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# Fitness to Study Policy

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**Audience:** Public

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**Responsible person:** Student Support Manager

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**Approved by:** Academic Board

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# 1.0 Introduction

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This version of the Fitness to Study Policy was approved by Academic Board on 6th June 2025 for immediate introduction and implementation.

The mid-year changes have been imposed because the Academic Board believes that this version provides the utmost support to any student who is required to go through the Fitness to Study process.

The primary change is the introduction of an external expert advisor to the panel. This has been recommended following a review of the policy by Shakespeare Martineau. It will ensure that the panel is able to make the most informed decision possible.

If a student is subject to Fitness to Study process in the academic year when this policy was updated (2024/25), they have the right to request that proceedings are undertaken using the previous version of the policy which was live at the start of the academic year. Any such request should be made in writing to [studentcases@dyson.com](mailto:studentcases@dyson.com), at the soonest possible opportunity. Requesting to use the earlier version of the policy will have no impact on a student's ability to appeal an outcome of the proceedings, but they should be aware that any appeal on the basis of the a procedural error because of a panel without an expert adviser being unsuitable or uninformed, could result in another panel meeting being required with an expert adviser, as per the updated version of the policy.

If any student wishes to discuss the Fitness to Study Policy, they should contact the Secretary and Registrar [dominic.stone@dyson.com](mailto:dominic.stone@dyson.com).

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The Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology (the 'Dyson Institute') is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of its student body. It recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing, and that a positive approach to the management of health and wellbeing is crucial to student learning and academic achievement. It also recognises that, while studying at the Dyson Institute, all students should be able to study and perform to the best of their ability, in a safe and comfortable environment.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage a co-ordinated institutional response in circumstances where it is considered that the health or wellbeing of a student may mean that they pose a risk to themselves, to other students or to the activities of the Dyson Institute.

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## 1.1 Objectives

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that staff and students understand the concept of 'fitness to study'; and

- To provide a clear, supportive, and impartial procedure through which to address concerns relating to a student's fitness to study.
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## 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all students who are currently enrolled at the Dyson Institute.

This policy is separate from any action which may be taken by Dyson Technology, as the employer, under the student's contract of employment. If a student's studies are deferred or they are withdrawn from their programme under this policy, this may lead to consideration of a leave of absence or dismissal from their employment in accordance with Dyson Technology's HR procedures.

This policy should be used when a student's fitness to study causes concern, and all other procedures or options have been exhausted or are not appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to, when:

- A student poses a risk to their own health, safety or wellbeing;
- A student poses a risk to the health, safety, or wellbeing of others;
- A student's academic performance has declined against the standard to which they usually perform and may be known to be or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health condition.

This policy will only be used in cases in which the behaviour, disruption or risk presented by the student is perceived to be of a serious or potentially serious nature. The policy is not disciplinary in nature; it is a supportive policy concerned with the wellbeing of the student and the Dyson Institute community.

Disruptive or inappropriate behaviour that does not arise from an underlying physical or mental health issue should be dealt with through the Dyson Institute's student disciplinary processes. However, a student may be referred to the Fitness to Study Policy during or after the conclusion of a disciplinary process, if appropriate.

Students should be involved in the management of their own wellbeing wherever possible. However, should a student be unwilling or unable to participate, the Dyson Institute may nonetheless follow this policy where it is reasonable to do so.

In this Fitness to Study Policy, all references to a post holder in the Dyson Institute should also be read as referring to any person (including external parties) to whom the roles and responsibilities of that post holder have been delegated.

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## 1.3 In an emergency

If a student's wellbeing or behaviour poses an immediate risk, either to themselves or to others, action should be taken in accordance with the Dyson Institute's Serious Incident Management Plan or by calling the emergency services.

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# 2.0 Definitions

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## 2.1 Fit to Study

A student who is fit to study is physically and mentally well enough, once any required reasonable adjustments are in place, that:

- They can engage with and benefit from their academic studies, submit assessments and complete required qualification hours with a reasonable chance of obtaining the qualification they have registered for;
- Their behaviour does not unreasonably disrupt any other members of the Dyson Institute community; and
- They do not pose a risk to their own health, safety or wellbeing or the health, safety, and wellbeing of others.

A student who demonstrates behaviour that does not meet the above definition, where such behaviour may be known to be or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health condition, may be supported through this Fitness to Study Policy.

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## 3.0 Reporting a fitness to study concern

Any member of Dyson Institute staff who has a concern about a student's fitness to study should speak to the student's designated year group Student Support Advisor ('SSA') via email [studentsupport@dyson.com](mailto:studentsupport@dyson.com)

It is possible that a third party, such as other students, accommodation providers, or student's workplace colleagues may report concerns to a Dyson Institute member of staff. It is the responsibility of the staff member to whom the concern is reported to ensure that the Student Support Team is informed that a concern has been raised.

Fitness to study concerns may also be raised as part of a disciplinary process, an academic appeal or claim for mitigating circumstances. In all these examples, as the initial coordinator for any fitness to study activity the SSA should be informed within five working days of the information coming to light, in writing via an email to [studentstupport@dyson.com](mailto:studentstupport@dyson.com).

If a safeguarding concern is recognised during the fitness to study process it will take precedence over any fitness to study actions.

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## 4.0 Responding to a fitness to study concern

The Dyson Institute takes the health and wellbeing of every member of its community very seriously.

Where a fitness to study concern is reported, it is the responsibility of the Student Support Team (in particular the designated year group SSA and individual SSA) to explore the concern, with representation from the academic team where required, and to initiate further action as appropriate in accordance with the policy steps set out below.

Where a fitness to study concern is immediate and critical, it may be appropriate to immediately initiate the formal fitness

to study procedure at either Stage 1 or 2 (outlined in sections 5.0 and 6.0 of this policy).

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#### 4.1 Exploratory

The student's designated SSA will discuss with them the concern that has been raised. This discussion will usually take place in a face-to-face meeting, either in person or via video call. The SSA will listen to the student's views, discuss any factors that may be relevant and discuss any immediate support that the Dyson Institute can offer as appropriate. The SSA will retain a record of this discussion.

This exploratory stage is very important. It is possible that a student may be unaware that their behaviour may be distressing to others or causing concern, and it's important that they are made aware and given the opportunity to consider and address their behaviour. An informal resolution, reached through discussion with the student, is always the preferred outcome.

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#### 4.2 Student Support Review

If informal resolution is not possible the SSA may put in place a monthly Student Support Review process. As part of this review, concerns relating to a student's academic or workplace engagement may be raised, as well as concerns around fitness to study, and actions agreed with the student.

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#### 4.3 Fitness to Study Procedure

Where the health and wellbeing support offered to the student via the SSA or relevant, contracted services is not improving the fitness to study concern, it will usually be appropriate to initiate the formal fitness to study procedure.

The procedure consists of two stages:

- Stage 1: continuing and/or serious concerns
- Stage 2: persistent and/or critical concerns

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## 5.0 Stage 1: continuing and/or serious concerns

Stage 1 of the fitness to study procedure will be initiated where there is a serious fitness to study concern about a student that cannot be addressed by the Dyson Institute's usual health, wellbeing, and student support tools, or where actions already agreed in relation to supporting the health and wellbeing of a student have not improved a fitness to study concern.

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#### 5.1 Formal meeting

The student will be invited to a meeting to discuss the fitness to study concern.

### 5.1.1 The meeting invitation

The meeting invitation should:

- Be sent in writing via email;
- Explain the concern;
- Offer the student the opportunity to provide any documentation or other evidence relevant to the concern;
- State the purpose of the meeting and its potential outcomes;
- Give notice of at least five working days (or sooner if both parties agree);
- Inform the student of their right to be accompanied by a supporter, and explain the role of the supporter;
- List the other individuals who will be attending the meeting, and their roles;
- Set out what happens if the student chooses not to attend; and
- Provide a date by which the student should respond.

### 5.1.2 Meeting attendees

The student may be accompanied to the meeting by a 'supporter'. Should a student wish to have a member of the Dyson Institute team or a fellow student with them during the meeting, they are able to request someone, and the Chair of the panel will consider their appropriateness and any conflicts of interest. Where there is a conflict, a mutually agreeable alternative will be sought.

The supporter may support and assist the student but should not represent them nor act on their behalf, including in a legal capacity. If the supporter is unable to attend in person, arrangements will be made for them to attend virtually via phone or video call.

In addition to the student and any chosen supporter, the meeting will be attended by:

- The meeting Chair (who should be a senior member of Dyson Institute staff)
- The student's SSA
- The student's designated Academic Tutor
- An HR representative from Dyson Technology
- One or more expert advisers e.g. medical professional
- A clerk (to record the meeting).

If the student has any concerns about the presence of one or more of the meeting attendees, they should discuss these with the meeting's Chair. Where possible and appropriate, alternative attendees will be found. If the student is not comfortable speaking about their concerns with the Chair, they may contact the Governance Team via email [Dysoninstitute.regulation@dyson.com](mailto:Dysoninstitute.regulation@dyson.com)

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## 5.2 Attendance at the meeting

The meeting is designed to be part of a supportive process in which the student and appropriate staff members discuss together the fitness to study concerns and appropriate actions. It is always helpful, therefore, if the student attends the meeting.

If the student has indicated that they wish to attend the meeting but cannot do so for good reason which can be evidenced, and the student advises their SSA at least 24 hours before the meeting, all effort will be made to defer the meeting to a mutually convenient time and date. This date should usually be within 5 working days of the date originally proposed.

If the student has indicated that they do not wish to attend the meeting, they may submit a statement to [Dysoninstitute.regulation@dyson.com](mailto:Dysoninstitute.regulation@dyson.com). The meeting will go ahead as planned and a decision will be reached based on the information available.

If the student fails to confirm attendance and all attempts to contact the student have failed, the meeting will go ahead as planned and a decision will be reached based on the information available.

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### 5.3 Content of the meeting

In advance of the meeting, any relevant documents or papers will be circulated to all parties. This includes the notes of any previous meetings regarding the concern, and any prior action plans. All information provided regarding fitness to study will remain confidential for use within this procedure and is subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Only staff directly involved in the process will be given access to confidential information.

The purpose of the meeting is to support the student; its intention is to recognise the individual needs of the student and agree an approach to addressing the fitness to study concern that recognises those needs.

During the meeting, the attendees will:

- Review the nature of the concern that has been raised;
- Discuss evidence (if relevant);
- Discuss the student's views;
- Explore with the student any explanations for the behaviour/circumstances that have resulted in the fitness to study procedure being enacted;
- Agree actions following the meeting within a clear timeframe;
- Explain how progress will be monitored and reviewed; and
- Explain what will happen if the concern continues.

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### 5.4 Meeting outcomes

Following the meeting, possible outcomes include (but are not limited to) the following:

- No further action required;
- Development or creation of a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP) including required assessments, reasonable adjustments etc.;
- Deferral of the student's programme for a specified period.

Recommendations may be identified which require support or action by the student's employer (Dyson Technology). In these circumstances, a further meeting will be held with relevant representatives from Dyson Technology.

Within five working days of the meeting the student will receive a record of the agreed outcomes via email, along with the meeting minutes. The record should include any agreed milestones or timeframes and whether review meetings will be required to discuss progress and should specify the Dyson Institute's commitments as well as those of the student.

Once the written record of the meeting has been sent to the student, a member of the Student Support Team will within five working days contact the student to ensure that they understand what has been agreed, and to provide any necessary support as appropriate.

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## 5.5 Review meetings

Where requirements or benchmarks have been agreed in relation to the fitness to study concern, one or more review meetings may be held to discuss progress and to determine whether the student is no longer a fitness to study concern. Review meetings will be conducted by the Student Support Team and Academic Tutor, and any other relevant persons.

A period of deferment may be extended in accordance with the Dyson Institute's Academic Regulations, where appropriate. The student's return to study will be subject to section 8.0 below.

If the student is not fit to study, or progress is not being made as expected, it may be appropriate to initiate stage 2 of the Fitness to Study Procedure.

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# 6.0 Stage 2: persistent and/or critical concerns

Stage 2 of the fitness to study procedure will be initiated where there is a critical fitness to study concern about a student that cannot be addressed by the Dyson Institute's usual health, wellbeing, and student support tools, or where actions already agreed at stage 1 of the procedure have not been followed or have not improved the fitness to study concern.

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## 6.1 Formal meeting

The student will be invited to a meeting to discuss the fitness to study concern.

### 6.1.1 The meeting invitation

The meeting invitation should:

- be sent in writing via email;
- explain the concern;
- explain why the concern is being discussed at stage 2 of the procedure;
- offer the student the opportunity to provide any documentation or other evidence relevant to the concern;
- state the purpose of the meeting and its potential outcomes;
- give notice of at least five working days (or sooner if both parties agree);
- inform the student of their right to be accompanied by a supporter, and explain the role of the supporter;
- list the other individuals who will be attending the meeting, and their roles;
- set out what happens if the student chooses not to attend; and

- provide a date by which the student should respond.

### 6.1.2 Meeting attendees

The student may be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter (see section 5.1.2).

In addition to the student and any chosen supporter, the meeting will be attended by:

- The Chair (who should be senior member of Dyson Institute staff)
- The student's SSA
- The student's designated Academic Tutor
- An HR representative from Dyson Technology
- One or more expert advisers e.g. medical professional
- A clerk (to record the meeting).

If the student has any concerns about the presence of one or more of the meeting attendees, they should discuss these with the meeting's Chair. Where possible and appropriate, alternative attendees will be found. If the student is not comfortable speaking about their concerns with the Chair, they may contact any member of the Governance Team via email [Dysoninstitute.regulation@dyson.com](mailto:Dysoninstitute.regulation@dyson.com) who will support them in raising and addressing their concerns.

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## 6.2 Attendance at the meeting

The stage 2 fitness to study meeting is designed to be part of a supportive process in which the student and appropriate staff members discuss together the fitness to study concerns and appropriate actions. It is always helpful, therefore, if the student attends the meeting.

If the student has indicated that they wish to attend the meeting but cannot do so for good reason which can be evidenced, and the student advises their SSA at least 24 hours before the meeting, all effort will be made to defer the meeting to a mutually convenient time and date. This date should usually be within 5 working days of the date originally proposed.

If the student has indicated that they do not wish to attend the meeting, the meeting will go ahead, and a decision will be reached based on the information available.

If the student fails to confirm attendance and all attempts to contact the student have failed, the meeting will go ahead, and a decision will be reached based on the information available.

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## 6.3 Content of the meeting

In advance of the meeting, any relevant documents or papers will be circulated to all parties. This includes the notes of any previous meetings regarding the concern, and any prior action plans. All information provided regarding fitness to study will remain confidential for use within this procedure and is subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Only staff directly involved in the process will be given access to confidential information.

The purpose of the meeting is to support the student; its intention is to recognise the individual needs of the student and agree an approach to addressing the fitness to study concern that recognises those needs.

During the meeting, the attendees will:

- Review the nature of the concern that has been raised;
- Review evidence (if relevant);
- Discuss the student's views;
- Explore with the student any explanations for the actions that have resulted in stage 2 of the fitness to study procedure being enacted;
- Explore with the student any reasons or factors which mean they have been unable to meet the requirements agreed in stage 1 of the fitness to study procedure (if applicable);
- Identify actions that will be required following the meeting, including timelines;
- Explain how progress will be monitored and reviewed; and
- Explain what will happen if the behaviour that has resulted in the fitness to study concern does not improve.

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#### 6.4 Meeting outcomes

Following the meeting, possible outcomes include (but are not limited to) the following:

- No further action required;
- Development or creation of a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP) including required assessments, adjustments etc.;
- Deferment of the student's programme for a specified period;
- Withdrawal of the student from their programme.

Recommendations may be identified which require support or action by the student's employer (Dyson Technology). In these circumstances, a further meeting will be held with relevant representatives from Dyson Technology.

Within five working days of the meeting the meeting notes and a record of the agreed outcomes should be shared with the student in writing via email. This record should include any agreed outcomes including milestones or timeframes and should specify the Dyson Institute's commitments as well as those of the student.

Once the written record of the meeting has been sent to the student, a member of the Student Support Team will within five working days contact the student to ensure that they understand what has been agreed, and to provide any necessary support as appropriate.

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#### 6.5 Review meetings

Where requirements or benchmarks have been agreed in relation to the fitness to study concern, one or more review meetings may be held to discuss progress and to determine whether the student is no longer a fitness to study concern.

Review meetings will be conducted by the SSA and the Chair of the panel.

A period of deferment may be extended in accordance with the Dyson Institute's Academic Regulations, where

appropriate. The student's return to study will be subject to section 8.0 below.

If the student is not fit to study, or progress is not being made as expected, it may be appropriate to reconvene the Stage 2 meeting to consider further actions.

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## 7.0 Appeals against a fitness to study decision

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The student may appeal against a fitness to study decision at either Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the procedure.

### 7.1 Grounds for appeal

An appeal against a fitness to study decision can only be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- New, relevant evidence is available that was not available previously and may have changed the decision made.  
In this case, appropriate reasoning must be given as to why the evidence could not be presented previously;
- There was a significant procedural error during the fitness to study procedure that can reasonably be thought to have influenced the decision made;
- The decision was unreasonable in all the circumstances.

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### 7.2 Making an appeal

The student should make their appeal in writing by submitting a form through the Concerns, Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Portal linked [here](#). If a student requires further information they should contact [studentcases@dyson.com](mailto:studentcases@dyson.com)

The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of the student receiving written confirmation of the decision at Stage 1 or Stage 2 and must specify the grounds on which the appeal is based. The appeal should be supported by relevant evidence as appropriate.

The Governance Team will appoint an independent investigator who has not been previously associated with the concern.

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### 7.3 Independent Investigator

The investigator will have access to all the evidence, notes and other records relating to the previous decision-making process. They will examine how the process was carried out and review the decision along with any additional information and/or evidence. This may include interviewing the members of staff involved and/or the student. If further information is obtained from staff as a result of these interviews, the student will have the right to comment on that information.

The investigator will submit a report, including recommendations, for the consideration of the Director of the Dyson Institute, who will determine one of the following outcomes:

- To dismiss the appeal;
- To uphold the appeal and refer the case to a new fitness to study meeting; or

- To impose an alternative action/outcome.

The student will receive the outcome of the appeal by email within 10 working days of the Director receiving the investigator's report. The Director's decision is final.

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## 7.4 Completion of procedures

Upon the conclusion of the appeals process the student will be sent a Completion of Procedures letter within 10 working days.

Once the student has received their Completion of Procedures letter, if they are still dissatisfied, they may ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) to review their case. The request must be made within 12 months of receipt of the Completion of Procedures letter.

The OIAHE's website is available at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk). Their phone number is 0118 959 9813.

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# 8.0 Returning to study

It is very important that any student returning to the Dyson Institute after a period away from their studies is adequately supported upon their return.

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## 8.1 Prior to returning to study

No later than one month prior to the agreed date on which the student is due to return, the Student Support Manager will contact them to discuss how they have progressed since the suspension began, their wellbeing and support needs and to agree with them how their return to the Dyson Institute will be supported.

If a student's studies were suspended for medical reasons, they may have to provide medical evidence that the concern has been appropriately addressed. This evidence will be reviewed by an appropriately qualified expert as required.

If the student is not fit to return to study, it may be appropriate to reconvene the Stage 2 meeting to consider further actions, including extending the period of deferment or the withdrawal of the student from their programme.

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## 8.2 Return to study action plan

The Student Support Manager will discuss an action plan with the student's SSA and the Deputy Director (Engineering Integration), to support the student's return. This action plan should be a collaborative exercise – the student's active participation will help the Dyson Institute to design an action plan that is appropriate to their own, individual needs. The Deputy Director (Engineering Integration) will also discuss with the Deputy Director of Academics how they envisage supporting the student's return to their programme and will discuss any proposed measures and the associated reasoning with the student.

This action plan may include, but is not limited to:

- Reconsideration of the student's Reasonable Adjustment's Plan;
- Regular review meetings between the student and their SSA;
- Provision of ongoing counselling or other professional welfare support.

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### **8.3 Upon return to study**

Upon a student's return to study, it is the duty of both the student and the Dyson Institute to observe the agreed action plan.