

Advice for MB ChB students who are referred due to a concern about Fitness to Practise

The purpose of this leaflet

This leaflet is designed to give you a brief outline of what happens after you have been referred under the Faculty Fitness to Practise Procedure because of concerns about your health or conduct. This is not intended to replace the official documents you will be sent by the Fitness to Practise team, which will give you more detail. It is really important that you read those documents in full and follow all the links to review the relevant regulations. Facing a referral can be stressful, so the more you understand about the process the better prepared, and therefore the calmer, you can be.

Key points to remember if you are referred

The key thing to remember about referrals for unprofessional conduct and/or health concerns (and management thereof) is that the primary concern is patient safety, your safety, and the safety of those you work with. The medical school want to ensure that all our medical students will be fit to practise and will be prepared to become great future doctors. Always bear that in mind when you talk, think and write about the events that resulted in your referral. Always ask yourself “How could I do better?”

I have been referred - what is likely to happen next?

Concerns about a student's health and/or behaviour first go to the MB ChB Concerns Review Panel (CRP). The Panel will look at the referral form and attached documents and (if additional information is needed) someone from the Panel may talk to you and to other people that are involved. Alternatively the Panel may appoint an investigator to speak to you and to anyone else involved. The investigator is impartial and just there to gather the information and feed back to the CRP.

Unless someone from the Panel (or the investigator) wishes to speak to you, you are not required to attend a meeting of the CRP.

If the CRP decides no further action is necessary or is able to resolve the case with some additional education, training, monitoring, supervision or support, then you may not be required to attend a Fitness to Practise Committee (FTPC) at all.

My case is going to a Fitness to Practise Committee (FTPC) – what now?

If the CRP decide that the concerns are more serious it will refer your case to an FTPC, where a committee of academics will consider whether your fitness to practise is impaired. In this case, you will receive an invitation clearly indicating the concerns to be considered and you are expected to meet with the Committee to talk about what happened. Currently all Committees are held virtually via Zoom.

According to the nature of the concerns, you may be referred to School FTPC or to Faculty FTPC. More serious or repeated concerns will usually be referred to a Faculty FTPC. The main difference between the two is that the Faculty committee has more outcome options available to it, including suspension and exclusion.

Whether you are invited to School or Faculty FTPC, you are encouraged to write a statement responding to the concern(s) beforehand to help the committee members understand your perspective. You are advised to have someone else check the draft of your statement before you submit it, for example an advisor from your defence organisation, the BMA or the Students Union.

Before the meeting you will be sent a bundle of documents relating to the specific concerns that have resulted in your referral to Fitness to Practise, and this bundle is the same as the documents seen by the Committee members. The Committee may ask questions about anything in your bundle of documents in order to evaluate your fitness to practise. You may find receiving these documents quite uncomfortable because, as well as including information about the most recent event, they may also refer to your past behaviour. The reason for including this is that a pattern of, for example, unaccounted absences and lateness might suggest that you have not yet learned to organise yourself and your life. And being able to organise your time is a key skill for any professional.

You can take a supporter with you to the meeting as facing an FTP can be stressful, but the supporter should not intervene on your behalf unless asked to speak.

You may be told the outcome of the meeting informally on the day but sometimes the Committee needs longer to deliberate. In all cases you will receive a more formal outcome a few days later.

Remember that although they are online, FTP meetings are a formal Committee and you should follow the guidance on dress code given in the Professionalism section of the MB ChB Programme Handbook. You will need to ensure you have somewhere private with a secure internet connection to join the Zoom meeting, and you will need to be able to view the bundle of papers pdf during the meeting. If you are having trouble identifying a suitable location please talk to one of the SPS teams who may be able to help.

What does the CRP/FTPC want from me?

What the CRP and/or FTPC is looking for is to understand why the situation(s) has (have) occurred; and to see that you accept responsibility for your past behaviour and show remorse and understanding of why even a minor misdemeanour might damage public perception of the profession.

An FTPC will want to know you have good insight and have learned from past errors and have developed a realistic action plan so that you would behave differently in future. The Committee want students to reflect that even a series of minor incidents can add up to a concern and will want proof of changed behaviour. The Committee will take context into account, including the stage you are at in the Programme and any issues that were affecting you at the time. However, it will wish to ensure that you are developing skills so that, at times of stress in the future, you are better able to manage in a professional way.

Occasionally the Committee may refer you, via the Occupational Health Service for a specialist medical/mental health opinion, if it has concerns about your health or your ability to self-manage.

What are the outcomes from FTPC?

There are a number of potential outcomes from an FTPC meeting (which will be outlined in the paperwork sent beforehand). You could, for example, receive a written warning or be asked to attend a particular course of additional education or training (e.g. a drugs awareness course) or other measures that the Committee deems appropriate. You might be required to undergo enhanced monitoring (involving personalised attendance registers and feedback from your tutors). You can also be required to repeat part of the programme – in that instance you would be interrupted from your studies with immediate effect and your return conditions decided by the Student Progression Committee.

School Fitness to Practise Committees cannot exclude students, only Faculty Fitness to Practise Committees can do that.

Who do I have to tell about FTP?

If a case does go to FTP then you have to inform the GMC of this when applying for medical registration as the GMC will want to know that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved. If your case is settled at CRP level then it is still possible that the CRP may also require you to inform the GMC, but this will be made clear in your outcome letter.

Provided the GMC is happy that you have learned a lesson and have been able to prove that your behaviour has been good since, then declaring an appearance at FTP is unlikely to cause any problems. Problems registering with the GMC only tend to arise for issues such as dishonesty or failure to learn the lesson and improve behaviour. Conduct problems that arise late on in the Programme may mean you have to work harder to show that you have changed and can sometimes lead to a delay in registration.

Attending an FTPC usually also means you need a bit of extra support, so you must tell your Foundation Programme about your support needs too when you are asked to complete your Supporting Trainees Entering Practise form in early Spring of your final year. Guidance on how best to word this is available if you need it at the time.

Who can support me through this?

There are a number of people both within and out with the University who can support you if you are facing concerns about your health or behaviour.

- Friends and family can provide moral support
- [Student Pastoral Support](#) will always offer you an appointment before and after a CRP/FTPC referral to help guide you through the process. You do not have to accept an appointment but you may find it helpful.
- Your GP and specialist medical team should be helping you if you have physical or mental health problems
- The [Disability Advisory and Support Service](#) (DASS) is there to support you if you have a long term health problem requiring reasonable adjustments to be made
- The [Occupational Health Service](#) may be asked to assess you if your health is impacting on your ability to study or behave appropriately on the Programme
- The [Students' Union Advice Service](#) has experience of helping students facing FTPCs
- Your defence organisation may offer advice, as may the British Medical Association (if you are already a member)
- The [University Counselling Service](#) is useful given that many FTP issues arise because of underlying mental health issues.

If you have further queries relating to support, please contact the Medical School Student Pastoral Support Office via med.sps@manchester.ac.uk or your local SPS team

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