



Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

May 2025

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1	This is a new procedure	A Brydon	December 2024

1. Equality Statement

- 1.1 Borders College is committed to advancing and promoting equality and diversity in all its activities and aims to create an inclusive culture, which is free from discrimination and based upon the values of dignity and respect.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 This policy provides guidelines for situations where illness, physical and/or mental health difficulties, trauma, psychological or emotional disorders are having a profoundly adverse impact on the functioning of an individual student or on the learning and/or health, safety and wellbeing of others around them.

3. The Context

- 3.1 The College is committed to supporting all students to be able to fully engage in their learning. Staff will work with individual students to make reasonable adjustments to support students to overcome barriers to learning.

- 3.2 This policy should be used when a student's fitness to study is a cause for concern and where other internal procedures such as the Positive Behaviour Anti-Bullying & Harassment policy are not appropriate, and after all other appropriate interventions have been explored. This may include:

- Actions taken under the Safeguarding policy
- Reasonable adjustments put in place by curriculum staff and/or the Learning Support Team
- Additional support and guidance from Student Services
- Referral to specialist support organisations and/or counselling support

- 3.3 A student's fitness to study may be a cause for concern due to a wide range of circumstances, including (but not restricted to) the following:

- Behaviour which would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which may be known to be, or suspected to be, the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty
- A student's physical or mental health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety, wellbeing, and learning of themselves or others
- The student's personal conduct is not acceptable and may be known to be, or suspected to be, the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem

- 3.4 To ensure the policy is applied effectively and supportively, taking into account all relevant information about a student, it should be implemented collaboratively by Student Support and Curriculum staff.
- 3.5 This Policy applies to students who are undertaking a programme of study which involves registration with any regulating body or other associated organisations. In these instances, 'fitness of practice' from the relevant regulatory body will also be considered.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This Policy covers the following areas of college student learning activity:
- All students on Full-time and Part-time courses
 - Commercial and outreach programmes, including all schools partnership activity
 - Students on work experience placements as part of their college course
- 4.2 For students participating in school college partnership activities, the college will liaise with the students' designated school contact.

5. The Procedure

- 5.1 It is expected that most Fitness to Study issues will be resolved under normal student support protocols.
- 5.2 Where a difficulty is identified, the students' Course Tutor should raise any immediate concerns with the Delivery Team Manager and encourage the student to access one or more of the support services offered by the College. Through discussion with the student and where necessary, their representatives, the appropriate support, adjustments or actions will be put in place.
- 5.3 All support, adjustments and actions will be agreed and recorded in a Wellbeing Support Plan within ProMonitor (Appendix 1). The plan will form the basis for regular review and adjustment as required.
- 5.4 Where a student is unwilling to engage with support or is unable to meet the requirements agreed and outlined in the Wellbeing Support Plan, the case will be referred to the Fitness to Study Panel.
- 5.5 Prior to Fitness to Study Panel the relevant staff should convene to complete a Health and Wellbeing Risk Assessment (Appendix 2). This meeting should be facilitated by a Student Support Services Manager and would comprise of relevant staff which may include the Course Tutor, Student Support Officer and Learning Support Advisor, or any other member of staff where deemed

relevant. Once completed, the Health and Wellbeing Risk Assessment should be reviewed with the student before submission to the Fitness to Study panel.

- 5.6 The Delivery Team Manager will inform the student of the decision to refer the case to the Fitness to Study Panel. A standard letter template for this can be found in Appendix 4. Students will continue to receive their usual financial support until a Fitness to Study Panel is convened, and an outcome is determined.

6. Study Pause

- 6.1 A student may be asked to take a Study Pause as a precautionary measure at any point in the process where any of the following apply:
- There is an immediate concern for the wellbeing of the student
 - Where a students' conduct is having an immediate effect on the health, safety and/or wellbeing of others
- 6.2 Study Pauses are designed to protect the student and others and should not be considered as supporting evidence to lack of fitness to study.
- 6.3 All Pauses will be actioned by the Head of Sector. The student will receive a letter (Appendix 3) confirming:
- The reason for the Pause
 - That date and time of the Fitness to Study panel
 - That any financial support currently in place will not be affected during the Pause
- 6.4 Pauses should normally be kept to a minimum and will not normally exceed two weeks. Students will continue to receive their usual financial support during a Study Pause.

7. Fitness to Study Panel

- 7.1 A Fitness to Study Panel will be arranged under the following circumstances
- If the student does not agree to or is not engaging with the appropriate support services
 - If the student is not adhering to, or achieving the requirements agreed and outlined in the Wellbeing Support Plan
 - If the case is sufficiently serious and urgent to warrant immediate referral to the Panel

7.2 A Fitness to Study Panel will convene to consider the case. Members of the panel will usually be:

- Head of Sector (Chair)
- Course Tutor
- 1 x Student Support Services Manager
- Relevant member of the Student Support Services team (for example, a Student Support Officer, Learning Support Advisor, Student Wellbeing Coordinator)

7.3 All invitations to a Fitness to Study hearing will be actioned by the Head of Sector. The student will receive a letter confirming

- The reason for the Fitness to Study hearing
- The date, time and location of the hearing
- The right to accompaniment
- The right to reasonable adjustments and specialist support, e.g. British Sign Language, translation support, communication support

8. Evidence and Outcome

8.1 The Head of Sector will review the Wellbeing Risk Assessment (Appendix 2)

8.2 The Head of Sector will collate appropriate evidence for the panel to consider.

8.3 The student will be notified in writing of their right to be present at the meeting and their right to be accompanied (Appendix 3 or 4 as appropriate).

8.4 Following the meeting with the student, the panel will consider all evidence presented and, where necessary, call for further evidence or speak to other appropriate personnel involved with the student.

8.5 The panel will then decide on an outcome, which will usually be one of the following:

- No further action required
- Extend monitoring of the Wellbeing Support Plan. It may be the case that additional actions are required
- Study Pause or Build Up Timetable: This is a short-term option and will only be applied if a brief break from study is likely to aid the student's fitness to study
- Deferral to the following year of study
- Withdrawal from the course

8.6 In the case of deferral or withdrawal, entry to future programmes is at the discretion of the College.

8.7 The Chair of the panel will inform the student of the outcome of the panel

hearing.

9. Right to Appeal

- 9.1 The student may appeal against a study break or requirement to withdraw. This must be sent in writing to the Assistant Principal within five working days of receipt of written notification of the outcome of the Fitness to Study hearing.
- 9.2 A detailed context of the grounds of appeal must be provided otherwise the appeal may be automatically rejected with no further appeal on the same basis allowed. It is insufficient simply to state that an appeal is sought.
- 9.3 There are three grounds for appeal, these are:
- Additional information that has not been considered previously
 - Extenuating circumstances relevant to the case which have not been considered previously
 - That the application of the Fitness to Study process has not been followed correctly
- 9.4 A panel will be convened to consider the appeal. Members of the panel will usually be:
- Assistant Principal (Chair)
 - Head of Sector
 - Director of Student Support Services

In the case of an appeal the possible outcomes are:

- Decision stands
 - Decision is overturned
 - Decision is modified
- 9.5 The decision of the Appeals Panel is final; any further concerns or disputes should be directed to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for review or guidance.

10. Right to Accompaniment

- 10.1 Students over 16 may be accompanied at all meetings as part of the process. Students may choose to be accompanied by a fellow student, Student Association Officer or by a parent, guardian or other family member.
- 10.2 Students Under 16 must be accompanied to all meetings by a parent or guardian. School pupils should be accompanied by a staff representative from their school.
- 10.3 The role of the person accompanying the student is to provide advocacy and support. In most situations, the person may not:

- Answer questions on the student's behalf, unless this has been pre-agreed as a reasonable adjustment, for example in the case of students with English as a Second Language, or those with a disability that may impact on their ability to communicate.
- Direct the student in their responses.
- Ask questions other than to clarify the process.

10.4 Should students require any specialist support, e.g. British Sign Language, translation support for ESOL students, accessibility support, the chair of the panel should be notified in advance.

11. Support to Exit

11.1 Where the outcome of the Fitness to Study Panel is to withdraw a student, individuals will be offered an exit plan with a duration of a maximum of 4-weeks. This provides time for students to work with the Student Support team to consider future options and identify alternative financial support.

11.2 Financial support will be provided on the basis that the student continues to engage with the student support team

12. Review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Status:	Approved
Policy Dated:	May 2025
Author:	Director of Student Support Services
Review Date:	May 2026
Equality Impact Assessed:	May 2025

Appendix 1



Staying Well Student Support Plan

Student Name:

This Staying Well Student Support Plan allows you as a student to develop your own positive approach to navigate the waters surrounding your Mental Health and Wellbeing with the guidance of the College Student Support Teams.

The purpose of the Staying Well Student Support Plan is to develop your own actions/goals and provide you with a resource which you can use as required to help you look after your wellbeing. By focusing on yourself, you will be able to thrive and be a positive and resilient individual, with our goal to support you to achieve your chosen college programme.

How can you manage your wellbeing?

Use this space to think about how you are feeling just now, what's going well for you, what can you do to help your wellbeing at College and home? What are things you can try doing every day? Don't worry if you're unable to do it all every day, take it a step at a time.



Recognise Wellbeing Signs

Some common examples of the signs that your wellbeing is low could be disrupted /no sleep, exhausted or lethargic, drinking alcohol / abusing substances, no physical or leisure activity. feeling unable to cope.

What are your coping strategies/your toolbox?

Use this space to think about what your coping strategies are, why do they help you? What do you gain from practicing these?

[Check out the NHS Ways to be Well Resource](#)



Date Created:

Date to be Reviewed:

Staying Well Student Support Plan

Student Name:

Who is your Support Network?

Who is there for you? How can the College support you? Do you have any external support?



What College Support do you have?

Student Support Officer:

Learning Support:

Student Wellbeing Co-Ordinator:

Referral to External Support:

Self-Support

College Student Portal - [Student Support Information](#)

NHS24 Mental Health Hub (24 hours) Urgent mental health support Tel: 111

Breathing Space (16+ Scotland) Evenings (until 2am) and weekends Tel: 0800 83 85 87
www.breathingspace.scot

Papyrus Prevention of Young Suicide HOPELINE
247 Tel: 0800 068 41 41 www.papyrus-uk.org

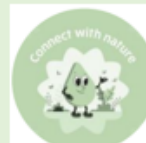
Creating Hope
Scottish Borders



www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/creating-hope

What are your Goals/Reminders?

How can you keep on top of things? Do you have any positive reminders? Will you continue to practice your coping strategies?



Actions/Commitments:

Appendix 2.

Health and Wellbeing Risk Assessment

Student Information	
Name	
Date of Birth	
Course/Programme	
Contact Information	
Student ID	

Assessment Details	
Date completed	
Staff Consulted	
Lead Assessor	
Job Title	

Immediate Concerns or Crisis

Is there an immediate risk of harm, e.g. suicidal ideation and/or severe distress? Yes No

Is emergency support or a safeguarding referral required? Yes No

If you answered yes to either question above, please take immediate steps to ensure the individual(s) are safe before proceeding with a full risk assessment as per the college's safeguarding processes.

Risk Criteria:



Low risk:

The student appears to have no immediate threat to themselves or others

Academic performance is unaffected by health conditions

The student is receiving appropriate support and demonstrates coping strategies



Medium Risk

Some health issues present, but can be managed with support

Some impact on academic performance, but accommodations can mitigate challenges

There is a risk of harm to self and/or others if not appropriately managed or if conditions worsen



High Risk

Significant health challenges that are currently unaddressed or require further support to manage

Potential or actual harm to self or others, requiring immediate intervention

Severe impact on academic ability, and may need a temporary break from studies or additional intensive support

		Comments and Support in place	Risk (L, M, H)	Next steps/ recommendations	Student Commentary
Support in place	Current support Core-10, safety plan, counselling, external support, family, friends, community support structures				
General Health and Wellbeing	Physical health Current medical conditions that may affect study (e.g. chronic illness, disability, physical injury)				
	Mental Health Current mental health conditions, self-harm, suicidal ideation, mental health interventions (e.g. CPN), medications or therapy				
	Substance use Use of alcohol, drugs or other substances that may affect academic performance or safety (including prescribed medications).				
Risk of Harm to Self	Self-harm Evidence of self-harm behaviours				

	Suicidal thoughts or intentions Thoughts, plans and/or attempts				
	Coping mechanisms Support systems, techniques to manage stress, anxiety or emotional distress				
Risk of Harm to Others	Violence and aggression Evidence of violent or aggressive behaviours Evidence of expressing frustration, anger or hostility in an unsafe manner				
	Judgement and decision-making Students ability to make sound decisions Engaging in behaviours that could pose a risk to others.				
Risk within the Environment	Physical environment Accessibility issues, risk of exposure to environmental hazards, e.g. animals, machinery etc.				
Academic Performance	Impact of health on study				

	How the students health or wellbeing is affecting their ability to concentrate, engage in coursework and complete assignments				
	Required accommodations Academic accommodations, e.g. extended time, separate accommodation Physical or emotional support needs, e.g. mental health support services				

Recommendations:

Immediate action needed

e.g crisis intervention, safeguarding referral, medical referral, external to specialist organisation, study pause, referral to Fitness to Study Panel.

Adjustments required

e.g. update/adjust the students' wellbeing support plan, modifying workload or course requirements, provide mental health services, pastoral support or learning support.

Review timeline

e.g. reassess in one-month, weekly check-ins.

Recommendation:

I can confirm that the information discussed during this assessment has been explained to me. We talked about my health, wellbeing, and how I'm doing at college. I understand what we spoke about and what support I might need. I've had a chance to ask questions and share how I feel.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Student Support Services Manager: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3

Panel invitation including Study Pause

Name
Address

Date

Dear { }

Course:

I am writing regarding recent concerns that have come to our attention about your ability to engage safely and fully in your studies. After careful consideration and discussions with relevant staff members, we feel it is necessary to ask you to take a temporary pause from your studies to ensure your wellbeing and safety.

Our primary concern is to ensure you are given the time and space needed to focus on your personal health, as well as access any additional support that may help you in returning to college in a way that is safe and healthy for you.

You are invited to attend a meeting regarding your fitness to study on {date} at {time} which will take place at {location details}. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss your current circumstances and assess how best we can support you in a way that prioritises your wellbeing and success.

When you arrive, please report to reception and ask for [staff member] who will assist you.

We understand that meetings like this can feel challenging. You are welcome to bring a supportive person with you, whether that is a member of the Students' Association, a friend, or relative. If you need any additional support such as British Sign Language interpretation, translation services or any other accessibility accommodations, please do not hesitate to reach out in advance.

Please call/email* {staff name} on [contact details] to confirm your attendance at this hearing, and any support requirements you might need. Any financial support you are currently receiving from the college will not be affected as a result of your study break.

Yours sincerely
Head of Sector

* select as appropriate

Appendix 4.

Standard panel invitation letter

Name
Address

Date

Dear { }

Course:

Following a conversation with {staff member} on {date} you are invited to attend a Fitness to Study Panel hearing on {date} at {time} in {location details}. This meeting is to consider your current circumstances and your fitness to continue your study. Please can you report to reception on arrival and ask for {name of staff member}

If you require support, you can be accompanied to this hearing by a member of the Student Association, a relative or a friend. If you require any specialist support, for example British Sign Language, translation support or accessibility support, please contact a member of Student Support Services in advance.

Please call/email* { } to confirm your attendance at this hearing.

Yours sincerely
Head of Sector

* select as appropriate