

The British University in Egypt

Fitness to Study Policy

Key Policy Information:

Author:	Academic Governance Office
Key Responsible Office:	Office of the Provost
Approved by (committee):	UTLC and Senate
Responsibility for Document Review:	Academic Governance Office
Date Created/First Draft	September 2026
Date Approved:	October 2026
Date Last updated:	October 2026
Date of next review	September 2028

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The British University in Egypt

Fitness to Study Policy

1. Purpose

The British University in Egypt (BUE) is committed to supporting students to participate successfully in university life and to achieve their academic potential while maintaining a safe and supportive environment for students, staff and the wider University community.

The Fitness to Study Policy provides a supportive and proportionate framework for responding when concerns arise about a student's ability to participate in their studies or university life safely and effectively.

Fitness to Study is **not a disciplinary process**. Its primary purpose is to identify concerns at an early stage, understand the circumstances affecting the student, provide appropriate support, and enable the student to continue or safely return to study wherever reasonably possible.

The policy recognises that students may experience physical health, mental health, wellbeing, personal, behavioural or other circumstances that affect their ability to engage with their studies. The University will seek to respond to such circumstances with appropriate support while also recognising its responsibilities towards other students, staff and the wider University community.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all students enrolled at BUE, including students undertaking programmes delivered in partnership with or validated or moderated by external academic partners, where applicable.

It applies where there are reasonable concerns that a student's health, wellbeing, behaviour, circumstances or level of engagement may be affecting:

- the student's ability to participate effectively in their studies;
- the student's academic progress;
- the student's wellbeing or safety;
- the wellbeing or safety of other students or staff;
- the student's ability to meet the reasonable requirements of their programme;
- participation in placements, professional activities or other programme-related activities; or
- the student's ability to return safely to study following an interruption (Break in Studies) or period of significant difficulty.

A Fitness to Study concern may arise from a single serious incident where there is an immediate and significant concern, but ordinarily the process will be initiated following a pattern of concerns or where informal support has not been sufficient.

3. Principles

The University will apply the following principles when managing Fitness to Study concerns.

3.1 Student-centred and supportive

The student's health, wellbeing, academic success and individual circumstances will remain central considerations.

The purpose of intervention is to support the student rather than to punish them.

3.2 Early intervention

Concerns should be identified and addressed as early as reasonably possible. Where appropriate, concerns should initially be managed through informal discussion, support and reasonable adjustments.

Formal Fitness to Study procedures should normally be used only where informal support has been unsuccessful, has not been accepted or is insufficient in light of the seriousness of the concern.

3.3 Proportionality

The response will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the concern. The University will seek to use the least intrusive intervention that can reasonably address the identified concern.

3.4 Evidence-based decision-making

Decisions will be based on relevant evidence and information rather than assumptions, speculation or diagnosis alone.

Evidence may include academic records, attendance information, information provided by the student, professional or medical information where voluntarily provided and appropriately authorised, and information from relevant University staff.

A formal medical diagnosis is not required before the University can provide support or take proportionate action.

3.5 Respect, dignity and confidentiality

Students will be treated with dignity and respect. Information concerning a student's personal circumstances will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need the information to fulfil their legitimate responsibilities.

The University will explain, as far as reasonably possible, how information will be used and with whom it may need to be shared.

3.6 Equality and reasonable adjustments

The University will consider relevant equality, disability and reasonable-adjustment requirements when responding to Fitness to Study concerns.

A student's disability or health condition will not in itself constitute a failure of Fitness to Study. The University will consider whether appropriate support and reasonable adjustments can enable the student to participate successfully.

3.7 Student participation

Students will normally be given an opportunity to understand the concerns raised, contribute information about their circumstances, participate in meetings and contribute to the development of an appropriate support plan.

Students may be accompanied or represented at formal stages in accordance with the relevant procedure.

A student involved in the Fitness to Study process has the right to be accompanied by one person of their choice at any meeting, case conference or Fitness to Study Panel. The companion may be a friend, family member, fellow student, Students' Union representative, or appropriate member of University staff.

The Chair may restrict the participation of a companion where this is necessary to ensure that the meeting remains focused, fair and respectful, or where the companion's involvement would compromise confidentiality or the proper consideration of the case.

3.8 Academic standards and professional requirements

Support for students does not remove the University's responsibility to maintain academic standards or, where relevant, professional, regulatory, placement or safety requirements.

Where a programme has specific professional requirements, these may be considered as part of the Fitness to Study process.

3.9 Continuation and return to study

Where reasonably possible, the University will seek to enable a student to continue their studies with appropriate support.

Where interruption or temporary suspension is necessary, the University will seek to establish an appropriate plan for the student's return to study.

Any interruption, temporary suspension or Break in Studies will align with the University's Break in Studies / Suspension of Studies policy currently in force.

4. Grounds for Fitness to Study Concerns

Concerns may arise where there is evidence of, or reasonable concern about:

- significant deterioration in physical or mental wellbeing;
- significant behavioural change;
- persistent inability to engage with academic study;
- repeated or unexplained absence;
- significant difficulties participating in teaching, assessment or other programme activities;
- circumstances that substantially affect academic progress;
- behaviour that indicates a concern for the student's own safety or wellbeing;
- behaviour that creates a significant concern for the safety or wellbeing of others;
- difficulties participating safely in placements or professional activities; or
- other circumstances that indicate that additional support or intervention may be required.

The existence of one of these circumstances does not automatically mean that a student is unfit to study. The University will consider the individual circumstances, available evidence, support already provided and the student's capacity to engage with an appropriate support plan.

5. Relationship with Wellness and Student Support

Fitness to Study is an institutional academic and student-support process. The **Provost is the owner of this Policy** and has overall academic and governance responsibility for its operation.

Operational responsibility for student wellness provision sits separately within the University's governance structure. The **Deputy Vice Chancellor for the Student Journey has responsibility for the Wellness function**, including the Wellness Team.

Where a Fitness to Study concern involves counselling, mental health, wellbeing or other matters within the remit of the Wellness Team, the student will be referred to the Wellness Team as appropriate.

The Wellness Team will manage:

- counselling and wellness support;
- meetings with students concerning wellness matters;
- professional assessment and support within its remit;
- appropriate wellness interventions and referrals; and
- appropriate advice to University colleagues concerning student support, subject to confidentiality and applicable information-sharing requirements.

Academic and professional staff should not undertake counselling or attempt to provide specialist mental-health or wellness interventions outside their professional competence.

The Fitness to Study process should therefore facilitate **appropriate coordination between academic, professional-services and wellness colleagues without conflating their respective responsibilities.**

6. Fitness to Study Stages

The University will normally operate a staged approach:

Stage 1 – Informal Support and Early Intervention

Concerns are discussed with the student and appropriate support is identified.

Stage 2 – Formal Fitness to Study Case Conference

Where concerns remain significant, cannot be adequately managed informally, or require coordinated institutional intervention, a formal case conference may be convened the terms of reference of which are defined in the Fitness to Study Procedure.

Stage 3 – Fitness to Study Panel

A Fitness to Study Panel may be convened where concerns remain unresolved, risk remains significant, the student is unable or unwilling to engage with appropriate support, or the circumstances are sufficiently serious to require formal institutional consideration.

The University may move directly to a later stage where the seriousness or urgency of the circumstances makes this necessary.

7. Possible Outcomes

Depending on the circumstances, outcomes may include:

- continuation of study with agreed support;
- a formal support and monitoring plan;
- reasonable adjustments;
- referral to the Wellness Team or other appropriate support;
- academic or pastoral support;
- Break in Studies / Suspension of Studies;
- temporary suspension where necessary and proportionate;
- conditions for continued participation;
- conditions for return to study; or
- exceptionally, termination of a student's studies where continuation cannot reasonably be supported.

Any outcome will be proportionate, evidence-based and appropriately documented.

8. Return to Study

Where a student has interrupted or been temporarily suspended because of Fitness to Study concerns, the University will seek to support a safe and sustainable return. A Break in Studies / Suspension of Studies will usually be of a duration of one full academic year and may not usually exceed two academic years.

A return-to-study process may include:

- appropriate evidence concerning the student's circumstances;
- a return-to-study meeting;
- consideration of reasonable adjustments;
- an agreed support plan;
- referral to the Wellness Team where appropriate; and
- a defined period of monitoring and review.

The purpose of return-to-study arrangements is to support successful re-engagement rather than create unnecessary barriers to a student's return. Terms of Reference for the Return to Study arrangements are defined in the Fitness to Study Procedure.

9. Student Rights

Students subject to the Fitness to Study process have the right to:

- be informed of the concerns being considered;
- have an opportunity to provide relevant information;
- participate in meetings concerning their case;
- be accompanied or represented at formal stages in accordance with University procedures, as defined in section 3.7 above;
- have relevant evidence considered;
- receive written decisions and agreed actions;
- receive information about the review or appeal arrangements applicable to the decision; and
- be treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination.

10. Emergency Situations

Where there is an immediate and significant risk to the student or to another person, the University will prioritise immediate safety.

Emergency or urgent situations should not be delayed while the Fitness to Study process is initiated. Appropriate emergency, medical, safeguarding, security or other professional interventions should be used as necessary.

Once an immediate situation has been managed, the University may consider whether a Fitness to Study process is appropriate.

11. Responsibilities

Provost

- Owns the Fitness to Study Policy.
- Provides institutional academic and governance oversight.

- Ensures the policy remains aligned with the University's academic framework.

DVC for the Student Journey

- Has responsibility for the University's Wellness function.
- Provides oversight of the Wellness Team.
- Ensures appropriate wellness provision is available to students.

Student Support and Wellbeing Team

- Provides counselling and wellness support within its professional remit.
- Conducts student meetings relating to wellness.
- Provides appropriate professional advice and referrals.
- Supports coordinated interventions while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Faculties and Academic Staff

- Identify and raise concerns appropriately.
- Engage with students within the limits of their professional role.
- Refer wellness concerns to the appropriate professional service.
- Implement agreed academic support and reasonable adjustments.
- Participate in case conferences or panels where required.

Academic Services

- Provides appropriate procedural and administrative support.
- Maintains relevant records.
- Supports formal meetings and panels.
- Ensures decisions and actions are appropriately documented and communicated.

Students

- Engage with support where reasonably able.
- Provide relevant information where appropriate.
- Participate constructively in agreed support arrangements.
- Comply with reasonable conditions associated with continued study or return to study.

12. Review of the Policy

The Fitness to Study Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains effective, proportionate and aligned with the University's strategic, academic, regulatory and student-support responsibilities.