



Policy and Procedure for Precautionary Suspension of Student from Placement

Version 1

This document replaces the legacy City School of health and Psychological Sciences policy, and is the first for the combined School with effect from 01/08/2026

Summary of changes to previous policy

This document replaces the legacy City School of health and Psychological Sciences policy, and is the first for the combined School, with effect from 01/08/2026. This now includes statements regarding Freedom of Speech, all relevant PSRB bodies and Programmes, and clarity of expectations with respect to process and documentation.

Table of Contents:

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Freedom of Speech.....	1
3.	Equality and Diversity Statement	1
4.	Context	2
5.	Purpose	2
6.	Application of this policy	2
7.	Data protection	3
8.	Precautionary suspension from placement	3
9.	Procedure	4
10.	Referral to other University Procedures	4
11.	Review.....	5

1. Introduction

This policy and process applies to all Programmes within the School of Health and Medical Sciences leading to registration with a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) e.g. British Psychological Society (BPS), General Optical Council (GOC), General Medical Council (GMC), Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), in order to protect students, patients and the public.

2. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

- 2.1. City St George's, University of London, regards freedom of speech and academic freedom to be fundamental to delivering its mission as the University of business, practice and the professions. Its values in this respect are set out in a code of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom, which explains how the University will uphold, secure, and promote freedom of speech within the law.
<https://www.citystgeorges.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/code-of-practice-on-freedom-of-speech> .
- 2.2. Nothing in this policy should be interpreted in any way that would be inconsistent with the code of practice and – in the event of any inconsistency – the provisions of the code will prevail.
- 2.3. The University recognises that PSRB requirements will apply when students and staff are undertaking work in the context of a placement or regulated professional activity. Students and staff should therefore also be mindful of the standards and requirements that PSRBs expect in such professional settings.

3. Equality and Diversity Statement

City St George's, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected characteristics.

4. Context

- 4.1. The University has a duty to protect patients, other service users, placement staff and other learners from harm that may be caused by students on placement. The University also has a duty of welfare to students and seeks to protect them from harmful situations that are a direct result of their placements.
- 4.2. This policy and procedure has been developed to support the student, academic and placement staff when a student's conduct is deemed sufficiently unsafe or unsatisfactory for the student to be removed from the placement pending an investigation conducted in accordance with applicable law, regulatory requirements, and relevant University policy & procedures
- 4.3. Application of this policy and any related procedures must uphold lawful freedom of expression and academic freedom, in line with applicable legislation and the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom and with applicable law, and must not be used to restrict speech that is within the law and consistent with PSRB requirements.
- 4.4. Any action taken under this policy will focus on behaviour that presents a material risk to safety, breaches PSRB or placement requirements, or involves unlawful speech or conduct (for example, harassment or incitement).

5. Purpose

The purpose of the School of Health and Medical Sciences Precautionary Suspension of Student from Placement Policy and Procedure is:

- 5.1. To comply with the requirements of the appropriate Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB), and University Fitness to Practise (Train) procedures, through clear responsibility and accountability
- 5.2. To safeguard the health and wellbeing of patients, other service users, placement staff and other learners, and the general public
- 5.3. To protect the student while an investigation is undertaken

6. Application of this policy

- 6.1. The School will at all times consider the most appropriate process to be followed when managing concerns about students' conduct or an incident in placement.
- 6.2. The policy is not intended to deal with a student's academic performance, extenuating circumstances or complaints.
- 6.3. The policy refers to different processes available to deal with conduct or an incident in placement, such as the Reflection & Development Process or Fitness to Practise Process, which are initiated to support the student and placement staff when investigating an incident. Any investigation will be undertaken fairly and proportionately and in a manner that respects the University's duty to secure freedom of speech within the law. Where a concern specifically relates to the exercise of lawful freedom of speech, advice should be sought through the University's established freedom of speech arrangements before determining the appropriate process.
- 6.4. The School seeks to create an open, transparent and flexible culture to resolve issues as they arise, where equality and diversity are in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.5. If a student's behavior gives rise to concerns regarding their fitness to practise, or their practice may be detrimental to the patients, other service users, placement staff or other learners in line

with the specific PSRB requirements, this policy may be invoked and the student may be removed or suspended from the placement environment.

- 6.6. Immediate removal without notice will be used only where reasonably necessary to protect safety or prevent serious disruption and will be followed by prompt consideration under the relevant procedures.
- 6.7. It is intended that any precautionary suspension be in the interests of the student and all other people involved, implemented with the minimum disruption to patients, other service users, placement staff or other learners and that the case is reported to the appropriate individuals to assess and, where appropriate, refer to relevant School or University processes.

7. Data protection

- 7.1. The policy will be operated in accordance with the University's duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 1998, the General Data Protection Regulations 2017, and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Staff operating the Precautionary Suspension from Practice Policy should refer to the Procedure and accompanying Guidance for further information about student confidentiality.
- 7.2. The University subscribes to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) scheme, and this policy and any associated regulations are therefore subject to its review. The University is committed to complying with any formal decision and/or recommendations issued by the OIA arising from a student complaint considered by the OIA, noting that the student complainant is not bound to comply with the University's decision. For matters relating to freedom of speech or academic freedom, this operates alongside any applicable complaints scheme administered by the Office for Students, and nothing in this section limits a complainant's ability to pursue that route where available.

Precautionary Suspension from Placement Procedure

8. Precautionary suspension from placement

- 8.1. This procedure supports placement and academic staff when a student's conduct is judged to be sufficiently unsafe, or so unsatisfactory in a way that jeopardises safety, legal compliance, PSRB requirements, or the proper functioning of the placement, such that temporary removal from the placement is required as a precaution while a full investigation is undertaken.
- 8.2. Suspension will only be considered where the concern relates to conduct or performance that may breach legal or professional standards and where the risk cannot reasonably be managed by alternative measures short of suspension. Any suspension from placement will be proportionate and kept under review. Action will be proportionate, time-limited, and reviewed promptly, in line with the University's applicable regulations and procedures.
- 8.3. Precautionary suspension may be imposed where a student's conduct contravenes PSRB requirements and/or University statutes and conduct guidelines, and where such action is necessary and proportionate to manage identified risks. The following list is not exhaustive and serves to provide examples of conduct that could justify suspension:
- 8.4. The student appears to be incapable of undertaking duties or demonstrate skills when required to do so in a safe and timely manner;
- 8.5. The presence of a student constitutes a serious risk to patients, other service users, placement staff or other learners, themselves or property (e.g. the student exhibits intimidating or violent behaviour, harassment or incitement, sexual behaviour towards patients, other service users, placement staff or other learners, being under the influence of alcohol or illicit substance, behaviour that may deter a patient group from engaging with healthcare in a timely fashion, or is seriously disruptive to healthcare team functioning in a way that may compromise patient safety);
- 8.6. The conduct of the student is subject to new criminal charges and alleged offences, not previously considered under the Disclosure and Barring Policy which are connected with, or may affect the student's performance, suitability for duties or to continue as a student on the programme;
- 8.7. The student demonstrates unprofessional behavior associated with e.g. disruptive time keeping, professional responsibility, or an incident or complaint has occurred involving others and an investigation needs to be carried out;

- 8.8. The student is unable to demonstrate that they are of good health and capable of safe and effective practice with any appropriate reasonable adjustments where required.

9. Procedure

- 9.1. Where an issue or concern is identified by either an academic or placement staff member, and in their judgement it is safe and appropriate to do so, an attempt should be made to address the issue or concern with the student in order to prevent the issue escalating and requiring suspension from placement. This may include, if felt proportionate and necessary sending the student home at the time. Any such discussion must be conducted in a manner that respects the student's lawful expression and academic judgement, and a contemporaneous written record made of the discussion.
- 9.2. If the allegation or concern is considered serious, either senior placement staff or Programme Director may arrange a precautionary suspension from placement where this is necessary and proportionate to manage identified risks to safety, legal compliance, or the proper functioning of the placement. Any such step is a neutral, non-disciplinary measure, should be time-limited and subject to prompt review.
- 9.3. Every effort should be made to communicate the decisions and rationale for suspension from placement to the Programme Director, relevant placement staff and the student as soon as a decision to suspend is taken.
- 9.4. The student should be sent a copy of this policy, advised to inform their personal tutor, and to take advice from the Students' Union Advice Service and make written records of the events that preceded their precautionary suspension from placement.

10. Referral to other University Procedures

- 10.1. At the point of suspension or at the latest prior to the next placement shift, the member of staff activating the precautionary suspension must email the Programme Director, any relevant placement staff and the student as soon as the decision to suspend is taken.
- 10.2. As soon as practical, and no later than within 3 working days, the member of staff activating the precautionary suspension should then complete the Precautionary Suspension from Placement Referral form and send it to the Programme Director (or nominee) giving clear evidence regarding the nature of the issues, with as much evidence as available to support the concerns. If the issue was raised by a member of the public or a fellow student, a member of staff will normally act as liaison to complete the form.
- 10.3. The Programme director (or nominee), in consultation with the referrer and other relevant colleagues (for example Head of Department, Academic Director of Practice) , will then determine whether the concern can be potentially remediated with a Professionalism, Support and Reflection Plan, or requires a referral under the Fitness to Practice (train) Policy. If material to informing the decision, and not already covered within the referral documents, an account from the student should also be sought. This decision should be made as soon as possible, and at most within 10 working days of referral, by the Programme Director (or nominee) in writing of the decision and next steps. The following factors should be considered in determining which policy is most appropriate:
- 10.4. The seriousness of the concern, and to what extent risks to the student, staff or the public can be addressed by reflection and development
- 10.5. Whether this is a first concern, or a repeated pattern despite previous efforts to redress the concern, potentially including prior reflection and development referrals.
- 10.6. The expectations of the student commensurate with their stage on the Programme, and opportunities for further learning within the Programme.
- 10.7. When informing the student, they should be sent a copy of the relevant policy, and again advised to access support from their Personal Tutor and the Student's Union Advice Service.
- 10.8. Subsequent actions are those outlined in the relevant policy and process (Reflection and Development, or Fitness to Practice).
- 10.9. All involved parties should be informed of outcomes at each stage. The responsibility will stay with the Programme Director (or nominee) unless/until such time as another process (e.g. fitness to practise) or alternative member of staff is tasked with this. All documentary

evidence will be made available to all parties throughout the relevant processes, from the owner of the relevant stage, including referral under the Professionalism, Support and Reflection Plan policy, or Fitness to Practise (train) Policy and any subsequent appeal (unless material must be excluded for data protection or other compliance reasons).

11. Review

- 11.1. The policy will be reviewed annually at the Practice Education Committee
- 11.2. The information in this Policy is correct at the time of approval. The School reserves the right to make amendments to the policy provided that such amendments are: (i) as a result of changes to PSRB requirements (ii) as a result of unforeseen events or circumstances beyond the University's control or (iii) are deemed reasonably necessary by the University.
- 11.3. In the event that amendments are made, the University shall take reasonable steps to notify relevant parties as soon as is reasonably possible.

Policy information

Should you require further information regarding this policy or access to the policy in an alternative format, then please contact SHMSquality@citystgeorges.ac.uk

Policy Title:	SHMS Precautionary Suspension from Placement Policy
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Primary Author:	Hannah Cock, Associate Dean Partnerships & Placements
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Accountable Authority:	EQC and Senate
Approving Authority:	 Professor Natalie Armstrong
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