Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study

Procedures for meetings of the Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study

This document should be read in conjunction with the *Policy on and procedures relating to student academic engagement and fitness to study* (https://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/-/media/project/functions/cqsd/documents/qap/academic-engagement-and-fitness-to-study.pdf) ('the Policy').

1. The relevant Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education & Student Experience) is responsible, following a Case Review, for referring any academic engagement/ fitness to study case to the Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study (hereafter referred to as 'the Committee'). The Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education & Student Experience) is responsible for submitting a Case Review report and other supporting evidence to the Secretary of the Committee.
2. The Committee is responsible for considering academic engagement and fitness to study cases referred to it under the Policy and for taking such actions as, acting reasonably, it considers appropriate in accordance with paragraph 26 below and in accordance with the Policy.
3. The membership of the Committee shall be determined by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor in respect of each case. The Committee shall comprise:
    - a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (*Chair*)
    - an Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education & Student Experience) who has not had previous involvement in the case
    - a School Director of Teaching and Learning or School Director of Academic Tutoring for a School with which the student is not registered
    - a Student Officer from the Students' Union (RSU)
    - a Secretary nominated by the University Secretary.
4. On receipt of the Case Review report from the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education & Student Experience), the Secretary shall write to the student enclosing the Case Review report and any other supporting documents that will be considered by the Committee.
5. The date for the meeting of the Committee will be set in a timely fashion. The student will be informed of the procedure to be followed and the date and time of the meeting. The student is normally expected to attend the hearing in person, but may request to attend by telephone or remote video/web conferencing or may, with good reason, be required by the University to attend by telephone or remote video/web conferencing.
6. The Secretary shall also write to the members of the Committee, informing them of the procedure to be followed and the time and date at which the case will be heard.
7. The student is permitted to submit a written statement to the Committee, which must be received by the Secretary not later than a specified date which shall be notified in advance.

8. The School with which the student is registered may be required to provide relevant evidence concerning the case on request of the Committee, to include a record of submitted and outstanding coursework and records of attendance where appropriate.

9. Any written supporting evidence submitted to the Committee in advance of the hearing, including a copy of the Case Review report, shall be circulated by the Secretary to all Committee members, to the School Director of Academic Tutoring of the School in which the student is registered (or an alternative who will attend the meeting) and the student.

10. The Secretary shall keep a record of the proceedings of and evidence given to the Committee. The Committee's hearings shall be held in private.

11. The student shall have the right to attend the hearing of the case on the specified date, and to be accompanied by a 'friend' who should normally be a currently registered student of the University, a member of staff of the University, a sabbatical officer or student adviser working within the Students' Union.

12. Where the student wishes to be accompanied by a 'friend', the 'friend' is normally expected to attend in person, but the student may request that the 'friend' attend by telephone or remote video/web conferencing or the University may, with good reason, require that the 'friend' attend by telephone/ or remote video/web conferencing.

13. Disabled students may also be accompanied by a support worker as appropriate to their needs.

14. The School Director of Academic Tutoring of the School with which the student is registered (or an alternate) shall be required to attend part of the hearing.

15. The student and their 'friend' shall have the right to be present throughout the Committee's hearing of evidence, save that they shall withdraw at any stage at the Chair's direction if the Committee wishes to consider privately any matter or point. The School Director of Academic Tutoring shall have the right to be present for the first part of the hearing, during which he or she will present the case and any supporting evidence, save that he or she shall withdraw at any stage at the Chair's direction if the Committee wishes to consider privately any matter or point. The Committee may require the School Director of Academic Tutoring to withdraw from the meeting while the student presents their evidence. If any person obstructs the proceedings, the Chair may require all or any of those present to leave the meeting.

16. The proceedings of the Committee shall not be invalidated by the failure of the student or their 'friend' or the School Director of Academic Tutoring to attend the meeting or by the exclusion of the student or their 'friend' or the School Director of Academic Tutoring from the meeting, or by the absence of a witness.

17. In the case where a student does not attend the meeting for good reason, the Committee may decide to proceed in their absence.

18. The Committee shall consider the Case Review report and any written statement submitted by the student, together with any supporting evidence submitted by any persons involved in the Case Review and/or student. The student and the School Director of Academic Tutoring have the right to give oral evidence. The student has the right to call witnesses. The Committee may at its discretion permit evidence to be given other than orally.

19. The Committee has the power to call any witnesses or seek such evidence as it deems necessary. The Secretary will notify the student of any witnesses who have been called, or of any evidence which has been sought.

20. The student and School Director of Academic Tutoring may speak, comment or ask questions at any time with the permission of the Chair, provided that the content is relevant to the case.

21. The 'friend' may speak, comment or ask questions at any time with the permission of the Chair, provided that the content is relevant to the case.

22. The Committee has the power to question the student, their 'friend', the School Director of Academic Tutoring , or any witness at any time during the hearing of a case.

23. The Committee has the power to adjourn a hearing for a reasonable period.

24. The Committee shall require the student, their 'friend' and the School Director of Academic Tutoring to withdraw from the meeting while it makes a decision.

25. In making its assessment, the Committee will take into account all relevant information presented to it, including any evidence of mitigating circumstances put forward by the School and/or the student.

26. The Committee may determine that:
    a) the student's fitness to study is not substantially impaired, that they have demonstrated a sufficient level of academic engagement and they may continue their studies;
    b) the student's fitness to study is impaired and/or their level of academic engagement has not been sufficient.

27. In determining (b), the burden of proof rests with the University. The student is assumed to be sufficiently academically engaged and fit to study unless it can be proved otherwise. The decision will be based on the balance of probabilities, i.e. whether, on the basis of the evidence before the Committee, it is more likely than not that the student's fitness to study is impaired and/or they have not demonstrated a sufficient level of academic engagement.

28. In the case of 26(a) the School will be responsible for ensuring that all reasonable efforts are made to enable the student to continue on their programme. The ongoing academic engagement and fitness to study of the student should be monitored as normal.

29. In the case of 26(b) the Committee will determine an appropriate and proportionate action: the extent to which fitness to study is impaired or academic engagement has not been demonstrated; the extent to and means by which that impairment or lack might be addressed and, if applicable, any mitigating circumstances accepted. Actions may include any of following alone or in combination:
    - formal notification to the student that their conduct has caused concern and that they must comply with any imposed conditions, which may include, but are not limited to:
        - close supervision by the School; and,
        - engagement with an appropriate medical or mental health professional; and/or,
        - engagement with a University Study Adviser to improve the student's academic practice;
    - suspension for a specific period of time with or without further conditions;
    - requirement to re-sit or retake part of the programme, with or without further conditions;

- termination of current course of study but offer of a transfer of University registration to an alternative programme as determined by the University, if deemed suitable in the circumstances and agreed with the student;
- termination of current course and removal from membership of the University, but retaining eligibility to receive any lesser award if applicable;
- termination of current course and removal from membership of the University.

30. If conditions have been applied alongside the specified action(s), the School is responsible for monitoring compliance with academic conditions. Failure to comply with conditions will result in automatic referral back to the Committee.

31. The outcome letter and a copy of the minutes of the hearing will normally be sent to the student within five working days. This will also include information on how to make an appeal. The decision will also be communicated to the School Director of Academic Tutoring, School Director of Teaching and Learning and the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education & Student Experience).

32. Failure to accept the conditions of submit an appeal within five working days will result in the case being referred back to the Committee for further consideration and a decision, usually by Chair's action.

33. The Secretary will record the decision of the Committee on the student's record where it will remain as long as the record is kept in accordance with the University's data retention schedule.

34. Appeals against decisions of the Committee are considered by the Student Appeals Committee.