



Procedure for Fitness to Practice Temporary Suspension

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1. Purpose

This procedure supports Atlantic Technological University's (ATU's) *AQAE016 Student Fitness to Practice Policy*, which outlines the principles and overarching processes that must be followed to ensure that students will be able to demonstrate the requisite levels of competency, professionalism and ethics required to work in their chosen fields.

The policy recognises that emergency situations may arise where there serious and immediate concerns over a student's fitness to practice which result in the placement/workplace supervisor, in collaboration with their manager, suspending a student. This procedure describes the process that must be followed in such situations.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to placement/work placement supervisors and managers and academic staff involved in the co-ordination and academic supervision (placement/work practice) of students registered on programmes that are subject to *AQAE016 Student Fitness to Practice Policy*.

It applies only in emergency situations requiring immediate suspension of students from their placement.

3. Reference Documents

None

4. Procedure

4.1 Procedure for the Temporary Suspension of a student due to Fitness to Practice Concerns

In cases where there is an immediate and serious Fitness to Practice concern that requires temporary suspension from a placement to protect the best interests of the public, the student, or others involved, the following shall apply:

1. Justification for Suspension

The placement/work practice supervisor (after seeking appropriate advice, if necessary, in line with any organisational policy or process that may apply) may suspend a student temporarily if they determine that suspension is necessary to protect service users, the

student, the general public or the welfare of animals. This decision should be based on a duty of care and take into account the specific circumstances of the situation.

2. Immediate Suspension

A suspension may initially be verbal and may take effect as soon as the placement/work practice supervisor deems necessary. The suspension should be confirmed to the student in writing as soon as possible.

3. Notification of Suspension

The placement/work practice supervisor must notify the Head of Department and the academic staff member co-ordinating the placement (e.g. academic supervisor/module co-ordinator) in writing as soon as possible of the imposition of the suspension.

The Head of Department will notify the Head of School/Faculty and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar.

4. Scope of Suspension

The suspension may be limited to specific premises, placements, activities, or modules of study, depending on the circumstances.

5. Duration of Suspension

The suspension should last no longer than necessary and should be lifted or modified as soon as it is deemed safe and appropriate to do so.

6. Academic Support

Every reasonable effort should be made to continue to support the student's academic studies, ensuring that, as far as possible, the student is not academically disadvantaged due to the suspension.

7. Referral to Fitness to Practice (FtP) Committee

Suspension should not be regarded as an indication that the grounds for concern are proven. It is a precautionary measure to protect all parties involved.

The FtP Committee for the programme must be convened to review the case as soon as possible and in accordance with *AQAE052 Procedure for Fitness to Practice Committee*.

4.2 Record Retention and Record Sharing

All documents and records related to the Fitness to Practice (FtP) process, including referral reports, investigation findings, minutes of meetings, recommendations and decisions of committees, will be securely stored within the faculty for a period of 7 years following the conclusion of the case.

If the student appeals the decision, all related records will be retained until the appeal process is fully completed, plus the specified retention period thereafter. During an appeal, relevant records will be made available to the Student Fitness to Practice Appeals Committee for review, ensuring that they have access to all necessary documentation from the original FtP process.

4.2.1 Storage

Records will be stored in a secure, access-controlled system in compliance with the university's data protection policies / procedures, and applicable laws and regulations (GDPR). Digital and physical records will be safeguarded against unauthorised access, alteration, or destruction.

4.2.2 Destruction

At the end of the retention period, records will be permanently deleted / securely destroyed, in line with the university's policy for data disposal.

4.2.3 Confidentiality

All records related to the FtP process are treated as strictly confidential. They will only be shared with individuals or bodies who have a legitimate need to access them, such as, members of the FtP Committee involved in the case, the Head of School/Faculty, programme or module coordinator(s), staff involved in implementing any recommendations, relevant university bodies (e.g. Registrar, legal advisers, appeals committee), and external professional accreditation bodies, where legally required.

4.2.4 Student Access

The student has the right to access the records pertaining to their case, in accordance with the university's policy on data access requests.

4.2.5 External Requests

Records will only be shared with external parties (e.g., employers, regulatory bodies) when:

- the student has provided explicit written consent,
- there is a legal obligation or a court order requiring the university to disclose the records, or
- the university deems it necessary to inform external professional bodies about an impaired fitness to practice issue, in which case the student will be notified prior to sharing the information.

5. Documents Related to this Procedure

AQAE016 Fitness to Practice Policy

AQAE052 Procedure for Fitness to Practice Committee

AQAE053 Procedure for Fitness to Practice Committee

6. Measurement of Effectiveness of this Procedure

This procedure will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required, through an analysis of all data related to the *AQAE016 Student Fitness to Practice Policy*, retained by the Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar. The analysis will involve an examination of key trends including numbers of cases, types of concerns, outcomes, and other data as required to assess the both the operation and outcomes of the process. Any recommendations for improvements based on the analysis will be considered.

7. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	Approved by Academic Standards and Policy Committee of Academic Council	17 Oct 2024