



2024-2025

Hampstead Fine Arts

Fitness to study Policy

Fine Arts College is an educational institution for full time students, committed to promoting inclusivity and tolerance. This philosophy underpins how we constantly strive to make 'reasonable adjustments' and provide 'best endeavour' for any student. In doing so we fully comply with the Equality Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014 as well as the Keeping Children Safe in Education governmental guidance (2024).

It is important, however, to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the individual support that can be provided within a college such as this. Our staff provide outstanding care for all students, but there will be times when a student's physical, social, emotional or mental health are so affected that they are no longer able, despite support both internal to the College and externally, to maintain reasonable academic progress:

- We are not a distance-learning College, and whilst on a temporary basis it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible with attendance due to ill health, prolonged periods of absence cannot be sustainable.
- There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health can require support beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer.
- Occasionally a student's ill health may present a health and safety hazard to either themselves or those around them that is unmanageable in an educational setting.

There are therefore occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our judgement that, in the best interests of a student, continuing at College is no longer the best option.

1. Joining the College

Students are encouraged to disclose any physical or mental health need when they are interviewed, before joining the College. This disclosure is used to establish how best we can respond to the individual need and what reasonable adjustments can be made.

In cases where a complex or significant physical or mental health condition is disclosed, it may be appropriate that further information is sought from health professionals supporting a student to be able to formulate a support plan.

2. Studying at the College

If students do not disclose a pre-existing physical or mental health condition on application, then it is unlikely that they will receive support or reasonable adjustment unless the condition becomes clear to a member of staff. Early disclosure of issues is therefore vital to allow us to assess how best to accommodate students and also to avoid exacerbating the issue through a lack of knowledge on the part of staff and tutors.

We only offer full-time programmes, and any student who is under temporary rehabilitative residential care must be able to access a full-time programme throughout the duration of their studies at Fine Arts.

Students are made aware of the Pastoral care systems at the College both at induction and as part of the ongoing PSHE Programme delivered throughout the year. All staff at the College have a duty of care to students and can be approached with any concern, however small.

The member of staff consulted will seek consent from the student to share with tutors, the key relevant information so that they can make adjustments. If the nature of the medical condition requires support or reasonable adjustment needs to be made to a student's studies, then the Deputy Head (Pastoral) will be asked to meet with and assess the student. This may lead to a support plan being agreed and other staff in the College, such as the appropriate tutors, becoming involved in providing support. Consent will always be sought from the student to involve parents and carers in these decisions, however in certain extreme cases confidentiality will need to be respected if the student requests it. Confidentiality can never be fully guaranteed if a young person is considered at risk of harm.

The support plan may also involve referral to external agencies, such as CAMHS or the student's medical professionals. This is particularly true where the health condition causes significant concern, since the expertise and capacity of the College in providing medical support is finite and the responsibility for medical support lies with outside services. In crisis situations, where there are immediate and grave concerns for a student's health or well-being, the appropriate staff will judge how best to provide first aid and whether emergency services should be called. We will always endeavour, in these situations, to contact parents and carers as soon as possible.

3. Limits to support

Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins the College or whilst at the College, there need to be reasonable limits set to the support that can be offered. These include both the flexibility the College should show around academic progress (attendance and meeting assessment expectations) and the support (type, location and frequency) that is needed for a student to remain at College. Clearly it is difficult to set 'non-negotiable limits' for academic progression and support and there needs to be judicious professional judgement in each case. Furthermore, physical and mental health conditions may be temporary or permanent, short or long-term, stable or prone to remission. As a guide therefore, the following minimum expectations should be set:

a) Academic progress

Each case needs to be considered on its merits, but it is clear that a minimum level of attendance needs to be maintained overall that will allow a student to realistically achieve. Academic success depends on engagement in classroom activity, so excessively long periods of complete absence or very poor attendance will make a student's studies untenable. With regards to coursework and homework, if students fall significantly behind with their deadlines, despite extensions being offered, then there comes a point at which catching up is not viable. The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will be set in each case depending on the circumstances.

b) Support

It is reasonable for tutors, on a short-term temporary basis, to support students via Google Classroom.

This cannot continue long-term. We are not a distance-learning College and do not have the resources, expertise, or remit to be one. We will, where appropriate, refer to external services and maintain liaison with them. We cannot provide complex medical or psychiatric support. Finally, the pastoral support available is finite and needs to be available for all students. In all cases the support we offer must be on site.

4. Educational trips and visits

Taking students offsite requires practical consideration, careful planning, and a detailed assessment of all potential risks. Where a student has a history of illness, be it physical, social, emotional, or mental health related, the College must assess if attending an educational trip and/or visits is safe, viable and in the general interest of the young person. Careful consideration must be given to safeguard all parties while offsite. The College reserves the right to revoke a student place on the educational trip or visit, should there be a concern for the welfare of any person in attendance.

5. Fitness to Study

Our default position, as a College, is that we want all students to complete their studies safely and successfully in order to achieve their potential. There are occasions, however, when physical or mental health issues are so complex or so significant that this is not possible. Clearly each student needs to be considered on a case by case basis and the College needs to ensure it is fully aware of all the medical evidence and the wishes of the student and the parents or carers. Ideally, a clear consensus would always emerge about the best way forward, but this will not always be the case. There will be situations where the College believes that it has exhausted the support options available, it has made reasonable adjustments and provided best endeavour in all aspects of College life, but the student is unable to maintain their fitness to study.

These situations impact negatively both on the student, since their welfare is at risk, and on the College, since there is an excessive demand on resources. For the student, who has struggled to maintain their academic progress against the odds and for whom trying to keep the structure of College life going has been so far a positive factor in their rehabilitation, there comes a point at which trying to catch up after a lengthy absence with deadlines long gone is actually more stressful and therefore more of a negative impact on their health than withdrawing from studies. To continue this situation would place the College in breach of its duty of care to young people. For the College, working with individual students to catch up on missed work, liaising remotely with absent students and arranging meetings and support for students must be a finite resource and cannot unreasonably impact on the learning of other students at the College.

If the College, medical professionals, the student and the parents or carers all agree that a student should withdraw then this will be supported and actioned. In these situations, we would always assure students and their parents or carers that the best interests of each student and their welfare are at the centre of decisions. Where there is no consensus that withdrawal is the most appropriate outcome, then the stages below will be followed:

Initial action

A meeting arranged with student and Deputy Head (Pastoral) to discuss and outline concerns. Targets to be agreed/set.

Review time: **2 weeks**

Stage 1

- An email/letter is sent home along with a copy of these procedures outlining concerns and actions taken.
- Weekly report to be initiated with the Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- iSams updated.

Review time: **2 weeks**

Stage 2

A meeting arranged with Deputy Head (Pastoral), student and parent/carer to outline concerns and set targets. iSams updated.

Review time: **Half/end of term**

Stage 3

A meeting arranged with the Head, Deputy Head (Pastoral), student and parent/carer to consider appropriate forward actions.

At all stages, the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of the young person is central to all discussions and action agreed. There are occasions where, it will be our judgement that in the best interests of a student, continuing at College is no longer the best option.

The student/parents have a right to appeal this decision and should contact the College in the first instance.

August 2024

Updated by: JC