

University of St Andrews - School of Medicine Handbook

GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE BEING INVESTIGATED
FOR A FITNESS TO PRACTISE CONCERN

1. **Introduction.** A concern (or concerns) has been raised regarding your fitness to practise and an Investigating Officer has been appointed to look into these concerns. This practical guidance is intended to help explain what will happen, and to highlight support available to you during the process.
2. **The role of the Investigating Officer.** The role of the Investigating Officer is to ensure a thorough, fair and prompt investigation of concerns raised about you. The Investigating Officer is not a decision maker but will make recommendations regarding the need or otherwise for a full Fitness to Practise Committee meeting. When you are notified that the concerns are being investigated, you will be told:
 - a. The basis of the concerns and any allegations against you.
 - b. The name and position of the Investigating Officer.
 - c. Any limitations or conditions placed upon the continuance of your studies or supervised practice during the period of the investigation.
3. You may register an objection to the appointment of the Investigating Officer on the basis of a lack of impartiality. If you feel you have grounds to object to the appointment, you should make it to the Faculty Fitness to Practise Secretary within 5 working days, detailing reasons for your objection.
4. **Your participation in the investigation.** You might be worried about the investigation and its potential outcomes but please try to remain calm. You are encouraged to be as cooperative as possible with the investigation. The Investigating Officer is likely to request that you attend an interview. If you are asked to attend an interview, you may want to consider writing some notes on your perception of events before the meeting. Try not to be defensive, the University has a responsibility to ensure that concerns regarding students on professional courses are taken seriously. The Investigating Officer is likely to ask you:
 - a. Whether or not you accept the allegations, criticisms or concerns.
 - b. What explanations you have for your actions, including extenuating or mitigating circumstances.
 - c. How you plan to change your behaviour in the future (if you accept that change is needed).
5. If you have evidence that you think the Investigating Officer needs to see, you should make it available to him/her. You can take someone with you to an interview for support e.g. friend, family member, partner, Students' Union Education Adviser.
6. Your conduct during the investigation is important. Remember that there are standards of professionalism required of your chosen course of study and you will be expected to act accordingly. This means; taking the matter seriously, cooperating with the investigation, making yourself available when required, responding in a timely manner to any communications from the Investigating Officer, not trying to influence either the person (s) who raised the concern or other people involved in the investigation.
7. It is most important that you tell the truth at all times. Honesty and trustworthiness are qualities required of health professionals and the Investigating Officer will be looking for evidence of these qualities when your case is being considered.

8. In cases where there are potential health, drug or alcohol-related problems, you may be required to attend the Occupational Health Department as part of the investigation. It is particularly important that you attend any appointments and fully cooperate with the Occupational Health Department.

What happens next?

9. Once the investigation is complete, the Investigating Officer compiles a report and makes recommendations to the Head of Studies regarding next steps. The Investigating Officer may recommend:

- a. That no further action is taken.
- b. That you should be referred back to your tutor and an action plan put in place.
- c. That your case should be referred to a Fitness to Practise Committee for consideration.

10. The Head of School does not have to accept the recommendations of the Investigating Officer but whatever course of action is selected you will be notified of what happens next.

Help and support

11. Help and support is available. Here is a list of possible sources of help and advice:

- a. The Students' Union. As well as providing advice, Education Advisers can accompany you to University meetings and hearings. They will help you make the best representations you can and ensure you follow the correct University procedures.
- b. The relevant Union e.g. the BMA. Representation and advice may be available for students who are members.
- c. Medical Defence Union; the MDU or MDDUS.
- d. University Counselling Service.
- e. Your Personal Tutor.