

Raising Concerns

What constitutes a concern?

'Concern' is deliberately a broad term, referring to any situation that represents a potential risk or barrier to a student's success. This encompasses a range of issues from academic weakness, health impacting on practise and issues relating to behaviour, attitude and conduct. Raising a concern can be considered as a notification to the medical school of a potential risk or barrier to a student's successful study and/ or practise, or a referral for individual monitoring and support. Raising a concern does not imply that any outcome or decision has been made and it is not a punishment or a fitness to practise referral. However, the most serious concerns can escalate in that direction where appropriate.

If there are concerns regarding a student's health/welfare that are not considered to represent a risk or barrier to successful study/practise, these can be discussed with the student support team more generally on FMHS-studentsupport@buckingham.ac.uk

Please note that the concerns process is not an emergency helpline. If urgent intervention is required for a student, please contact the student support team on FMHS-studentsupport@buckingham.ac.uk. Concerns can be raised in addition if appropriate but will be followed up separately once the student is able to engage.

Purpose of the concerns process

The purpose of the concerns process is to identify students at risk of being unsuccessful in their progress through medical school and to support them to mitigate the identified risk. The condensed and intensive nature of the medical course means that it is important to identify problems and associated support needs for individual students as early as possible to minimise the impact of those problems and to maximise opportunities for development.

Who can raise a concern?

Concerns can be raised by anyone who is concerned about a student's ability to function appropriately as a medical student and/ or future doctor for any reason. This could include university staff, students (including the student themselves), healthcare professionals, patients, carers and members of the public. Any member of staff can raise a concern on behalf of a member of the public or other person who may have communicated their concerns to the medical school via any route. There is no requirement that the person completing the form will discuss the issue with the student before or after the concerns form is completed, however it would be helpful to note whether or not the student is aware of the concern being raised.

How to raise a concern?

Concerns will normally be reported using the 'Concerns Reporting Form', which is widely available and published on the Medical School VLE. The form can be accessed here:

<https://emer.buckingham.ac.uk/concerns/new>. If there is supporting documentation that should accompany the concern, this can be sent to FMHS-concerns@buckingham.ac.uk

The concerns reporting form itself contains guidance on the nature of the concern being raised and you will be asked to choose the most relevant category and subcategory. However, it is not important if you are unsure which category to choose as all new concerns will be triaged by a group of medical school staff and these details can be updated if necessary.

What happens when the Medical School receives a concern?

- i) Concerns will be reviewed by the medical school on a regular, but not daily, basis. If urgent intervention is required, please also contact the student support team on FMHS-studentsupport@buckingham.ac.uk
- ii) The medical student will be informed of any concerns, however, will not be informed of who raised the concern unless this is clear from the concern text.
- iii) The concerns will be reviewed in light of the severity of the issue and any relevant previous concerns and will be allocated a category (academic, professionalism or health) and a level. A member of staff will be identified to manage the concern. Where there are contributing health and/or pastoral issues, these will normally be supported separately to any professionalism or academic issues.
- iv) Students will normally be referred to relevant guidance and support and, depending on the nature and level of the concern, may also be asked to meet with a member of staff, engage in training, write a reflection or develop an action plan relating to the situation or engage in other support and/or remediation activities.
- v) The process is intended to allow for support mechanisms to be put in place as soon as a need is identified to reduce the risk of deterioration. Most low level concerns will usually be resolved within a short period of time once the recommended actions have been completed and will have no implications for a student's studies or future practise.
- vi) Where a student has multiple concerns and/or more serious concerns, their broader concerns profile will be reviewed by a progress panel or full concerns committee until such time that all concerns have been remediated and the student is considered to be meeting expectations of the course overall.
- vii) Where problems continue or escalate, or where there are very serious concerns, there is the potential for a student to receive a warning, be referred to the student fitness to practise process and/or to the Dean.
- viii) To maintain student confidentiality, feedback will not normally be provided to people who have raised concerns. However, an acknowledgement of successful submission is provided within the online form and verbal or written confirmation that the concern has been received and is being acted upon can be provided on request.

Relevant staff contacts:

Dr Emma Spikings, Student Support Lead (E: emma.spikings@buckingham.ac.uk)

Prof Greg Simons, Academic Support Lead (E: greg.simons@buckingham.ac.uk)

Dr Andrew Findlow, Professionalism Support Lead (E: andrew.findlow@buckingham.ac.uk)

Mrs Nikki Dean, Student Support Manager (concerns) (E: nikki.dean@buckingham.ac.uk)