



SUPPORT TO STUDY POLICY

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Support to Study policy

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

1.1 Support to Study applies to students studying at the university full-time or part-time, on undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research and apprenticeship programmes. Support to Study also applies to students who are:

- studying on educational exchanges or are otherwise away from the campus
- undertaking a year in business / industry
- exchange students registered with another higher education institution who are being hosted by the university
- on a foundation year course hosted or run by the university

1.2 Students are expected to take responsibility for organising their academic work, their personal lives, and their participation in university life in line with the Student Conduct Regulations and e General Regulations. Students will be held accountable for their actions, both academic and non-academic. During online sign-up students agree to be bound by the University regulations and policies of the university as amended from time to time. All applicable University regulations are enforced under the Student Conduct Regulations, breach of which may lead to discontinuation of registration or withdrawal of facilities.

1.3 The emphasis of this process is to provide support for a student to successfully continue their studies at the university when an area of concern is noted. However, there may be times when it is considered not to be in the best interests of the student, or the university and its community to allow the student to continue studying because they are not fit to do so. In these circumstances it may be appropriate for the university to recommend an interruption of studies or a withdrawal from studies. In cases where a student is studying towards a professional qualification in a regulated health or social work profession the University Support to Practise Policy and Procedures should be followed when there is a cause for concern. In circumstances where the student cannot reasonably be expected to attend meetings in person (e.g. students on an international exchange or due to

hospitalisation) the university will endeavour to facilitate suitable alternative arrangements to enable the student to participate but has the option to proceed in the student's absence if all reasonable steps have been taken to allow the student to attend.

- 1.4 The university is an academic community and the pastoral services it provides for students are those appropriate to this setting. Where a student requires specialist, medical or other care, the university will refer to the NHS and other statutory services that can provide appropriate support.
- 1.5 Where the conduct of the student leading to the concern is also a misconduct offence under the Student Conduct Regulations, it is anticipated the misconduct aspect will be concluded before Support to study is assessed. Where necessary a student may be temporarily suspended from their programme or study and / or restricted from campus pending a Support to study process. Every reasonable effort will be taken to advance the process promptly and to not disadvantage the student.

2. DEFINITION OF SUPPORT TO STUDY

- 2.1 If students meet the academic requirements detailed in the Attendance and Academic Regulations - in particular requirements related to attendance, participation in teaching and learning activities, submission of coursework and assessments and participation in field work where relevant – they will be considered to be engaged with their studies.

Students will be considered fit to study if they can consistently and practically undertake their academic studies as required by their degree programme in a way that does not present risk to or serious concern about them or risk to other members of the university community.

Students may self-identify as not fit to study or participate through an interruption of studies, a change of mode of attendance or through the submission of Extenuating Circumstances.

- 2.2 A concern about a student's fitness to study may also be raised by another party including School Academic or Administrative staff, Professional Services staff or another student. A cause for concern about a student's fitness to study may relate to a wide range of concerns including, but not limited to failure to engage with academic studies; failure to undertake fieldwork where relevant; and issues including:

- Severe health issues (physical or mental)
- Severe health concerns including lack of management or understanding of these concerns
- Violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening, or aggressive behaviour
- Situations where the health and wellbeing of students, staff or the wider campus community may be at serious or immediate risk
- Drug, Alcohol, Substance use or misuse
- Failure to meet conditions placed about a Support to return after a period of absence (where applicable)
- Extended interruption of studies requests or evidence that Extenuating Circumstances have become a long term difficulty
- Behaviour or conduct that would ordinarily be dealt with as a misconduct issue but where that student's behaviour may be a demonstration of an underlying physical or mental health illness

- 2.3 All concerns by a third party should be escalated or referred to the relevant services as promptly as possible to enable support to be put in place and to avoid a high risk crisis

situation. In the event of crisis situation or an emergency staff or students should consult the university advice on gaining help with an emergency or contacting campus security.

- 2.4 Where there is an immediate risk or similarly urgent situation (e.g., where a student poses a risk to themselves or others) the university may take steps to temporarily suspend or restrict a student and / or to contact their next of kin or an emergency contact.

3. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 3.1 It is a guiding principle of the Support to Study process that students should be invited attend all stages of the processes contained within stages one, two and three; that all procedural matters should be clearly explained to them; and that the rationale for decisions are fully explained.
- 3.2 Students are strongly encouraged to seek support from relevant services at all stages of these processes. These services include the Wellbeing department, their Personal Tutor, the student's GP or other medical practitioner or therapist, and the Students' Union Advice Centre.
- 3.3 Students seeking advice and guidance on the process being followed should consult with the Students' Union Advice Centre.
- 3.4 If the outcome of a Support to Study Panel is the student's de-registration at the university the student will retain the right to consult with the university and Students' Union's pastoral and administrative services for a period of up to three months from the date of the outcome letter to support transition and adjustment.

4. STAGE 1: STUDENT CASE REVIEW

- 4.1 When a cause for concern has been raised about a student the first stage is for initial student case review. The student will be invited to meet with an appropriate member of staff (for example, Personal Tutor, Academic staff, an Adviser from the Student Life Wellbeing teams) about their situation, health and wellbeing or conduct. It is possible the student will be unaware they are of concern and so the concerns will need to be clearly explained to the student. The member of staff will be responsible for convening the meeting and taking appropriate notes. Students may be accompanied to the meeting (see 5.2).
- 4.2 The student should be advised by what support options are available to them. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments should be put in place through the Disability & Neurodiversity team, with advice from the Academic Quality and Policy Office, and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The student should be informed about the relevant pastoral and support services available to them, in particular the Student Life Wellbeing teams, CeDAS, and the Students' Union Advice Centre and / or to seek a consultation with their GP or other healthcare professional.
- 4.3 The meeting discussions and agreed actions should be recorded in written form and shared with the student with an agreed date for further review. The record should confirm the student's responsibility to take proactive steps to resolve the concerns. A review of the student's case should normally take place no longer than two weeks after the initial meeting and with a written record of this review. In the majority of cases the cause for concern will be resolved at this stage.
- 4.4 Records of these meetings and agreed actions will be sent to the student within five working days of the meeting taking place, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. This record will include a statement that failure from the student to take proactive steps to follow the agreed actions and / or to attend the final review meeting will normally lead to a referral to a Case Conference for consideration of a Fitness to Study Panel.

5. STAGE 2: CASE CONFERENCE

- 5.1** If the student has not completed the agreed actions or if additional serious causes for concern have been raised the process should move to step 2 and a Case Conference will be convened. A review of the case, led by a Case Conference Lead (a Senior Wellbeing Manager or nominee) (the “Case Conference Lead”), will be undertaken by relevant staff, which might include a selection of the following individuals: Staff from the Student Life Wellbeing teams ; a representative from the NHS GP Surgery team on campus; a Personal Tutor, an academic or a School Manager. The Case Conference Lead will suggest participants and will consider any request from the student for other relevant parties to be in attendance.
- 5.2** The student will be made aware of the case conference and the causes for concern one week in advance and will be invited to attend. They may be accompanied by a student or staff member of the university or Students’ Union. If the student wishes to be accompanied by an individual who is not a member of the university or Students’ Union, they should notify the Case Conference Lead as soon as possible (whose decision on this matter will be final).
- 5.3** The Case Conference Lead will lead a discussion of the steps already taken and the student will be asked to respond why they have not completed the agreed actions. After the student has responded they will be asked to leave the Case Conference and the conference participants will consider whether a developed support and action plan is required for the student or whether the case should be referred to the Fitness to Study Panel. There is provision for specialists (for example a GP or Mental Health Practitioner) to be consulted in order to assess evidence provided by the student regarding their physical or mental health and / or to provide a professional opinion.
- 5.4** If the case conference determines a developed support and action plan is required this will be written by the Case Conference Lead with input from all teams who will be supporting the plan. This record will include a statement that failure by the student to demonstrate action to follow the agreed steps will lead to a referral to the Fitness to Study Panel. The plan will state the university’s expectations, the steps required from the student and will confirm agreed support from the university. The student will be informed of this by letter.
- 5.5** The options open to the Case Conference are (i) immediate referral to stage 3; (ii) an action plan; (iii) a decision that no further action is required, and the case closed.
- 5.6** The Case Conference Lead will nominate someone to have responsibility for monitoring engagement by the student with the plan and for recording any failure by the student to engage or participate. Monitoring will include an agreed review and a reiteration that failure or inability to comply with the agreements will lead to a referral to the Fitness to Study Panel. The review meeting should be held no longer than two weeks after the Case Conference.

6. STAGE 3: FITNESS TO STUDY PANEL

- 6.1** A referral to the Fitness to Study Panel can be made by the Case Conference Lead if (i) the recommendation from the Case Conference was for an immediate referral; (ii) there is a failure or inability from the student to comply with the developed support and action plan from the Case Conference; or (iii) where there is an immediate risk or similarly urgent situation (e.g. where a student poses a risk to themselves or others) that does not require an emergency response
- 6.2** The referral will be made to the Director of Student Life (& Student Conduct Officer) by the Case Conference Lead with a written report of the issues of concern, the steps taken to address the concern, the impact of the student’s health and wellbeing to themselves, other students, staff or other members of the university community. After a referral to the Fitness

to Study Panel the university may consider whether a Campus Exclusion & Restriction Order or temporary suspension from studies pending the hearing is required. A Campus Exclusion & Restriction Order could be placed following the guidance within the Student Conduct Regulations and signed by an Authorised Officer (as listed in the Student Conduct Regulations).

- 6.3 If agreement is given by the Director of Student Life to convene a Fitness to Study Panel, the student will be notified in writing that the panel is to take place and that the outcome could result in the interruption or discontinuation of their registration at the university. The student will be provided with all papers relevant to this panel at least one week before the panel is held so they can fully prepare.
- 6.4 The panel will be organised by the Directorate of Student Life Wellbeing teams and an independent panel secretary nominated – usually the Conduct & Investigations Officer. The Fitness to Study Panel will be chaired by a Director or Head of Professional Services and the panel will include the (i) an academic member of staff; (ii) a member of professional services staff who have had no prior direct involvement in the case. A member of the Academic Quality & Policy Office or Student Administration will be invited to attend so the panel have access to guidance on academic processes but will not be part of the decision-making process. The Case Conference Lead will be invited to attend the panel and may be accompanied by another participant from the Case Conference. The student will be invited to attend the panel and may be accompanied by another member of university or the Students' Union. Consideration will be given to the student being accompanied by a parent or supporter if a request is made to the panel secretary by the student.
- 6.5 The panel procedure will follow the principles of the hearing processes defined by the Student Conduct Regulations. The panel will consider the referral report from the Case Conference Lead, the response from the student, and may ask questions to all those present. In circumstances where the student is unable to attend the panel hearing the panel may consider their findings based on the documents provided by the Case Conference Lead and the student.
- 6.6 After hearing the case the panel will take one or more of the following actions:
- (i) Decide there is no case to answer and that the student may continue their studies.
 - (ii) Put in place a revised managed study plan.
 - (iii) Require the student to interrupt their studies and leave the university until conditions set by the panel are met by the student and evidence is provided to the satisfaction of a nominated senior member of staff.
 - (iv) Require the student to interrupt their studies or leave the university for a fixed period (for example the remainder of the academic year or one academic year) or impose a suspended interruption with the option to delegate the authority to discontinue the student's registration to a specified senior member of staff should the student break the conditions set by the panel.
 - (v) Discontinue the student's registration or impose a suspended discontinuation of studies with the option to delegate the authority to discontinue the student's registration to a specified senior member of staff should the student break the conditions set by the panel.
- 6.7 For guidance on the findings and outcomes of a Fitness to Study Panel, please see Appendix 1. Appropriate support will be offered to the student to support their engagement with the actions. When the student is not able to attend the Fitness to Study Panel due to their physical or mental health it is expected that only in the most exceptional cases that the panel should discontinue the student's registration. If a student chooses not to attend

the panel for other reasons the Chair may decide to proceed in their absence but will provide every reasonable opportunity for the student to attend. To request the discontinuation of studies in exceptional cases the panel should ensure they are in receipt of clear, professional, and independent evidence that the student is unlikely to be considered fit to study for the foreseeable future.

- 6.8 Following the Fitness to Study Panel the Chair will communicate, via the Secretary, the outcome to the student in writing, including the decisions for the outcome and details of the appeals process. Where the panel has agreed the ending of the students' registration the panel's finding is invoked immediately and remains in place until the outcome of any appeal lodged. Where the panel agrees a Campus Exclusion & Restriction Order the secretary will inform the Student Conduct Officer who will prepare and communicate the CERO.
- 6.9 In an emergency the university may consider under the Student Conduct Regulations whether there is a need to temporarily suspend or restrict a student from aspects of student life pending a Fitness to Study panel. A full Fitness to Study Panel will be convened as soon as is practicable after the immediate risk is managed by the emergency process.

7. APPEAL AGAINST A FITNESS TO STUDY PANEL OUTCOME

- 7.1 To exercise their right to appeal the student will submit an appeal, in writing, to the secretary of the panel within fifteen working days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome. The student must clearly explain the reasons for appeal which may be one of more of the following grounds:
- (a) The procedures were not followed properly
 - (b) There is bias or reasonable perception of bias in the procedure
 - (c) The decision maker(s) reached an unreasonable decision
 - (d) The student has new material evidence that they were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process
 - (e) The penalty imposed was disproportionate or not permitted under the procedure
- 7.2 The Appeals Panel will consist of at least two members of staff who have not previously been involved to ensure independent consideration of the case. There should also be appropriate representation from the Students' Union (for example a Sabbatical Officer) to represent student voice. The Chair of the Appeals Panel should be from the Vice-Chancellor & Principal's Office (e.g. Pro-Vice-Chancellor). The Appeals Panel is conducted as a review of papers with the opportunity for the Chair to invite the student to a subsequent if they believe further information from the student will help their considerations.
- 7.3 The student will be advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing with an explanation of the reasons for the decision. The student will have completed the university's internal processes and will also be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter which will enable them to consider taking their appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

If anyone considers that this Policy has not been followed or for further information on the interpretation and application of the policy please contact the code of conduct owner.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDANCE ON THE FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES OF A FITNESS TO STUDY PANEL

A Fitness to Study Panel will normally be expected to consider the following to agree the outcome:
Is the student considered fit to study without putting their safety and wellbeing at risk or that of other students, staff or other members of university community?

- If the answer to the above question is 'yes', the Panel should accompany their findings with advice about the support available and recommend steps the student can take to avoid further Fitness to Study considerations. The Panel may require that a managed study plan be put in place or endorse the existing support plan agreed at the Case Conference.
- If the answer to the above question is 'yes', but only with the student's adherence to the terms of a managed study plan, the Panel should check with the School programme and Wellbeing department the support that the student will require can be provided by the university on a continuing basis or, if not by the university, by external support networks such as the NHS. The student should be made aware that a continuation of the concerns that led to the initial referral could lead to a new referral to a Fitness to Study Panel.
- If the answer to the above question is 'no', when might the student be fit to study?
- If the answer to the above question is 'within a period that can be specified', then having taken advice from the School and the Student Life Wellbeing teams, the Panel should recommend a managed study plan that may include a brief period of a required interruption of studies, and a return to study assessment. An agreed level of support should be provided to the student through any period of interruption.
- If the answer to the above question is 'not for the foreseeable future', then, again having taken advice from the School and the Student Life Wellbeing teams, the Panel should find accordingly and recommend closing the student's registration at the university.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Closing university registration: Where a Fitness to Study Panel concludes there is evidence that there is no realistic prospect that the student will regain their fitness to study in the foreseeable future, the panel will recommend that the student's academic registration is discontinued. The Panel may choose to attach to this recommendation a comment on how a subsequent application by the student to enrol on the same programme or another programme at the university could be made, and whether the student should be required to complete a specified return to study assessment linked to the concern that led to the initial referral to the Panel to demonstrate their ability to return to study. This may require input and advice from the Admissions team to ensure the Admissions Policy is adhered to. Where the finding of a Fitness to Study Panel is that the student's registration be discontinued, this outcome is immediately processed. If the student does not lodge an appeal within the specified time limit against a recommendation by a Fitness to Study panel that their registration be ended, the Secretary to the Panel will send a Completion of Procedures letter. If appropriate the Director of Student Administration will ensure the student receives the interim or alternative academic award to which they are entitled and a copy of their transcript or equivalent.

Required Interruption of Studies: A Fitness to Study Panel may consider a student's wellbeing and safety, or the wellbeing or safety of other students, staff, and third parties can only be achieved by requiring the student to interrupt their studies for a defined period. In these cases the defined period will be specified after consultation with student's Academic School and the Academic Quality & Policy Office and will not normally exceed one year. The interruption will conclude when the concern that triggered the initial referral to the Panel has been addressed (as shown by the student's successful completion of a specified return to study assessment for Support to study). Where a Fitness to Study Panel receives specialist advice that a student will be likely to regain their ability to study with rest, recuperation, or by undertaking specified treatment or therapy, the Panel may recommend an interruption of the student's studies or recommend the extension of an

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existing interruption. Interruption of studies is normally agreed as part of a Managed Study Plan and at its conclusion requires the student to complete a specified return to study assessment that is linked to the behaviour or concern that triggered the initial reference to the Panel. A Fitness to Study Panel may recommend that a Campus Exclusion & Restriction Order is placed for the duration of a student's time away from the university. It is anticipated this option would only be required to be considered in a small number of cases.

Revised Managed Study Plan: A revised Managed Study Plan will be formulated with input from the panel outcomes and agreements, the Case Conference Lead, the Academic School and the Wellbeing department. The support available should be central to the plan and should involve discussion with the student and their supporters / accompanying person. There should be agreement about adjustments (where required) to the student's participation in their academic work, the level and manner of engagement required, appropriate expectations of behaviour, presentation or conduct and confirmation of the agreed support from university or external services. The Managed Study Plan will also record how the plan will be monitored and followed up with time scales for progress to be made.
