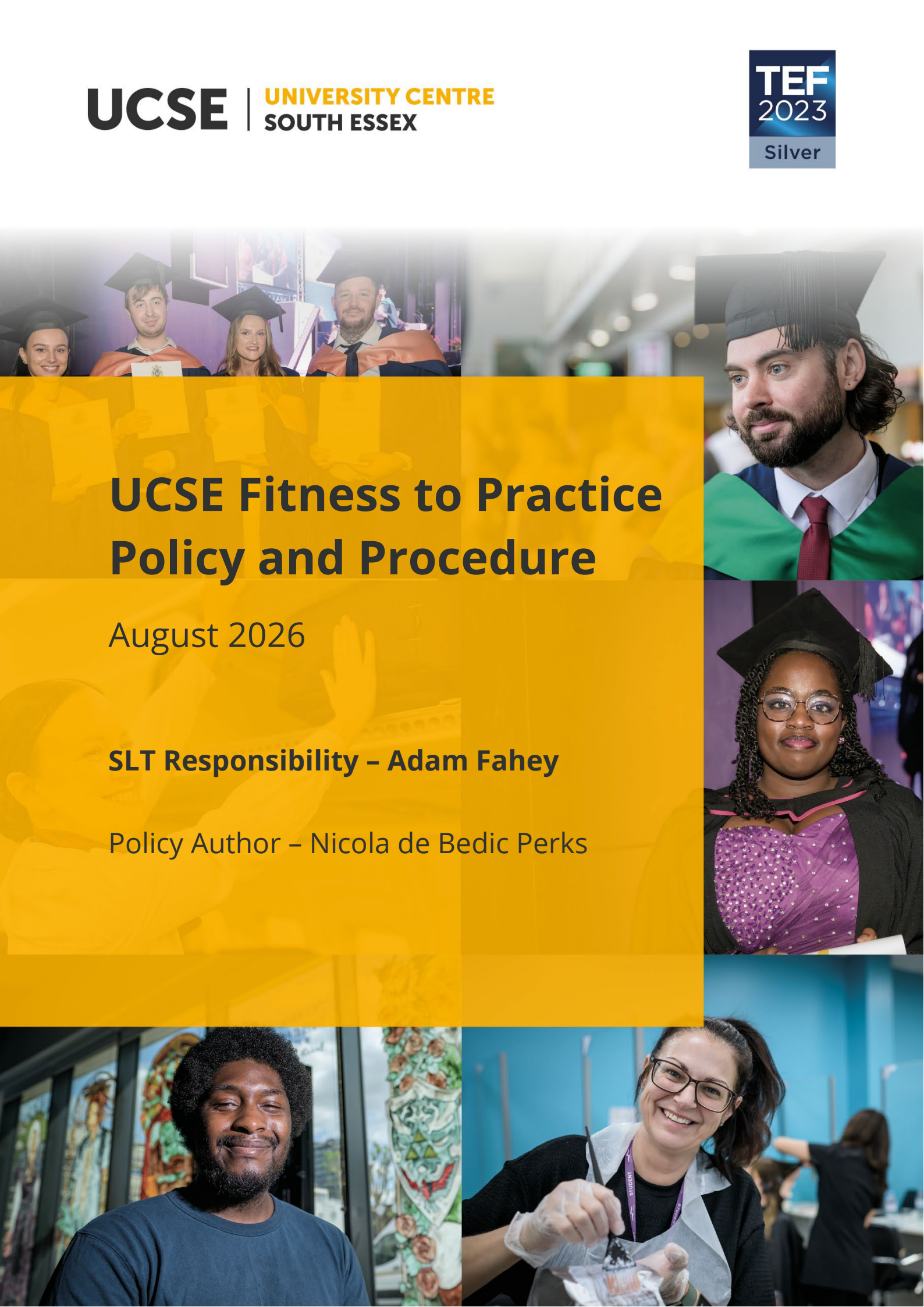




UCSE Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure

August 2026

SLT Responsibility – Adam Fahey

Policy Author – Nicola de Bedic Perks

Significant Changes Following Review

PAGE NUMBER OR HEADING NAME	DETAILS OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE	CHANGES MADE BY
General	Policy expanded for clarity regarding policy and procedure	Nicola de Bedic Perks
P4	Fitness to Practice Panel meeting changed to 2 stage process	Nicola de Bedic Perks
P5	Definitions section added	Nicola de Bedic Perks
P7	Appeals section added	Nicola de Bedic Perks
P14	Appeals procedure added	Nicola de Bedic Perks
Appendices	Stage 1 and Stage 2 flowcharts added	Nicola de Bedic Perks

Equality Impact Assessment

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EIA) is to consider the equality implications of any new or amended policy, procedure, practice, project, function on different groups of staff, students and visitors to the college. This EIA tool provides a simple framework that helps evaluate whether the change may inadvertently disadvantage protected characteristics and identify ways to proactively advance and promote equality.

You will need to consider each of the equations and provide information as to consideration and any changes made in relation to Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Date EIA completed.	24-08-2026
Name of person responsible for completing the EIA	Sharon Dunphy
Role of person responsible for completing the EIA	Executive Director – Higher Education
Who is affected by the policy / decision / change?	All staff and students
What's the reason for the new policy / change in policy, practice, process etc.?	Review of the Fitness to Practice policy

You will need to consider whether its possible that the proposed new policy / change in policy /procedure/practice etc could discriminate or unfairly discriminate or disadvantage people. You should consider:

Who gets to participate?	Who does not, or who now does not due to the changes proposed / made.
Who is at an advantage?	Who is at a disadvantage, and again has this changed?
Who will benefit?	Who will not benefit (or who did and now doesn't due to the changes proposed in policy
Who can access the policy?	Who cannot, or now cannot.

Protected Characteristic	What degree of impact does the change have (score 1-5 with 1 the lowest and 5 the highest)	What is a potential positive, neutral or negative impact? Include what you have considered. Are there any barriers?	What action will be taken to address any negative impact or remove any potential barriers identified? Note if we are not able to resolve anything identified.	Date by when and whom will this action be taken.
Age	1	Neutral	None identified policy available in accessible formats	N/A
Disability	3	Neutral	Provide additional support for complainants needing assistance	N/A
Gender (Sex)	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Gender Reassignment	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Marriage or Civil Partnership	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Pregnancy / Maternity	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Race	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Religion or Religious Belief	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Sexual Orientation	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A
Any other element that needs to be considered.	1	Neutral	None Identified	N/A

CONTENTS

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. PURPOSE	2
3. SCOPE	3
4. RELATED COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	3
5. DEFINITIONS.....	3
6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES	4
7. APPEALS.....	7
1. FITNESS TO PRACTICE PROCEDURE – OVERVIEW	8
2. CAUSE FOR CONCERN RAISED	9
3. Stage 1 – Informal Fitness to Practice discussion	10
4. Stage 1 Review meeting.....	11
5. Stage 2 – Formal Fitness to Practice meeting.....	12
6. OUTCOME.....	13
7. APPEAL.....	14

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 South Essex College Group (“we”, “us” or “our”) acknowledges that it has both a role and responsibility in ensuring the welfare of its HE students, staff and the wider community.

1.2 This document describes the procedures to be followed when a Fitness to Practice concern has been raised to assess a student’s fitness to practice in order to find a way to resolve difficulties. Particular circumstances may require adjustments to the procedures outlined below in order to act in the best interest of the student and, when relevant, any other individuals or bodies concerned.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The purpose of this policy and associated procedure is to support the student to achieve a positive outcome from their programme of study and to ensure that concerns are identified and discussed in a timely manner and relevant support implemented as necessary. It safeguards

- Public safety
- Professional standards
- Institutional reputation
- Student wellbeing

2.2 We therefore expect that students studying on a UEA/UAL/Pearson BTEC Higher National validated award are in a fit state, subject to the terms of relevant disability discrimination law, to benefit from their practice learning and pursue it for the required period with a reasonable chance of successfully obtaining the award for their programme of study for which they are registered.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This policy and procedure applies to all full-time and part-time students on voluntary placements/work experience studying on a Level 4 and above programme of study at South Essex Colleges Group that may lead to entry into a professional field or career where recognized skills, qualifications, or experience are valued.

4. RELATED COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Higher Education Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Higher Education Fitness to Study Policy
- Higher Education Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- SEC Safeguarding Policy
- Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy and Process
- Freedom of Expression Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1 Practice learning – a defined period of supervised work within an external environment.

5.2 Fitness to practice - a student (or professional) is said to be fit to practice where they have the skills and knowledge (competence), character, and health to practice safely and effectively.

5.3 Cause for concern - a situation or event that indicates that there might be potential problems or risks that need attention.

5.4 Professional misconduct - unprofessional or unethical behaviour arising from a single event or issue or a series of events which lead to concerns that a student is not meeting the expectations of the profession or industry in which they are placed.

6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

6.1 As a student, you are always required to act in a manner consistent with the standards expected by the profession or industry in which you are undertaking practice learning. This is known as professional suitability.

6.2 Students must not:

- jeopardise the welfare of the professional subject, such as a pupil, patient, or client; or the welfare of a colleague; or
- contravene the relevant professional/ethical code of conduct the profession or industry. Doing so may constitute professional misconduct and may, depending on its nature and seriousness, also render you as a student unsuitable for the profession.

6.3 A student may be found not fit to practise where, on the balance of probabilities, their behaviour, conduct, health or competence has placed, or may place, themselves or others at risk, or where there is a genuine concern regarding their ability to meet professional standards.

6.4 A student (or professional) is said to be fit to practice where they have the skills and knowledge (competence), character, and health to practice safely and effectively. Anything that can impact on skills, knowledge, character, and health can compromise an individual's fitness to practice. This means that fitness to practice may involve issues which arise outside of professional performance, but which may impact on students' professional suitability e.g., their fitness to practice.

6.5 Issues which may impact on a student's fitness to practice are listed below, however, this is not a definitive list:

- Health and safety breaches in the workplace setting

- Unsafe practice, incompetence, failing to use initiative/requiring too much supervision in the workplace
- Unprofessional behaviour in the workplace, e.g., lack of respect, aggression, poor attitude, laziness, dress-code issues, working inappropriately with clients, poor attendance or timekeeping, poor self-management etc.
- Failure to self-reflect
- Lack of professional insight
- Breaking client confidentiality
- Dishonesty
- Failure to engage with investigations of unprofessional behaviour
- Failure to disclose convictions or other information that the student is required to disclose
- Disclosure of offences during the student's time on their programme, or upon enrolling to the programme
- Disclosure of issues that potentially make the student unsafe/unfit to practice, e.g., homelessness, domestic abuse, evidence of substance/alcohol misuse, involvement of social services in the student's family (e.g., removal of student's children from the family home), sexual misconduct, evidence of bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment of staff/students, disruptive behaviour in the community, inappropriate use of social media etc.
- Personal safeguarding concerns
- Failure to engage with appropriate services in relation to health issues

This policy applies to you as a student at all times that you are enrolled on your programme of study and are not limited to the periods spent on professional

placement or on campus or to issues arising on placement or in a professional context.

6.6 If as a student, you are found to be in breach of this policy, South Essex College Group may levy a penalty in accordance with the Higher Education Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure up to and including expulsion; and or require as a student you to meet the outcomes specified by the Higher Education Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure or other related policies as detailed in Section 4 of this document (found at [HE Policies, Procedures and Downloads | South Essex College](#)).

6.7 Where the South Essex College Group believes that its concerns are inextricably linked to your health and wellbeing or disability, we will consider whether it is appropriate to direct you as a student to the [Higher Education Fitness to Study Policy](#) and/or the [Higher Education Attendance and Engagement Policy](#).

6.8 In determining the appropriate outcome of any professional misconduct, South Essex College Group must consider whether as a student you may become capable of meeting the requirements of the profession within a reasonable period.

6.9 This policy and procedure will be carried out in line with our Data Protection Policy, subject at all times to the College's duty of care to safeguard the welfare of students and responsibilities under the safeguarding policies and procedures. The College reserves the right to contact a student's next of kin where it considers it has a responsibility to do so under the duty of care to safeguard them or where there is a reason to do so under the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

6.10 Reasonable steps should be taken to maintain confidentiality, with any disclosure of a student's name being limited to those who need to know in order to help resolve the situation that has presented itself.

7. APPEALS

7.1 Should a student feel that the Fitness to Practice outcome is inappropriate or misguided, the student must be advised that they have a right to appeal this decision. Any such appeal should be confirmed in writing by following the relevant appeal policy. Guidance for the appeal policies can be found under Key HE Information on the University Centre South Essex [website](#).

8 POLICY REVIEW

8.1 This policy and associated procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is fully compliant with legislation and best practice in the sector.

1. FITNESS TO PRACTICE PROCEDURE – OVERVIEW

1.1 The Fitness to Practice Procedure consists of the following stages:

Stage 1 – Initial cause for concern raised and informal Fitness to Practice discussion

Stage 1 Review: Review of action plan (where applicable)

Stage 2 – Formal Fitness to Practice Panel meeting

Stage 3 – Outcome

Stage 4 – Appeal

Where the concern indicates substantial professional unsuitability or misconduct, the College may suspend the student's placement pending the outcome of the procedure.

1.2 Concerns may arise where:

- there is evidence of significant non-engagement by the student within their placement setting (which have not been satisfactorily addressed through other interventions and procedures as outlined in the HE Attendance & Engagement Policy or HE Disciplinary Policy)
- there are serious concerns about a student's professional conduct in placement
- there are serious concerns about a student's health and wellbeing;
- where a placement provider terminates a placement with immediate effect, due to a high level of concern

This list is not exhaustive; other issues may arise that could warrant a Fitness to Practice meeting.

1.3 A cause for concern may be raised by the placement provider, Programme Leader, Practice Learning Co-ordinator or student.

1.4 If a student is an employed member of staff in their placement, any concerns as outlined below will be discussed with the student's employer in the first instance.

1.5 Should a student be unwilling or unable to take part at any stage of the procedure or to attend a meeting, the College may nevertheless follow the procedure where it is reasonable to do so, notifying the student in writing of that step. Written correspondence will be sent to the student's college email address and contact address. In addition, it will consider any request from a student to proceed with a meeting in their absence and accept and consider written reports and/or a written statement from them.

1.6 In implementing the procedure, the College will ensure that it offers and encourages students to seek appropriate support from the outset, for example, by referring students to their GP, or Student Counselling Service, The Safeguarding Team or the HE Support Team or as appropriate.

2. CAUSE FOR CONCERN RAISED

2.1 Where there is no critical concern of immediate risk to self or others, the first stage of the 'Fitness to Practice' procedure should be invoked. The student would usually enter the procedure at Stage 1.

2.2 Stage 2 intervention of the 'Fitness to Practice' procedure will be invoked when the concern continues despite Stage 1 intervention, and/or are perceived to be of a serious or potentially serious nature.

2.3 Where the level of concern is deemed to demonstrate substantial professional unsuitability or misconduct, placement will be suspended – if not

already terminated by the placement provider - until the Fitness to Practice process has been concluded.

3. Stage 1 – Informal Fitness to Practice discussion

3.1 Where there is no immediate risk to the student or others, an informal meeting will be held between the student, Programme Leader and Practice Learning Co-ordinator to discuss a suitable way forward. This may include additional monitoring, both in the placement setting, and through additional supervision and tutorials.

Following the meeting, the student will be advised in writing of the outcome within 5 working days.

These could include (more than one could apply):

- No further action
- Action plan with associated timescales
- Additional supervision
- Written advice or warning
- Escalate to stage 2 Formal investigation
- Referral to UCSE Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure
- Referral to UCSE Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Referral to UCSE Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure

Should the three-way meeting deem that the student's behaviour amounts to professional misconduct, the student may be subject to the College Procedures for Termination of Practice Learning and Programme of Study.

3.2 Should a student be issued with a Stage 1 warning, this will be kept on your student file, however these are not normally declared to employers or

professional regulators as part of a Transfer of Information process, providing no further issues arise during the course of your studies.

If further issues do arise during your programme, any previous Stage 1 Warning(s) would form part of the documentation to be considered in subsequent Fitness to Practice investigations.

4. Stage 1 Review meeting

4.1 Where target setting and action planning is the outcome of the Fitness to Practice meeting, a review meeting will be scheduled to ensure that efficient progress has been made.

4.2 The following options will be considered:

- I. Close the action plan as all agreed targets have been met;
- II. Continue with the agreed action plan with new dates agreed for review;
- III. Adjustment of the agreed action plan.

4.3 If, following the meeting and implementation of the agreed actions and support plan, concerns are not resolved (including where a student does not participate in the process without reasonable justification), a further meeting must be arranged. The meeting will consider one of the following:

- I. continuation of Stage 1, where more time is considered appropriate
- II. Referral to Stage 2 of the Fitness to Practice process
- III. Referral to the HE Attendance and Engagement policy or another policy deemed appropriate for the next stage of the process.

5. Stage 2 – Formal Fitness to Practice meeting

A Stage 2 meeting is convened when:

- Concerns remain unresolved after Stage 1, or
- The concerns are serious enough to bypass Stage 1

5.1 Where a stage 2 Formal Fitness to Practice meeting is required, this will be arranged by the HE Practice Learning Co-ordinator.

5.2 As a student you will be informed of the meeting arrangements and who will be on the Panel at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. Normally in attendance will be the HE Practice Learning Co-ordinator (chair), Programme Partnership Manager or equivalent, relevant Programme Leader, HE Practice Learning Administrator (minute taker), and the student.

5.3 The student may, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend, family member, Student Union or HE Student Support member, provided that the Lead member of Staff is informed of their identity at least two working days before the meeting. It is the responsibility of the student to inform any attending third party of the date, time and location of the meeting.

5.4 At the meeting, the lead staff member must;

5.4.1. reassure the student that this is a supportive procedure and not part of the disciplinary procedure;

5.4.2. explain the concerns and the impact these may have on the student's ability to achieve a positive outcome from their programme of study;

5.4.3. discuss with the student any related support needs and/or reasonable adjustments;

5.4.4 discuss with the student whether suspension of placement may be appropriate and the most supportive option at that time. If a voluntary interruption is agreed, the student must be reassured that the intention is for them to return to placement as soon as practicably possible.

5.5 As a student the panel members will discuss their concerns with you and may ask you further questions. You will be given the opportunity to inform the Panel of anything you want them to take into consideration. The Panel will meet on their own after meeting with you, to consider which outcome would be most appropriate for you in the circumstances.

5.6 If as a student you do not participate in the process, the Fitness to Practice meeting can be held in your absence.

6. OUTCOME

6.1 Following the discussions, the Fitness to Practice Panel will agree the most appropriate outcome for your situation. This could be referral under other HE policies and procedures outlined in Section 4 of this document, or continuation under this Fitness to Practice policy and procedure.

6.2 Outcomes will be determined by the nature of the misconduct. These could include the following:

- No further action required
- Target setting and action planning with agreed review dates, including an appropriate support plan for the student
- Referral to HE Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure
- Referral to HE Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Referral to HE Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure
- Suspension of placement

- Immediate termination of placement
- Withdrawal of registration for a period up to 12 months (recorded as intercalation)
- Recommend expulsion

6.3 As a student you will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 working days of the date of the meeting.

6.4 Where an action plan is imposed following a Stage 2 Panel, arrangements for monitoring and review will be clearly specified within the outcome letter.

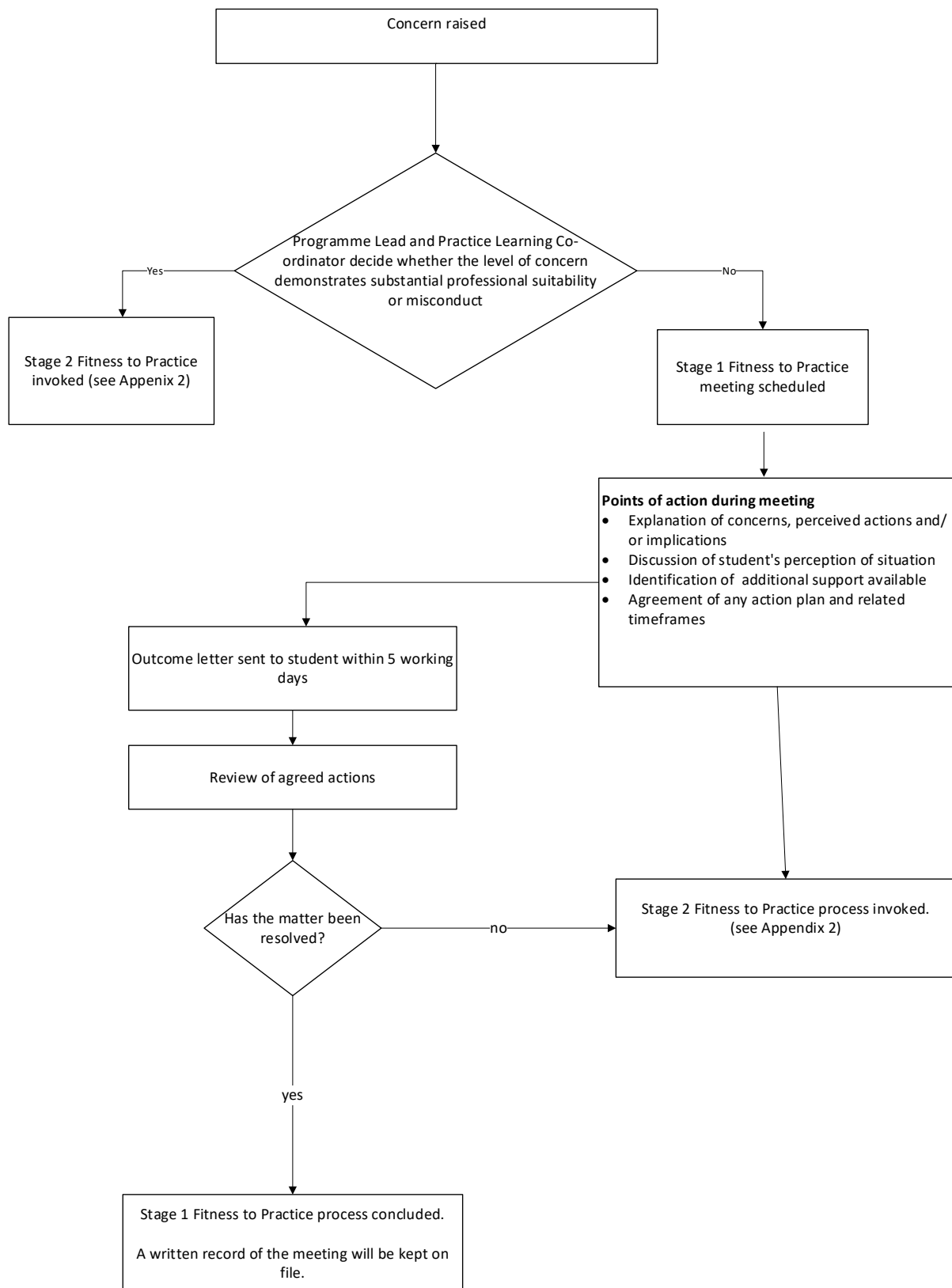
6.5 Should a student be unwilling or unable to take part at any stage of the procedure or to attend a meeting, the College may nevertheless follow the procedure where it is reasonable to do so, notifying the student in writing of that step. Written correspondence will be sent to the student's college email address and contact address. In addition, it will consider any request from a student to proceed with a meeting in their absence and accept and consider written reports and/or a written statement from them.

7. APPEAL

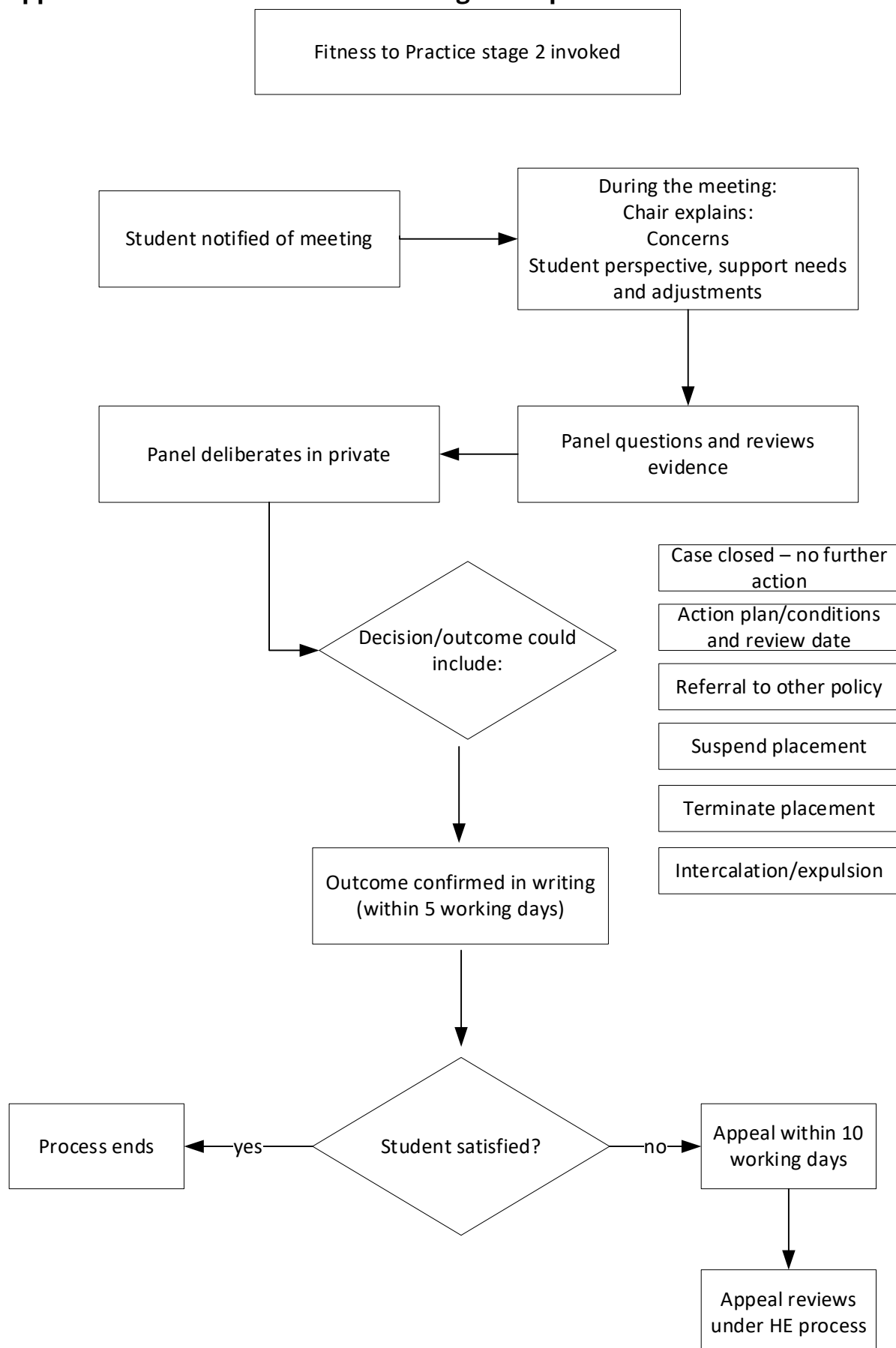
7.1 A student can appeal the outcome of the Fitness to Practice Stage Two procedure.

7.2 Any such appeal should be confirmed in writing by following the relevant appeal policy. Guidance for the appeal policies can be found under Key HE Information on the University Centre South Essex [website](#).

Appendix One - Fitness to Practice stage one procedure flowchart



Appendix One - Fitness to Practice stage two procedure flowchart



Senior Leadership Responsibility	Adam Fahey
Policy Author	Nicola de Bedic Perks
Roles Responsible for Reviewing	Executive Director – Higher Education
Issue date of current version	August 2026
Date to be reviewed	August 2027
Type of Policy	Public / Internal

