THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Student Participation and Practice Policy

Policy UP 26/7 (F26/1428)

Approver	Academic Board
Sponsor	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Owner	Director, Student Life and Community
Secretary	Academic Secretary
Policy Type	Academic
Policy Category	Academic Governance

1 Purpose

1.1 The University is committed to supporting student wellbeing and recognises that early, positive and coordinated responses to concerns relating to fitness to study and fitness to practice are critical to learning, academic and professional achievement and the broader student experience.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy is to set out a consistent approach to identifying and managing concerns relating to fitness to study and fitness to practice by:

(a) supporting students whose circumstances may be affecting their ability to meet the requirements of their course; and/or

(b) managing risk where a student's health, wellbeing or behaviour affects, or is likely to affect, the safety of the student or others, significantly disrupts University or placement environments, or affects the student's capacity to meet legal, ethical, behavioural or professional requirements relevant to their studies or professional practice

1.3 This Policy, which must be read in conjunction with the Student Support Policy, is intended to facilitate timely support and, wherever practicable, provide a pathway for students to return to study and/or practice-based learning safely and within an appropriate timeframe.

2 Definitions

In this policy and any associated procedures,

Term	Definition
Student participation	means a student's ability to engage with and progress in the learning and assessment activities of their course, and to function appropriately within University life. For the purposes of this Policy, concerns about student participation may be considered by reference to a student's fitness to study or fitness to participate and, where relevant, fitness to practice.
Fitness to study	means a student's capacity to participate and engage in their studies and function in University life. Fitness to study, which may also be referred to a fitness to participate, encompasses the student's ability to: a. meet the requirements of their course and achieve relevant academic and professional outcomes; b. demonstrate the behaviours expected in academic, residential and social settings; and c. manage the ordinary demands of higher education with the level of support that a higher education provider can reasonably be expected to provide.

Term	Definition
Fitness to practice	means a student's capacity to undertake professional practice components of their course safely and effectively, and to meet the professional, legal, ethical and behavioural requirements that apply in the course of their studies or potential subsequent professional practice settings (including placements and other third-party learning environments). It includes a student's ability to: a. demonstrate the knowledge, skills and professional judgement required to perform safely at the expected level for the relevant stage of the course; b. demonstrate professional behaviour and conduct standards expected in professional practice environments (including interactions with clients/patients, peers, staff and the public); c. comply with applicable legal, ethical, professional and placement-provider requirements (including any mandatory conditions for engaging in professional practice learning); d. maintain safe practice, including recognising limits, responding appropriately to feedback/supervision, and taking steps to manage health or wellbeing issues where they may affect safety or performance; e. engage with reasonable supports and adjustments available within the scope of what a higher education provider can reasonably provide, to enable safe continuation in professional practice learning where practicable.
Inherent requirements	means requirements that form the essential components of a course (or unit) that a student must meet to achieve the core learning outcomes and complete the course, while preserving academic integrity and, where relevant, professional accreditation and safe practice expectations.
Professional practice	means any course-related learning activity undertaken in a professional, industry, clinical, community, laboratory, fieldwork, or placement setting (on- or off-campus), including where the activity is hosted, supervised or delivered by a third party.
Fitness concern	means a concern that a student's fitness to study and/or fitness to practice may be impacted, such that support, adjustments, or risk management arrangements may be required.
Placement provider	means an external organisation or site that hosts, supervises or oversees a student undertaking professional practice as part of a course requirement.
Action plan	means a documented set of support arrangements, requirements (if any), review points and timeframes implemented to address a fitness concern.
University	means The University of Western Australia, and any and all subsidiary or associated entities.
University Community	means all individuals who engage in University activity and/or use University property.

3 Scope

3.1 This Policy applies to all students, including Higher Degree by Research students, across their period of enrolment, including students on campus, engaged in University-related activity away from campus (including placements, practicums, field trips, study abroad and other professional practice settings), and in University or private accommodation where the concern relates to University life or University-related activity.

3.2 This Policy may also apply to a former student seeking to return to study where their previous enrolment was interrupted, suspended or terminated under this Policy or an equivalent predecessor framework.

3.3 This Policy operates alongside (and does not replace) other University processes; pathway decisions are made in accordance with Section 6 of this policy and the associated procedures.

4 Policy Principles

4.1 The University adopts a support-first approach to concerns about students' fitness to study and fitness to practice, to assist students to continue or return to study and/or professional practice wherever safe and practicable.

4.2 The University promotes and fosters a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for students participating in study and professional practice. The University maintains clear accountabilities, support pathways and guidance concerning actions students and staff may take to enhance safety and security in University, online and professional practice environments.

4.3 The University encourages early identification of concerns and timely, coordinated support to reduce escalation and promote student wellbeing and academic success.

4.4 Students must be clearly informed of their rights and responsibilities and the processes that apply to the matter. Matters must be managed by staff in a coordinated, respectful, sensitive and non-judgemental manner, recognising the confidential nature of the matter and having regard to the student's privacy, wellbeing and cultural context.

4.5 Fitness to study and fitness to practice concerns must be managed in a culturally safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory manner. The University must consider whether racism, racial discrimination, marginalisation or other discriminatory conduct may have contributed to the concern, affected the student's participation or created barriers to accessing support. Where information indicates possible racism, discrimination, victimisation or a systemic cultural concern, the matter must be referred through the applicable support, complaint, conduct, safety or institutional escalation pathway.

4.6 The University promotes active collaboration between staff, students and, where relevant, third parties, including placement providers and health professionals, and seeks to involve the student in planning supports and outcomes wherever practicable. Collaboration and information sharing must occur in accordance with applicable privacy, confidentiality, consent and student support policies, and be limited to what is necessary and appropriate. Where consent limits the sharing of information, staff may provide general support, seek de-identified advice, and refer or escalate concerns through appropriate University wellbeing, safety or risk pathways where serious safety or wellbeing concerns arise.

4.7 Where practicable and appropriate, the University considers and implements reasonable adjustments and support arrangements, while maintaining academic standards and relevant conduct and professional standards.

4.8 Decisions and actions under this Policy are proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the concern and the level of risk, including potential risk to the public, and (where restrictions are required) the University applies the least restrictive measures reasonably available to support continuity of learning. Restrictive measures should be applied only where necessary and proportionate, including as a last resort where support and adjustments have been appropriately considered, implemented and reviewed where practicable, and where there remains a demonstrable and significant risk that cannot otherwise be mitigated.

4.9 The Policy may be applied where a student's health condition, wellbeing or behaviour is impacting, or may impact, their capacity to meet course requirements and/or to undertake professional practice safely and effectively, including where early intervention may support progress.

4.10 Concerns may be raised by University staff, clinical and research supervisors, students, placement providers and, where appropriate, third parties such as health professionals, recognising that relevant information may arise across both University and professional practice settings.

4.11 In determining the appropriate pathway, the University aims to consider whether a matter is primarily a wellbeing/capacity concern to be managed under this Policy, or whether it is more appropriately managed under alternative University processes, including student conduct, discipline, professional suitability, professional accreditation, registration or mandatory reporting processes.

4.12 The University observes procedural fairness, including (where practicable) informing the student of the concern, providing a reasonable opportunity to respond, and communicating decisions and reasons in writing; students have access to support, including cultural support if required, during the process in accordance with the associated procedures.

4.13 The University may vary steps in the associated procedures where necessary in the interests of fairness, health and safety, or where the student's circumstances make standard engagement impracticable (for example, crises or hospitalisation).

4.14 Information is managed in accordance with privacy, confidentiality, consent, records management and information-sharing requirements.

4.15 The University documents material decisions, action plans and review points to support consistent case management, continuity of support, and appropriate monitoring and service improvement.

4.16 A temporary difficulty, personal circumstance or support need does not of itself require management under this Policy where the matter can be appropriately addressed through ordinary student support, academic progress, assessment, exceptional variation of assessment mechanism or other existing University processes.

4.17 The existence of a disability, medical condition or mental health condition does not, of itself, constitute a fitness to study or fitness to practice concern. A concern arises only where the student's circumstances may affect their ability to participate in study or professional practice safely, effectively or with the level of support that the University can reasonably provide.

4.18 Support arrangements and decisions under this Policy must take account of the health, safety and wellbeing of the student and other persons who may be affected, including staff, other students, placement providers, clients, patients and members of the public.

4.19 The Policy must be administered lawfully, ethically, responsibly and consistently with the University's values. Monitoring and review must support the identification and timely response to systemic cultural concerns arising from the operation of the fitness to study and fitness to practice framework.

5 Inherent Requirements

5.1 Courses may include inherent requirements only where there is a clear and documented rationale that the requirement is necessary, academically or professionally defensible, and proportionate to the relevant learning, accreditation or safe practice context. Before determining that a student cannot meet an inherent requirement, the University must consider reasonable adjustments and alternative participation pathways, in consultation with relevant academic and disability support expertise.

5.2 Course inherent requirements must be approved under the applicable delegation of academic authority and periodically reviewed to confirm that they remain necessary, academically or professionally defensible and proportionate to course learning outcomes, accreditation requirements and safe practice expectations.

5.3 The development and review of inherent requirements must be informed by appropriate consultation with students, academic and professional staff, disability and student-support expertise and, where relevant, professional or placement stakeholders.

5.4 For courses that lead to professional qualifications, professional registration, or professional accreditation, inherent requirements may include professional practice requirements where these are necessary to meet relevant course learning outcomes, professional standards, accreditation requirements or safe practice expectations. The University must ensure that these requirements are interpreted and applied proportionately, and do not create barriers beyond those necessary for progression, completion or professional practice. Schools may continue to operationalise and communicate inherent requirements in ways that align with their disciplinary context, provided this does not contravene this policy.

5.5 The University is committed to making available clear information about inherent requirements for relevant courses to support informed decision-making and early engagement with appropriate support services.

5.6 Where practicable and appropriate, the University considers reasonable adjustments to assist a student to meet inherent requirements and participate on the same basis as other students.

5.7 Reasonable adjustments must not fundamentally alter the inherent requirements of the course or compromise academic integrity. Where an adjustment may affect the learning experience of other students, reasonable mitigation strategies must be explored before determining that the adjustment would have a significant, sustained and demonstrable adverse impact.

5.8 A concern may be managed under this Policy where a student, during their course of study, is temporarily unable, or may be unable, to meet inherent requirements, including where this affects safe and effective engagement in professional practice settings. The University recognises that disability or health conditions may be episodic or fluctuating and, where practicable and appropriate, supports reasonable adjustments and flexible participation arrangements, including staged or reduced engagement.

5.9 Students are encouraged to seek advice early and engage with University support services if they anticipate difficulty meeting inherent requirements; information disclosed for support and adjustment planning is handled sensitively in accordance with the Policy's privacy provisions.

5.10 In professional practice contexts, outcomes under this Policy may include restrictions, conditions or changes to professional practice activities where required to manage risk and/or where a student is unable to meet inherent requirements relevant to safe and effective professional practice.

6 Management framework

6.1 Fitness concerns are managed through a structured framework set out in the associated procedures, intended to provide timely, coordinated support, and referrals and to manage risk proportionately.

6.2 Concerns may be raised by Schools, Student Life or another relevant University area. The appropriate level of response is determined having regard to the nature, seriousness, urgency, complexity and risk profile of the concern. While early intervention is preferred wherever appropriate, a matter may commence at, or be escalated directly to, a higher level of response where warranted, provided the response is proportionate, documented, and consistent with student support, procedural fairness and privacy requirements.

6.3 The framework includes:

(a) Level 1: early or emerging concerns managed through local support and informal intervention;
(b) Level 2: continuing or serious concerns managed through formal intervention and coordinated case management; and
(c) Level 3: persistent or critical concerns considered through a senior panel or case conference process.

6.4 A matter may be entered at any level, or escalated between levels, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the concern, the level of risk, the student's capacity to engage with supports, and the response to earlier interventions.

6.5 At each level, the University considers appropriate supports and, where practicable and appropriate, reasonable adjustments, while maintaining academic standards and relevant conduct and professional standards.

6.6 Action plans may be used at any level to document supports, expectations (if any), timeframes, review dates, and the consequences of non-compliance.

6.7 Matters are reviewed in accordance with the associated procedures and recorded with an outcome to:

(a) close the matter where concerns are resolved;
(b) continue support, managing and monitoring under the current level; or
(c) escalate the matter to a higher level where required.

6.8 Where urgent risk management is required, interim measures may be applied in accordance with the interim measures provisions of this Policy.

6.9 Where a concern relates to professional practice, the University may engage with relevant placement providers and other parties as appropriate to support safe learning arrangements and continuity of progression, consistent with privacy and procedural fairness requirements.

6.10 A decision affecting a student's academic progression, capacity to meet course requirements, participation in professional practice learning or continuation in a course must be made by a body or officer exercising authority under a documented delegation of academic authority. Academic delegations must be clearly documented, understood, exercised consistently and reviewed periodically. Material decisions and reasons must be appropriately recorded.

6.11 Academic Board, through its relevant committee, provides academic governance oversight of systemic academic-quality matters arising from the operation of this Policy. Operational case management and individual decisions remain the responsibility of the authorised University areas and officers.

7 Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Students are encouraged to engage with supports, provide relevant information where appropriate, and comply with reasonable requirements set out in an action plan.

7.2 Staff who become aware of a potential concern are expected to refer the matter through the relevant University pathway in accordance with the associated procedures and are not expected to make clinical, disability or specialist risk assessments.

7.3 Schools and placement coordinators work with the central case management team to implement academic and professional practice arrangements, including adjustments and safe learning arrangements.

7.4 Student Life provides or coordinates specialist student support, wellbeing, disability and case management advice, and may consult with Schools, placement coordinators and other relevant University areas where required. Where a matter involves a Higher Degree by Research student, Student Life coordinates the University's response in collaboration with the Graduate Research School and relevant members of the research portfolio.

7.5 The central case management function coordinates individual case administration, records and operational monitoring.

7.6 Schools and the Graduate Research School, as applicable, are responsible for academic and research-training arrangements within their authority.

7.7 The Policy Owner is responsible for coordination, monitoring, review and institutional reporting.

7.8 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) is accountable for management oversight of the implementation of the Policy.

7.9 The Academic Board, through its relevant committee, oversees systemic academic-quality matters arising from the operation of this Policy.

7.10 The periodic review of this Policy and its associated procedures must include structured and meaningful consultation with students, academic and professional staff and other stakeholders directly affected by the fitness to study and fitness to practice framework. Consultation outcomes must be documented, considered in the review and, where appropriate, communicated to participants.

8 Interim measures (urgent risk management)

8.1 Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) or nominee (namely, the Director of Student Life and Community) reasonably considers that an immediate or continuing serious risk exists to any person, University activities, University property, a placement environment, members of the public (e.g. for students on placements at clinics or hospitals), or University interests, the University may impose time-limited interim measures to manage risk while the matter is considered under the procedures.

8.2 Where interim measures relate to a Higher Degree by Research student, the University will engage the Graduate Research School and relevant members of the research portfolio as appropriate, having regard to the impact of those measures on candidature, supervision and research activities.

8.3 Interim measures are neutral and risk-based, and do not constitute a determination of the student's fitness to study or fitness to practice.

8.4 Interim measures must be proportionate, documented, time-limited where practicable, and subject to review in accordance with the associated procedures, having regard to the impact on the student's study, support needs, procedural fairness and any relevant safety or professional practice considerations.

9 Possible outcomes and arrangements

9.1 In response to a fitness concern, the University may implement one or more outcomes proportionate to the circumstances, including:

(a) support arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments;
(b) an action plan with review dates and expectations;
(c) modified study arrangements (including mode of attendance, assessment arrangements where feasible, or adjusted enrolment in relation to unit selection);
(d) support for, or recommendation of, a voluntary interruption where appropriate;
(e) withdrawal from, restriction of, or conditions on professional practice activities (e.g. clinical placements) where necessary to manage risk;
(f) restrictions on access to facilities or premises where necessary;
(g) requirements for relevant medical or professional evidence to support ongoing arrangements or return;
(h) referral of the matter for consideration under the Regulations for Student Conduct and Discipline where the fitness concern involves possible student misconduct, including misconduct affecting other students' fitness to study or practise, which may result in a reprimand, restriction or suspension of privileges, exclusion or expulsion, as authorised by the applicable Penalty Matrix; and
(i) withdrawal from, restriction of, or conditions on enrolment in a course for other situations such as a student's health-related issues or where necessary to manage risk.

9.2 Where practicable, outcomes are implemented with a view to facilitating a supported return to study and/or professional practice learning in an appropriate timeframe.

10 Student support and procedural fairness

10.1 The University, where practicable, informs and consults with the student about decisions that may affect them and provides the student with an opportunity to respond, except where immediate action is required to manage serious risk.

10.2 The student may be accompanied by a support person at meetings held under the associated procedures, subject to reasonable conditions set out in those procedures.

10.3 Where a student is unwilling or unable to engage, the University may proceed where reasonable to do so, including on the basis of written reports and available information.

10.4 Decisions and key outcomes are communicated to the student in writing in accordance with the associated procedures.

10.5 Where a matter under this Policy involves, or may involve, a student's disability or health condition, reasonable adjustments to the process must be considered, including adjustments to communication, meetings, timeframes, evidence requirements, support planning or staged participation where appropriate. Relevant disability or student support expertise, including UniAccess where appropriate, may be consulted to support fair, accessible and informed decision-making.

10.6 Students must be treated equitably, supported to make informed decisions and provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions concerning their study, support arrangements, action plans and professional practice participation. Information provided to students must clearly explain the relevant process, available support, reasonably foreseeable academic or professional consequences, review rights and actions the student may take.

11 Return to study and/or return to professional practice learning

11.1 A student returning from leave must notify the University of any material change to their health condition, disability, functional capacity or support requirements where those changes may affect their participation in study or professional practice learning, so that appropriate supports, reasonable adjustments and any conditions for return can be considered.

11.2 Return to study and/or professional practice learning may be subject to conditions, including the provision of relevant evidence, such as a letter from a medical specialist, and an agreed support plan. The return process must include structured review and support arrangements appropriate to the circumstances, which may include staged re-entry, agreed review points and adjustment of supports where required.

12 Review and appeal

12.1 Decisions made under the associated procedures are subject to review and/or appeal in accordance with the relevant University review and appeal policy and processes, as specified in those procedures.

13 Privacy, records and reporting

13.1 Information is handled sensitively and shared internally on a need-to-know basis for the purpose of supporting the student and managing risk.

13.2 Information is not ordinarily disclosed externally without the student's consent, except where permitted or required by law, or where necessary to prevent or manage serious risk (including where contact with an emergency contact is required).

13.3 The University establishes and periodically reviews institutional indicators for monitoring the operation and academic impact of this Policy. These may include the occurrence and outcomes of matters, effects on student progression and professional practice learning, recurring concerns, review and appeal outcomes and the effectiveness of action plans and support arrangements. Material risks arising from the operation of this Policy must be identified, assessed, escalated and managed through the applicable academic governance and institutional risk-management arrangements.

13.4 Where monitoring or review identifies a systemic barrier, recurring concern, control weakness, cultural concern or material academic-quality risk, corrective or improvement action must be assigned to an accountable University area or officer. Actions must be monitored until completed, superseded or formally closed. Where appropriate, completed actions must be evaluated to determine whether the underlying issue has been addressed and the intended improvement has been achieved.

13.5 The central case management function maintains secure records and produces periodic de-identified and aggregated reporting on the occurrence, nature and outcomes of matters managed under this Policy. Reporting must support the identification of material trends, critical incidents, recurring concerns, systemic barriers and underlying causes, including matters affecting academic standards, student progression, professional practice learning and the accessibility or effectiveness of support arrangements.

13.6 The relevant Academic Board committee must periodically consider consolidated, de-identified information concerning systemic academic-quality matters arising from the operation of this Policy. Reporting must include, as applicable:

(a) material trends and recurring concerns;
(b) effects on student progression and professional practice learning;
(c) systemic barriers, cultural concerns and underlying causes;
(d) material and emerging academic-quality risks;

(e) review and appeal outcomes;
(f) corrective and improvement actions and their status; and
(g) evidence concerning the effectiveness of completed actions.

13.7 The Committee must provide advice and assurance to Academic Board on matters affecting academic standards and the quality of teaching, learning and research training. Material matters requiring timely institutional attention must be reported promptly through the appropriate governance or risk pathway.

14 Records management

14.1 Records relating to this Policy and matters managed under it are stored securely and managed in accordance with the University's records management and privacy requirements.

Legislative Context

Relevant Legislation or Regulations
University of Western Australia Act 1911 (WA)
University of Western Australia Statute (2020)

End