

Fitness to Study Policy in Action: Frequently-asked questions

Why have I been asked to go to a Fitness to Study meeting?

A Fitness to Study meeting is called when there are serious ongoing concerns about a student's safety, ability to manage their health and studies, or impact on others (often unintentional). The meeting group considers the concerns raised and offers you an opportunity to respond to those concerns and to present your view on your fitness to be studying and / or living in the University community. The meeting ends with a decision, action plan or other outcome.

You will be given a University contact email address for any queries that arise for you during the process.

Who will be attending the fitness to study meeting?

The meeting panel will include;

- A senior member of University staff who will chair the meeting
- A senior representative from your College
- A senior representative from your Faculty
- A representative from your academic Department(s)

and at least one of the following

- A senior representative from the Counselling & Mental Health Service
- A senior representative from Disability Support.

Further information on panel members can be found in the [Fitness to Study Policy](#).

Can I invite friends/family to the meeting?

We recognise that this may be a difficult process for you, so you are allowed to bring someone from the Durham University community to support you in a personal capacity. This support can be another Durham University student or member of the University. You may wish to invite a medical practitioner who is supporting you to join you at the meeting, if appropriate.

In addition, you may wish to receive independent advice and guidance in relation to your current position; this can be provided through the Durham Students' Union Advice Centre, see: [Advice Service @ Durham SU](#)

If you wish to bring a parent, relative or other supporter to the meeting, this is allowed (one person only) but the role of the accompanying person is to provide support to you through their presence. They are not expected to contribute to the meeting nor to speak on your behalf unless the need for such a role arises, at the discretion of the meeting chair.

Can I send in medical evidence ahead of the Fitness to Study Meeting?

If you wish to submit medical evidence to support your position, this can be in the form of a letter emailed to your Fitness to Study contact email address. Alternatively, it may be quicker and easier for your practitioner to communicate directly with a Mental Health or Disability Adviser by email or phone. You can request this by contacting your Fitness to Study contact email address.

What information will I get before the Fitness to Study Meeting?

You will be sent a set of documents ahead of the meeting which will include;

- Reports highlighting the concerns from your College, Department, Mental Health Advisor and Disability Support, as relevant.
- A copy of any medical evidence that the University has received in relation to Fitness to Study concerns.

- A meeting agenda which will explain how the meeting will be structured.
- A copy of the Fitness to Study Policy
- A copy of your suspension letter, if applicable.

Once you have received a copy of the documents and reviewed all the information, you can email your contact email address with any comments and if you wish, you can submit a written statement outlining your position, which the panel will review at the Fitness to Study Meeting.

What happens during the meeting?

The Chair will invite the staff representatives present to describe their involvement and concerns as outlined in their report. Your academic Department will also comment on your academic progress. You will be invited to query anything that has been said, and to present your view of your fitness and academic situation.

Staff may ask further questions, however it is impossible to anticipate what these might be as they will be individual to your situation.

What to do if you need any individual arrangements ahead of the meeting?

If you require any individual arrangements or reasonable adjustments to allow you to fully participate in the meeting and feel more comfortable, please let us know by emailing your Fitness to Study contact email address. Such arrangements may include:

- Breaks during the meeting
- Information being provided in a different format.
- A written agenda which will explain what will happen during the meeting.
- The opportunity to provide a written statement.

What are the possible outcomes of a Fitness to Study Meeting?

The outcomes of a Fitness to Study Meeting may be:

- No further action;
- A recommendation of a further specific support arrangement, formal monitoring of your condition, the specification of evidence required and a date set to reconsider the situation;
- An assessment of your Fitness to Study that leads to your agreement to a Grace Period of up to three (3) weeks or a suspension of studies concession, or withdrawal.

You will usually be informed of the outcome of the Fitness to Study meeting in writing within 5 working days of the meeting taking place.

Can I appeal the outcome of a Fitness to Study Meeting?

Yes, if you are unhappy with the outcome, you can appeal the decision made by the Fitness to Study Meeting panel. The purpose of an appeal is to ascertain whether the decision was reached in accordance with the University procedures; and in the light of all relevant information.

You must make an appeal in writing to student.cases@durham.ac.uk within fourteen days of the outcome of the Fitness to Study meeting being communicated to you in writing.

What support is available after the meeting?

Following the meeting, you will be offered the chance to meet with your College Student Support Office to ensure that any impact on your College accommodation (as appropriate), financial position and other related issues can be discussed.