

ITE Student Guide to Fitness to Practise

1. What is Fitness to Practise?

Settings, parents and pupils must be able to trust and respect their teachers. Society rightly expects teachers to behave professionally and have both the physical and mental fitness to teach without putting children and young people at risk. Entrants to the teaching profession are expected to have high standards of ethics and to work within the frameworks set out in the DfE Teachers' Standards (2021) [here](#).

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers are expected to ensure that all student teachers are 'suitable' to become teachers in accordance with the requirements set out by the Secretary of State for Education [Section C1.3](#).

The Statutory 'Fitness to Teach' requirements are assessed before entry to, and during, a programme of ITE which includes:

- a) Before entry to an ITE programme through:
 - A face-to-face or online interview conducted by IOE and partner school staff
 - Two written references submitted by the applicant
 - An assessment of 'Health and physical capacity' to Teach using the agreed standards for the profession [here](#) conducted by UCL Workplace Health
 - Obtaining an enhanced Child Workforce Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check
 - Childcare disqualification check (Primary and Early Years trainees only)
- b) During and at the end of an ITE programme through:
 - Health and physical capacity assessment using agreed standards for the profession [here](#) if concerns are raised by student teachers, school partners or IOE staff.
 - Assessment against Teachers' Standard 8 and part 2 of the Teachers' Standards

2. IOE's Fitness to Practise Policy for students on ITE programmes

IOE has a policy which governs the Fitness to Practise process [here](#) which is overseen by IOE's Quality Team. The policy aims to:

- Protect and safeguard the public, individuals, students and pupils
- Ensure students are appropriately prepared for entry to the profession, including developing professional attitudes and clearly demonstrable and understood professional behaviour
- Adhere to the standards set out by relevant regulatory bodies
- Identify students who are unfit to practise
- Protect UCL against significant risk during the student's professional training

3. When might a referral to the Fitness to Practise process be made?

A Fitness to Practise concern relating to a wide range of behaviours can be raised, including, but not limited to:

- Criminal conviction, caution, reprimand or equivalent
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Aggressive, violent, or threatening behaviour
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour
- Academic misconduct
- Dishonesty or fraud (whether or not linked to the professional role)
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitudes
- Health concerns and lack of insight or management of these concerns

Concerns can be raised by IOE staff and partner schools, and this is done by completing a Fitness to Practise referral form which is submitted to the Head of ITE and IOE Quality. The student's tutor and Programme Leader are informed that a referral has been made and receive a copy of the referral form.

In cases where there are serious concerns, the Head of ITE may recommend that the student is suspended from attending UCL sessions with immediate effect. The Head of ITE, in discussion with the Programme Leader, may also decide to suspend or terminate the placement.

4. How will I know if I am referred to the Fitness to Practise process?

You will receive formal notification from the Secretary to the Fitness to Practise panel via your UCL email. You will also receive informal communication or guidance from your Tutor, Subject Leader or Programme Leader to explain the FTP process.

5. Who is told if I am referred to the Fitness to Practise process?

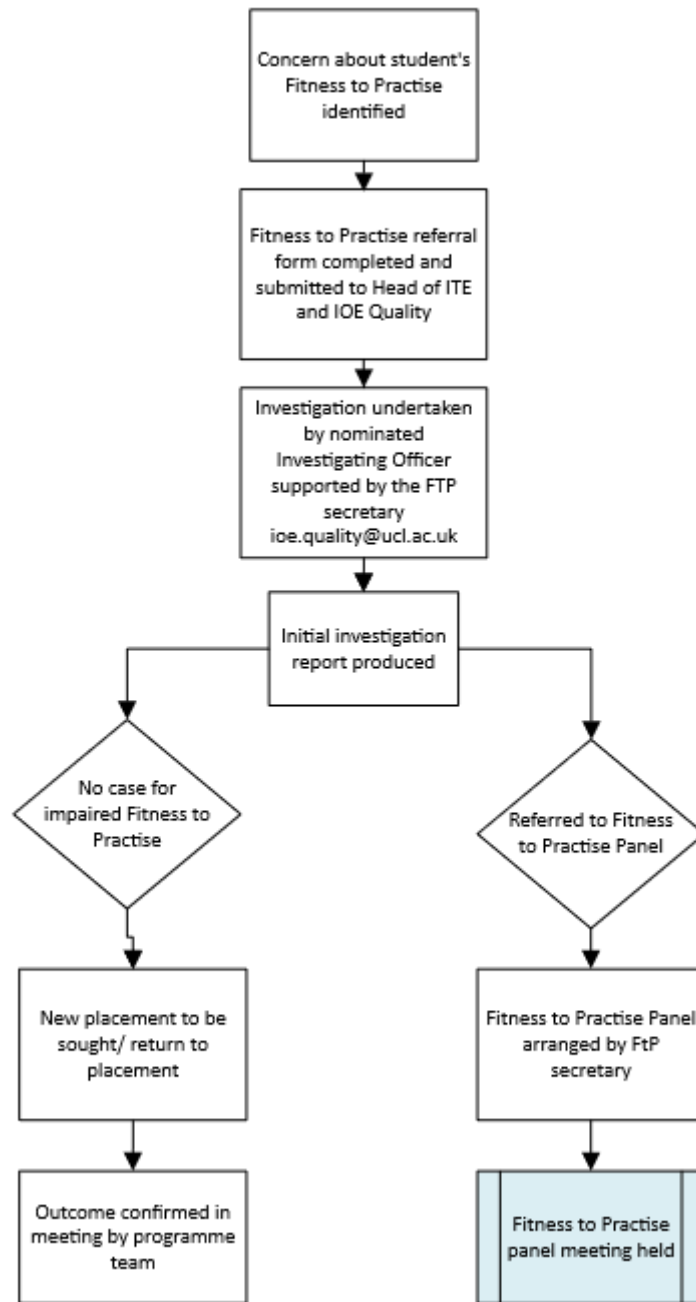
Confidentiality will be maintained, and the referral will only be communicated to IOE staff who need to know. In addition to the Head of ITE and the Programme Leader, this is likely to be your tutor and subject leader, programme administrator and placements administrator.

Your setting may be informed if you are on placement and the concerns relate to this element of your programme.

Information will be shared with the setting if concerns constitute a safeguarding risk or your place on the programme is suspended.

6. What happens during the Fitness to Practise process?

Please refer to the Fitness to Practise policy section 7.7 to 7.82 with the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Regulations, Policies and Procedure. If you have any questions about the process, please contact the Secretary to the Fitness to Practise panel. An overview of the process is provided below.



The panel hearing.

A panel hearing is a formal University process but is not intended to be intimidating. The purpose is for the panel to have a good understanding of the events that led up to the Fitness to Practise referral form being submitted and any mitigating factors to be considered. It is an opportunity for evidence to be presented and discussed and for questions to be asked so that the panel makes an informed decision about your fitness to practise.

The panel may be face to face or online and will be conducted as follows:

- i. Initial discussion

The panel members meet, without you, to ensure that all panel members understand the regulations and their role on the panel.

- ii. **Student joins the meeting.**
You and your companion (if attending) join the meeting. All members of the panel introduce themselves and the chair will run through the order of events and ensure that any reasonable adjustments required are in place. The secretary may record the meeting solely for the purpose of accurate note taking. Any such recordings are destroyed once the notes have been approved.
- iii. **Initial Investigation report**
The Investigating Officer will present the key findings of initial investigation to the panel. Core panel members will have seen the full report in advance of the hearing.
- iv. **Student's response**
You present a response to the Fitness to Practise referral form and the initial investigation report. This is done verbally but you are welcome to bring notes to support you with this.
- v. **Questions and Answers**
There is then an opportunity for members of the panel to ask you questions, and the investigating officer to clarify their understanding of events.
- vi. **Final comments**
An opportunity for you and the investigating officer to make any final comments.
- vii. **Panel deliberations**
At this point you and the investigating officer withdraw, and the panel deliberates on the outcome of the hearing.

Possible outcomes of a panel hearing

There are four possible outcomes of a Fitness to Practise hearing, as follows:

- a. **The student is fit to practise.**
You will be permitted to remain on the programme as usual and the case is closed.
- b. **The student is fit to practise.**
You will be permitted to remain on the programme subject to conditions set out by the panel. The conditions will be designed to support you to be successful and might include one or more of the following:
 - A support plan to be agreed with the tutor and subject leader
 - Additional training
 - Engaging with online learning
 - Additional reading
 - Other activities or conditions set out by the panel
- c. **The student is not fit to practise.**
You will be asked to suspend your studies for a set period of time. Once this suspension of studies is complete the panel will re-convene and consider whether you may be re-

admitted to the programme or your registration at UCL should be terminated. If registration is terminated, you will leave the ITE programme.

d. The student is not fit to practise.

The panel will recommend to the appropriate Board of examiners that your registration at UCL should be terminated, and you will leave the ITE programme.

7. What happens after a panel hearing?

Following the panel hearing you will be invited to a meeting with the Chair of the Panel and your Programme Leader. Subject Leaders may join this meeting for secondary PGCE students. The purpose of the meeting is for the Chair of the Panel to share the Panel's decision and to discuss any specific support or conditions. You will then be sent a letter stating the outcome and the rationale for the decision made by the panel. You will also be sent a copy of the notes taken by the secretary. The IOE will endeavour to communicate with you as quickly as possible, normally within 10 working days of the meeting.

The process, from raising a concern to the outcome, should normally be completed within 8 working weeks,

8. Who is told about the panel hearing outcome?

The outcome of the panel will only be communicated to IOE and partner school's staff who were informed that a referral had been made. If you are deemed not fit to practise, the decision may be noted in any reference provided for you by IOE. If your registration at UCL is terminated the findings and outcome may be communicated to relevant regulatory bodies, such as The Disclosure and Barring Service.

9. Can I appeal the panel outcome?

Yes, you can request a review of your case by submitting a complaint to the Student Casework Team using the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) (Section 10).

10. What goes on my student record?

A copy of the findings, decision and conditions will be placed on your record on Portico as a module minute in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

11. Where can I go for support?

Your tutor will continue to provide support during a fitness to practise process. You can also seek impartial advice and guidance from [Students' Union UCL Support Service](#). Information on a comprehensive range of health and wellbeing support services is accessible at the following link: [Student Support and Wellbeing](#).

12. What if I have other questions that are not answered in this guide?

You may ask your tutor, the Secretary to the Fitness to Practise panel or members of your programme team for further advice.

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