

Central Film School

2025-26

Central Film School

Support and Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Central Film School (CFS) is committed to providing a supportive, inclusive, and professionally focused learning environment that enables students to succeed academically, creatively, and personally.
- 1.2. CFS recognises that a student's health, wellbeing, and personal circumstances are integral to their ability to engage with their studies and to participate fully in the academic community. At times, however, a student's circumstances may impact their ability to study effectively or safely.
- 1.3. This policy sets out how CFS will respond in such circumstances, ensuring that students are supported appropriately while also safeguarding the wider community.

2. Duty of Care

- 2.1. CFS encourages students to develop independence, self-awareness, and responsibility for their own wellbeing and academic progress. However, the School also has a clear duty of care to:
 - individual students
 - Staff
 - the wider student community
 - visitors and external partners
- 2.2. This includes taking appropriate action where a student:

- may be at risk of harm to themselves
 - may present a risk to others
 - is unable to engage effectively with their studies due to health or wellbeing concerns.
- 2.3. This policy provides a structured mechanism through which CFS can fulfil this duty of care in situations that cannot be addressed through standard academic processes.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. The purpose of this policy and associated procedure is to:
- provide a clear framework for responding to concerns regarding a student's fitness to study
 - outline the stages of intervention and support available
 - ensure that decisions are made consistently, fairly, and transparently
 - support students to remain engaged with their studies wherever possible
- 3.2. This is a supportive process, not a disciplinary one. It is used where a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour is adversely affecting:
- their academic progression
 - their ability to function within the learning environment
 - the safety or wellbeing of themselves or others

4. Scope

- 4.1. This policy applies to:
- all students enrolled at CFS
 - applicants where concerns arise prior to enrolment
- 4.2. It may be applied in a wide range of circumstances, including (but not limited to):
- physical or mental health conditions
 - disability (including undiagnosed or emerging conditions)
 - significant changes in behaviour or engagement
 - prolonged or repeated absence
- 4.3. Where a student has, or may have, four weeks or more of continuous absence due to serious health issues (including mental health), they will normally be required to engage with a (depending on the level of concern and risk):

- Support to Study meeting
- Return to Study meeting
- or Fitness to Study process

5. Aims

5.1. CFS aims to:

- support students to achieve their academic and creative potential
- foster independence and personal responsibility
- intervene at the earliest appropriate stage where concerns arise
- ensure that students are able to make informed decisions about their studies
- balance individual student needs with the safety and wellbeing of the wider community

5.2. CFS is also committed to meeting its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the provision of reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities or long-term health conditions.

5.3. Intermission or withdrawal will only be considered where all reasonable alternatives have been explored and it is not possible to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

6. Definition

6.1. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'student' includes:

- current students
- applicants and prospective students

7. Core Principles

7.1. In applying this policy, CFS will ensure that:

- decisions are made in the best interests of the student, while balancing community safety
- students are supported to engage with their studies wherever possible
- concerns are addressed at the earliest appropriate opportunity
- students are given clear information to make informed decisions
- reasonable adjustments are considered and implemented where appropriate
- staff work collaboratively to ensure a consistent and fair process

8. Support and Fitness to Study Process

- 8.1. The process consists of three stages, reflecting the level of concern and associated risk.
- 8.2. The process may be entered at any stage depending on severity
- 8.3. In most cases, Stage 1 or Stage 2 will precede escalation to Stage 3
- 8.4. If actions at one stage are not effective, escalation to the next stage may occur

9. Stage 1: Support to Study – Emerging Concerns

- 9.1. This stage is used where there is cause for concern regarding a student's:
 - health or wellbeing
 - behaviour
 - engagement with learning
- 9.2. Typical indicators may include:
 - decline in attendance or punctuality
 - missed deadlines or reduced academic performance
 - noticeable changes in behaviour, mood, or presentation
 - difficulty participating in learning activities
- 9.3. Process:
 - A meeting is arranged with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. Course Leader, Director of Curriculum & Courses, Student Services Manager)
 - Concerns are discussed in a supportive and constructive manner
 - A support plan is agreed, which may include:
 - referrals to student support services
 - reasonable adjustments
 - agreed actions and review points

10. Stage 2: Fitness to Study – Ongoing or Significant Concerns

- 10.1. This stage is used where:
 - concerns persist following Stage 1, or
 - there is a significant concern requiring more formal intervention

- 10.2. This may include concerns relating to:
- safety
 - serious deterioration in wellbeing
 - ability to cope with academic demands
- 10.3. Process:
- A formal meeting is convened involving relevant staff (e.g. Course Leader, Director of Curriculum & Courses, Student Services)
 - Previous actions and outcomes are reviewed
 - Further support measures or conditions are agreed
 - Where there is uncertainty regarding risk, senior staff will determine whether escalation to Stage 3 is appropriate.

11. Stage 3: Fitness to Study Panel – Serious or Persistent Concerns

- 11.1. A Stage 3 panel will be convened where there is:
- serious or persistent concern regarding a student's wellbeing
 - significant risk to the student or others
 - inability to safely or effectively continue studies
- 11.2. In some cases, Stage 3 may be initiated immediately where risk is high.
- 11.3. Panel considerations include:
- the student's current situation
 - relevant history and previous interventions
 - academic requirements and context
 - the safety and wellbeing of all parties
- 11.4. The student will normally be invited to attend unless:
- attendance would cause undue distress
 - the student is unable to engage (e.g. hospitalisation)
- 11.5. Outcomes may include:
- continuation with conditions
 - intermission
 - withdrawal

12. Students Detained Under the Mental Health Act 1983

- 12.1. Where a student is detained (sectioned) under the Mental Health Act 1983 or hospitalised due to a mental health crisis:
- Immediate Action
 - The student will be temporarily suspended from their studies
 - The priority will be their health, treatment, and recovery
- 12.2. Before returning, the student must provide medical evidence from a qualified clinician confirming:
- they are no longer detained, or are transitioning out of detention
 - their diagnosis and current condition
 - that they are fit to return to study
- 12.3. Students may also be required to provide:
- a care plan
 - a risk assessment
 - details of ongoing clinical support
- 12.4. Further Action
- A Stage 3 Fitness to Study Panel may be required where:
 - reasonable adjustments cannot be effectively implemented
 - the student's condition continues to significantly impact their studies
 - there are ongoing concerns regarding safety

13. Return to Study

- 13.1. Students returning after one of the following reasons:
- intermission due to ill health
 - extended absence (typically 4+ weeks)
 - Fitness to Study intervention

will be required to:

- attend a Return to Study meeting
 - provide appropriate medical or professional evidence
- 13.2. This evidence should address:

- the student's readiness to resume study
 - ability to meet academic demands
 - any risks associated with returning
 - required adjustments or support
- 13.3. Return will only be approved where CFS is satisfied that the student can engage safely and effectively.

14. Appeals

- 14.1. Students have the right to appeal a decision where there is evidence of:
- procedural irregularity
 - bias or unreasonable decision-making
 - new material evidence not previously considered

15. Related Policies and External Reference Points

- 15.1. This policy aligns with:
- Equality Act 2010
 - CFS Respect and Consideration Statement
 - CFS Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
 - CFS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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