

FITNESS TO PRACTISE POLICY

Audience:	STUDENTS
Requirement:	ESSENTIAL
Policy Owner:	Executive Director of Business and Civic Partnerships
Review Delegation:	Curriculum and Quality Committee
Review Cycle:	Every 2 years
Last Review:	March 2024
Due for Review:	March 2026

SOUTH HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUP

FITNESS TO PRACTISE POLICY

1.0 Statement of Principles

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the appropriate procedures that South Hampshire College Group (SHCG) staff ought to take when concerns are raised regarding a student's academic engagement and/or fitness to practise in relation to training in vocational and professional occupations including those with a licence to practise.
- 1.2 The policy primarily applies to students studying on courses which lead to a professional qualification where there are statutory or professional or regulatory body requirements relating to health or behaviour or attitudes. However, there are forms of behaviour expectations, processes and penalties that all students are expected to adhere to, to ensure that they conduct themselves appropriately and that they do not damage the reputation of SHCG or their validating University partners, qualification providers and other partners.
- 1.3 These regulations apply to enrolled students at SHCG, and not to applicants, where other procedures apply, although issues about applications may be considered under these regulations for students who are enrolled.
- 1.4 SHCG has a commitment to ensure that students are fit to practise in the relevant profession and that they meet the professional standards of the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body. We will ensure that students are made aware of any concerns about fitness to practise and that any decisions about this are arrived at through a fair and transparent process. At SHCG we are committed to ensuring that we are mindful of our obligation to safeguard the public interest, i.e., protection of patients and children, maintenance of public confidence in professions and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour.
- 1.5 Issues considered under this policy include those relating to health, behaviour or attitude and professional standards associated with the learning programme which may affect fitness to practise in the relevant profession. These concerns may arise inside or outside of SHCG and may be brought to our attention by any person or organisation. There may be particular processes in curriculum areas for reporting issues from placement providers, however under these regulations any issue which merits attention could be considered.
- 1.6 Where issues may be considered under another policy as well as this one, for example, either the Fitness to Study or Behaviour Management the most appropriate procedure will be used, taking into account fairness to students, the scope and purpose of the regulations and SHCG's responsibility to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. It may be appropriate for the outcome of any proceedings under one set of regulations to be taken into consideration under another set of regulations.
- 1.7 Decisions made under this policy may not be changed by external stakeholders unless this relates to HE students and the relevant University policy applies.

- 1.8 The impact of any concerns about fitness to practise will be decided in the context of the particular professional standards of the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body applying to the specific programme of study.
- 1.9 SHCG are responsible for making students aware of the relevant professional standards. Students have a responsibility for familiarising themselves with the relevant professional standards and meeting the requirements.
- 1.10 Students will be required to self-report on matters relating to health, behaviour or attitude for example, and where they are the subject of criminal justice processes or employee/student disciplinary processes. Such requirements may be profession specific, and you will be made aware of these in course specific documentation. If students fail to self-report as required, this may lead to action under these regulations.
- 1.11 SHCG may start proceedings under these regulations up to six months after you have ceased to be a student at SHCG, if there is a serious concern raised. If you withdraw from the programme after the proceedings have started, we may continue the proceedings. This policy is written in line with SHCG student 'non negotiables' and behaviour management policies which identify commitment to core values, safeguarding, health safety and welfare, and equality and diversity.

2.0 Scope

The scope of the policy is to outline the appropriate procedures that SHCG staff ought to take when concerns are raised regarding a student's academic engagement and/or fitness to practise. The term student includes those on apprenticeships and Higher Education.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Those investigating or making decisions at any stage of the proceedings set out in the policy will do so impartially.
- 3.2 Any issues raised under the policy will be dealt with promptly, sympathetically and with respect for privacy and confidentiality. Information will only be disclosed to other parties as is necessary for the investigation of a case, or for safeguarding reasons, or as required by law, or as is required by the relevant professional, regulatory or statutory body.
- 3.3 Action under the policy will be initiated promptly following the receipt of allegations or the emergence of relevant issues of concern. Such action will be completed as quickly as possible balancing the need for a thorough investigation and a fair process with the desirability of a speedy outcome. Students will be informed of progress in general and, in particular, of any delays.
- 3.4 Where the placement provider informs SHCG that they are no longer prepared to accept a student for training because of concerns about fitness to practise, we will confirm to the student

that they should no longer attend the placement. A decision will be made whether an investigation is required under these regulations. If appropriate SHCG may request to place a student back with the placement provider or seek to find an alternative placement. Delays to attendance on placement may occur pending investigation and conclusion of Fitness to Practise (FTP) cases. This means the length of time taken to complete an award could increase and there will be a number of implications of this including fees, funding and visa implications.

- 3.5 Where concerns have been raised with SHCG which, if substantiated, could mean there is a potential risk to the wellbeing of other students and staff, or the clients or staff of a placement provider, or to a student's own wellbeing, the student may be suspended from SHCG generally pending investigation under this policy. Suspension may also be considered if it was deemed that a thorough investigation of the case would be difficult to conduct if the student were continuing on the programme without any restriction or limitation. In the event of a suspension the student will be provided with details in line with the behaviour management policy.
- 3.6 When a concern is raised at SHCG, a senior member of the team will decide whether or not to instigate a FTP investigation. Issues and concerns will usually be dealt with via existing SHCG existing Fitness to Study or Behaviour Management policies and where applicable e.g. attendance, minor issues could be dealt with via informal methods.

4.0 Right of Appeal

Students have the right to appeal a decision relating to FTP, within the grounds and timescales set out in whichever policy and procedure was used to review their particular situation (see 1.6)