



Fitness to Practise Policy

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Fitness to Practise Policy

Introduction

1. Fitness to practise refers to the ability to meet professional standards; Spurgeon's College (the College) recognises that in conferring certain academic awards leading to a professional qualification, it has a duty to ensure the fitness of students for practise and registration with the relevant Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB).
2. Students on the programmes listed in Appendix 1 are required to comply with PSRB standards and codes of conduct and may be subject to investigation under the College's Fitness to Practise Policy if matters related to their character, professional competence, conduct and/or health are identified and found to be of significant concern in relation to relevant PSRB standards and codes.
3. This Policy does not apply to students who are studying towards an award of the College that is delivered by a partner's institution, except where it is expressly stated in the institution's regulations that this policy is applicable.
4. The safety of the student, as well as those around them in the College and their professional practice environment, is fundamental to the way in which this policy is implemented.
5. The College needs to ensure that students are not awarded a qualification that permits them to practise a statutorily or otherwise regulated profession if they are not fit to do so.

Scope

6. This policy applies to students registered on relevant programmes. Fitness to practise concerns for applicants or offer holders will be addressed by the relevant admissions criteria and processes, and professional standards of practise.
7. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a list of relevant programmes covered by this policy. This policy relates to all students on those programmes.
8. This policy should be read in conjunction with specific Fitness to Practise Guidance for individual programmes¹.

¹ Contained within the Programme Handbooks or Student Handbooks.

Principles

9. It is expected that most concerns will start at Stage 1. However, a cause for concern can be referred straight to Stage 2. The procedure can also be stopped at any stage if concerns are not felt to warrant further action.
10. It is recognised that supporting students where there is a concern, can be difficult to manage and the level of risk hard to determine. Staff can seek advice from the Academic Director or Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC).
11. Concerns should be acted upon promptly and should be supported by written evidence.
12. Staff should consult with the Learning Enhancement Department and take account of a student's Learning Enhancement Plan (if relevant) when considering any actions under this policy. They should also consult with the Special Cases Committee and take account of any mitigating circumstances.
13. Where a student has a recognised disability, the College Disability Officer(s) will be asked to give advice as to any reasonable adjustments required throughout the process. The student is asked to inform the College as soon as possible of these requirements so that suitable facilities can be made available.
14. Students should be encouraged to seek appropriate support from relevant external sources as well as from sources internal to the College.
15. It is important that notes are kept of all the steps taken so that the College has a written record of the actions it took to fulfil its duty of care to the student. These notes should be kept confidential to those involved in the processes outlined in this policy or who need to know this information for professional or regulatory reasons.
16. Students may be accompanied to meetings by a friend, family member, fellow student or student representative. Legal representatives or advocates are not permitted. The companion is invited to support the student during the process, not to advocate on their behalf.
17. Any role or office mentioned in this procedure is to be read as including reference to any suitably appointed nominee.
18. This policy follows the principles of natural justice and sets out a process where a student will receive a fair, accessible and unbiased hearing before any decision is made that will affect them and their potential progression on their programme.
19. Students will be assisted to understand any allegations and/or concerns, how they relate to the relevant PSRB standards and the student's fitness to practise.
20. The Fitness to Practise process aims to be supportive to the student, even when the student's progression on the programme is affected.

21. The investigation, any hearing, and any appeal will be carried out as quickly as possible, consistent with fairness.
22. Reasons will be given for decisions reached about the student's professional competence, health or behaviour, and courses of action resulting from decisions made, will be proportionate.
23. In a Fitness to Practise case the burden of proof will be on the College to establish the facts of the case based on evidence. The standard of proof will normally be 'the balance of probabilities', that is, it is more likely than not that something happened based on supporting evidence. The person (whether the College or the student) raising a concern in relation to Fitness to Practise or stating a particular fact is responsible for proving it. There is no need to prove facts that have been admitted or proven by the existence of a relevant criminal conviction or substantiated case heard under the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy.

Relevance of other policies and procedures to Fitness to Practise

24. Fitness to Practise is separate from and additional to Fitness to Study and allegations of academic or other misconduct. A student is not exempt from other regulations or policies simply because they have been subject to Fitness to Study or misconduct proceedings arising out of the same set of facts or circumstances.
25. A disciplinary matter might lead to Fitness to Practise proceedings if the behaviour that led to a substantiated report and sanction calls into question a student's Fitness to Practise.
26. A student on a PSRB programme of study facing a formal disciplinary process of a Fitness to Practise nature may be dealt with solely by Fitness to Practise, rather than any other disciplinary policy, to prevent the student from undergoing multiple hearings. Depending on the nature of the concerns, the Fitness to Practise policy may rely on the findings of a student disciplinary investigation to establish the facts of the matter.

Fitness to Practise Concerns

27. Each PSRB has specific codes of conduct and standards that students are expected to adhere to but, in general terms, examples of issues that may lead to fitness to practise concerns may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Academic misconduct (for example plagiarism, cheating, falsification).
 - b. Other breaches of student conduct and discipline (for example antisocial, abusive, or threatening behaviour, sexual misconduct, violence, bullying or harassment, damage to property, internet access abuse, substance/ alcohol abuse).
 - c. Health and safety breaches.
 - d. Failure to disclose convictions or other information that the student is required to disclose.
 - e. Inaccurate or falsified practice placement documentation.
 - f. Unsafe practice, incompetence or requiring too much supervision.

- g. Repeated and/or serious unprofessional behaviour and/or breaches of the relevant PSRB code of conduct, including but not limited to:
 - Lack of respect, aggressive or poor attitude, laziness.
 - Indiscipline, failure to follow dress code, inappropriate use of mobile phone, poor time keeping, poor attendance.
 - Failure to self-reflect, lack of insight.
 - Failure to engage with investigations into unprofessional behaviour.
 - Poor self-management, lack of personal accountability.
 - Dishonesty.
 - Breaking confidentiality of privileged information gained in the professional placement setting.
 - h. Behaviour away from the student's studies, including:
 - Criminal conviction e.g., violent offence, offence of dishonesty.
 - Disruptive behaviour in the community.
 - Inappropriate use of social media.
 - i. Safeguarding concerns of any kind.
 - j. Mental or physical health or serious physical impairment that interferes with the student's ability to practise safely.
 - k. Failure to seek help or engage with appropriate services in relation to health issues.
 - l. Concerns regarding a student's competency to meet the communication skills required by the relevant PSRB standards.
28. In accordance with good practice, relevant programmes will include Fitness to Practise issues and competency requirements and for this to be addressed through assessment and feedback.
29. It is the College's responsibility to support students to meet the Fitness to Practise standards that apply at each level of study, with the understanding that they may not meet all standards to a professional level initially but can improve. Certain serious issues, such as some criminal convictions or serious or repeated misconduct, may mean that a student will not meet the PSRB fitness to practise requirements whatever their level of study.

Raising Fitness to Practise Concerns

- 30. The Fitness to Practise Policy may be invoked at any time during a student's programme of study.
- 31. Any person who has concerns about a student's Fitness to Practise may refer the matter for investigation including, but not limited to, the student, a relative, friend, colleague, fellow student, College staff, placement provider, PRSB, member of the public or medical professional.
- 32. The outcome of other College proceedings, including criminal convictions, academic misconduct, non-academic misconduct, or fitness to study may also be used to trigger appropriate action under this policy.
- 33. Fitness to Practise concerns should be made in writing to the Fitness to

Practise Officer² for the programme, who will then initiate the process at the relevant stage. Matters may be reported verbally but a written report should follow as soon as practicable.

34. Anonymous concerns will not normally be dealt with under this procedure. Exceptionally, an anonymous concern may be considered if the College deems that there is a serious and compelling case supported by evidence. In such cases, the scope of the investigation and the action the College can take, may be limited.
35. Where concerns are raised by or on behalf of a placement provider, the placement provider may need to ensure that they protect confidentiality, particularly where there are children or vulnerable adults involved. In these cases, the Fitness to Practise Officer will obtain as much information and evidence from the practice placement provider as possible, which may include a summary of allegations made by service users, or anonymised witness statements. The student concerned will be provided with enough information about the concerns to be able to respond.
36. Where the College has been informed by a PRSB that a student is not fit to practise, and the PRSB requires the removal of the student from the relevant programme or pathway, the College will comply with the request.³ The College may transfer the student to a non-professionally accredited programme if such an alternative is available and the student meets the relevant criteria.

Stage 1 – Cause for concern

37. Cause for Concern is a preliminary stage of the Fitness to Practise Policy. It is usually used to address lower-level concerns that do not require immediate or specialist support. It is intended to be a relatively informal meeting for staff to raise the identified issues of concern with the student, to try and identify the cause of those concerns and, if appropriate, to agree an action plan to support the student towards meeting the relevant fitness to practise requirements.
38. On receipt of an allegation relating to concern about a student's fitness to practise, the Fitness to Practise Officer will appoint an Investigating Officer, who will be a member of academic staff, preferably in the student's programme area, unconnected with the allegation⁴.
39. The Investigating Officer should contact the student in writing to request a meeting. This meeting should be held as soon as possible, and the student should usually be given 5 working days' notice. The letter should make clear to the student why the meeting is taking place, the general nature of the concern, and that the intention is to supportively explore and, if warranted, address the concern. The student should also be advised where they can access a copy of the Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure and that the concerns are being addressed under Stage 1 of the process. The student should be advised who

² This is usually the Head of Placements (for theology programmes) or the relevant Programme Director.

³ Any refund of tuition fees will be made in accordance with the Tuition Fees Policy.

⁴ Not the student's Pastoral Tutor, if they have one.

will be at the meeting.

40. One other member of staff should attend the meeting, either the Chaplain, Learning Enhancement Officer, Disability Officer, minute taker, or other nominee as appropriate.
41. Prior to the meeting the Investigating Officer will communicate with any other relevant parties, to assess whether the student's Fitness to Practise may be in question or whether the concern is about less serious issues.
42. At the meeting the following points should be considered:
 - a. Explaining to the student, in a supportive and understanding manner, the concerns that have arisen and a brief explanation of the Fitness to Practise process.
 - b. Encouraging the student to give their perspective.
 - c. Clarification of the College's duty of care and the student's responsibilities in respect of the concerns raised.
 - d. Discussing and signposting to any specific arrangements or other types of support that could be applied to help the student, if appropriate.
 - e. Agreement of actions to support the student, with clear timescales (e.g., modifying behaviour, seeking external advice or support etc.).
 - f. If relevant, an explanation that if the actions do not resolve the issue, there is failure to engage with the process or comply with actions, or additional concerns arise, this may result in progression to Stage 2 of the procedure.
43. Where the concern is not deemed to be sufficiently serious to warrant instigation of Stage 2 of the Fitness to Practise Policy, an action plan with timeframe may be agreed and signed by both the student and the Investigating Officer. The student should be informed that the action plan will be shared with any staff (at the College or placement provider) who have a role in the process or in supporting the student as per the action plan.
44. A copy of the meeting notes and any action plan should be sent to the student no more than 5 working days after the meeting has taken place. A copy will be sent to the Senior Registrar and the Fitness to Practise Officer and added to the student's file. The student will be informed of this.
45. A review meeting should be set, by agreement between the student and the staff. Sufficient time should be given to allow the student to consider their behaviour and seek support. At the review meeting, the steps taken to address the concerns should be discussed. Staff should also explore any additional concerns that have arisen since the first meeting and whether ongoing support is required. These discussions should be recorded.
46. The lead staff members, in conjunction with the student, will make the decision as to whether the concern is resolved by the end of the monitoring period and no further action is required.
47. If necessary, further meetings may be scheduled to monitor the situation and

progress made by the student. The general expectation is that the student will take responsibility for and fully engage with the support recommended by staff.

48. Staff are encouraged to make three attempts⁵, using different methods of communication, to engage the student with this process and considering any additional learning needs. Failure of the student to engage with the process without a satisfactory explanation will result in progression to Stage 2.
49. If the Investigating Officer, having spoken to the student and consulted any available evidence, assesses that the concern is of a serious nature then this should be reported to the Fitness to Practise Officer who will instigate Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Fitness to Practise Hearing

Suspension or termination from placement

50. Where serious concerns about a student's Fitness to Practise have been raised, a student may be suspended from a placement as a precautionary measure for a period pending a Fitness to Practise Hearing.
51. Conditions where a student may be suspended from placement, pending a Fitness to Practise Hearing, include, but are not limited to:
 - Threat of serious harm to the student and/or others.
 - Gross misconduct/serious incidences of unprofessional behaviour.
 - The student has demonstrated consistent unsafe practice.
 - The student's mental or physical health is at risk.
 - Any safeguarding concerns have been raised.
52. Suspension from placement will be undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Officer following discussion with the placement setting, DVC, Dean of Ministerial Formation (for theology programmes) and the relevant Programme Director.
53. Students will be notified of their suspension at the earliest opportunity after the decision has been taken and a formal letter of placement suspension will follow within 5 working days.
54. The Fitness to Practise Hearing will be held as soon as is possible to avoid prolonged suspension of the student.

Concerns about behaviour that amount to a criminal offence

55. Where alleged misconduct is or could also be a criminal offence, the Vice Chancellor or DVC may:
 - Report the matter to the police or other relevant authority, but this does not affect the right of any person affected by the alleged misconduct to

⁵ These attempts should be over a suitable timeframe to allow for instances where there is a reasonable explanation for a student not to respond, such as being on holiday etc.

- report it to the police on their own behalf.
- Defer acting until the police, Crown Prosecution Service and courts have dealt with the matter.
- Continue with its investigation, where it is confident that the College's investigation will not prejudice or hinder the police investigation or criminal proceedings.

56. A student is not exempt from proceedings under these regulations simply because they have been convicted of a criminal offence arising out of the same set of facts. Similarly, a student is not exempt from proceedings under these regulations simply because they have been acquitted of a criminal offence arising out of the same set of facts.

Preliminary Stage 2 Investigations

57. If the case has been referred from Stage 1, it is felt that all proper investigations were undertaken at stage one, and there is no new evidence to gather, the Fitness to Practice Officer may proceed directly to the Fitness to Practice Panel without further investigations. The student should be informed of this in writing as soon as possible.

58. If the case has been referred directly to Stage 2 or there is further relevant or new evidence to be gathered, the Fitness to Practice Officer will appoint an Investigating Officer for Stage 2. This will be a member of academic staff in the student's programme area unconnected with the allegation.⁶

59. The Investigating Officer will carry out an investigation into the events which led to the Formal Fitness to Practise Stage being instigated. These events may or may not have included precautionary termination or suspension of a placement. The Investigating Officer will gather evidence and witness statements where appropriate.

60. The Investigating Officer should contact the student in writing to request a meeting. This meeting should be held as soon as possible, and the student should usually be given 5 working days' notice. The letter should make clear to the student why the meeting is taking place, the general nature of the concern, and that the intention is for the student to be able to give their perspective and to supportively explore the concern under Stage 2 of the process. The student should also be sent:

- A copy of any correspondence relating to the decision to escalate to the Formal Stage.
- A copy and/or reference to the relevant PSRB standards regulation and relevant competency or competencies being investigated.
- Any evidence in support of the allegation.
- A copy of this Policy

61. One other member of staff will attend the meeting, either the Chaplain, Learning Enhancement Officer, Disability Officer, minute taker, or other nominee as appropriate.

⁶ Not the student's Pastoral Tutor if they have one.

62. A copy of the meeting notes and any actions agreed, will be sent to the student no more than 5 working days after the meeting has taken place. A copy will be sent to:
- The Senior Registrar
 - The Fitness to Practise Officer
 - The Dean of Ministerial Formation (for Theology Students)
 - The Head of Placements and/or Programme Directors (If they are not the designated Fitness to Practise Officer)

A copy will be added to the student's file, and the student advised of this.

63. A student can decline to meet and/or may give a written response within 10 working days of being informed of the concerns. A student who refuses or fails to attend a Fitness to Practise interview, or provide a written response within the timescale, without good reason, will normally be deemed to have declined the opportunity to meet.
64. If, following the investigations and meeting, the concern is not deemed significant enough to proceed with a Fitness to Practise Panel Hearing, the concern may be referred back to Stage 1.
65. The Investigating Officer will only determine that Fitness to Practise concerns should be escalated to Panel if:
- i. The student has been referred from Stage 1, and the Cause for concern stage has failed to address issues (for example, the student refused action plan or failed to engage with agreed actions, with the concerns still present at end following implementation of an action plan).
 - ii. The student has been referred straight to Stage 2 and investigations have resulted in evidence that there are significant Fitness to Practise concerns which are appropriate to be addressed by a Fitness to Practise Panel hearing.
66. Where Fitness to Practise concerns relate to a student's health, the Investigating Officer may ask students to provide statements/letters from healthcare professionals who can provide evidence of their health status, including physical and mental health as appropriate. Should a student not wish for this information to be gained, the Fitness to Practise Hearing will be unable to consider claims from the student related to their health when hearing the case.
67. If the student raises health issues as pertinent to the circumstances surrounding their case, but they have not previously consulted a healthcare professional, the Investigating Officer will encourage the student to seek healthcare advice and may accommodate this within the timescale of the Formal Fitness to Practise Stage. Furthermore, if the student discloses a disability or long-term health condition, that the student has previously not disclosed or received support for, the Investigating Officer should seek advice from the Disability Officer and where appropriate refer the student with their consent. The student is liable for the cost of any medical or other assessments.

Fitness to Practise Panel Membership

68. The Fitness to Practise Panel will consist of:
- A member of the Senior Management Team, or their nominee, who will Chair the Panel.
 - One member of academic staff, whether of the College or another Higher Education Institute, registered with the same PSRB as the one which regulates the student's course⁷, who must be unconnected with the case, not be the student's Pastoral Tutor, and have no other conflict of interest.
 - One Senior Professional Practitioner registered with the same PSRB, as the one which regulates the student's course, who must be unconnected with the case, experienced in dealing with Fitness to Practise in the relevant professional workplace, and have no other conflict of interest.

Fitness to Practise Panel Meeting

69. The Registry Department will appoint a minute taker to the Panel, who is not a member of the Panel but will be present throughout the proceedings to take a written record and advise on regulatory matters.
70. The student will be invited to attend a Fitness to Practise Hearing with the Panel to discuss the concerns and all relevant issues. The student will be given at least 5 working days' written notice of the meeting, which will include a summary of the concern(s) and evidence to be considered by the Panel, copies of any documents to be considered at the meeting and a list of witnesses that the Panel intends to call.
71. Students may be accompanied to meetings by a friend, family member, fellow student or student representative. Legal representatives or advocates are not permitted. The companion is invited to support the student during the process, not to advocate on their behalf.
72. The student will be given 5 working days from receiving notification of the Panel membership to identify any potential conflicts of interest with any panel members. The Chair of the Panel will have the final decision on panel composition in line with the guidance in this Policy.
73. The student will be asked to provide copies of any documents they wish the Panel to consider to the secretary to the Panel at least 3 clear working days before the meeting along with a list of witnesses they intend to call. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for these witnesses to attend the meeting.
74. If the student or other witness is not able to attend for good reason, an alternative date may be arranged, at the discretion of the Chair. The student will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the rescheduled date. If the student or other witness is unable to attend the rescheduled date, the student and/or witness may provide a written statement to be heard by the panel in their

⁷ If this is not possible then they must be a member of another relevant professional institution and have knowledge of the industry standards and framework for professional practise and fitness to practise.

absence.

75. Should a student decide not to attend a Fitness to Practise Panel, the Panel will proceed, and a decision on the case will be made without the student present. This includes situations where a student has failed to acknowledge or respond to notification of the panel meeting where reasonable steps have been taken to notify the student of the Fitness to Practise panel arrangements.
76. The Investigating Officer will present to the Panel the facts of the case that have been established regarding any concerns related to their fitness to practise concerns.
77. The Panel may call witnesses, institute enquiries, request further evidence (including medical evidence) and/or seek advice and support from legal advisers or other third parties to assist its deliberations and may adjourn its meetings to another time or place.
78. Students are permitted to present their own case to the Panel, including asking questions of witnesses called by the Panel through the Chair of the Panel.
79. The Panel should consider mitigating and aggravating factors, such as the level of insight a student has shown, evidence of good practice, personal circumstances and previous concerns or patterns of behaviour. The student will be provided with the opportunity to put forward any mitigating factors before the panel decides what action it should take.

Fitness to Practise Panel Decision

80. The Panel will decide whether the student's Fitness to Practise is impaired and, if it is, what action should be taken considering the impairment. The panel is required to base their decisions on sound evidence and provide reasons for the decisions made.
81. The panel will deliberate in private and reach its decision by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair of the Panel will have a second or casting vote. A record of the closed session will be kept so that the student can understand the reasoning that has led to the outcome of the Hearing.
82. The Panel is encouraged to consider all possible outcomes, starting with the least severe outcome for the student, and may decide to act in one or more of the following ways:
 - a. Take no further action.
 - b. A time constrained action plan to remedy the concerns raised.
 - c. Give the student a formal written warning, which will remain on record for a period to be determined by the Panel.
 - d. Recommend, to the Academic Director or their nominee, an exceptional change to the student's Programme of Study, if permitted within the relevant academic regulations.
 - e. Postpone, subject to the Academic Director (or nominee) approval, part of the student's course (for example, a placement).
 - f. Recommend to the Progression and Awards Board the Termination of the

- student's status as a student.
- g. Recommend that the student can be given an exit award, or transferred to a different programme of study without professional registration.
 - h. Recommend, to the Academic Director (or nominee), that the student takes an interruption of studies for a fixed period.
83. The outcome of the Panel will be tied to evidence and professional regulations and standards. Reasons for decisions must be adequate, though clear so that the student can understand why the matter was decided as it was and what conclusions were reached.
84. A copy of the meeting notes and a report of the decisions made and any actions following this, will be sent to the student no more than 5 working days after the meeting has taken place. A copy will be sent to the senior Registrar, Fitness to Practise Officer and the Head of Placements and added to the student's file. The student will be advised of this.
85. The Fitness to Practise Officer, in consultation with the Head of Placements, and in line with PSRB guidance, may inform the PSRB of the outcome of the Fitness to Practise Hearing.

Fitness to Practise Appeal (all stages)

86. A student who wishes to appeal a decision arising from a Fitness to Practise Panel Hearing may do so on one or more of the following grounds:
- a. There is new material evidence that was unavailable, for valid reasons, or could not be provided earlier in the process at the time of the Fitness to Practise Hearing.
 - b. The procedures were not followed, there is an irregularity or misapplication of the policy in how the procedure was conducted.
 - c. The action taken because of the Fitness to Practise Hearing is disproportionate, unreasonable, or not permitted under the procedures.
 - d. There was bias or reasonable perception of bias during the Fitness to Practise procedure and/or Panel hearing.
87. Requests for appeals on any other grounds than those stated above will not be accepted.
88. The request for appeal must:
- a. Identify the ground(s) for the appeal.
 - b. Be accompanied by all relevant, independent, supporting evidence that the student wishes to rely upon to support their appeal.
 - c. Be submitted writing or by email directly to the Registry Department (registry@spurgeons.ac.uk) or by post addressed and sent directly to the College. The College does not accept responsibility for the receipt or late delivery of appeals submitted by post or email.
 - d. Be received by the Registry Department within 10 working days of receiving official notification of the Fitness to Practise Panel's decision. Appeals received after this deadline will be deemed invalid unless the student has demonstrated good reason for any period of delay.

89. The Senior Registrar will establish whether there is a case for consideration, or whether to dismiss the request and inform the student in writing of the reasons for doing so⁸. If it is decided that there is a case for a review, the Senior Registrar will refer the case to an Appeal Panel, which should meet as soon as possible.
90. An Appeal Panel will normally consist of:
- Vice Chancellor as Chair (unless they have been involved in the Fitness to Study Panel).
 - A Governor (other than any Governor involved in the Fitness to Study Panel); and
 - An external member of the Academic Board.
91. If the Vice Chancellor has been involved in the Fitness to Practise Panel, their place will be taken by another Governor or external member of the Academic Board, and one of the Governors will chair the Appeal Panel.
92. The student should be notified that their request for a review has been successful, the date of the Appeal Panel meeting, and that they will be notified of the outcome within 5 working days of the meeting.
93. The Chair of the panel will work with the Senior Registrar to gather relevant documentation or other evidence required to support the review, including interviewing staff as necessary. This should be circulated to the panel members at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.
94. After considering the appeal, the Appeal Panel makes one of the following decisions, depending on the ground for appeal and the evidence presented:
- a. Dismiss the appeal; or
 - b. Uphold the appeal and:
 - i. Refer the matter back to an earlier level of the procedure for reconsideration e.g., if the correct process has not been followed, or if new material evidence has been made available. This can be to the same Fitness to Practise Panel or a new one; or
 - ii. Impose an alternative sanction or action.

Completion of Procedures

95. The decision of the appeal panel is final. This is notified to the student in a 'Completion of Procedures Letter', issued within 5 working days of the panel meeting. This will conclude the College's internal appeal procedures.

⁸ For example, that the appeal was received after the deadline without a reasonable explanation of why it could not be submitted on time or does not disclose reasonable grounds for appealing the decision.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

96. Students who believe that their case has not been dealt with properly by the College or that the outcome is unreasonable may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if the complaint is eligible under its rules and once all internal procedures have been concluded. The deadline for an application to the OIA is twelve months from the date of the 'Completion of Procedures Letter'. Information about the role of the OIA and the procedure for submitting complaints can be obtained from the OIA website: www.oiahe.org.uk.

Appendix 1 Programmes subject to the Fitness to Practise Policy

Students undertaking, about to undertake, or returning to courses or programmes of study leading to the following awards are subject to Spurgeon's college Fitness to Practice Policy:

Theology

- i. BA in Theology with Ministerial Formation
- ii. BA in Theology with Chaplaincy
- iii. MA in Christian Thought and Practice with Ministerial Formation
- iv. MTh in Advanced Christian Studies (ministerial)
- v. Professional Certificate in Ministerial Formation
- vi. Micro Credential Certificate in Baptist History and Principles
- vii. Foundation Degree in Theology with Ministerial Formation

Counselling

- i. BSc in Integrative Counselling
- ii. BSc in Integrative Counselling (Top-up)
- iii. Diploma in Integrative Counselling

Fitness to practise requirements for Theology

Students on relevant theology programmes are assessed for fitness to practise according to the requirements of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Requirements can be found in the current version of the '[Marks of Ministry](#)' document.

Baptist Union students also come under the BUGB Ministerial Recognition Rules. <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=180015&view=browser>

Fitness to Practice Requirements for Counselling

1. Characteristics of Counsellors for the BSc in Integrative Counselling

Students are assessed for fitness to practise according to the requirements of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. The [Scope of Practice and Education \(SCoPEd\) Framework](#) sets out the core training, practice and competence requirements for counsellors and psychotherapists working with adults.

2. Characteristics of Counsellors for Courses Accredited by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)

Level 4 Competencies

- Working ethically, safely and professionally as a counsellor
- Working within a counselling relationship
- Working with client diversity in counselling work
- Working within a user centred approach to counselling

- Working with self-awareness in the counselling process
- Working within a coherent framework of counselling theory and skills
- Working self-reflectively as a counsellor

Please see [Download TC-L4 Specification - CPCAB](#) for more information regarding competencies.