

# STUDENT GUIDANCE NOTES

MBBS/MSc Physician Associate  
Students/Postgraduate Students

These guidance notes have been prepared for all students who are involved in any investigation whether this is initiated by the Case Management Group, Student Fitness to Practise Committee, Academic Cases Committee or a Complaints' Panel

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This guide serves to provide support for Students who have been referred to either the Case Management Group, Academic Cases Committee or Student Fitness to Practise Committee. It is intended to outline what will happen during what can be an extremely worrying and stressful time. The process is sometimes lengthy and the support/advice you need may change through the investigation. At any point if you are experiencing difficulties with the process or indeed this is having an impact on your academic and/or clinical work, please make sure that you contact someone for help and advice. The School and the Universities have an extensive network of support to help all students through difficult times.

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## HELP AND SUPPORT

Take advice from relevant sources, including:

- Hull York Medical School Student Support Team ([studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk))
- Student Life and Wellbeing Officer within the School
- Senior Advisors
- Personal Tutor
- The Student Union at both Hull and York Universities
- Your friendship network – it can sometimes help to share problems but please proceed carefully when sharing details with other students.
- Code of Practice on Student Fitness to Practise
- Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct
- Code of Practice on Investigation and Determination of Student Complaints
- Code of Practice on Fitness to Study

All Codes of Practice are available on the School's website

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# REFERRAL TO THE CASE MANAGEMENT GROUP (CMG)

The CMG is a core group of highly experienced staff responsible for considering all student cases brought to its attention by Phase Leads, Programme Directors, clinical placement staff, members of the public or the Student Support Team. There are many different reasons why a student case may have been escalated to the CMG – common reasons are related to academic issues, health and/or conduct, dishonest behaviour or professionalism.

In most cases, you will have been made aware that an Expression of Concern has been submitted about you. CMG has a number of options to take including: -

- Refer to Phase Lead or Programme Director
- Issue a CMG Caution
- Refer to Academic Cases Committee – for academic misconduct and fitness to study
- Refer to HYMS or University Support Teams
- Refer to Occupational Health
- Appoint an Investigating Officer to gather facts about the allegations
- Refer to the Student Fitness to Practise Committee
- Hold a formal meeting with the student to discuss the concern with representatives of the CMG

Once the CMG has considered the most appropriate course of action to deal with your case, you will receive a letter from the Chair or nominated Deputy. This letter will outline the allegations against you and identify what will happen next. The Student Support Team are copied into correspondence to students at this stage so they will be familiar with the allegations raised so know how best to support you.

If you are invited to a formal meeting to discuss the concern, the purpose of this is to gather facts about the case. This is your opportunity to convey your response to the allegations and give your account of events. It would be a good idea to take a supporter with you to the meeting and be as open and honest as possible to any questioning. Always try to be open and honest and if you feel part of the allegations are untrue – this is your chance to explain. The CMG is looking for students to understand why the School has taken the concern seriously and demonstrate evidence of insight or remediation where appropriate. The meeting is normally attended by the CMG Chair or a nominated Deputy and normally one other member plus the Secretary who will take notes. The meeting will be recorded for note taking purposes.

The CMG will decide if any further action is required following the meeting and you will get a letter with the outcome.

If you are referred for an investigation, full details will be shared with you in a letter which will outline reasons for the referral and any conditions placed upon the continuance of studies or supervised practice during the period of the investigation if these are needed.

Conducting yourself professionally during the investigation is important. Remember that there are standards of professionalism required throughout your chosen course of study and you will be expected to act accordingly. This means taking the matter seriously, cooperating with the investigation and responding in a timely manner to any communications.

It is important for you to familiarise yourself with the following documents which may be applicable to your investigation:-

- Code of Practice on Student Fitness to Practise
- Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct
- Conditions of Training document for MBBS/PA students – this is an extensive document which ensures that student conduct justifies patient trust in the professions.
- Code of Practice on Investigation and Determination of Student Complaints
- Code of Practice on Fitness to Study

These can be found at:-

<http://www.hyms.ac.uk/staff-and-students/regulations-policies-and-codes-of-practice>

It is also useful for Medical/PA students to be aware of the following GMC Guidance Documents:-

Professional behaviour and fitness to practise

Achieving good medical practice: guidance for medical students

### [Investigation Phase](#)

Having considered your case in some detail, CMG may decide that they need to gather more information before deciding if further action is necessary. If this is the situation then an Investigating Officer will be appointed to gather factual information relevant to the case and to present this in a chronological and evidenced report. They are responsible for ensuring that any concerns raised about you and/or by you, are investigated thoroughly, fairly and promptly. The Investigating Officer will have access to your full student record. It is

important that the Investigating Officer is not a current Tutor or Mentor. If you feel that the nominated Investigating Officer is not suitable, the School needs to be advised as soon as possible. It is important for any matter of concern to be investigated fully and the subsequent reports and letters can, where applicable, assist the provisional registration process with your professional body as you will be able to provide evidence that the Medical School fully explored the case. The Investigating Officer is there to gather the facts and will remain impartial throughout the process.

The Investigating Officer will meet with you and other relevant people to collate a wide range of evidence. You are encouraged to bring along a supporter to the meetings who can be a friend, fellow student, member of staff or Students' Union representative from the Universities of Hull or York. The School's Student Support Team have experience of guiding students through the process and can be a good first place for advice ([studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk)). Please do let the Investigating Officer know who will be supporting you before the meeting as a matter of courtesy. Try and choose your supporter carefully – a best friend may not always be the best suited for the occasion. During the process you may be asked personal and confidential questions, the responses for which you may not wish to share with a friend or peer. A note taker will also attend the meeting in order that the Investigating Officer can concentrate on the responses to questions without the need to take notes. The meeting will also be recorded but once the notes are typed and agreed, the recording is destroyed.

As this investigation is a University process, attendance of a legal representative is not permitted, although students may seek legal advice before and after any discussions which take place.

You will usually be offered support from a School's Senior Advisor or member from the Student Support Team as a matter of course during the process. The supporter would not take part in the investigation but would purely be present as support through the process. A student does not have any obligation to accept this support and can of course ask for support from another person. It can be helpful to gain support from someone familiar with the process. If at any time during the process you would like to take a break or stop the proceedings for any reason, please ask and this will always try to be accommodated

Notes will be taken of your discussions with the Investigating Officer and you will be asked to agree their content. Once the Investigating Officer has gathered all the relevant information, they will produce a report.

The CMG considers the Investigating Officer's report and may conclude that:-

- No further action is required

- Request further meetings/monitoring
- Issue a Caution – where a student’s behaviour departs significantly from the expected standards but does not reach the threshold for referral to fitness to practise.
- Refer to Academic Cases Committee.
- Refer to the Student Fitness to Practise Committee

You will receive a formal communication from the Case Management Group advising of the outcome of the investigation and further action proposed (if any). You will also receive a copy of the Investigating Officer’s report.

# REFERRAL TO THE STUDENT FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE

The referral process to the Case Management Group is designed to ensure that students have the opportunity to obtain support and guidance before a matter becomes a fitness to practise concern. However, in cases where a very serious concern is raised, the matter may be referred directly to the Student Fitness to Practise Committee who will take responsibility for the appropriate investigation and, if necessary, the setting up of a Panel Hearing. If there has been a serious event regarding a student which may have implications for safety of patients, staff or students, a Critical Incident may be imposed. This may involve a temporary suspension or limitation placed upon the continuation of studies. If you are the subject of a Critical Incident, the Code of Practice on Student Fitness to Practise advises of the action that can be taken.

The SFtP Committee is concerned with matters relating to conduct, behaviour, attitudes and values as well as issues relating to the health of students where these may impact on patient care. It is imperative that the School has in place a robust and consistent mechanism to ensure that all graduates applying for registration with a licence to practise are fit to practise and the safety of patients is of paramount importance.

A referral may go through the investigation process of the Case Management Group initially or, for more serious cases, may be referred directly to the SFtP Committee.

When a case is referred to the SFtP Committee without being part of the CMG process, it will firstly be considered by the Chair and/or Committee. The Committee will consider the referral to decide if an Investigation is required. The Investigation process will be conducted in the same way as for a CMG investigation.

When the Investigating Officer's report is received, the SFtP Committee may make the following recommendations:-

- No further action is required
- That remedial support or therapeutic action be implemented
- That additional monitoring, supervision, or appraisal is arranged
- Where there are concerns of a more serious nature, the Committee will decide that a Fitness to Practise Panel Hearing is required
- Issue of a Formal Warning

The Committee can issue a Formal Warning in the absence of a Hearing.

This is done in cases where the student has demonstrated an acceptable level of insight, engaged with any remediation and there are no identified patient safety issues. Before a Warning is issued, the student will meet with representatives of the Committee. Once again, you can bring a supporter along.

The purpose of this meeting is to:-

Confirm agreement of the key facts

Evaluation of insight and ability to reflect

Agree remediation and undertakings if these are recommended

Decide if a formal Warning should be recommended as an outcome to Board of Studies

At any point during this process, the Committee and student will still have the power to escalate to a panel hearing.

After the meeting, a copy of the report will be shared with you to check it is an accurate record. Please do try and respond as quickly to any email messages about the process as this will speed everything up.

Once the record is agreed, it is forwarded to Board of Studies for their consideration of the recommendations and you will receive a full outcome letter from them.

The Student Fitness to Practise Committee is not a court of law nor is it a Hearing of a professional body such as the General Medical Council. It is a School Committee set up to consider whether students are fit to practise and whether there are any special measures needed to support and guide students through their studies.

### [Panel Hearing](#)

At least 21 days in advance of the Hearing you will receive a letter and all of the paperwork for the Hearing. All attendees at the Hearing will receive the same paperwork – the panel has no additional information to the student. The letter outlining the details of the Hearing will contain some important information about deadlines for evidence and notification of a supporter so ensure you read it and respond as appropriate. It is a good idea to acknowledge receipt of the papers to demonstrate your engagement with the process.

You are encouraged to bring a supporter with you to the Hearing. This can be a friend, fellow student, students' Union representative or member of staff of Hull York Medical School. You should advise the Hearing secretary of your supporter's identity at least seven days prior to the Hearing. Legal support is not permitted.

Arrive in good time for the Hearing; this will help you to approach the meeting calmly and to give a good account of yourself and to demonstrate appropriate professional behaviour.

It is impossible to predict how long a Panel Hearing will last: make sure you are available for as long as needed.

If the hearing is to be held in person (rather than virtually) an anteroom will be available for you and your supporter. Make sure you bring the Hearing Papers with you, and you are familiar with their content and have read them thoroughly. You may also find it useful to prepare some notes to ensure you say everything you need to.

Remember that the Panel is neutral, its members will make their decision based on the documentation provided to them and what they are told by you and the Investigating Officer. It is usual for a Panel to consist of a Chair and two other members and should always have at least one member who is a registrant of the GMC.

The reasons for the Hearing will be discussed. The Investigating Officer will then usually present a summary of their report. Both you and the Panel will then be given the opportunity to ask for any clarification. If there is anything you feel is unclear or inaccurate, now is the time to raise it. The Investigating Officer does not discuss the case with members of the Panel except in the Hearing when you are present.

The Panel members will then have the opportunity to ask you questions. It is really important that the Panel hears directly from you. Your supporter will not respond to questions for you but can remind you and prompt if needed.

Once all the questions have been asked and answered, you will be given the opportunity to further clarify any points that may have arisen during the Hearing so far. This is your chance to make sure that you have given the Panel all the information you think is pertinent to the case. Your supporter will also be given the opportunity to add comments.

It is understandable that you may find the Hearing stressful. If things are getting difficult and you would benefit from a break, just ask the Chair of the Panel who will happily accommodate this. If you need time to compose yourself, this is absolutely fine.

Honesty is a key consideration for the Panel and at the heart of good professional practice. It is imperative that you are always open and honest during the process.

Once all questions and statements have been concluded, you, your supporter and the Investigating Officer will be asked to withdraw while the panel comes to a decision.

You will not find out the outcome on the day of the hearing. A report will be prepared of the part of the hearing when you were present and this will be shared with you for checking. Once agreed, the report and the recommendations are then forwarded to Board of Studies for their consideration, and you will receive an outcome letter and a copy of the full report. This usually would occur within 10 working days of the hearing.

The Panel has to make a decision having considered all of the evidence presented and the discussion held at the hearing and they will make a decision based on the balance of probabilities.

It is important to remember that a student needs to be in Good Standing with the Committee in order to progress to the next academic year or graduate.

The Student Fitness to Practise Panel may, following consideration of the case, and in the interest of safeguarding patient safety in the short and long term, recommend to the Hull York Medical School Board of Studies the outcomes outlined in the Code of Practice on Student Fitness to Practise.

If a student breaches any aspect of the outcome and/or recommendations of the Panel Hearing, the case will be referred back to the Student Fitness to Practise Committee.

It can be stressful to attending a Hearing and then have a negative outcome. It is important to think about what you will do in the light of difficult news. It can be helpful to have told someone else about your Hearing, even if they are not your supporter on the day. Your supporter will be given time in a private space with you immediately after the Hearing but you can always contact support at a later date. Try to think about who you can talk to afterwards and how you plan to get home. Remember that the School's Student Support Team will continue to be available to you in the days that follow, whatever the outcome.

# REFERRAL TO THE ACADEMIC CASES COMMITTEE (ACC)

The Case Management Group may receive an Expression of Concern relating to a student's ability to engage appropriately with the programme or an allegation of academic misconduct. In such cases, an option available to the CMG is referral to the Academic Cases Committee.

The ACC exists to hear cases of students of the School relating to fitness to study and allegations of academic misconduct.

The Fitness to Study process ensures that any individual is able to participate fully and satisfactorily as a student on a HYMS programme or module in relation to academic studies and more broadly in the life of the School community.

All forms of academic misconduct are dealt with by the ACC including but not limited to, plagiarism, self plagiarism, collusion between students taking assessments and cheating.

If a student is referred for an investigation, the process is exactly the same as described for CMG and FTP.

Reference:-

Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct

Code of Practice on Fitness to Study

## (a) Academic Misconduct Cases

The School needs to make sure they have high standards of academic practice amongst its students and to safeguard the standards of academic awards.

Following an examination or assessment, a marker may raise a concern about plagiarism. There are different forms of academic misconduct which are set out of the Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct so if you receive a letter to say a Concern has been raised, it is important to familiarise yourself with this Code of Practice.

The action taken by the ACC depends on the type of misconduct, if a student has previously had any referral for academic misconduct in the past, the student's year of study and the type of assessment. Minor cases are often just escalated to the Phase Lead or Programme Director – in some cases this can be linked to a downgrade in mark if appropriate. This route is only available for non-severe misconduct.

Depending on the severity of misconduct, the ACC can conduct a few different methods of investigation, including a paper-based investigation where all parties are invited to submit statements or a more formal process involving interviews conducted by an Investigating Officer and, potentially, a panel hearing.

The outcomes from an Academic Misconduct process are outlined in the Code of Practice and so are not duplicated here. The outcome will always be communicated to you in letter, but the Chair may also request a meeting in order to explain the outcome face to face.

Please be aware, if you are a MB BS or PA student, the ACC also has the power to make a referral to the Student Fitness to Practise Committee.

### Panel Hearing

Understandably referral to a Panel Hearing may be stressful so please do ensure you have the support around you to help.

At least 21 days in advance of the Hearing, you will receive a letter and all of the paperwork for the Hearing. All attendees at the Hearing will receive the same paperwork. The Panel has no additional information to the student. The letter outline the details of the Hearing will contain some important information about deadlines for evidence and notification of a supporter so ensure you read it all though and respond as appropriate. Please do acknowledge receipt of the information.

You are encouraged to bring a supporter with you to the Hearing. This can be a friend, fellow student, students' union representative or HYMS staff member. The School's Student Support Team have great experience guiding students through this process so will make an excellent starting point for advice ([studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk)).

Arrive in good time for the Hearing, this will help you to approach the meeting calmly and to give a good account of yourself and to demonstrate professional behaviour.

It is impossible to predict how long a Hearing will last, make sure you are available for as long as needed.

If the Hearing is held face to face, an anteroom can be made available for you and your supporter. Make sure you have all the Hearing papers to hand; you are familiar with their content and have read them thoroughly. You may also find it useful to prepare some notes and have a pen or pencil handy. You need to ensure you say everything you need to and this will be a good way to check.

Remember the Panel is neutral, members will make their decision based on the documentation provided to them and what they are told by you and the Investigating Officer. It is usual for a Panel to consist of a Chair and two other members.

The reasons for the Hearing will be discussed. The Investigating Officer will then usually present a summary of their report. Both you and the Panel will then be given the opportunity to ask for any clarification. If there is anything you feel is unclear or inaccurate, now is the time to raise it. The Investigating Officer does not discuss the case with members of the Panel except in the Hearing when you are present.

The Panel members will then have the opportunity to ask you questions. It is really important that the Panel hears directly from you. Your supporter will not respond to questions for you but can remind you and prompt if needed.

Once all the questions have been asked and answered, you will be given the opportunity to further clarify any points that may have arisen during the Hearing so far. This is your chance to make sure that you have given the Panel all the information you think is pertinent to the case. Your supporter will also be given the opportunity to add comments.

It is understandable that you may find the Hearing stressful. If things are getting difficult and you would benefit from a break, just ask the Chair of the Panel who will happily accommodate this. If you need time to compose yourself, this is absolutely fine.

Honesty is a key consideration for the Panel and at the heart of good academic and professional practice. It is imperative that you are open and honest at all times during the process.

Once all questions and statements have been concluded, you, your supporter and the Investigating Officer will be asked to withdraw while the panel comes to a decision.

You will not find out the outcome on the day of the hearing. A report will be prepared of the part of the hearing where you were present and this will be shared with you for checking. Once agreed, the report and the recommendations are then forwarded to Board of Studies for their consideration and you will receive an outcome letter and a copy of the full report.

The Panel has to make a decision having considered all of the evidence presented and the discussion held at the hearing and they will make a decision based on the balance of probabilities

Reference:-

**[Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct](#)**

(b) Fitness to Study

It is emphasised that in the majority of cases, this process should be seen as supportive for students. The medical school has a duty of care towards its students and the Fitness to Study process exists to assist the school in determining what processes or adjustments need to be put in place to give a student the best possible chance of successfully completing their degree.

Sometimes a formal process may seem intimidating but the prime aim of this Fitness to Study process is to help!

You will have been made aware that a concern has been raised and that it has been referred to the Academic Cases Committee for their consideration. This is normally related to health and/or engagement issues. You should always ensure if you have a health condition that may affect your study that the school is made aware as that is the best way you can be signposted for the most appropriate support.

It is most probable that you will have to attend a meeting with an Investigating Officer as part of the process which is similar as outlined previously for CMG and FtP cases.

The outcomes from each stage of the process are as outlined in the Code of Practice on Fitness to Study and so are not duplicated here.

It is sometimes a good idea when you are experiencing difficulties with health or engagement, to consider a Leave of Absence and this can be discussed with the Student Support Team, Phase Lead or Programme Director

If you are referred to the Fitness to Study process and then take a Leave of Absence, the process will be suspended and then a period of monitoring will be initiated when you return to studies. This is your opportunity to demonstrate that things have improved. If the ACC still has concerns about your ability to undertake your studies at this point, the Fitness to Study process will be resumed.

If referred to a panel hearing, the process is the same as described above for Academic Misconduct.

It can be stressful to attending a Hearing and then have a negative outcome. It is important to think about what you will do in the light of difficult news. It can be helpful to have told someone else about your Hearing, even if they are not your supporter on the day. Your supporter will be given time in a private space with you immediately after the Hearing but you can always contact Student Support later. Try to think about who you can talk to afterwards and how you plan to get home. Remember that the School's Student Support Team will continue to be available to you in the days that follow, whatever the outcome.

Reference:-

**Code of Practice on Fitness to Study**

## **APPEAL PROCESS FOLLOWING HEARINGS**

When you receive the formal outcome letter from the Board of Studies this will include details of your right to appeal.

Details on how to make an appeal can be found at:-

<https://www.hyms.ac.uk/staff-and-students/regulations-policies-and-codes-of-practice>

# DECLARATIONS TO PROFESSIONAL BODIES

## FOLLOWING A FITNESS TO PRACTISE

### INVESTIGATION/HEARING

You should be aware that unprofessional behaviour during your programme of study or serious health issues that affect fitness to practise, may result in a professional body refusing to grant provisional registration with a licence to practise. This is the case even if the circumstances in question occurred before or early in the medical school

In January of each year the School is required to make a declaration to the General Medical Council of all MBBS students who are due to graduate in July of that academic year who have been the subject of Fitness to Practise investigations.

It is also necessary for all MBBS students to advise the GMC when applying for provisional registration that an Investigation/Hearing has taken place. It is important to be open and transparent with the GMC as they will require additional information about your case. It is imperative that you prepare for provisional GMC registration at an early stage. Examples of the information required by the GMC is listed below:-

All documentation associated with a Hearing (Good Practice to keep a folder with all correspondence so it is easy to locate when required).

References from members of staff at the Medical School who are aware of your case and can comment on your professionalism within the programme – make good use of Tutors and Mentors to ensure you are all prepared to provide this information.

The GMC usually contacts students who have an FTP history in March/April prior to graduation so it is important to be prepared.

Your attendance at Student Fitness to Practise may also be mentioned by members of staff in references and the STEP Form to your accepting Foundation School for MBBS students.

If an MBBS student is excluded from the course, their details will be added to the Excluded Student Database which is held by Medical Schools Council.

It has recently been announced that the General Medical Council will become the professional regulatory body for Physician Associates, although no date has yet been identified for this to begin. All students are encouraged to be open and transparent with employers with regard to fitness to practise proceedings.

It is not currently a requirements for students to declare a Case Management Group investigation or Caution.

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **Am I suspended whilst waiting for the Hearing?**

If this is the case, you will already have been told this by the School through a formal letter. If there are any restrictions on what you can do, you will also have already been informed.

## **Can I continue on the programme after the Hearing?**

This will be a decision for the Panel and Board of Studies. The Panel will consider a range of sanctions and will only discontinue studies where milder penalties are considered to be inadequate or inappropriate.

## **Will Tutors, Supervisors, Mentors or Teachers be informed of my referral to the SFtP process?**

Some key members of staff may have to be advised but this is kept to a minimum. It may be appropriate for you to advise your Tutor in order that they can understand why you may be stressed during the process.

If you are unclear about anything during the process, it is important to ask. There will always be support and guidance for students through this process. You will find the process easier if you do get support. In producing these Guidance Notes, we have had assistance from students who have been through an investigation process. Any suggestions for improvement would be appreciated.

The General Medical Council has produced the following documents which may be useful:-

**Achieving good medical practice. Professional behaviour and fitness to practise**

## **WHERE TO FIND HELP AND SUPPORT**

We know that an investigation or hearing can be very stressful – see below some useful signposts for help

**[studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@hyms.ac.uk)**

Samaritans 116 123

MindInfoLine 0300 123 3393

Call 999 if you are, or the person you are concerned about is in immediate danger of hurting themselves or someone else

Local NHS Mental Health Response Unit:

York 0800 05116171

Hull 01482 301701

Open Door Team - <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/help/open-door/>

### **Hull York Medical School**

#### **Hull**

University of Hull  
Hull, HU6 7RX

#### **York**

University of York  
York, YO10 5DD

[www.hyms.ac.uk](http://www.hyms.ac.uk)