

FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY AND PROCEDURE 2026/27

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Fitness to Study Policy 2026/27

1. Introduction

City of Portsmouth College (COPC) is committed to promoting a culture of positive mental wellbeing for its students with the aim of creating such a culture, all Students will be able to fulfil their potential in their studies and in their lives beyond college. This policy provides a framework for managing situations where there is a concern about the wellbeing of a student, which will affect their ability to study at the College and impact on their wellbeing and learning of themselves and/or others.

2. Scope and Purpose

The term 'fitness to study' as used in this document relates to the entire Student experience, and not just to a student's ability to engage with their studies. For example, the College expects its students to live in harmony with others, and not to conduct themselves in a way which has an adverse impact on those around them. This policy is not designed to address academic performance problems unless these result from a fitness to study difficulty. This policy is intended to be complementary to the Student Behaviour Policy and specifically to be used where there is sufficient concern that a student's behaviour could be as a result of disability or ill health and to be having, or likely to have, an impact on the health and safety of the student or other people in the College. The Student Behaviour Policy may initiate action, for example suspension of the student if there is a threat to their own or other members of the College community's safety, but subsequently this policy may replace the Student Behaviour Policy if the cause of the student's behaviour is identified as a health issue during disciplinary proceedings. The outcome of a disciplinary meeting may in fact reflect an outcome under this policy where appropriate. Where this is the case, it will be made clear in the outcome letter.

The Student Behaviour Policy is not punitive but is designed to support Students who display negative behaviours which may be caused by underlying health problems. Teaching and support staff may initiate the use of the policy if concern for the student is sufficient.

This policy applies to all Students enrolled on programmes taught by the College. Where Students are under 16, the school representatives must be incorporated into all stages of the process including attending any meetings with Students.

This policy is designed to be 'preventative,' dealing with issues early and before they escalate to a crisis, and on all occasions where this policy is either being considered or used, appropriate confidentiality and data protection protocols must be maintained at all times

Where any health issues could be considered to be covered by the Equality Act,

the College will implement reasonable adjustments to support a student to continue with their studies.

The College Admissions Policy should be followed for all applicants prior to enrolment

3. Scope and Purpose

COPC is committed to:

- Enabling all staff to know how to proceed when they identify if a student is struggling with medical, psychological, or emotional problems
- Considering the lawful application of temporary or permanent exclusion if there is justification for such an act. This would apply where there is a risk to the health, safety, and wellbeing of the individual Student, following any reasonable adjustments, or this was having a detrimental effect on the College's duty of care to the other Students
- Recognising when a student's support needs fall outside of the scope of support that the College can provide reasonably.

This policy does not cover Student behaviour management as this is covered by the Student Behaviour Policy. The concerns that are applicable to this policy are those when there is a serious risk either to the individual or to other staff or Students because of health or wellbeing issues.

4. Scope and Purpose

COPC aims to provide all students with access to opportunities which will help to improve their health and wellbeing through a variety of means whilst studying with us, such as:

- The College Tutorial Programme
- Access to a Personal Tutor.
- College wide community events
- A range of free activities
- Wellbeing assessments available for all students
- Access to onsite or remote counselling

5. Access to Policy

This policy will be published on the College website.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, and when there are substantial changes to personnel or related policies.

7. Links to other Policies

- College Equity, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- College Admissions Policy

- Student Behaviour Policy K Procedure
- Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults policy

8. Roles & Responsibilities

The Colleges Senior Management Team will monitor the implementation of the Policy and:

- ensure staff are aware and comply with the procedures
- actively promote this policy
- take corrective actions when issues for improvement are identified.

Fitness to Study Procedure 2026/2027

1. Joining the college

Students are encouraged to disclose any physical or mental health need as part of their application. This disclosure will in no way prejudice any decision about the application; on the contrary, it is used to establish how best we can respond to the individual's need and what reasonable adjustments can be made.

In cases where a complex or significant physical or mental health condition is disclosed, it may be appropriate that further information is sought from health professionals or that confirmation is obtained from a medical professional that the student is 'fit to study' (Appendix A).

A Fit to Study Form (see Appendix B) must be submitted prior to enrolment, otherwise this process cannot be completed. A senior member of the Student Experience or Learning Support department will enrol the student on a suitable, agreed programme of study. Information regarding this student will be passed onto the delegated Pastoral Monitor of the student, who will complete a Targeted Support Agreement to ensure that appropriate support is in place for the student from the outset. (see Appendix C).

Students in this category will meet regularly. In these meetings, a review of whether a student is meeting required expectations with regards to attendance, punctuality, and performance. If a student is not meeting the required standards, support in place will be reviewed and a meeting arranged with parents/guardians to determine whether it is in the student's best interests to continue.

If students do not disclose a pre-existing physical or mental health condition on application, then it is unlikely that they will receive support or reasonable adjustment unless the condition becomes clear to a member of staff. Early disclosure of issues is, therefore, vital to allow us to assess how best to support students.

Students are made aware of the extensive range of student support services at the College, both during the induction period and as part of the ongoing Tutorial Programme. If a student wants or needs to disclose any information, they can do this by seeing any member of staff. Information will then be passed on to the relevant members of staff.

2. When to use this Procedure

The policy/procedure may be implemented by a member of staff when:

- There is concern raised that Student's health or wellbeing are affecting their attendance or capacity to study to the extent that they are not able to participate in their study programme to a level which will enable them to complete successfully.
- Concerns about the Student's fitness to study are raised by a third party i.e., a friend, relative, employer, member of the College staff or medical professional.
- The Student has informed a member of staff that they have concerns about their own fitness to study.

- Behaviour that would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter may be known or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.
- A Student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety, or wellbeing of others.
- A Student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the learning, progress, or likelihood of success of other Students

3. Procedures for Responding to Emerging and Ongoing Concerns

The procedure has 3 stages:

Stage 1

Emerging or initial concerns about an individual Student's health, safety, behaviour or mental well-being is raised. A member of staff with primary responsibility, e.g., an appropriate curriculum manager, should meet with the Student and explain in a supportive and understanding manner that concerns about the Student's fitness to study have emerged, at this stage, it may be appropriate to make a referral to the Wellbeing Team and/or a Mental Health First Aider as part of a proactive early intervention.

If there are significant concerns, it may be necessary to go straight to Stage 2 or 3 below. Information will be given at this stage about the range of college services that are available.

These support services include:

- Tutor support
- Campus Safeguarding Team
- The Student Support and Wellbeing Team
- Counsellors
- The Learning Support Team

The Student should be given a copy of the Targeted Support Plan and the next steps explained to them. At this stage, it should be made clear to the Student that it is their responsibility to take appropriate steps to manage their own health, well-being, and ability to study. The Student should be encouraged to speak to their parents and their GP if there are well-being concerns. If the Student is under 18, a copy of the Targeted Support Plan will be sent to their parents/carers unless there is a safeguarding intervention or concern relating to either of these parties when the allocated professional will be informed. A review date will be agreed between the Curriculum Manager and Student at this time.

If concerns are raised during the application process, depending on the issue, the member of staff from the appropriate curriculum team will contact the applicant (or parent/guardian if the Student is under 18 years old) and arrange an exploratory meeting.

Stage 2

When the concerns outlined in Stage 1 are continuing or escalating, a Stage 2 meeting will be held with the Student to review action and impact. This will be

chaired by the Assistant Principal - Curriculum and a Senior safeguarding Officer and/Wellbeing. Others attending should be the Student's Tutor or member of curriculum staff and, as appropriate, their Learning Support contact. This stage may be triggered before or at the review meeting. If the Student is under 18, their parents/carers/ allocated professional such YOT, Social Worker, Key worker should be invited to the meeting. At this stage, an extended action plan will be completed which will identify further support options/interventions that can be offered to retain the Student on their course. Where the course is still within the Student's capabilities and their support needs can be met by the relevant curriculum area, the review meetings will be in place indefinitely depending on how the Student responds. Support will be provided for Students as necessary to act as advocates and meet individual needs i.e., Learning Support, interpreters etc. This support should be arranged prior to the meeting and in negotiation with the Student.

If it is felt necessary, with the consent of the Student, the panel can request advice/ risk assessment from an appropriate health professional to see how the Student's health is affecting their studies. This needs to be with the Student's written permission, or with their parents/carers' written permission if under 18. However, in the instance of safeguarding concerns it may be that the Safeguarding team will communicate on a 'need to know' basis with appropriate external agencies in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the Student.

At Stage 2, there is the option of applying a temporary withdrawal from the Student's studies. If such a withdrawal is deemed necessary, the Student, and their parents/carer if under 18, must be informed in writing, within 5 working days of the meeting. The letter must identify clearly, why the College is taking this course of action and what support can be offered both by the College and by alternative external agencies.

Stage 3

Stage 3 is actioned when the behaviours/concerns identified seriously compromise the College's duty of care either to the individual Student or to other Students/members of staff. Stage 3 may be introduced at any stage of the Student's referral. For safeguarding and well-being concerns, the College's safeguarding procedures should be followed.

If serious concerns are identified or a Student's ability to continue on the course is not possible, a panel meeting will be called to review the case. This will be chaired by the Assistant Principal- Student Experience (SDDSL).

If the Student is under 18, their parents'/carers/ Social Worker (if CLA) should be invited to the meeting. Relevant medical professionals should be invited to the meeting/ invited to contribute to the meeting. Support will be provided for Students as necessary to act as advocates and meet individual needs, i.e., Learning Support, interpreters etc. This support should be arranged by the by the Assistant Principal Curriculum prior to the review and in negotiation with the Student. At this point, a decision will be made as to whether the Student will be able to continue studying at the College. As at Stage 2, if a full withdrawal is

deemed necessary, the Student, and their parent/carer if under 18, must be informed in writing, within 5 working days of the panel meeting. The letter must identify clearly, why the College is taking this course of action and what support can be offered both by the College and by alternative external agencies.

4. Adjustments

On a case-by-case basis, reasonable adjustments will be considered and applied where possible in terms of the students' timetable to enable them to engage with their course of study (see Appendix D).

5. Return to Study

Following a period of absence from the College, it may be appropriate for the Student to return to the College to continue their studies. If this is the case, then the Student's situation/ well-being needs will be reviewed by the original panel with advice from medical professionals and an inclusive risk assessment and associated action plan will be completed. This will set out the risks and recommended measures for managing the risks. It will support the decision of whether a Student is fit to study and what support would need to be in place and whether this is a reasonable adjustment/ reasonably manageable. A two week phased return will be implemented; this will be agreed at a meeting with student and parents/carers where appropriate.

6. Return to College after a Crisis

A crisis is defined as:

- Suicide attempt
- Student has been hospitalized as a result of serious mental health difficulties
- Serious self-harm

If a student has been deemed fit enough to return to College by a medical professional, the student will meet one of the safeguarding team before they resume attending lessons/activities. A member of the safeguarding team will continue to monitor that student for the next four working weeks (if applicable).

If a student has been identified through a crisis or received a diagnosis of a mental health issue or is receiving support either through CAMHS or another organisation, it could be that a Targeted Pastoral Support Plan is written up and a safety plan (Appendix G) is agreed. The plan will be written consulting the Student, parents/carers, and relevant professionals. The plan works using an 'Assess, Plan, Do and Review' cycle.

When a student returns in this instance, if the student is unable to keep themselves safe by following an agreed plan, it will be deemed that the College environment is not suitable for the student and therefore they will be withdrawn from College role. Section 10 of this Policy may be considered.

Please note, the College is an open site, where students have 'free periods.' Therefore, we do not have the resources to:

- Account for a student's whereabouts at all times.
- Ensure a student's safety at all times.

7. Break in Learning

The College will endeavor to respond flexibly to any request to suspend studies on the grounds of mental health to enable a period of recovery. An appropriate period of recovery may be negotiated after which the college may require evidence to confirm that the Student is fit and able to return to their studies.

8. Appeals

Students have the right to appeal against the decision of the Fitness to Study meeting on the following grounds:

- The College failed to follow its own procedure
- There is further material evidence which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration at the meeting.

A request for an appeal must be received within 10 working days of the panel's decision and must be in writing to the Vice Principal Student Experience, clearly identifying the reasons for the appeal. An appeal panel will be convened and will include the following staff:

- Vice- Principal Student Experience (Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Assistant Principal from a curriculum area not related to the Student.

Students have the right to present their case in person to the appeals panel at an appeal hearing, with one other person in attendance to support them, for example a parent or carer. The panel may either:

- Uphold the decision for the Student to be withdrawn from the College on grounds of their fitness to study or:
- Reinstate the Student, with or without conditions as appropriate.

The findings of the appeal will be communicated to the Student and, if appropriate, to their parents/carers in writing. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

Appendix A – Checklist of Evidence for Fitness to Study

The students and/or the parents/carers must provide evidence that the student is fit to study. Evidence of the following is required:

- Ability to attend College regularly
- Ability to complete regular academic study
- Ability to cope with exam and coursework pressure
- Ability to manage in the open and unsupervised nature of the College site
- Ability to cope with being in the large College community of over 2,800 students
- Any reasonable adjustments that may need to be made

Appendix B is a pro forma that the medical practitioner can complete

Proof of sustained routine in the student's life for example attendance at school/college/employment/voluntary work or recognised programme of rehabilitation.

Proof of regular and on-going engagement with support services/medical services/social services as directed by the medical practitioner

- Letter or email detailing what support the young person has received, what ongoing support is in place to help the younger person with the transition into the college environment. Evidence of Engagement men with support and evidence that demonstrates that the student will be able to:
 - to attend College regularly
 - to complete regular academic study
 - to cope with exam and coursework pressure
 - to manage in the open and unsupervised nature of the College site
 - to cope with being in the large College community of over 2,800 students
 - Any reasonable adjustments that may need to be made

Appendix B – Fitness to Study Form

Medical Professional Pro Forma

In my professional opinion, _____ (Student Name), is fit to study at COPC.

Please tick and comment on each of the following points. The above-named student has the:

	Yes	No
1 Ability to attend College regularly Comment:	☐	☐
2 Ability to complete regular academic study Comment:	☐	☐
3 Ability to cope with exam and coursework pressure Comment:	☐	☐
4 Ability to manage in the open and unsupervised nature of the College site Comment:	☐	☐
5 Ability to cope with being in the large College community of over 2,500 students Comment:	☐	☐

Please specify any reasonable adjustments that may need to be made in order for the student to meet the above:

Name: _____ Position/Profession: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Official Organisation Stamp:

Appendix C – Targeted Support Plan

Targeted Pastoral Support

Throughout your time at College, you may need to have some more regular support from the Student Experience or Learning Support team. This is called Targeted Support. This idea of this support is to put in place a plan that can be monitored and reviewed. This is to hopefully enable you to get some support that makes a difference. First we will **assess** your situation, make a **plan**, then we hope that you alongside support can **do** you plan and then in time we will **review** your plan.

Name		Tutor Group	
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Assess: Presenting Concerns

Assess: Support Network. Who is currently supporting you?

	Yes	No
Parents/Carers		
Friends		
Staff members		
Any other		

Assess: Wellbeing - Have you tried any of the following changes?

	Yes	No
Exercise (ideally 30 minutes at least 4 times a week)		
Reducing your caffeine intake (300 mg or less)		
Practicing good sleep patterns		
Limiting screen time		

Assess College Support - Have you tried any of the following support systems:

	Yes	No
Wellbeing Team		
Safeguarding Team		
Counselling		

Assess External Support - Have you tried any of the following support systems:

	Yes	No
GP		
CAMHS		
Health Care		
Other:		
Other:		

Plan

The College works to put in place plans that should support you, these plans can also include reasonable adjustments. These adjustments are designed to be put in place for a period of time to see if they make an improvement to your learning and time at college.

What is the plan (include reasonable adjustments)

Any external referrals required:

We need to give you time now to work on your plan. There is lots of things to try and do. Do not forget sometimes you have to keep on trying to find out what works for you. There is never one answer to anything.

Review Schedule	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Termly

Review Date	
Where	
Reviewer	

Appendix D – Targeted Support Plan

Reasonable adjustments are a method that the College uses to make adaptations to minimise the risk a student not achieving to the best of their ability due to Pastoral Reasons. Reasonable adjustments can be implemented on a Short term and long term basis. The list below outline the most common reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable Adjustments

Movement break – A break during lesson time

Toilet breaks – Not asking to leave lessons

Work In Study Centre instead of lessons

Work on Deck or Mezz instead of lessons

Sit near the door

Timetable adjustment

Leave a lesson early and arrive late

Get an extension on a deadline

To attend regular appointments

Materials Support (pre-printing materials)
