



**SUPPORT ON ISSUES  
THAT MATTER TO YOU**

# **FITNESS TO PRACTISE**

**- A helpful Guide**



**We've got your back.**

Email [suadvice@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@essex.ac.uk) if you're ever unsure or want more guidance.

A portion of an accounting spreadsheet is visible in the bottom right corner. It features a grid with columns and rows. The text 'Saw-Tooth Cash' is visible at the top right of the grid. The grid contains numerical values, including '1000' and '10000', and some cells are highlighted in light blue.



# WHAT IS FITNESS TO PRACTISE?

Fitness to Practise is about making sure you're safe, professional and suitable to work in certain professions.

**Not all courses are subject to the University's Fitness to Practise procedure.** If your course is, you will be notified at the start of your course.

All University students are required to comply with the University's Code of Conduct.

## It's Not Just About Placement

50% of cases come from things that happen during the rest of your studies, or outside university life and not just from placements.

When you start placement you will be informed of local policies you must also follow.

## Fitness To Practise Doesn't Refer To Your Health

If you are unwell this is not grounds to refer you to Fitness to Practise. But, if you are ill and have not followed the correct procedure, this may put patient safety at risk. You may be asked questions and have a Fitness to Practise referral made.



# HOW DO REFERRALS WORK?

Concerns about a student's Fitness to Practise maybe raised from any source including, a member of university staff, other students, a placement partner, a member of the public, the occupational health team, the Police or social services or from a professional service body.

## How To Avoid A Referral

- Make sure you have read and are aware of the policies of the university and the placement, and your relevant professional bodies.
- If you are unsure about what to disclose or if an activity would cause a referral, ask your placement supervisor or ask your Personal tutor.

If you have any doubt over what you can and can't do... **just ask.**

## Helpful Links

### University of Essex Code of Conduct

[www.essex.ac.uk/student/values/code-of-student-conduct](http://www.essex.ac.uk/student/values/code-of-student-conduct)

### University of Essex Fitness to Practise

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/values/fitness-to-practise>

# WHAT ISSUES MIGHT LEAD TO A REFERRAL?

In 23/24 48 HSC students and 1 SRES student were referred through the Fitness to Practise procedure.

## Most Common issues

**Tapping in to lectures on someone else's behalf**

**Failing to declare something such as a criminal record**

**Incorrect or inappropriate use of social media**

**Driving Conviction**

**Communication issues with patients, colleagues or lecturers**

**Failing to respond to feedback**

**Issues around Competence**

**Being on performance procedures within employment**

**Found to be drunk and disorderly**

The table on the right shows some real life examples and the subsequent outcomes.

Concerns	Outcome	Action
Falsification of time sheet information	Proven	Withdrawn from University
Tapping into the attendance monitoring system for another student who was absent	Proven	Issued an Early Resolution Agreement
Non disclosure of criminal record	Proven	No further action from fitness to practise - referred back to programme team for support and further management.
Academic Offence-Plagiarism	Proven	No Further Action as penalty issued by AO deemed adequate
Unprofessional communication and failure to respond to feedback	Proven	Issued an Early Resolution Agreement, where the student had to complete certain tasks to prove they are fit to practice.
Violent Assault	Proven	Removal from placement. Issued an Early Resolution Agreement
Sexual Assault	Proven	Excluded from placement. Withdrawal from University
Drink Driving Conviction	Proven	The placement was contacted by the Fitness to Practise panel and were asked if they would still take the student. They agreed as the student was already banned from driving by the courts.

# WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

If the referral goes to the Fitness to Practise Committee they will review your case. If they decide it is unproven, they will dismiss the case. If they decide a concern is proven, they can implement one, or more, of the following outcomes:

-  Permit the student to continue on the course with no further action required
-  Permit the student to continue on the course with adjustments
-  Issue a formal warning
-  Discontinue the placement and institute arrangements for locating an alternative placement if this is permitted under the Rules of Assessment
-  Require the student to intermit from the course for a defined period of time with return subject to conditions
-  Require the student to withdraw from the course because they are unfit to practise
-  Impose such other action as it considers appropriate, provided that no such action requires or implies a concession or exemption under the Rules of Assessment
-  Referred back to the programme team for support

If the Fitness to Practise case is proven, the Head of School and Academic Registrar (or their nominee) will decide whether to report it to the relevant professional or regulatory body and/or your employer. You will be notified of this decision in writing.



# FAQS

## **What does being 'Fit to Practise' mean?**

To be 'fit to practise' means that your behaviour and health allows you to safely and competently support the care of vulnerable individuals in your care as well as members of the public.

## **Who can be referred under the Fitness to Practise procedure?**

Anyone who is enrolled on a course where a practical professional placement is required.

This is not limited to the following but includes health, social work and education.

If concerns are raised about your conduct and or professional suitability (as outlined in relevant regulatory and/or professional body codes of practise) this can lead to the Fitness to Practise Procedure being invoked. You will be notified on registration if your course of study is subject to the terms of this procedure.

## **What are possible outcomes of a referral under the Fitness to Practise procedure and when might they be used?**

- No further action – no fitness to practise concerns are found
- Appoint an Investigating Officer to conduct an investigation
- Issue an Early Resolution Agreement for low to medium risk cases where there is a proven allegation following an investigation

## **What to do if I am referred to Fitness to Practise?**

- Talk to the SU Advice team ASAP
- Talk to your placement supervisor ASAP
- Be honest
- Learn from feedback provided to you

One of the areas being assessed is your integrity. Therefore lying about an issue will just make the circumstances worse and more likely to incur a heavier penalty. The board will also be considering if this is an issue that is likely to reoccur or whether you will take on board the feedback given and learn from it.

# WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

## SU Advice

Here to support you through the highs and lows of University. We can give you free, confidential, independent and impartial advice on lots of issues including Fitness to Practise procedure.

Colchester:

Located on Sq 3, check online for opening times

[Essexstudent.com/advice](https://essexstudent.com/advice)

01206 863211 or [suadvice@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@essex.ac.uk)

Southend:

Located in the Lounge building (next to the Mezz), check online for opening times and to book an appointment

[Essexstudent.com/southend/advice](https://essexstudent.com/southend/advice)

[suacsou@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suacsou@essex.ac.uk)

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