

# **Fitness to Practise Process**

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# Introduction

This process covers:

1. Relevant policies
2. Introduction to Fitness to Practise
3. Definition of Fitness to Practise
4. How might a Fitness to Practise issue or concern be identified?
5. What to do if a Fitness to Practise **concern** is identified within a centre
6. What to do if a Fitness to Practise **issue** is identified within a centre
7. What to do if a Fitness to Practise issue or concern is identified within NCFE
8. Glossary of terms
9. Appendix.

This process must be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures which can be found on the [NCFE website](#):

- Adverse Effect Process
- JCQ Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy

All centres delivering NCFE qualifications for entry into a registered profession must have their own Fitness to Practise policies, and this is a mandatory requirement at approval stage. Policy names and structure will vary by centre but will typically include:

- Fitness to Practise
- Safeguarding
- Whistleblowing
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Conflicts of Interest.

## NCFE responsibility

Any qualification which has a practise component, which will lead to a professional registration is governed by a requirement that centres and awarding organisations are monitoring the Fitness to Practise of both staff and learners.

NCFE must ensure that the behaviour, health, wellbeing and professional conduct of learners, delivery staff and colleagues does not constitute a risk to themselves or others.

The purpose of this document is to outline the action that should be taken by NCFE if a Fitness to Practise is a cause for concern for the following:

- Learners
- Centre/work placement delivery staff who are registered professionals
- NCFE colleagues who are registered professionals.

## Definition of issue and concern

A **concern** is defined as something which has the potential to impact on Fitness to Practise.

An **issue** is where an incident has occurred which has had an impact on a registrant's Fitness to Practise.

**Fitness to Practise** relates to clinical or technical knowledge and skills, professional behaviour and health.

An individual's Fitness to Practise may be challenged when their behaviour, health and/or professional conduct gives cause for concern. This could be as a result of:

- ill health
- criminal convictions (pending or spent)
- inappropriate behaviour
- misconduct
- incompetence
- issues outside the professional environment.

If a registrant's Fitness to Practise is compromised it may ultimately result in their professional, regulatory and/or statutory body (PRSB) refusing to record their award and entitlement to practise, or removal of their professional registration.

PRSBs are likely to have slightly different definitions and approaches to Fitness for Practise, check their websites and their publications for further clarification (appendix).

## Identification of an issue or concern

Issues or concerns may be identified through situations including but not limited to:

- centre monitoring of learner progress and behaviour
- discussing Fitness to Practise during external quality assurance reviews
- feedback from a learner about delivery staff
- feedback from placement mentors/supervisors/whistleblowers
- an issue reported to NCFE directly
- performance reviews of registered professionals working for NCFE.

## Concern identified within a centre

If NCFE becomes aware of a **concern** in a centre the external quality assurer (EQA) will document this within their report as an Action for Head Office to escalate to the Provider Assurance team. If notified outside a review this would be escalated to the Provider Assurance team by email.

Upon request by NCFE, within one week of identifying the concern the centre must share their own Fitness to Practise Policy and process and confirm they have invoked this and begun an investigation. The EQA must inform the Lead EQA that the centre has presented their Fitness to Practise Policy to them and that the investigation has commenced.

The Provider Assurance team will consider relevant action plans and sanctions in conjunction with the EQA. Once the investigation is concluded a summary is recorded and any best practice, lessons learned,

or process changes shared and implemented as appropriate.

NCFE must be satisfied that measures are in place to ensure that the concern does not become a Fitness to Practise **issue**, and the centre must continue to be monitored.

## Issue identified within a centre

If NCFE becomes aware of an **issue** in a centre the EQA documents this within their EQA report as an Action for Head Office to escalate to the Provider Assurance team. If notified outside a review this would be escalated to the Provider Assurance team by email.

Within 36 hours of identifying the issue the centre must share their own Fitness to Practise Policy and process with their EQA and confirm to their EQA they have invoked this and begun an investigation.

The EQA will then escalate this to the Provider Assurance team who will follow their usual investigatory processes.

Within one week of identifying the issue the Provider Assurance team will decide if the individual's Fitness to Practise is compromised and if the issue has impacted on programme delivery or patient safety. If it has the Audit, Risk and Assurance team (ARA) must be notified who would then contact the appropriate PRSB and a copy of the notification shared with the Provider Assurance team and LEQA/EQA.

If the centre refuses to notify the PRSB, NCFE must do this on their behalf. In this instance the Adverse Effects Process must be followed and ARA will make the notification.

Provider Assurance team will conclude the investigation following their normal process and any action plan or sanctions will be implemented accordingly.

NCFE has an obligation to notify the appropriate PRSB where there is an issue and this is particularly important where patient safety may be at risk. Specific guidance from the PRSB in relation to this should be reviewed. Points of contact can be found on the PRSBs' websites or for NCFE colleagues via ARA team.

## Issue identified within NCFE

If NCFE become aware of an issue or concern relating to an NCFE colleague, who is a registrant and is involved with one of our qualifications for registered professions.

The colleague who identifies or is notified should consult with their own line manager, and within 36 hours either they or their line manager must email both the individual's line manager and People Services confidentially.

People Services and the individual's line manager will address the issue or concern in line with the appropriate NCFE policy.

Within one week of the issue or concern being identified, People Services and the individual's line manager will make a joint decision about the severity of the incident and any actions to be taken. The PRSB will be notified via ARA within one week if this is required.

## Glossary of terms

**Centre:** college, training provider, course provider.

**Delivery staff:** assessors, tutors, internal quality assurers, educational supervisors or workplace mentors.

**Learners:** students, apprentices, trainees, pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians or pre-registration trainee dental nurses.

**NCFE colleague:** being a registrant is a requirement of some NCFE roles including subject specialists (content or assessment writers or reviewers), EQAs, Independent End Point Assessors or Health Associates.

**Professional, Regulatory and/or Statutory Body:** some healthcare professions require professional registration in order to enter employment. The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the PRSB for Pharmacy professionals and the General Dental Council (GDC) is the PRSB for Dental professionals.

**Registrants/registered professionals:** registered healthcare professionals such as registered pharmacy technicians, pharmacists, dental nurses or dentists. To work in any of these professions individuals must not only be suitably qualified but must also register with the appropriate PRSB.

## Appendix

Link to websites of PRSBs associated with this policy and relevant documents:

**Dental nursing:**

[General Dental Council \(GDC\) website](#)

[GDC's Student Professionalism and Fitness to Practise Policy](#)

**Pharmacy technician:**

[General Pharmaceutical Council \(GPhC\) website](#)

[GPhC Student Fitness to Practise Guidance](#)

**Health and care:**

[Health and Care Professions Council](#)

## Version control

<b>Date approved</b>	September 2025
<b>Approved by</b>	Kay Barrass, Quality Assurance Manager (EQA)
<b>Review date</b>	September 2026

Only approved versions of this document should be documented in the below table:

Version	Date	Revision authors	Summary of changes
v2.2	September 2025	EQA team	Review for 2025/2026 session. Updated formatting and policy template.