Level 2 / 3)	13
B	Meeting Agenda (Level 2 / 3)	14
C	Decision Notice (Level 3 Panel Outcome)	15
D	Return to Study Confirmation and Plan	16
3	Guidance for Staff Conducting Level 3 Meetings	17
4	Evidence and Documentation (Examples	18
5	Reasonable Adjustments and Support (Illustrative Menu)	19
6	Timeframes	20
	Equality Impact Analysis	21

Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

Coastland College is committed to supporting students and apprentices, and recognises the importance of health and wellbeing in academic progress and the wider student experience. This Policy sets out the approach when a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour is having a detrimental impact on:

- their ability to engage with essential course requirements and make academic progress;
- their capacity to remain safe and healthy independently (or with reasonable support);
- the experience, learning, safety, or wellbeing of others (students, apprentices, staff, employers/placement providers); and/or
- the day-to-day operation of the College or a placement provider;
- This policy aims to ensure a consistent, sensitive and fair response and clarifies when other policies (e.g., Safeguarding, Student Behaviour & Intervention, Admissions, Equality, Data Protection, Complaints) may be initiated in parallel or instead of Fitness to Study;
- **Note (HE programmes):** Where students are registered on a partner university award, the university's Fitness to Study principles and procedures may take precedence. In such cases, the College will liaise with the partner institution and the student to apply the appropriate process.

2. Purpose & Scope

The Policy seeks to:

- support early identification and appropriate intervention where significant concerns arise;
- provide a non-judgemental, coordinated response that balances the student's interests with those of the wider community;
- identify and implement reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- define roles, responsibilities and boundaries of internal support and when onward referral is appropriate;

- safeguard and promote welfare while minimising disruption to teaching, learning and support for all;
- ensure students can make informed decisions about available options;
- consider proportionate application of temporary suspension or withdrawal when justified.

Out of scope:

- short-term, self-limiting medical events managed through routine academic flexibility;
- straightforward study adjustments negotiated within the course team;
- cases more appropriately managed under the Student Behaviour Management Policy (which may be run alongside this policy where risk/behaviour warrants).

Coverage: All applicants and enrolled students (full-time, part-time, distance learning, apprenticeships). Applicants who disclose significant health conditions may be considered under this policy to ensure the College can make safe, reasonable arrangements.

3. Definitions

Fitness to Study: A student's capacity to engage safely and effectively with their programme and the College community, with reasonable adjustments as appropriate, without causing unacceptable risk to self or others and without unreasonable disruption to others' learning or College operations.

Reasonable Adjustments: Modifications to reduce or remove substantial disadvantage due to disability or health condition, proportionate to course requirements and safety obligations.

Placement Provider: Any employer or organisation where the student undertakes work experience or industry placement as part of their programme.

4. Related Policies

- Student Behaviour Management Policy
- Safeguarding Policy (including Looked-After Children)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection (GDPR) Policy & Privacy Notices
- Complaints Policy

5. Roles & Responsibilities

5.1 Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing and DSL – Fitness to Study Advisor (FSA)

- Acts as College Lead for Fitness to Study;
- Advises staff on threshold, process, information sharing and proportionality;
- Chairs Fitness to Study Panels (Level 3) or nominates a suitable chair;
- Coordinates with partner universities and external agencies as required.

5.2 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads – DDSL

- Moderates cases; ensures safeguarding considerations and legal thresholds are applied;
- May authorise immediate interim measures where risk is acute;
- Ensures appropriate liaison with external agencies.

5.3 Heads of Curriculum & Skills (HoCS) / Course Leaders / Apprenticeship Manager

- Identify and record emerging concerns; initiate Level 1 response;
- Engage parents/carers (U18s or those with an EHCP; or 18+ with consent), employers (apprenticeships/placements), and support teams;
- Maintain case notes, action plans, and timely reviews; escalate where needed.

5.4 Safeguarding & Welfare / Wellbeing / Learning Support (SEND)

- Provide specialist assessment, advice, and support planning;
- Coordinate reasonable adjustments and referrals to external services;
- Advise on risk assessments and safety planning;

5.5 Students, Apprentices, Parents / Carers, Employers, External Professionals

- Students and Apprentices are expected to engage with agreed actions, support and reviews;
- Parents / carers (U18s or those with an EHCP; or 18+ with consent) and employers provide relevant information and support attendance;
- Health / mental-health professionals provide evidence and advice (with consent) to inform decisions.

6. Information Consent and Sharing - Considerations

- Health data is special category personal data. Information will be shared strictly on a need-to-know basis to support the student and manage risk;
- Wherever possible, explicit written consent will be obtained for sharing; students and apprentices will be informed what is shared, with whom, and for what purpose;
- Confidentiality may be broken without consent where there is credible risk of serious harm to the student or others, safeguarding concerns (including under-18s and adults with care/support needs), a legal obligation, or significant impact on others' rights and safety;
- Records will be accurate, proportionate, and stored securely in line with college data protection policies.

7. Support & Involvement

- **EHCP / SEND:** Where students or apprentices have an EHCP, their caseworker / practitioner will be kept informed with consent and reasonable adjustments reviewed;
- **Looked-After Children:** The Designated Person for Looked-After Children will be informed prior to meetings involving a LAC or care-experienced student or apprentice;
- **Under 18s and / Parental Responsibility:** Parents / carers will be invited to meetings (unless safeguarding risks prevent this). For students or apprentices aged 18+ and without an EHCP, consent will be sought to involve parents / carers;
- **Representation:** Students or apprentices may be accompanied by a parent / carer, employer representative (where appropriate), support worker, or College staff member. Their role is supportive, not formal representation.

- **Academic & Non-Academic Support:** This may include timetable / course adjustments, study skills, counselling / wellbeing, assistive technology, disability support, finance/welfare advice, careers, and signposting/referral to external services.

8. Levels of Concern and Procedure

The procedure has three levels and may be entered at any level depending on assessed risk/seriousness.

Most cases should begin at Level 1 and escalate only if concerns persist or risk increases.

Summary of Levels

- **Level 1 – Initial Concerns (Low risk):** Local response; early support and monitoring; no immediate specialist intervention required.
- **Level 2 – Ongoing / Further Concerns (Medium risk):** Formal meeting; multidisciplinary involvement; SMART action plan and closer monitoring.
- **Level 3 – Serious / Persistent/Critical (High risk):** Fitness to Study Panel; potential suspension, withdrawal, or managed return.

8.1 Level 1 – Initial Concerns (Low Risk)

Typical indicators: noticeable deterioration in health/appearance/attitude; emerging attendance issues; missed deadlines; reduced engagement; low-level behaviours causing concern but not an immediate crisis.

Lead: Course Manager / HoCS / Apprenticeship Manager with advice from Safeguarding / Welfare / SEND as needed.

Process:

1. **Information gathering:** Attendance, progress, placement feedback, previous interventions.
2. **Arrange meeting** (tutorial or specific appointment) at an appropriate time/location; invite parents / carers for U18s and those with an EHCP (and 18+ with consent); involve employer for apprentices (unless detrimental to wellbeing / employment).
3. **Discuss concerns** with clear, factual examples; hear the student's or apprentice's perspective and self-identified needs.
4. **Clarify expectations** (conduct, attendance, engagement, safety rules, relevant policies).

5. **Identify support** and reasonable adjustments; signpost to internal services; encourage GP / health contact where appropriate.

6. **Agree actions** (proportionate, SMART), including any risk assessment needs and reasonable review timescales.

7. **Record** the discussion and actions; share a written summary with the student and relevant staff; store securely.

8. **Review** after 2 weeks (or agreed period) to evaluate progress; either close, extend the plan, or escalate to Level 2.

8.2 Level 2 – Ongoing and/or Further Concerns (Medium Risk)

Triggers: No/insufficient improvement at Level 1; deterioration in health/engagement; complaints from others; refusal to access support; behaviours causing significant concern; increased risk indicators.

Lead: HoCS and DDSL must attend (with Safeguarding/Welfare/SEND; employer / parents / carers as appropriate).

Preparation: - Issue a **formal invitation letter** (see Template A) providing: purpose, policy copy/link, requested evidence (e.g., medical reports), attendance list, confidentiality statement, right to be accompanied, and implications of non-attendance.

- Collate documentation (attendance, progress, incident reports, previous plans, medical evidence with consent, placement reports).

Meeting Agenda (see Template B):

1. Purpose and policy explained.
2. Concerns detailed with objective evidence.
3. Student perspective and any new evidence.
4. Review all supporting documents (including external reports where consented).
5. Clarify relevant rules/expectations.
6. Discuss support and reasonable adjustments.
7. Consider options (extensions, alternative arrangements, interruption/deferral, part-time study, withdrawal with exit award where applicable).
8. **Agree SMART action plan** and monitoring arrangements; set review date (~2 weeks).
9. Explain consequences of non-engagement or deterioration.

After the meeting:

- Circulate written record and action plan within 5 working days; store securely.
- Undertake interim monitoring; hold review as scheduled.

- If resolved, close with a summary note. If unresolved or risk increases, either extend with revised plan or **escalate to Level 3**.

- Where **suspension** is considered, ensure a **Return to Study criteria plan** is drafted (evidence required, roles, timeframes).

Non-attendance: If the student or apprentice fails to attend without adequate reason / notice, the meeting may proceed in their absence and outcomes / actions will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days.

8.3 Level 3 – Serious, Persistent and / or Critical Concerns (High Risk)

When used: - Health / wellbeing and ability to study are seriously compromised;

- Significant / persistent non-attendance due to ill health;
- Suicidal ideation / means or acute risk indicators;
- Serious impact on others' safety / learning;
- Support needs exceed what the College can reasonably provide;
- A higher level of authority and decision-making is required.

8.3.1 Fitness to Study Panel (Case Conference)

Chair: Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing (FSA) (or nominee such as Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality).

Membership: Chair; HoCS / Curriculum Manager / Apprenticeship Manager; Safeguarding DDSL or nominee; Welfare / Wellbeing; SEND as relevant. Parents/carers (U18s or those with an EHCP; 18+ with consent) and employers (where appropriate) are invited. Partner university representation may be sought for HEI students.

Timescale: Convened within **5 working days** of decision to escalate (or as soon as reasonably practicable).

Process:

- Issue a formal invitation with at least **2 working days'** notice (more where possible), outlining purpose, panel composition, and rights to be accompanied.
- Encourage the student to submit a personal statement and provide/consent to relevant professional evidence.
- Invite internal summaries from support teams and curriculum (subject to data protection and professional codes).
- Conduct a structured discussion covering: concerns; student perspective; evidence review; risk/safety; reasonable adjustments; proportional options.

Possible Outcomes:

1. **No further action** (fit to study); advice and signposting.
2. **Managed Action Plan** with explicit conditions and review schedule.
3. **Temporary Suspension / Interruption / Deferral** with clear **Return to Study** criteria (evidence required, timeframes, responsibilities).
4. **Withdrawal on health grounds** (where fitness to study cannot reasonably be achieved in the foreseeable future).
5. **Referral to other policy** (e.g., Student Behaviour Management Policy) where behaviour/risk requires it.

Communication: A **Decision Notice** is issued **within 5 working days**, summarising evidence considered, outcome, conditions, reviews, and appeal rights.

8.3.2 Interim (Emergency) Conferences

Where there is acute risk requiring immediate action, an interim conference may be convened by an appropriate senior manager (e.g., DDSL, HoCS, Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing) to **implement immediate safeguarding measures** (e.g., contacting emergency services, temporary suspension, contacting next of kin where justified).

A full Panel will follow within **5 working days**.

9. Return to Study

Where a student or apprentice has taken a break (suspension / withdrawal) due to health, the College will ensure any return is **safe, supported and sustainable**.

Requirements may include:

- Evidence from an appropriate health professional confirming readiness to resume and any recommended adjustments (for psychiatric illness, a psychiatrist's assessment may be required).
- Independent occupational health assessment where indicated.
- **A Return to Study Plan** jointly developed by Curriculum, Welfare/Wellbeing/SEND and the student or apprentice, setting out:
 - short-term and longer-term support/adjustments;
 - any conditions of return and review points;
 - a risk management plan linked to precipitating factors.
 - Ongoing compliance with any conditions and participation in scheduled reviews.

Failure to meet conditions or significant deterioration may result in re-entry to this procedure and / or further action.

10. Independent Review / Appeals

Students or apprentices may request an independent review of Level 2/3 decisions if they believe **one or more** of the following applies:

- there was a **material procedural irregularity** in the way the case was handled;
- the **outcome was disproportionate** in the circumstances;
- **new evidence** is now available that could reasonably have led to a different decision.

How to appeal: - Submit a written **Statement of Appeal** to the College Complaints Officer within **10 working days** of the Decision Notice.

- State the grounds clearly and include any new evidence.
- An appropriate senior manager (not previously involved) will review the case and confirm an outcome **within 15 working days** (or advise if more time is required).
- Appeals against a recommendation of **exclusion** will be considered by the Principal.

A student may withdraw an appeal at any time by writing to the Complaints Officer. The withdrawal will be acknowledged and the matter closed.

Appendix 1 – Procedure Grid (Summary)

Level	Assessed Risk	Response Required	Chair/Lead	Others to Involve	Typical Outcomes
1. Initial Concerns	Low	Local response; early support; no immediate specialist intervention	Tutor / Course Manager / Apprenticeship Manager / HoCS	Parents/carers (U18s or those with an EHCP; 18+ with consent); Employer (apprentices/placements); Welfare/ Safeguarding/ SEND as needed	Advice; signposting; reasonable adjustments; documented action plan; scheduled review
2. Ongoing / Further Concerns	Medium	Formal meeting; multidisciplinary input; SMART plan; monitoring	HoCS and DDSL	Safeguarding/ Welfare/ Wellbeing; SEND; Curriculum; Parents/Carers; Employer where appropriate	Formal record; SMART actions; monitoring; potential suspension; escalation to Level 3 if insufficient progress
3. Serious / Persistent / Critical	High	Immediate high-level intervention; panel decision	Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing (FSA) or nominee	DDSL; Welfare/ Wellbeing; SEND; Curriculum; Parents/Carers; Employer; Partner University (HEI)	Decision Notice within 5 working days; managed action plan; temporary suspension/deferral; withdrawal on health grounds; referral to other policy; appeal rights

Appendix 2 – Template Letters

Template A – Invitation to Fitness to Study Meeting (Level 2/3)

[Coastland College Letterhead]

Private & Confidential

[Student Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Student Name],

Re: Fitness to Study Meeting (Level [2/3])

We are writing to invite you to a Fitness to Study meeting to discuss concerns regarding your ability to continue your studies safely and effectively at Coastland College.

- **Date/Time:** [Insert]
- **Location / Online link:** [Insert]
- **Those attending:** [Chair/Role list]

Please find enclosed the Fitness to Study Policy and the agenda for the meeting. You may be accompanied by a parent/carer, a member of your support team, an employer representative (if applicable), or a member of the College staff. The meeting will be confidential and information about your health will be shared only with those directly involved in the meeting.

If you have relevant medical or other evidence that you wish the meeting to consider, please send this to [secure email] in advance and let us know if you consent to sharing it with those present. If you cannot attend, please contact us as soon as possible to arrange an alternative. If you do not attend and no reason is provided, the meeting may proceed in your absence.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Role]

[Contact details]

Enclosures: Fitness to Study Policy; Meeting Agenda; Summary of Evidence held by the College

Template B – Meeting Agenda (Level 2/3)

- Welcome and introductions; purpose of meeting; policy overview.
- Summary of concerns and evidence.
- Student statement and additional evidence.
- Review of documentation from internal/external services.
- Clarification of expectations and relevant policies.
- Discussion of support, reasonable adjustments and options.
- Agreement of SMART action plan and monitoring.
- Review date and attendees; consequences of non-engagement.
- Next steps and communication arrangements.

Template C – Decision Notice (Level 3 Panel Outcome)

[Coastland College Letterhead]

Private & Confidential

[Student Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Student Name],

Re: Fitness to Study Panel – Decision Notice

Thank you for attending / providing a statement to the Fitness to Study Panel on [date]. The Panel considered the evidence listed in Appendix 1 of this letter.

Outcome: [No further action / Managed Action Plan / Temporary Suspension/Deferral with Return to Study criteria / Withdrawal on health grounds / Referral to other policy].

Reasons: [Summary of key considerations].

Conditions / Action Plan: [Detail SMART actions, support, responsibilities, and review dates].

Right of Appeal: If you wish to appeal this decision, please submit a written Statement of Appeal to the College Complaints Officer within 10 working days of this letter, stating your grounds (procedural irregularity; disproportionate outcome; new evidence) and including any supporting documentation.

If you have any questions or require support, please contact [named contact].

Yours sincerely,

[Chair Name]

[Role]

[Contact details]

Appendix 1: Evidence considered by the Panel

Template D – Return to Study Confirmation & Plan

[Coastland College Letterhead]

Private & Confidential

[Student Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Student Name],

Re: Return to Study – Confirmation and Plan

Following review of your evidence dated [insert] and the meeting held on [insert], we confirm that you may return to study on [date], subject to the conditions below and the attached Return to Study Plan.

Conditions / Adjustments: [Detail agreed support/adjustments, review points, and any risk-management steps].

Please contact [named contact] if you have questions or need to discuss any aspect of this plan. We look forward to supporting your successful return.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Role]

[Contact details]

Appendix 3 – Guidance for Staff Conducting Level 1 Meetings

- Collate attendance, progress, placement/employer feedback, and previous support notes.
- Prepare clear examples of concerns; avoid speculative language; be specific and objective.
- Create a supportive setting; allow the student time to speak; focus on problem-solving and enablement.
- Consider safeguarding context (age, care status, disability, risk indicators).
- Discuss available support; encourage GP/clinical input where indicated.
- Agree SMART actions and set a realistic review date (~2 weeks).
- Document the meeting and share the record promptly; store securely.
- If risk indicators escalate (e.g., suicidality, severe deterioration), seek immediate advice from Safeguarding/DSL.

Appendix 4 – Evidence & Documentation (Examples)

- Attendance and punctuality records; assessment deadlines and outcomes.
- Incident reports; complaints by others (appropriately anonymised where required).
- Placement/employer feedback.
- Previous action plans and reviews; reasonable adjustments implemented.
- Student's personal statement.
- Professional reports (GP, psychiatrist, psychologist, OT, social worker) – with consent.
- Risk assessments and safeguarding notes (on a need-to-know basis).

Appendix 5 – Reasonable Adjustments & Support (Illustrative Menu)

- Timetable adjustments; reduced credit load; temporary remote access where feasible.
- Deadline extensions; alternative assessment arrangements in line with awarding body rules.
- Assistive technology; accessible formats; exam access arrangements.
- Quiet rooms/break spaces; named contact for check-ins.
- Counselling / wellbeing support; disability adviser input; peer mentoring.
- Signposting to GP/third-sector services.
- Safety/risk plans where indicated.

Appendix 6 – Timeframes (Indicative)

- Level 1 review: **2 weeks** from initial meeting (or agreed period).
- Convene Level 3 Panel: within **5 working days** of escalation (or as soon as practicable).
- Issue Decision Notice (Level 3): within **5 working days** of Panel.
- Appeal submission: within **10 working days** of Decision Notice.
- Appeal response: within **15 working days** of receipt (or notify if extension needed).

Equality Analysis

Name of Policy:	Fitness to Study Policy
Person Responsible:	Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing (Fitness to Study Advisor – FSA)
Date of Analysis:	September 2025

1: Identify aims of the activity

What is the purpose of the policy and who is intended to benefit?

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to students, apprentices and staff involved in concerns relating to a student's ability to achieve a positive outcome during their time at college, reviewing and implementing support and intervention strategies available.

2: Assess likely impact

How might this policy have an impact on staff, visitors or students in terms of disability, age, race, gender, religious belief, trans-identity, sexuality?

☐

Positive Impact

☒

No Impact

☐

Negative Impact

If you have identified **negative** impacts, you need to revise your activity to ensure that you are not disadvantaging any group on the grounds of disability, age, race, gender, religious belief, trans-identity, sexuality.

If you have identified **positive** impacts or **no impact**, please explain your decision

The College is committed to ensuring all students and apprentices are treated with a consistent, sensitive and fair approach in terms of issues experienced.

3: Checklist

1. Which of the following groups have you consulted?

☒

Staff

☐

Students

☐

Committee

☐

Other stakeholders
(please specify below)

2. How frequently will you monitor the impact(s) of this activity?

☐

Termly

☐

Annually

☒

Other (please specify below)

High-level and anonymised information regarding to FTS processes will be included in the Assistant Principal Student Life and Wellbeing annual report to The Corporation.