

Support to Study Policy

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1. Overview

- 1.1 The University is committed to supporting students' wellbeing and recognises that a positive and enabling approach to the management of physical and mental health is key to student learning and academic achievement. The Support to Study process is a supportive one with the aim of achieving the best possible outcome for students.
- 1.2 Any reference to this policy is a reference to the policy and its associated procedures.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 This policy seeks to ensure the University's commitment to delivering inclusive, timely, equitable and meaningful support to students when issues relating to health, wellbeing or behaviour may impact their academic progress and/or general participation in university life.
- 2.2 This policy seeks to be holistic and supportive, and the expectation is that students will actively engage in decision-making processes about their capability to study, where possible.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all registered students of all levels, including both campus-based and distance learning students. It will inform the processes for prospective students where required. An exception may apply where there is an applicable Fitness to Practise and/or other professional regulatory process; these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.4 Where there are concerns for a PGR student that also has a staff contract, then consideration to each case will be given under their respective staff contracts and relevant HR policies.
- 2.5 This policy seeks to ensure that all staff involved in support:
 - 2.5.1 are aware of their responsibilities in the support to study process.
 - 2.5.2 engage fully with the support to study process; and,
 - 2.5.3 are enabled to support the student as needed.

3. Purpose and Scope

- 3.1 The term "fitness to study" has historically been used in Higher Education to articulate and navigate the ability of a student in particular circumstances, to successfully engage with and complete their studies. The University of Leicester maintains a positive, inclusive and supportive teaching, learning and research environment for all, and as such chooses to use the term "Support to Study" as an alternative. This term has become increasingly utilised across the sector.
- 3.2 Definition of Support to Study:
 - 3.2.1 The University defines Support to Study as a student's ability to engage with their programme of study, with reasonable adjustments where necessary, in accordance with the expectations set out in the University's Regulations. A students' engagement should not impact negatively on their safety or wellbeing or that of others and should offer full opportunity to meet the learning outcomes of their programme.

- 3.3 This policy may be used for any student whose ability to cope with university life, and to study and progress on their programme is seriously compromised as the result of their health, wellbeing or disability.
- 3.4 This policy is intended to support students and staff in managing students' complex needs in relation to their ability to engage in their studies. The procedure is in place to encourage a collaborative approach to finding ways for students to move forward with their studies in a proactive way, with the primary concern being their wellbeing.
- 3.5 There are specific colleges/schools who deliver programmes with a practice component for which they have a separate Fitness to Practise policy and/or other professional regulatory processes. Details of this and associated procedures can be found within the [Senate Regulations](#).
- 3.6 Specific schools with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies will have their own local policies that will be implemented where there are safety concerns, which may lead to compulsory break in study and suspense. These processes sit outside of the Support to Study policy.
- 3.6.1 The University has published regulations and procedures for the investigation of the professional conduct of students in relation to fitness to practise on the following programmes: Doctor of Clinical Psychology, MBChB degrees, BSc in Operating Department Practice, PGCE, MSc in Midwifery and Leadership, MSc in Nursing and Leadership, BSc in Diagnostic Radiography, Pharmacy MPharm and BSc in Physiotherapy.
 - 3.6.2 Where students registered on one of these programmes are subject to an investigation under the Student Conduct and Discipline Regulations this is likely to raise an issue of concern for the relevant Fitness to Practise Committee. Fitness to Practise Committees may take appropriate precautionary measure prior to the instigation of the disciplinary investigation, which may result in a compulsory suspension.
 - 3.6.3 Precautionary suspension will be undertaken if a student contravenes PSRB requirements and/or University statutes and guidelines for conduct.
 - 3.6.4 Colleges/schools should declare to the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Sub-Committee and Student Support Services the courses and circumstances in which they may suspend a student on these grounds.
- 3.7 In certain circumstances, students may be referred by other teams, for example the Student Conduct Team, for review under the Support to Study policy. This is because it may be more appropriate for the student to be assessed under this policy, rather than under other University regulations/policies, to enable due consideration to be given to their health and wellbeing. This does not remove the fundamental principle that students are responsible for their actions but recognises that a more holistic and supportive approach needs to be applied to manage the situation. Similarly, students may also be referred from the Support to Study policy to other teams for consideration if it is felt necessary. It is also possible for a student to be involved in both the Support to Study policy and Student Conduct procedures concurrently.
- 3.8 An order of precedence has been sent in the event there is conflict between this policy and one or more other existing University policies.

4. Data Protection Compliance

- 4.1 The University and its staff are governed by the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (in alignment with the provisions of the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 ('GDPR')). Under this Act, data relating to an identifiable person's health is regarded as special category ('sensitive') personal data and must be handled with extreme care because of the sensitive nature of this data. For the purpose of the data protection regulations, all information shared in confidence by students with the University concerning a student's ill health or disability, including physical or mental health conditions are deemed to be special category data.
- 4.2 The University processes all personal information in line with the Student Data Privacy Notice which all students are provided at the point of Registration. This includes the handling of sensitive data in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy and this is overseen by Information Assurance Services (IAS).
- 4.3 The University may raise specific data sharing agreements with external and internal partners when considered appropriate to facilitate lawful and confidential sharing of data to support students throughout the process.
- 4.4 All cases where, from the view of the member of staff, it would be in the student's best interests to disclose sensitive information and special category data to the University's support services and/or to an external agency (e.g., so that appropriate support may be provided) the student's informed and explicit consent to such disclosures should be obtained where possible.

5. Process Flow

- 5.1 The Support to Study policy has three Stages. These are based on the degree of concern and the perceived seriousness of the situation, informed by the relevant risk assessment. A case can enter and be resolved at any stage and students may move between the stages depending on the nature of the concerns.
- 5.2 The Cause for Concern group will review the concerns referred to the group and identify the appropriate stage of the policy to enact.
- 5.3 The Cause for Concern group is the operational group of University services which meets regularly to ensure high level student cases are appropriately managed, coordinated and risk assessed.
- 5.4 Stage 3 can only be instigated by the Head of Student Support Services or nominated deputy, where there are significant and persistent concerns for a student's wellbeing.
- 5.5 Reasonable adjustments to this process will be made in line with our legal responsibilities for disabled students under the Equality Act 2010 or for those with additional needs or to allow for other factors that would otherwise place a student at a disadvantage.
- 5.6 All three stages will consider the impact the student's behaviour is having on the wider University community and actions will seek to mitigate this as much as possible.

5.7 Students will be supported through the process by central Student Support Services and can receive impartial support through the Students' Union Advice Service.

5.8 All decisions made in this process will be done in the best interest of the student and to ensure the best outcome for the student's wellbeing.

5.9 In the event that a student is detained under Section 2 or 3 of the Mental Health Act (2007), an authorised break in studies can be agreed and the student may be placed in suspense. This will be agreed within the Cause for Concern group rather than a panel due to the student being in hospital and detained at the point the decision is made. A Mental Health Response Lead will be allocated to support the student to be as involved as they are able to be making informed decisions on their academic progress. This will include:

- 5.9.1 Discussing and communicating a break in study or suspense with the student, if deemed appropriate by the medical team, their care team and any identified trusted contact before any formal changes are made to student status
- 5.9.2 Liaising with their care team to ascertain when the student will be discharged from hospital
- 5.9.3 Before discharge, contact the student to arrange a convenient time to explore what they intend to do academically. The student may choose to withdraw at this stage, extend their suspense or express their wish to return from suspense
- 5.9.4 Seeking advice from the student's case team on whether they feel the student is fit to return to study
- 5.9.5 Liaising with the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance team for cases involving international students
- 5.9.6 A case meeting will be convened to present information regarding the student's circumstances and the group will agree on whether:
 - The student's authorised break in studies is ended and they return to study or suspense is extended
 - There are still concerns around the student's wellbeing and it is therefore necessary to convene a Support to Study panel.

5.10 At all stages, consideration will be given to whether the Emergency Contact Protocol needs to be initiated in cases where there is deemed to be sufficient concern and high-risk for the student.

5.11 Below is a list of key people who may be involved in the process; their involvement will depend on the seriousness of each case:

- Relevant Head of Programme/Personal Tutor/Supervisor/Senior Tutor.
- Student Support Services.
- Health and Safety Officer.
- Other programme staff including administrators, tutors and visiting lecturers.
- Student and Academic Services.
- Estates and Campus Services.
- Students' Union.
- Deans and Registrar (at Stage 3).
- Academic Registrar and Registrar and Secretary.
- Occupational Health/Psychology (currently only exists for students on professionally

regulated courses).

- Chaplains.
- External providers of support for example: community mental health teams, the police, relevant members of the local Channel group or other “Prevent” specialists, family of student, social workers etc.

5.12 The outcomes from all three stages may include the below recommendations:

- 5.12.1 To take no action.
- 5.12.2 To monitor the situation (including regular review meetings with a named member of staff).
- 5.12.3 To establish and monitor specific support (internally or externally).
- 5.12.4 A review letter accompanied by a support action plan.
- 5.12.5 Require the student to take a period of suspension or withdraw from the course. The latter outcome will be decided at Stage 3 of the process and will always be done in the student’s best interest.
- 5.12.6 Any period of suspension would normally be reviewed within four weeks and the review may include a recommendation to convene a Support to Study Panel.
- 5.12.7 To issue a Temporary Exclusion Order.
- 5.12.8 Other outcomes as determined by the panel.

5.13 Stage 1: Informal Case Review

- 5.13.1 Where there are initial or moderate concerns for a student’s wellbeing, the Cause for Concern group will identify the needs of the student based on the concerns presented and coordinate support for the student. The student will be encouraged to engage with relevant support services and/or staff with a specific support role.
- 5.13.2 A Cause for Concern case meeting will be convened if detailed information regarding the concerns for the student need to be discussed.
- 5.13.3 It is intended that this is a collaborative approach to find ways to work together in moving forward and should be seen as the start of a process to re-engage the student with their studies.
- 5.13.4 Where support is refused by the student, or where support has been given but the concerns continue and the situation does not improve, then the next phase of the procedure may be initiated.

5.14 Stage 2: Formal Case Review

- 5.14.1 Stage 2 will be initiated where lower-level interventions have not resolved the concerns for the student, where the concern raised is too serious to be dealt with at the informal stage and/or where there are serious emerging concerns which necessitate a more formal response from the University.

- 5.14.2 A collaborative approach to find ways to move forward will be the primary objective with the student's wellbeing at the core of the process.
- 5.14.3 The Cause for Concern group will re-convene to consider the needs of the student and coordinate support.

5.15 Stage 3: Exceptional Case Review

- 5.15.1 Stage 3 will be initiated where a student's behaviour is causing significant concern for their own safety and wellbeing, and may be affecting the teaching, learning or experience of other students or is negatively affecting the day-to-day activities of the University.
- 5.15.2 A Support to Study panel will be convened to review all action taken thus far and to ensure the University has considered all possible support options to enable the student to continue with their studies.
- 5.15.3 Each panel will consist of three members, one of whom will act as Chair, all of whom are impartial and will have undertaken appropriate training. Further information relating to this role will be detailed in the accompanying procedure documents.
- 5.15.4 Additional panel members may be appointed at the discretion of the Chair according to the nature of the case under consideration and, if necessary, where expertise is required.
- 5.15.5 The panel may recommend to the Registrar for the student to be placed into suspense or withdrawn permanently from the University. Where a suspension of studies is considered, this will take into account the students' allowed registration time.
- 5.15.6 During the Support to Study panel at Stage 3, a student may be accompanied by a member of the University. Prior agreement on this individual's attendance must be sought from the Head of Student Support Services.
- 5.15.7 The number of cases being considered in this stage in each academic year is expected to be low.

6. Return to Study

- 6.1 A Return to Study panel will be convened to lead a review of the documentary evidence of the student's wellbeing and contextualise with the demands of the course and decide whether the student is able to return to their studies at that time.
- 6.2 This panel is intended to be collaborative to ensure the best outcome for the student and as such, will include representation from the School and support staff as well as other key members of staff.

6.3 The outcome from the panel may be one of the following:

- 6.3.1 Student returns to their studies with no conditions attached to this.
- 6.3.2 Student returns to their studies with a support package which is developed collaboratively with relevant parties and is reviewed at regular intervals following return to study.
- 6.3.3 Student has a phased return to their studies which is decided with relevant parties.
- 6.3.4 Student is withdrawn from their studies based on significant circumstances where it would not be in the best interest for the student to continue their studies.
- 6.3.5 Student does not return at that time but instead extends their suspension of studies and the possibility of their return is reviewed at a later agreed date.

7. Appeals

- 7.1 Providing the student has grounds, as defined in 7.2, they may appeal against a decision made at Stage 3 of the Support to Study policy.
- 7.2 Students may appeal against a decision if they can show that on the balance of probabilities:
 - i. they have new substantive information that may have affected the original decision or,
 - ii. there has been significant failure of due process in the making of the original decision, which the student believes affected that decision.

8. Linked Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Legal Framework

8.1 The policy should be read in conjunction with other University of Leicester policies, procedures and guidelines, as necessary. A list of these are below however, this is not exhaustive; if you have any queries, please e-mail concerned@le.ac.uk.

- [Student Information Privacy Notice](#)
- [Senate Regulations](#)
 - [Senate Regulation 11: Student Conduct and Discipline](#)
- [Data protection](#)
- [Accommodation policies](#)
- [Mitigating circumstances policy](#)
- [Student engagement](#)
- [Safeguarding policy](#)
- [Dignity and Respect policy](#)

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Mental Health Act 2007](#)