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| **UniLogo** | **FITNESS TO TEACH AND DISABILITY SUPPORT PROCEDURES** |

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) recognises the benefits that teachers with a disability can bring to education and actively welcomes applications from trainees with a disability. For teacher education courses, whilst needing to ensure that all applicants have the health and physical capacity to teach (Department for Education (DfE) ITT Criteria document), we are also mindful of the implications of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001), the Equality Act 2010) and the Higher Education Occupational Health Physicians/Practitioners (HEOPS) – Trainee Teachers – Standards of medical fitness to train guidance (2014). The Graduate School of Education addresses disability positively and does not discriminate against applicants with disabilities. It strives to ensure that such applicants are given every opportunity to succeed with the support of its own staff, staff in partner schools and wider University support services.

**School Direct**

This document applies to all Core ITE programmes and all School Direct Fee-paying programmes within the Graduate School of Education. For School Direct Salaried programmes, the employing schools are responsible for completing the Fitness to Teach process and for supporting their trainees/participants within the school environment. They are also responsible for confirming to the Graduate School of Education that a satisfactory fitness to teach assessment has been carried out for their School Direct salaried trainees. The Graduate School of Education is responsible for supporting School Direct Salaried trainees with disabilities and/or learning difficulties during their academic studies. This document is therefore relevant to the School Direct Salaried route but should be read with the above distinctions in mind.

**Fitness to Teach and Disability Support**

It is important for applicants/trainees and ITE staff to understand the differences between the Fitness to Teach medical assessment and an applicant’s rights under the Equality Act for disability support. Regular communication between GSE, the AccessAbility and Wellbeing teams and the Occupational Health assessment team ensures that all parties who might be involved in discussion with a disabled applicant/trainee are fully informed. To clarify, the Fitness to Teach assessment is related to a trainee’s time spent in a school environment as a trainee teacher. Wider assessment from the AccessAbility and Wellbeing teams ensures that trainees with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are well supported during their academic studies.

**Determining Fitness to Teach at application stage**

All successful applicants are informed that the offer of a place is conditional upon being deemed Fit to Teach and they are required to complete a confidential medical questionnaire. This is returned, via a secure online portal to the Occupational Health assessment team, who make the ‘Fitness to Teach’ decision based on its information, in line with the guidance provided in the Higher Education Occupational Health Physicians/Practitioners (HEOPS) – Trainee Teachers – Standards of medical fitness to train guidance (2014) (<http://www.heops.org.uk/HEOPS_Teaching_Students_fitness_standards_2014_v9.pdf>) . This will result in one of three decisions being conveyed to Admissions:

1. The trainee is Fit to Teach
2. The trainee is Fit to Teach with recommendations/adjustments
3. The trainee is not Fit to Teach.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to seek further information before the Fitness to Teach decision can be made. In these cases, the Occupational Health professional, with consent from the applicant, will discuss any proposed adjustments with the Partnership Director to ensure that any such adjustments are reasonable within the teaching context. If necessary, this may result in an applicant needing to defer their studies (or interrupt if the trainee is already registered on the course) if the adjustments required are deemed reasonable but a suitable placement cannot be found within these constraints for the appropriate period of time.

**Re-assessing Fitness to Teach once training has commenced**

If an applicant fails to disclose a pre-existing disability on the medical form which would have deemed him or her not fit to teach, the university has the right to reassess the trainee and if necessary, require the trainee to leave the course.

If a trainee’s physical or mental health changes during the year, the University, or the trainee, has the right to ask the Occupational Health assessment team for another Fitness to Teach assessment.

**Accessing Fitness to Teach after a break in study**

If a trainee interrupts their ITE programme or fails and returns for a re-sit opportunity, a further fitness to teach assessment will be required on their return, regardless of whether the reason for return is connected to the trainee’s health or capacity to teach.

**Disclosing a disability on application, at interview or at registration**

Disclosure of relevant health matters and disabilities is a requirement of the fitness to teach process. However, any information disclosed via the Fitness to Teach process remains confidential to the Occupational Health assessment team and is used solely for the assessment of fitness to teach unless permission is given by the applicant/trainee for disclosure to other parties via an OH report.  
  
Separately, all applicants are given the opportunity to disclose any disabilities at application and again at registration (and at any point during the programme thereafter) in order that appropriate support can be provided by the University. However, an individual’s right not to disclose in this context is fully respected.

When applicants are invited for interview, they are given the opportunity to provide details of any medical, special or cultural needs that should be met during the interview process. This information is passed to the admissions tutor and appropriate arrangements are made. If an applicant declares a disability for the first time during the interview, the admissions tutor should signpost the applicant to the AccessAbility/Wellbeing team for further information on support available.

If an applicant declares a disability on their application form and is subsequently offered a place, this information is passed to the University’s AccessAbility/Wellbeing team who will contact the applicant before the start of the programme inviting them to book an appointment for a meeting with an AccessAbility/Wellbeing advisor who will then, if appropriate draw up an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP provides information to the relevant teaching department on what support or adjustments are required and whose responsibility it is to provide them. It will not, as a matter of course, provide information on the actual disability or medical condition; it will only provide details of the adjustments needed.

If a trainee declares a disability for the first time at registration or to a member of staff at any other point in the year, they should be encouraged to contact the AccessAbility/Wellbeing team direct to make an appointment to see an advisor.

**Disclosure during the Fitness to Teach Assessment process**

If a disability or medical condition is disclosed during the Fitness to Teach process which is relevant to the support available from the AccessAbility or Wellbeing Services teams, the Occupational Health professional will invite the applicant to contact the relevant University team to discuss support options.

**Disability disclosure and school placements**

In addition to the Individual Learning Plan process and the Fitness to Teach process, there are times when it might be appropriate for a wider group of staff to be made aware of any individual support needs. If the trainee discloses a disability at application stage or at registration, there is an additional process whereby the trainee is contacted by Partnership Office staff for permission for them to be able to inform the trainee’s Subject Leader, placement school’s ITE Coordinator and University Visiting Tutor of their declared disability so that support can be made available as appropriate. The trainee has the choice of giving consent, or not to relevant individuals. A meeting between key Partnership Office staff is held prior to each placement commencing to ensure that where a disclosure, ILP or Reasonable Adjustment has been received the appropriate people have all been informed subject to the relevant permissions being gained.

**Key Documents**

*DfE ITT Training Criteria*[*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria)

*Higher Education Occupational Health Physicians/Practitioners (HEOPS) – Trainee Teachers – Standards of medical fitness to train guidance (2014) (*[*http://www.heops.org.uk/HEOPS\_Teaching\_Students\_fitness\_standards\_2014\_v9.pdf*](http://www.heops.org.uk/HEOPS_Teaching_Students_fitness_standards_2014_v9.pdf) *Equality Act 2010:* [*http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents*](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents)

*The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001:* [*http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/10/contents*](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/10/contents)

*The Education (Health Standards) (England) Regulations 2003:* [*http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/3139/contents/made*](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/3139/contents/made)

*University of Exeter Fitness to Practise procedure:* [*http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/fitness/*](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/fitness/)

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**Fitness to Teach Process for Core ITE & School Direct Fee-Paying Programmes**

Fit to Teach with Adjustments

Fit to Teach

Inform Admissions, clear to register

Ask Partnership Director if adjustment required is reasonable. (Can it be accommodated within a school setting?)

No

Yes

Not fit to teach

Inform Admissions

Reject

Refer to AccessAbility/ Wellbeing/ other appropriate agencies

Inform Admissions, Fit to Teach with reasonable adjustment.

Clear to register

AccessAbility/Wellbeing produce Individual Learning Plan which contains info about Uni-based adjustments and advice for trainee about placements.

The ILP should NOT contain any **conditions** for placements as this will have been discussed under FtT adjustments.

ILP information distributed to appropriate staff in GSE and placement schools where appropriate.

Placements informed of the reasonable adjustment expected of them if appropriate after informing trainee of what is going to be said

Action by OH Assessment team

Action by Partnership Office

Action by AccessAbility/Wellbeing

Fit to Teach with Recommendations   
(might need Additional Support)

University OH Assessment team have a concern arising from the medical form; make further enquiries and receive sufficient information to make a decision