



Policy Name and Number:	Fitness to Study Policy – 09a
Version Number:	1
Approval date:	01/09/2025
SLT Lead:	Deputy Principal, Curriculum, Performance and Student Experience
a. Responsible Person for policy review: b. Responsible Manager for policy implementation (if different):	Vice Principal, Quality and Student Experience Head of Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Bursary
How does the policy link to the Strategic Plan Aims and Themes: Aims: 1. Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment 2. Beneficial Partnerships 3. Sustainable SMART Campuses 4. Inclusive, Thriving Community 5. Financial Sustainability Themes: a. Sustainability and the environment b. Happiness and wellbeing c. Digital transformation d. Equality, diversity and inclusion	1. Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment 4. Inclusive, Thriving Community b. Happiness and wellbeing d. Equality, diversity and inclusion
a. Related Policies and Procedures: b. Related Legislation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding Policy - Health and Safety Policy - Positive Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy - Equality and Diversity Policy
Consultation Process: eg, FRCP / CPSE / HR / SPBD / SLT	CPSE
Approving Authority:	SLT Approval <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporation/Committee Approval <input type="checkbox"/>
Policy Review Frequency:	Annually
Effective Date:	01/09/2025
Date of Next Revision:	01/09/2026
Scope: (Describe what and to whom the policy applies, and any exemptions. i.e. staff, students, stakeholders, visitors, volunteers, contractors)	This policy applies to all enrolled students at the College, including full-time, part-time, and distance learners, regardless of age or programme of study. It also applies to prospective students where concerns about fitness to study arise during the application or enrolment process. The policy is designed to support students whose physical or mental health may

	<p>impact their ability to engage safely and effectively in academic and college life. It ensures that appropriate support, reasonable adjustments, and safeguarding measures are considered before any decisions are made regarding a student's continued participation.</p> <p>Exemptions: This policy does not apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff, who are covered under HR and occupational health policies. - Visitors, volunteers, and contractors, who are subject to separate safeguarding and conduct policies. - Stakeholders not directly involved in student support or academic delivery.
Policy classification:	<p>Public (website): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Internal: SharePoint <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Governor Portal <input type="checkbox"/> Canvas <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Key Updates/Changes from previous policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation/Communication/Training <p>All staff will receive annual training on recognising and responding to fitness to study concerns. The policy will be published on the College website and internal platforms. Safeguarding and wellbeing teams will lead on implementation and case management. Students will be informed of the policy during induction and via the published documentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring Impact <p>The policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team. Feedback from students and staff involved in the process will be collected. Outcomes, including retention, progression, and satisfaction data, will be monitored to assess the policy's effectiveness in performance boards and curriculum meetings.</p>	

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Fitness to study relates to a person's capacity to fully participate, satisfactorily as a student, in relation to academic studies and college life in general. Oaklands College is committed to supporting student's wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health is essential to a student's learning and academic achievement.

2. College Vision, Mission, KPIs and Objectives

- 2.1 **Vision:** To be a sustainable educational trailblazer inspiring our learners and our wider community to achieve their potential in a changing world.
- 2.2 **Mission:** To prepare every learner for work, a rewarding career, and life's opportunities. By treating every student as the individual they are, with care, passion and understanding in a professional, contemporary and community-focused environment they'll value and enjoy.

- 2.3 This policy aligns with **Strategic Aim 1.**

Deliver continuous outstanding teaching, learning, and assessment to all learners and employers.

This policy also aligns with **Strategic Objectives:**

- a. Deliver outstanding teaching, learning, assessment and enrichment providing an environment that builds skills and knowledge
- b. Inspire our learners to attend, learn and achieve above the national quartile

- 2.4 This policy aligns with **Strategic Aim 4.**

Further enhance our caring, accessible, inclusive, and thriving college community, committed to fairness, health, and success.

This policy also aligns with **Strategic Objectives:**

- a. An educational group that is at the forefront of, and leading in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity by embedding effective practices in all we do
- b. Nationally accredited as an employer of choice that promotes a consistent culture of trust, innovation, enterprise, and teamwork, where both staff and students feel valued and recognised
- c. Renowned for delivering a safe and secure environment that allows learners to thrive

3. Purpose/Policy Statement

- 3.1 The policy is intended to be used as an alternative to any disciplinary procedure where there is sufficient concern that a student's behaviour resulting in a possible disciplinary response could be as a result of disability, ill health or have an impact on the health & safety of the student or other people. Any decisions made on a student's fitness to study, health or safety will be made through a collective process of consideration of the ability to study, learn and achieve. Teaching and support staff may initiate use of the policy if concern for the student is sufficient. It is

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important that all those concerned with the student are kept fully informed of the outcome of these processes, whilst keeping in mind the legitimate concerns around confidentiality, data protection and professional guidelines.

The College recognises that there may be circumstances when a student is unable to recognise that he or she is placing unreasonable demands on staff, interrupting the learning of other students or endangering themselves or others.

4. Implementation/Communication/Training

- 4.1 All staff will receive annual training on recognising and responding to fitness to study concerns. The policy will be published on the College website and internal platforms. Safeguarding and wellbeing teams will lead on implementation and case management. Students will be informed of the policy during induction and via the published documentation.

5. Monitoring Impact

- 5.1. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team. Feedback from students and staff involved in the process will be collected. Outcomes, including retention, progression, and satisfaction data, will be monitored to assess the policy's effectiveness.

6. Joining the College

- 6.1. Students are encouraged to disclose any physical or mental health need as part of application & enrolment procedure. This disclosure will in no way prejudice any decision about the application – on the contrary, it is used to establish how best we can respond to the individual need and what reasonable adjustments can be made. In cases where a complex or significant physical or mental health condition is disclosed, a referral to the Learning Support Team and / or Safeguarding Team will be made. A support needs assessment will be offered, and it may be appropriate that further information is sought from or shared with multi-agency professionals. We will work with the student, parents/carers and any multiagency professionals to devise a support plan that will detail the required teaching and learning adjustments. In some cases, the support plan will require formal medical paperwork to be provided. Where appropriate consent will always be sought from adult learners, young people and their parents and carers. This consent is documented on the students Support Needs Assessment document or within confidential comments on ProMonitor.
- 6.2. Consent will always be sought from the student to involve parents and carers in decisions, however in certain cases parents may need to be informed without the student's consent. The support plan may also involve referral to outside agencies, such as CAMHS or the student's GP.
- 6.3. In exceptional circumstances confidentiality may need to be broken without the student's consent. In these circumstances the parent / carer or a professional will always be informed.

7. Studying at the College

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- 7.1. If a student does **not** disclose a pre-existing physical or mental health condition on application or during enrolment, then it is unlikely that they will receive support or reasonable adjustment, unless a need becomes apparent to staff or tutors. Early disclosure of need is therefore vital to allow us to assess how best to accommodate students and to avoid exacerbating any health or wellbeing need through a lack of information sharing.
- 7.2. If the nature of the medical condition requires support or reasonable adjustment needs to be made to a student's studies, then a referral to the Learning Support Team will be made to assess the student. This may lead to a support plan being agreed and other staff in the College becoming involved in providing support.
- 7.3. We will always seek to provide appropriate support to any student with ill health, whether the condition was pre-existing or commences during study at the College.
- 7.4. Students are made aware of the extensive range of student services at the College both at induction and as part of the ongoing pastoral programme.
- 7.5. All staff at the College have a duty of care to students and can be approached with any concern, however small. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- 7.6. This is particularly true where the health condition causes significant concern since the expertise and capacity of the College does not include medical provision. The responsibility for medical support lies with the external services. In crisis situations, where there are immediate and grave concerns for a student's health or well-being, staff will judge how best to provide first aid and whether emergency services should be called.
- 7.7. The student may disclose an issue prior to joining the college or at a later point.
- 7.8. We will always endeavor, in these situations, to contact parents and carers as soon as possible.

8. Limits to Support

- 8.1. Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins the College or whilst at the College, there needs to be reasonable limits set to the support that can be offered. These include both the flexibility the College should show around academic progress (attendance and meeting assessment expectations) and the support (type, location and frequency) that is needed for a student to remain at College.
- 8.2. Clearly, it is difficult to set non-negotiable limits for academic progression and support and there needs to be judicious professional judgement in each case.
- 8.3. Furthermore, physical and mental health conditions may be temporary or permanent, short or long-term, stable or prone to remission.
- 8.4. As a guide therefore, the following minimum expectations should be set:
 - 8.4.1. Academic progress
 - 8.4.2. Fitness to Study

9. Academic Progress

- 9.1. Each case needs to be considered on its merits, but a minimum level of attendance needs to be maintained that will allow a student to realistically achieve. Academic success depends on engagement in classroom activity, so excessively long periods of complete absence or very low attendance will make a student's studies untenable.
- 9.2. With regards to coursework and homework, if students fall significantly behind with their deadlines, despite extensions being offered, then there comes a point at which catching up is not viable. The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will be set in each case depending on the circumstances. It is reasonable for teaching staff, on

a short-term temporary basis, to liaise with students via email and Teams. This cannot continue long-term.

- 9.3. Safeguarding and Welfare staff can all provide appropriate support within certain parameters. We will, where appropriate, refer to external services and maintain liaison with them. We cannot provide medical or psychiatric support. This would be sought externally through the GP or other services.

10. Fitness to Study

- 10.1. Our default position, as a college, is that we want all students to complete their studies successfully and achieve their full potential. There are occasions, however, when physical or mental health issues are so complex or so significant that this is not possible. Clearly each student needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, and the College needs to ensure it is fully aware of all the medical evidence and the wishes of the student and the parents or carers. Ideally, a clear consensus would always emerge about the best way forwards, but this will not always be the case. There will be occasions where the College believes that it has exhausted the support options available, it has made reasonable adjustments in all aspects of College life, but the student is unable to maintain their fitness to study. These situations impact negatively both on the student, since their welfare is at risk, and on the College, since there is an excessive demand on resources.
- 10.2. For the student, who has struggled to maintain their academic progress against the odds and for whom trying to keep the structure of College life going has been so far a positive factor in their rehabilitation, there comes a tipping point at which trying to catch up after a lengthy absence with deadlines significantly overdue is actually more stressful and therefore more of a negative impact on their health than withdrawing from studies.
- 10.3. The time required to work with individual students to catch up on missed work, liaising remotely via email for absent students and arranging meetings and support for students is a finite resource and cannot unreasonably impact on the learning of other students at the College. If the College reaches a decision, after consultation with the student, parents /guardians and medical professionals, that a student should withdraw then this will be actioned. In these situations, we would always assure students and their parents or carers that the best interests of the individual student and their welfare are at the centre of decisions.
- 10.4. Where there is no consensus that withdrawal is the most appropriate outcome, then the stages below will be followed.
- 10.5. **Fitness to Study Stage 1**

Emerging concerns about a student's health and safety and ability to study e.g., significant deterioration in health, appearance, attitude and/or behaviour might require a response from the College.

A member of staff with primary responsibility e.g., Personal Tutor, Learning Support Team should in the first instance approach the student in a sympathetic and understanding way and indicate that there are concerns about fitness to study and that a concern has been recorded by use of this policy.

A letter is sent home outlining concerns an inviting student and parents to a fitness to study stage 1 meeting with the Tutor/Learning Support Team.

The nature of the concerns should be clearly identified and, if appropriate, information should be provided about sources of professional support and advice available within the College. It should be made clear to the student that it is his/her responsibility to be fit to study and that there is a recognised concern about this within the College.

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10.6. Fitness to Study Stage 2

Continued/initial concern about an individual's health and safety and ability to study alongside significant deterioration in health, appearance, attitude and/or behaviour might require a further/initial response from the College and should be seen as a stage 2 case under the policy.

A Fitness to Study Stage 2 meeting reviews the situation and provides guidance to the Vice Principal Safeguarding, Quality & Student Experience, Head of Safeguarding, and a Curriculum Team Manager/Leader, they will decide on the feasibility of the students' continued place at college. The student will then be notified of the decision.

NB. It is crucial to recognise that, on occasion, the College is advised, by medical specialists and multi-agency partners that it is unsafe or unwise for students to attend. This advice will always supersede College procedure, and the student will not be able to attend until we are notified of their fitness to do so by the relevant authority.

10.7. Restarting at College

Students at Oaklands College with Fitness to Study concerns sometimes request to restart at the College. In most cases, the College strongly advises against restarts as historically attendance, retention and progression of restarting students has been poor, and restarting is therefore not in their best interest.

Oaklands College will consider a request to restart where:

- A student has not restarted before at the college or elsewhere
- They meet the entry requirements for their chosen course
- They withdrew from college of their own accord
- There is robust medical/multi-agency support outside of college and there is time before the restart to respond to this support (typically 6 months)
- There is evidence of their fitness to study e.g., through voluntary or paid work
- The student is willing to undertake additional supervised study within the college day
- A medical professional can evidence that returning to College is in the best interest of the student

The decision to restart will be made by the Head of Safeguarding/and Curriculum Team Manager/Leader in consultation with Learning Support Teams and relevant staff in the best interests of the young person. Where there is insufficient evidence, the restart will not be successful then it will be refused with the decision confirmed in writing.

Where the College offers the opportunity of a restart, the onus is on the student and their parents or carers to ensure they are recovered enough for the restart to College. Any restart will be conditional on maintaining reasonable expectations of attendance and progress as relapses would not be in the interests of students. Students who restart will be monitored by their Tutor and Learning Support Team and will begin on Stage 1 of the Fitness to Study Procedure.

10.8. Appeals

Students and/or their parents or carers have the right to appeal decisions made under the Fitness to Study Policy. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Deputy Principal, Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience within 7 days of the decision. The appeal should clearly state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documentation. The Deputy Principal will review the appeal and respond in writing within 14 days. The outcome of the appeal will be final and communicated to all relevant parties.