

Title of Document

Fitness to Study Policy

TYPE: Policy

PURPOSE: To inform staff and students of Solihull College & University Centre's approach when an applicant or student is unable to meet course requirements or standards of behaviour due to a health or mental health condition or personal circumstances, which place the applicant, student, or others at risk.

SCOPE: This policy applies to learners.

RESPONSIBILITY: The Vice Principal HR & Student Services is responsible for this policy. The Director Student Services & Equality is responsible for the monitoring of the policy.

LEGAL CONTEXT: N/A

PUBLICATION:

Staff Hub/Intranet: (Y)

Website: (N)

Student Hub: (Y)

Reviewed By	Created	Last Reviewed	Next Review Date	Total Pages
Hilary Baird, Julie Barson	January 2015	August 2016	August 2017	14
Adam Thomas, Julie Barson		July 2018	August 2019	

Aim

This policy is in place to ensure that Solihull College & University Centre takes a fair and consistent approach where students are unable to meet course requirements in terms of attendance; participation in class; adherence to targets and academic deadlines or meet expectations within Solihull College & University Centre's Student Code of Conduct, due to:

- a medical condition;
- a mental health concern;
- aspects of the student's personal life significantly impacting on participation; and / or
- behaviour(s) reported and/or observed which are considered to be putting the student or others at risk.

Scope

The Fitness to Study Policy can be implemented at pre-entry, transition and on programme.

The Fitness to Study Policy and Procedures supports the Disciplinary Procedure. Solihull College & University Centre recognises that there may be circumstances where a student is unable to determine that they are placing unreasonable demands on themselves, staff, resources or the learning of others and are endangering their own wellbeing or success. This Policy will, therefore, come into effect in circumstances where usual support, actions undertaken via student review, reasonable adjustments, referral to Student Services Support and the curriculum team have exhausted appropriate avenues to maintain the student's attendance and academic targets.

Measures under consideration at Stage 1 are temporary and SMART and are considered 'reasonable adjustments'. Stage 2 is implemented to monitor interventions and review progress and participation. If after consideration, there is no change or prospect of change in circumstances then Stage 3 will be implemented. At this point the student will be advised to consider interrupting their study temporarily or voluntarily withdrawing from study with a view to possible re-enrolment in the future.

In situations of significant concern or when emergency interventions appear necessary, the student may be asked to suspend attendance and Stage 3 is immediately implemented.

Solihull College & University Centre reserves the right to revert to the Disciplinary Policy where appropriate.

Fitness to Study Policy Panel, Chair and Designated Panel Members

The Director of Student Services and Equality is the Chair of the Fitness to Study Panel and will invite appropriate members of staff to act on behalf of the Chair to implement, monitor or advise during the actions instigated in the Fitness to Study Policy process.

Fitness to Study Panel members can include:

- Head of Student Services
- Additional Needs Manager
- Head of School/ Programme Manager
- Assistant Principal
- Dean of HE & Curriculum Innovation
- Disability Officer/Safeguarding Officer/Student Support Officer/College Nurse
or
- Other relevant and designated member of staff as assigned by the Fitness to Study Chair.

Panel Stages

Initial Cause for Concern Curriculum Team SSO Student Services Manager AN Manager	Stage 1 Director of Student Services and Equality as Fitness to Study Panel Chair	Stage 2 Director of Student Services and Equality as Fitness to Study Panel Chair	Stage 3 Director of Student Services and Equality as Fitness to Study Panel Chair
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report concerns at earliest opportunity Identify reasonable adjustments/ support and other strategies implemented to improve situation Provide documentary evidence for referral to the Fitness to Study Panel Chair 	<p>Fitness to Study Panel Chair reviews information and processes to date and determines next stage of procedure</p> <p>Fitness to Study panel member(s) assigned to support actions; monitor progress and report to Panel Chair</p>	<p>Fitness to Study Panel Chair reviews information and processes to date and determines next stage of procedure</p> <p>Fitness to Study panel member(s) assigned to support actions; monitor progress and report to Panel Chair</p>	<p>Fitness to Study Panel Chair reviews information and processes to date and determines next stage of procedure</p>
Fitness to Study Referral	Assigned Panel member gathers relevant information and external documentary evidence of outside support and agencies and informs Chair of findings.		
<p>Director of Student Services and Equality (as Fitness to Study Panel Chair) reviews information and processes to date and determines next stage of procedure</p> <p>Fitness to Study Chair determines panel members and further actions required</p> <p>Formal Fitness to Study Panel Meeting:</p>	<p>Assigned Panel member gathers relevant information and external documentary evidence of outside support and agencies and informs Chair of findings.</p> <p>Director of Student Services and Equality confirms actions satisfactory or next stage of Fitness to Study Procedure implemented</p>		

Implementation of the Fitness to Study Policy

Emergencies

The Fitness to Study Policy should not distract from acute situations where it is believed a student's behaviours or health presents an immediate risk to self or others.

In such circumstances a Safeguarding Officer or the Disability Officer must be informed immediately. If neither is available the Director Student Services & Equality must be contacted by phone or in person.

Examples include:

- Unreasonable or dangerous behaviours;
- Suicide intent; and / or
- Significant issue relating to immediate wellbeing.

Admission Processes, Interviews and Selection to Solihull College & University Centre

Solihull College & University Centre recognises that for certain courses there is a need to ensure that learners are emotionally and physically fit and able to undertake all aspects of study and relevant work placement.

The interview and selection process takes every reasonable step to ensure that learners are supported and given appropriate information regarding the demands of the course and the support available. However, in doing this the College must also consider its duty of care in relation to Health and Safety and Safeguarding.

Where a member of staff has concerns that, by making an offer to study, the course demands may have a detrimental effect on either the applicant and/or others, then a referral will be made to the Director of Student Services and Equality directly, to determine whether the Fitness to Study Policy needs to be implemented.

Where there is insufficient information to make a decision then the Director Student Services & Equality will request further evidence in writing from the GP, health professional or relevant external agency. The applicant will be asked to provide historical details of relevant support services that can be contacted, current medical status and external support the applicant accesses. If the applicant declines to co-operate, or after investigation, information is not available to enable risk management procedures to be put into place, then a decision may be made to withdraw the offer of study. The applicant will be formally advised of the decision and the applicant may be offered the opportunity to apply for a different course or offered a Careers Advice and Guidance appointment, arranged with the careers team at Solihull College & University Centre to assist the applicant in making an informed choice.

Where after consideration of all the information available, it is considered that an Individual Support Plan (outlining reasonable adjustments), an assessment

of risk and in some instances capacity to study are deemed not viable then reasons for the decline or referral of the offer will be explained.

On Programme

In all cases, the initial consideration to implement the Fitness to Study Policy will be as a result of a significant cause for concern. The arrangements of the Fitness to Study Policy should be explained clearly to the student and a copy of the Fitness to Study Policy given. Staff raising the cause for concern must ensure that it is made clear that this is a supportive measure to:

- ensure that the demands of study are not impacting negatively on overall wellbeing or recovery from ill health;
- ensure that changes are made and the student is supported, to adjust behaviours that are negatively affecting their own success or that of others;
- assist the student to significantly improve attendance, and
- assist with changes regarding personal life, which are affecting the success, participation and wellbeing of the student and intervention is required.

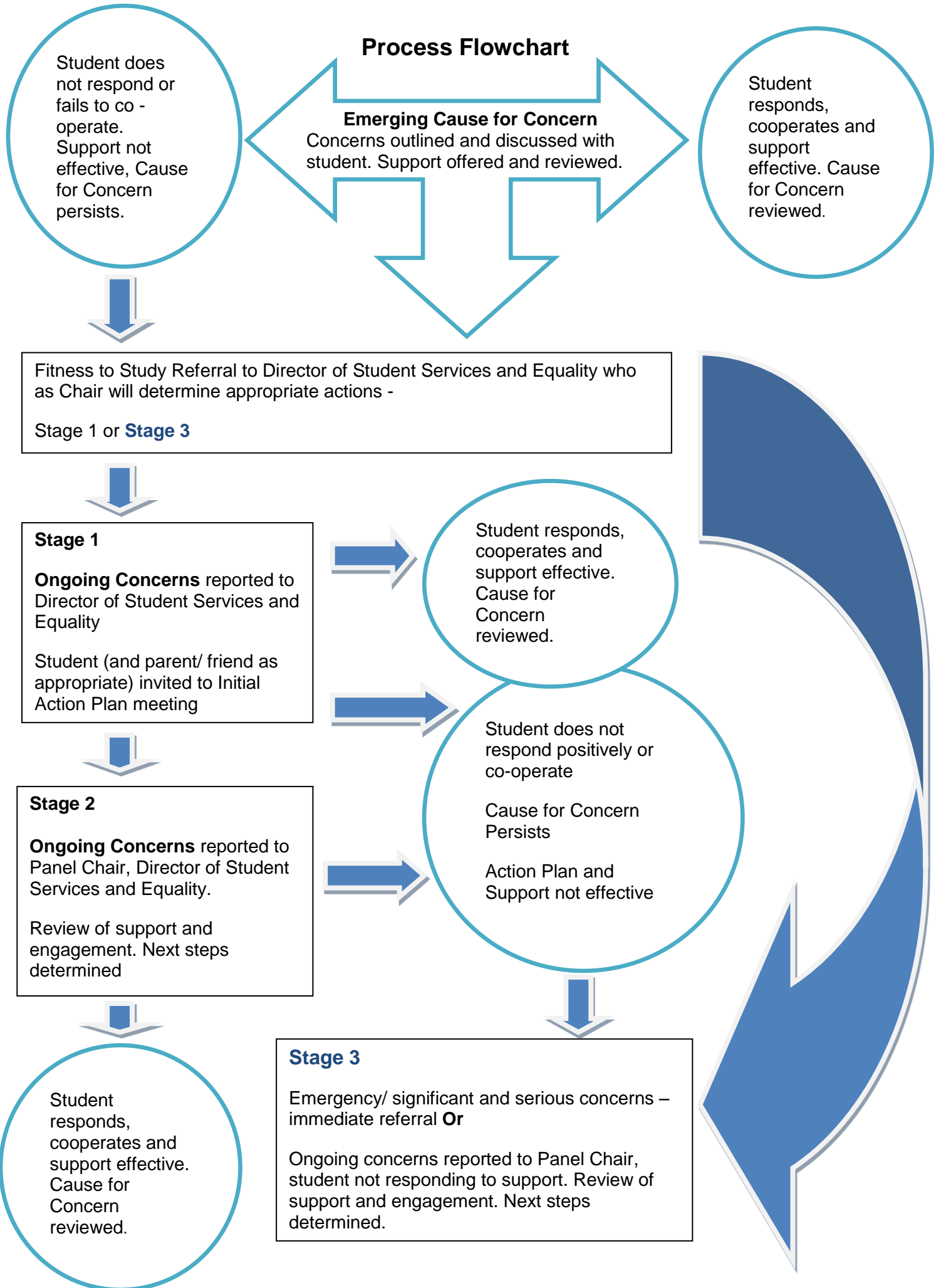
Concerns due to a Student's Medical or Mental Health Status

Initially, the curriculum team should follow the Cause for Concern process and implement appropriate support via a referral to Student Services, Additional Needs or Safeguarding. Following assessment and if we are able to support the student, an Individual Support Plan will be put in place by the Additional Needs or other support team.

Concerns due to Unacceptable Conduct or Unreasonable Behaviours

The student may already have an Additional Needs Individual Support Plan in place. Where every endeavour has been made to ensure that support is provided, but unacceptable conduct or unreasonable behaviours are still apparent, the Director of Student Services and Equality may decide to implement the Fitness to Study Policy.

Process Flowchart



Stage 1 Action Plan Meeting

Fitness to Study Panel

Where there are significant or persistent concerns regarding a student's medical or mental health status, all reasonable adjustments available should be considered. If, after consideration, there are still concerns then the Head of School should contact the Director of Student Services and Equality to arrange a Stage 1 Fitness to Study meeting and a Fitness to Study designated panel member will be assigned. The panel member will review the concerns with the student's Personal Tutor and Student Support Officer, if applicable, and determine whether it may be possible to offer further 'exceptional' support within Student Services.

If, there are still concerns after Stage 1 is implemented the designated panel member will meet with the student to discuss concerns and establish whether there have been any changes in the student's medical condition, medication or personal circumstances. It may be possible to address concerns through this meeting and to further adapt the Individual Support Plan.

Stage 2 Review of Actions

At Stage 2 the panel will review actions taken at Stage 1 and the student response. If the panel takes the view that additional, appropriate support may be possible within Student Services, arrangements will be made for a meeting with the student and student's parent/ friend, as appropriate, and appropriate staff and an Individual Support Plan will be put in place. A designated panel member will monitor progress involving curriculum and support staff as appropriate. The process will be reviewed and reported back to the Chair.

Where the initial cause of concern has been allayed no further actions under the Fitness to Study Policy are required.

In circumstances where all reasonable adjustments have been made and the support planned has failed, then the designated panel member will refer the concern to the Director of Student Services and Equality to implement Stage 3 of the Fitness to Study Policy or implement the Disciplinary Procedure, as appropriate.

Stage 3 Emergency or Persistent and Continuing Significant Concern

Consideration will be made as to whether the student's behaviour, health or wellbeing cannot be accommodated in the interim and it serves the student's and the Solihull College & University Centre's best interest for the Director of Student Services and Equality to recommend that the student be required to stay at home and not attend his/her course. It will be stressed to the student that this step is not a disciplinary action and will not be recorded as such.

In the case of significant health or behavioural concerns, the Director of Student Services and Equality will arrange a Stage 3 Fitness to Study Panel Meeting with the student, their representative(s) and designated panel members to inform the student and relevant parties that the student cannot attend until agreement has been made on next steps.

A formal Stage 3 Fitness to Study Meeting will be arranged and it will be determined, and the student informed, who will be attending the meeting.

As a guideline, the participants of a formal Stage 3 Fitness to Study meeting will typically be:

- The Director of Student Services and Equality;
- The relevant Assistant Principal;
- The HOS/Programme Manager;
- One professional external to the college e.g. a CPN, Key Worker, Social Worker, if in place;
- Someone to support the student e.g. a family member, guardian, mentor, advocate, friend (**NB** up to age 25 for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the parent or guardian will be invited to attend); and / or
- The student.

Solihull College & University Centre will not be prescriptive regarding who attends, but reserves the right not to agree to a particular person's attendance.

Possible and Usual Outcomes of a Fitness to Study Meeting

The desired outcome of all Fitness to Study meetings and actions is to promote wellbeing and success.

Initial actions, reasonable adjustments and support are implemented to enable the student to continue attendance, participate and succeed without affecting the wellbeing of themselves or others.

At Stage 3, the student may be asked to interrupt their attendance and studies until recovery is sufficient or behaviour improves. The Director of Student Services and Equality will make this decision and may seek advice from other Fitness to Study panel members. This may take the form of an agreed period of authorised absence to allow for recovery or a formal withdrawal from the course with a view to a possible re-enrolment on an appropriate course in a future academic year.

The decisions, effectiveness and outcomes of all stages of the Fitness to Study process will be formalised in writing and will, where possible, be with the agreement of the student. If the student declines to enter into the agreement, the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked. Any implementation of the Disciplinary Procedure will be done in such a way as to place health and welfare concerns at the centre of decision making.

A Fitness to Study Policy Action Plan will be produced, covering the main points of investigations, observations and meetings, and will include interim support offered, further reasonable adjustments made, actions the student is required to undertake, the expectations for future behaviour and the consequences if the student fails to engage or the behaviour does not improve.

Future Considerations

Where concern reappears after intervention of the Fitness to Study Policy, the matter will be referred again to Director of Student Services and Equality, who will:

- Liaise with external agencies; and / or
- Reconvene a Fitness to Study Panel meeting at Stage 3.

Appeal

The student has the right of appeal against any decisions made.

The appeals procedure for the Fitness to Study Policy will follow the same guidelines as the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

Appeals must be made in writing within 10 days to the Vice Principal HR & Student Services.

Returning To Study

At the point at which a return to study might be viable, the Director of Student Services and Equality may seek evidence regarding medical interventions sought, what external professional support is in place for the student and will determine what other reasonable adjustments are required.

A revised Individual Support Plan and/or Risk Assessment will be implemented to highlight what support will be provided by Solihull College & University Centre to enable the student to return to study.

Where appropriate the student may be required to agree to and sign a Behaviour Contract highlighting interventions and actions required for managing risks to self or others.

If a return to study is not considered appropriate, or there is a lack of information regarding interventions undertaken by the student, the options will include postponing a decision pending the receipt of further information and extending the period of voluntary withdrawal to a later date.

If return to study is deemed not to be an option, and the student is dissatisfied, the College's usual complaints procedure should be followed.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Solihull College & University Centre acknowledges that as a result of implementing this policy it will receive personal data of a confidential and sensitive nature and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Sensitive personal data and confidential information will only be disclosed to third parties with the express, informed consent of the student. However, there may be occasions where Solihull College & University Centre is obliged to disclose and/or request information, notwithstanding that the student has refused consent, these include:

- Where the student's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety of others; and / or
- Where a member of staff of Solihull College & University Centre would be liable to civil or criminal penalty for failure to disclose.

Equal Opportunities

Solihull College & University Centre's commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated through its determination that every student receives a high quality learning experience which will bring success. The Fitness to Study Policy will be implemented in a manner which maintains each individual's attendance, if at all possible. If a student is required to interrupt his / her studies, Solihull College & University Centre will seek to make available opportunities for the student to continue at an appropriate stage in the future.

Safeguarding

Solihull College & University Centre will ensure that the Fitness to Study Policy processes promote safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults.

Managing Responsibilities within the Fitness to Study Policy

Director of Student Services and Equality
Head of Student Services
Additional Needs Manager
Disability Officer

Related Documents

Admissions Policy
Attendance Policy
Disciplinary Procedure
Student Code of Conduct
Health and Safety Policy
Equality Policy
Safeguarding Young People & Vulnerable Adults Policy
Data Protection Statement
Fitness to Study Action Plan (new document)

Fitness to Study Meeting Record

Initial / Extended (delete as needed)	Date:	
Name of Student:	ID:	
Panel Stage:	DOB:	
Attending Meeting: <i>(including role)</i>		
Issues discussed:		
Action points for Student <i>(see also Fitness to Study Action Plan)</i>		
Action points for Staff		
Planned Review Dates	To be reviewed by:	
1		
2		
3		

Declaration by student

I understand the concerns raised and the possible impact that this/these have on my success at Solihull College & University Centre and University Centre and my fitness to study.

I also understand the impact that this/these concerns may have on the learning of others.

I have agreed to work towards the targets in the Fitness to Study Action plan and will co-operate and engage with the support offered to me.

Whilst I understand that Solihull College & University Centre and University Centre has a duty of care to support me, I recognise that I am responsible, with the support of others, for my own health and wellbeing and it is my responsibility to engage with all activities to enable my success.

I understand I have the right to appeal against any decisions made with regard to my Fitness to Study and the appeal process has been made clear to me.

Student Name:	Student Signature:	Date:
Hilary Baird, Director Student Services & Equality	Signature:	Date:

Fitness to Study Action Plan

Reviewer: (assigned by Panel Chair)	Date:	
Name of Student:	ID	
Panel Stage:	DOB	
Support Services/ agencies involved:		
Summary of actions required:		
Action point:	By whom:	By date:
Action point:	By whom:	By date:
Action point:	By whom:	By date:
Action point:	By whom:	By date:
Planned Final Review Meeting Date:		
Attendees:		
Final Review Notes:		Actions:
All actions completed and resolved:		
Hilary Baird, Director Student Services & Equality	Signature:	Date: