Fitness To Study Procedure

This document sets out the procedure which Hughes Hall follows when concerns are raised about a student’s fitness to study. A student’s fitness to study may be called into question if their behaviour and/or physical or mental health or condition is seriously disrupting their own studies or the studies of others, or results in unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students.

Hughes Hall follows this University definition and its further explanation: “‘Fitness to study’ ... relates to a student’s capacity to take part in life in the Collegiate University, and not just a student’s ability to engage with her or his studies. The University expects students to be able to live and work in harmony with others, and not to conduct themselves in a way which has an adverse impact on themselves or those around them. This procedure is not designed to address academic performance issues (which will be dealt with under the normal academic assessment and monitoring procedures); disciplinary issues (which will be dealt with under normal disciplinary procedures except where they clearly involve a fitness to study issue arising from a physical or mental condition); or fitness to practise for medical and veterinary students.’

Hughes Hall addresses fitness to study primarily as a tutorial matter (even if serious or persistent concerns may lead to disciplinary measures). Members of college should refer any matter of concern to the student’s tutor, who takes the lead in addressing it and keeps the student’s best interest as their primary focus.

College tutors will gladly give advice and support to any student, and may well direct them to:

- their local doctor
- University Counselling Service, with its Mental Health Advisors and self-help resources
- Disability Resource Centre
- Cambridge University Students Union and Graduate Union

General procedural points

This procedure has three levels depending on the severity of concerns, the perceived level of risk and the student’s engagement in addressing issues.

The student’s tutor is responsible for keeping records, and for liaising with the Senior Tutor and other college officers on a strictly need-to-know basis. The tutor will normally start at Level 1, but may take significant concerns straight to Level 2 or exceptionally to Level 3.

The Senior Tutor is responsible for overseeing Levels 2 and 3. This includes ensuring that there is appropriate input from medical and/or mental health professionals, and that formal records are given to relevant parties on a strictly need-to-know basis. If conflicted, e.g. when also the student’s tutor, the Senior Tutor will designate a substitute, and the later will take the Senior Tutor’s formal role. Unless urgent action is needed, good notice will be given for formal meetings: at least two working days at Level 2 and four working days at Level 3.

The student may be accompanied at any stage by an MCR welfare officer or another Hughes Hall student and/or by a medical or mental health professional, giving notice of their name(s) at least one working day before formal meetings at Levels 2 and 3.

Level 1: concerns

The tutor meets the student following normal tutorial practice, encourages the student to discuss the issue and its possible implications for both the student and others, and outlines sources of support within Cambridge, including that of medical and/or mental health professionals.
If this does not sufficiently alleviate the issue, the tutor outlines this Fitness To Study Procedure, and notes that they are already addressing concerns at Level 1. The tutor and student agree on regular review of the situation and measures taken to address the issue. If the student responds co-operatively and the support is effective, no further action is taken.

**Level 2: significant or recurring concerns**

The Senior Tutor convenes a Senior Tutor’s Review attended by the student and their tutor. Together they assess the student’s situation and its effect on both the student and others.

The Review proposes an Action Plan to be agreed and formally recorded. It should include:

- support for the student, as appropriate
- agreed academic/behavioural expectations
- agreed actions with review dates

**Level 3: serious or persistent concerns**

The Senior Tutor convenes a Case Meeting attended by the student, their tutor and where relevant their Director of Studies. Where a graduate student has a course director or supervisor instead, the latter will be invited and, if unable to attend, will be fully consulted.

If the student is unable or unwilling to attend, the Senior Tutor may decide to proceed, but will consult the MCR President to ensure that an appropriate Hughes Hall student is present.

The Case Meeting may propose a second Action Plan to be agreed and formally recorded. It should include the elements listed above, plus potential consequences if the plan is not kept.

Alternatively, the Case Meeting may recommend that the student should leave the College: either temporarily, via an application for disregard of terms or intermission; or permanently, via a recommendation to the College Council. It may also recommend immediate action to the President if deemed necessary.

**Returning to Study**

Each case depends upon the specific circumstances and concerns raised. Nevertheless, in all cases return to study depends on satisfactory medical evidence of fitness to study and on the provision of appropriate support services. Evidence must be submitted from health professionals with sufficient knowledge to make an informed statement of the student’s wellbeing and their renewed ability to manage the demands of studying at Cambridge. The College must be satisfied with this evidence before submitting a request to the appropriate university body for the student’s return to study.

Maintaining fitness to study is an ongoing responsibility of the returning student and Hughes Hall, and will be kept under review throughout the remaining period of their study. The student’s tutor will meet them regularly to provide ongoing pastoral care and to ensure that their further support is effective.

**Student Complaint**

If the student is not satisfied with any decisions made following this procedure, they should invoke the College’s Grievance Procedure. The College will then follow its Grievance Procedure, nominating alternative officers for any who are conflicted (e.g. tutor or Senior Tutor). However, the College reserves the right to pursue its Fitness To Study Procedure concurrently if urgent action is deemed necessary.

*Approved by College Council, December 2015*