

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO

# FITNESS TO PRACTISE

## GET IN TOUCH

**0121 204 4848**

[advice@aston.ac.uk](mailto:advice@aston.ac.uk)

10:00am - 4:00pm

### DROP IN

10:30am - 12:30pm weekdays

No appointment needed at this time

### LOCATION

Ground floor of Students' Union building



# FITNESS TO PRACTISE



University programmes that involve close interaction with patients and the public are covered by Fitness to Practise regulations.

## WHAT IS FITNESS TO PRACTISE COLLEGE OF HEALTH & LIFE SCIENCES?

Programmes in the College of Health and Life Sciences that involve close interaction with patients and the public are covered by Fitness to Practise regulations to ensure everyone's safety. If you're enrolled in one of these accredited courses, you've agreed to uphold a Code of Professional Conduct, undergo Occupational Health screening and complete Enhanced Level DBS checks.

## UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSIBILITY

The University has a responsibility to assess whether students enrolled on its health profession-accredited programmes meet the professional requirements for accreditation as well as the academic requirements, and that student performance, conduct or health does not put clients, colleagues, patients, staff, or students themselves, at risk.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You must always maintain professional standards, both inside and outside the University. Your conduct and health must meet expectations to ensure you're safe to work with clients, colleagues, patients staff, and the public. If you don't meet these standards, the University may investigate whether you're fit to continue in your chosen health profession.

## VALID CONCERNS

Various issues may trigger a Fitness to Practise investigation, including:

- Criminal convictions, cautions, or penalty notices (e.g. failing to disclose police cautions or investigations).
- Drug or alcohol misuse.
- Aggressive, violent, or threatening behaviour.
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour (including frequent lateness and absences).
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- Cheating or plagiarism.
- Dishonesty or fraud (including actions outside the professional role, like covering up mistakes or claiming more hours than worked).
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitudes (including harassment or posting inappropriate material on social media).
- Health concerns and lack of insight or management (e.g. failure to seek medical treatment, follow medical advice, or a treatment-resistant condition affecting fitness to practise).

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Facing fitness to practise concerns can be overwhelming, but proactive steps can help:

- a) Familiarise Yourself with Professional Standards:** Read the Professional Standards relevant to your programme and profession, paying close attention to key aspects. Understand the expectations outlined and their application to your conduct and practise.
- b) Draft a Reflective Statement:** Begin drafting a reflective statement addressing any concerns raised by the school. Follow provided guidelines: include an introduction, timeline of events, reflections on behaviour and attitudes, lessons learned, feelings about professional standards, a proposed action plan, and a conclusion. Ensure the statement covers all incidents comprehensively.

## THE FTP OFFICER

Concerns are reported to the Fitness to Practise Officer (FPO), who will:

- Investigate:** Look into the concerns about your conduct or health interviewing those involved and gathering statements.
- Decide:** In consultation with your Head of School, the FPO will choose on of the following actions:
- **No action:** If no issue is found, no record is kept and the case is closed.
  - **Support or remedial action:** If no formal action is needed, they may recommend additional training or supervision.

## WE CAN HELP...

Please visit: [astonsu.com/support](https://astonsu.com/support)

EXPLAIN FITNESS TO PRACTISE REGULATIONS. HELP YOU UNDERSTAND CONCERNS RAISED BY UNIVERSITY. PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON ANY STATEMENT YOU WISH TO SUBMIT. AND MORE.



## THE FTP OFFICER....continued

- **Referral to discipline officer:** If there's a potential breach of University Regulations, the case may be escalated.
- **Issue a warning:** If your conduct breaches the programme's Code of Conduct but not the regulations, they may issue a warning with steps to improve.
- **Refer to fitness to practise committee:** If your fitness to practise is in question, the case is referred to the FTP committee. You'll be informed in writing.

## THE FTP COMMITTEE

- **Role:** Decides on Fitness to Practise (FTP) cases referred by the FTP Officer and School, reviews University Discipline Boards actions and Admission Concerns referrals, and considers appeals against warnings issued by the FTP Officer or School.
- **Composition:** Typically consists of a Chair and two Aston University members with relevant professional registration, two external representatives (potentially from the NHS or related fields), and additional members consultants as necessary.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Strict confidentiality is maintained throughout the FTP Committee proceedings.

## PROTOCOL FOR FTP COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Students are invited at least 15 days before the hearing date with relevant paperwork.
- The committee may proceed even the student leaves the University.
- Cases are presented by the FTP Officers or a designated presenter.
- Students are informed of their rights (e.g. to representation and calling witnesses).
- Mitigating circumstances are considered.
- A decision is made regarding the establishment of facts, impairment of fitness to practise, and sanctions.

## POSSIBLE SANCTIONS

- **No sanction required:** Committee determines no further action is necessary.
- **Written Warning:** Issued to formally notify the student of concerns about their fitness to practise.
- **Conditional Continuation:** Continuation on the programme is conditional upon specific requirements (e.g. close supervision, professional help, or meeting academic/professional standards).
- **Exclusion:** Temporary removal from the programme until specified conditions are met.
- **Expulsion:** Permanent removal from the programme.

## APPEALING DECISIONS

### How to Appeal:

- To appeal a **Fitness to Practise Officer's decision**, submit a written request to the **Secretary of the Fitness to Practise Committee** within **10 days**.
- To appeal a **Fitness to Practise Committee decision**, submit a written request to the **Secretary of the University Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee** within **10 days**.

Appeals are only considered on grounds of **procedural errors, new evidence, or disproportionate sanctions**.

### Appeal Hearing Process:

- If appeal is considered valid, students receive a hearing notice at least **15 days** before the hearing.
- All supporting documents and witness details must be submitted **7 days** in advance.
- Students may bring a representative.

**Outcome:** The Committee's final decision is communicated in writing within 7 working days. and cannot be appealed.

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

We can offer support in various ways:

- Explain Fitness to Practise regulations.
- Help you understand concerns raised by the University.
- Provide feedback on any statement you wish to submit.
- Accompany you to meetings or hearings and provide representation.
- Advise on options available if you are unhappy with the outcome of your case.

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