

STUDENT INFORMATION GUIDE

Professional standards, Ethical Behaviour &
Student Support framework ([ProFESS](#))

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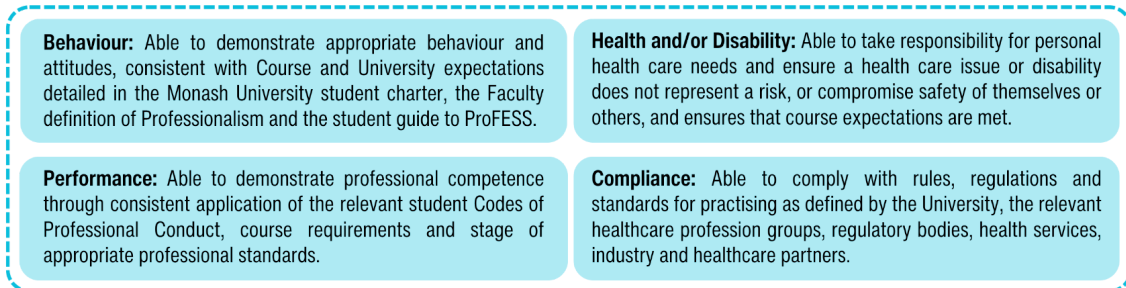
Table of Contents

<i>Professional Standards, Ethical Behaviours and Student Support (ProFESS)</i>	2
<i>ProFESS in a Nutshell</i>	3
<i>Why do we need ProFESS?</i>	3
<i>What is a Fitness for Practice concern?</i>	4
<i>Assessment and Fitness for Practice</i>	5
<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	5
<i>Appendix A: Personal challenges or difficulties?</i>	7
<i>Appendix B: What is a professional behaviour lapse?</i>	8
<i>Appendix C: Defining the Seriousness of a FfP concern</i>	9

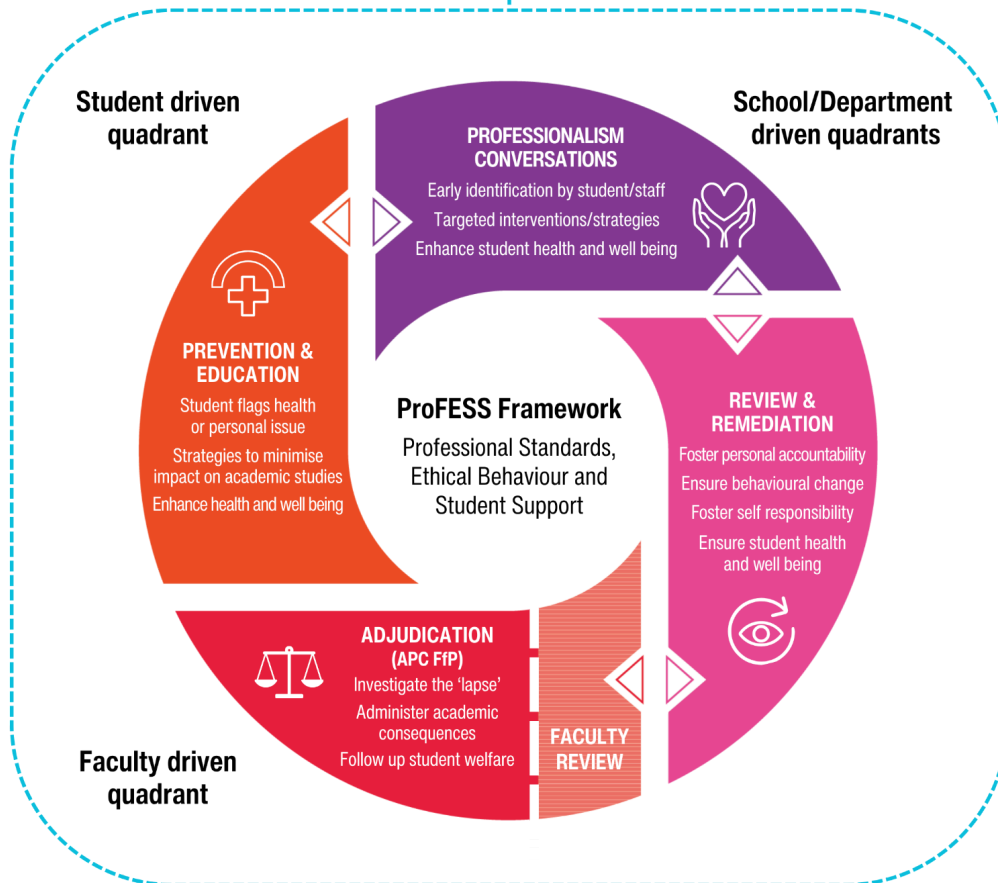
Professional Standards, Ethical Behaviours and Student Support (ProFESS)

This information guide is an overview of the *Professional Standards, Ethical Behaviour and Student Support* (ProFESS) framework used to assist you meet Fitness for Practice¹ course expectations, especially if you are experiencing difficulties.

Fitness for Practice (FfP) Model



Choose the appropriate ProFESS quadrant/s to match the seriousness of the FfP concern



¹ Fitness for Practice is explained on page 4.

Professionalism and Fitness for Practice are an integral part of curricula in the majority of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate courses in the faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University. This reflects the importance we place on the need for our students to develop a strong understanding of practical professionalism (as it is embedded in Fitness for Practice). The process is designed to assist you to become a safe and effective practitioner and/or researcher, especially when you are dealing with, or challenged by, uncertainty or professional/personal difficulties (see appendix A).

Fitness for Practice course expectations apply to every aspect of teaching and learning within our courses, irrespective of where they are delivered - on campus, online, in a research laboratory, a non-clinical workplace or on clinical placement.

ProFESS in a Nutshell

ProFESS is a student centred process to empower you to be an active agent in your own learning. Sometimes a professional behaviour lapse can occur for unexpected reasons, including ill health and personal difficulties, resulting in a significant impact on your professional and personal growth (Appendix A). The ProFESS framework supports you to work through these difficulties. It uses a behaviour change approach to strengthen your understanding of professional standards and outline strategies to help you meet Fitness for Practice (FfP) course requirements (Appendix B).

When you are requested to attend a ProFESS meeting, this is to discuss a professional behaviour lapse(s), which has occurred. Your educators attempt to do this as early as possible to ensure you have sufficient time to address the concern so that you can meet your Fitness for Practice requirements. By engaging in the process you will find that your Professional Identity Formation and understanding of professionalism deepens. Attending any academic performance meetings can be stressful and bringing a support person with you often eases this tension. If you identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student, Gukwonderuk is able to provide a support person to accompany you, if you wish. If you are registered as having a Disability, consider inviting your case worker as your support person. Please observe all university requirements in relation to a support person



Key focus of ProFESS *Identify a problem early and intervene quickly and appropriately to enable behaviour change consistent with course expectations.*

Why do we need ProFESS?



Professional excellence is as essential to effective health care and research practice as academic excellence. Having a strong sense of a professional identity and understanding of professionalism will assist you to function safely and effectively within your chosen field of endeavour. For many 21st century health professional groups this is regarded as a core competency.

Developing professional habits of thinking, acting and feeling happens within the broader aspects of your life. Some of you may already have experienced significant life events, or these may develop during your studies. Of course they can impact our behaviour in unintended ways. At other times professional boundaries can appear that we had no idea existed. ProFESS is designed to help you identify how to manage difficulties or challenges and still meet your professional responsibilities or course expectations. This is summarised in the following five points:

- Foster all students health and wellbeing, triaging support options as needed and supporting the importance of personal care in professional and research practice.
- Develop appropriate habits of thinking and being that are consistent with the roles and responsibilities of a 21st century healthcare practitioner and researcher.
- Build a strong understanding of the privileges and responsibilities of being a healthcare professional in the 21st century.
- Promote professional standards and codes of conduct for guiding professional behaviour choices and decision-making when values and beliefs conflict.
- Address individual learners' needs while simultaneously ensuring our assessment and progression pathways are consistent with our duty of care to the public.

What is a Fitness for Practice concern?

Fitness for Practice (FfP) has four domains, each with its own competency statement:

- **Behaviour**
Able to demonstrate appropriate behaviour and attitudes, consistent with Course and University expectations detailed in the Monash University student charter, the faculty definition of professionalism and the student guide to ProFESS.
- **Performance**
Able to demonstrate professional competence through consistent application of the relevant student codes of professional conduct, course requirements and stage appropriate professional standards.
- **Health and/or disability**
Able to take responsibility for personal health care needs and ensure a health care issue or disability does not represent a risk, or compromise safety of themselves or others, and ensures course expectations are met.
- **Compliance**
Able to comply with rules, regulations, and standards for practising as defined by the University, the relevant healthcare profession groups, regulatory bodies, health services, industry, and healthcare partners.

Meeting Fitness for Practice course expectations is a compulsory course requirement in all the courses in our faculty.

Assessment and Fitness for Practice

Professionalism will continue to be taught and assessed within standard courses. Fitness for Practice course expectations are also monitored by teaching, learning and support staff. When difficulties or concerns about professional behaviour or Fitness for Practice are noted then the ProFESS framework is activated to try to help you **meet** course expectations as Fitness for Practice is a compulsory course requirement.
https://www.monash.edu/students/study-support/academic-progress/receiving-notice/course-requirements#_MNHS

An academic progress risk level three is triggered when you do not meet one or more compulsory Fitness for Practice course requirements usually for serious concerns (Appendix E). Referral to Adjudication may result in an Academic Progress Committee (APC) – Fitness for Practice hearing.
(<https://www.monash.edu/students/study-support/academic-progress>).



Key point

Dual pathways of assessment for professionalism and professional identity formation occur through standard course curricula and Fitness for Practice (FFP) course expectations

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I have been asked to attend a ProFESS meeting – am I in trouble?

A. No. ProFESS is not punitive. If you have been asked to attend a ProFESS meeting it means one or more of your educators have identified a Fitness for Practice concern. This can happen for many reasons. A ProFESS meeting ensures you are properly informed about the concern and we have the opportunity of working with you to address it.

Q. If I have a ProFESS meeting does this mean the faculty is trying to get rid of me?

A. No. We value all our students and want you to be the best healthcare practitioner or researcher you can be. Modern healthcare practice and research can be very challenging. Learning knowledge, skills and attitudes as a student to help you navigate difficulties can be hugely beneficial to you as a graduate. ProFESS is a process developed to help you do this.

Q. I know students who have failed a year or been excluded based on Fitness for Practice. Doesn't this mean it is punitive?

A. No. Fitness for Practice is part of your academic program of study. It is a compulsory course requirement that you must meet in order to progress through your study programs. ProFESS has been developed as an academic support process to help you.

Q. Is there any difference between a Professionalism Conversation meeting and a Review and Remediation meeting?

A. We know there are many reasons that a professional behaviour lapse can occur but we also know that learning what this means, and being able to rectify it is essential. It demonstrates your Professional Identity formation is on track. Some people need a little more help than others to do that so the type of support you may be offered in a Professionalism conversation meeting will be a little less structured than it might be in a Review and Remediation meeting.

Q. Is one meeting more serious than another?

A. Often educators will be more concerned about the type of Professional behaviour lapse (or there may be more than one). This may mean they have concerns you are not meeting expected professionalism standards. A Review and Remediation meeting is more appropriate in this setting to be able to address these concerns.

Q. How can I get the best use out of ProFESS?

A. Step forward, not back. Some students think if they hide their difficulties or try to avoid them then they will somehow go away. Of course, they don't. This can cause problems to escalate. Experiencing difficulties as a student is not the problem. Not owning it, accepting help or working toward a solution is a problem. ProFESS is a support tool – ask for a Prevention and Education meeting to find out what support and guidance might assist you before a professional behaviour lapse happens. The University wants to help and wants you to succeed.

Q. I have been given an Action Plan - what should I do with it?

A. The first thing is to fill out your column. What steps do you intend to take to make sure the issues you have been chatting about resolve. This is a commitment on your part. It is quite powerful and will help you modify things that are causing you difficulty. It also provides a 'jumping off' point for conversations with your educators and shows you how much progress you have made.

Q. I have been given a Professionalism Performance plan. Why should I follow it?

A. A Professionalism Performance plan can act like a map for you. Clearly there are some serious concerns and modifications that need to happen. The plan can help you demonstrate you are serious about meeting your Fitness for Practice course expectations. Embrace the opportunity. Your educators want to work **with** you to help you achieve the standard but ultimately the choice is yours.

Appendix A: Personal challenges or difficulties?

A number of personal challenges can impact on your learning or demonstration of professionalism. As detailed below student concerns/problems can occur for a variety of reasons and discussing these with the appropriate staff can provide you with guidance and support to help remedy the problem. Additional support information is in [Managing the Maze](#).

Common challenges students experience include:

Adjustment difficulties e.g. difficulty adapting to University; difficulty adjusting to clinical environment; international student or cultural challenges.

Course challenges e.g. confused about placements or course expectations; difficulty with mandatory requirements.

Family problems e.g. difficulty with a family member; abuse/harassment by family member; relationship challenges within the family.

Financial concerns e.g. couch surfing, sleeping in a car etc.

Health concern e.g. acute illness; previously undiagnosed chronic illness/disability; recent trauma; stress/distress related to bullying/harassment/intimidation.

Learning difficulties e.g. struggling with academic workload; difficulty with language or study techniques; difficulty with academic teaching staff; difficulty with course requirements.

Lifestyle problems e.g. external demands on time (elite athlete); outside work commitments impacting on study time; use/misuse of alcohol or drugs; excessive engagement with hobbies such as online gaming or addictive activities.

Personal issues e.g. recent personal trauma/challenge; death or illness of close friend/family member; personal relationship issues; existential problems.

Social difficulties e.g. interpersonal difficulties within the student cohort; feeling of isolation or not fitting in.

Appendix B: What is a professional behaviour lapse?

Professional behaviour lapses are grouped into six categories. At times some of the behaviours detailed here, may be managed under Academic progress, Discipline or Misconduct University policies and regulations.

Behaviour Category	Example of Behaviour
Failure to Engage	Absent or late for assigned activities; not meeting deadlines; poor initiative; general disorganisation; cutting corners; poor teamwork; language difficulties; poor participation.
Dishonest behaviours	Lying; cheating; data fabrication; data falsification; misrepresentation; acting without consent; denying responsibility.
Disrespectful behaviour	Poor verbal/nonverbal communication; not complying with rules & regulations; inappropriate use of social media; inappropriate clothing; disruptive behaviour in teaching sessions; privacy &/or confidentiality violations; bullying; harassment and/or abuse; discrimination; sexual harassment and/or abuse ² .
Poor self-awareness	Avoiding feedback; not accepting feedback; not sensitive to another's needs; blaming external factors rather than own inadequacies; resisting change; not aware of own limitations; lacking insight into own behaviour; not demonstrating accountability.
Delayed professional identity	Not responsive to, or accepting the required standards; poor understanding of patient/client need; behaviour that presents risk to patient safety; unable to accept appropriate level of professional responsibility
Unethical behaviour	Poor demonstration of stage appropriate role virtues; Not demonstrating stage appropriate ethical principles; Not demonstrating integrity.

² Within Monash University this is initially managed as a Misconduct issue

Appendix C: Defining the Seriousness of a FfP concern

This table provides you with a guide to how the faculty may decide whether a FfP concern is considered Minor, Moderate or Serious.

Minor	Moderate	Serious
A single FfP concern – student acknowledges the concern and responds to it. Apology is given if needed. Responsive to support and/or remediation.	Repetitive episodes of a single FfP concern in spite of support and /or remediation; multiple educators reporting a single concern, and/or multiple episodes of different concerns.	Student has attended 1, 2 or 3 review and remediation meetings without satisfactorily addressing remediation plans and/or behavioural change targets within an acceptable timeframe.
FfP concern(s) that does not represent a safety concern for self, peers, patients, or staff, which resolves with support and/or remediation.	Behaviour that could potentially cause harm to self, peers, teachers, or patients. Behaviour that represents a low level safety concern to self, peers, teachers, or patients.	A significant safety concern for self, staff, peers, or patients and/or FfP concern resulting in removal from placement.
Student accepts responsibility and is responsive to feedback about the FfP concern.	Irresponsible/unethical behaviour. Student lacks insight/awareness and/or is resistant to feedback.	Student is nonresponsive to feedback, support and/or remediation strategies. Lacks insight and/or does not accept responsibility for unethical behaviour
Student is accountable for the FfP concern or professional behaviour lapse.	Student does not accept responsibility for the FfP concern or denies accountability.	Student does not demonstrate remorse or accept responsibility/accountability for the FfP concern. Repetitive behavioural issues despite prior remediation
Single/sudden/unexpected health issue affecting studies. Acute or chronic health issue(s) that affects studies and impacts on FfP performance. Student is well enough to address the concern.	Ongoing concerns re student's health &/or wellbeing that intermittently appears to affect studies. Student does not appear to be managing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant health issues impacting on academic studies or course requirements. Limited student response to care needs. • Illegal and/or Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) reportable behaviour.

FfP = Fitness for Practice