

# Undergraduate Fitness to Study Policy & Procedure

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the policy and procedures, which the College follows when there are concerns about the fitness to study of one of its undergraduate students.

: cf`h\Y`di fdcgYg'cZ'h\]g'XcW a Ybh'EZ]hbYgg'hc'ghi XmNa YUbg'bch'cb`mZ]hness to engage in academic study but also fitness to take full advantage of all aspects of university life.

The document outlines the steps to be taken by the College when there is concern

community, and to ensure a consistent and sensitive approach to managing situations.

Tutorial, academic or support staff can initiate the procedure when concerns for a student are raised, thus allowing for issues to be detected and addressed in a structured manner as early as possible.

Shared concerns in different sections of the College and the University community can be formally collated by the use of this process.

Agreed actions geared to achievable aims, which are clearly documented and come from a supportive perspective rather than a disciplinary one.

## Background knowledge

In advance of this policy being initiated there are other support services in the College and the University to which students may be directed by Tutorial Advisers, Directors of Studies or other support staff, if it is felt that this may be of benefit.

Students with a mental or physical health difficulty:

- are strongly advised to consult all relevant support services available in the College and University, and in particular the College nurse, the University Counselling Service, the University Mental Health Adviser, their General Practitioner, the Disability Resource Centre; but the first port of call should be a Tutorial Adviser.

- are strongly encouraged to speak to a Tutorial Adviser, their Director of Studies or other appropriate member of staff in the College about the

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## Purpose and Scope of the Policy & Procedure

Whilst at university, all students should be able to live, study and perform to the best of their ability in a safe and comfortable environment. The reality of College and University life means that students not only work but also live in close proximity to each other, and whilst many students find studying and living in such an environment easy and enjoyable, others can find it more challenging.

However, unless it is informed otherwise, the College expects its students to be able to live in harmony with others, and not conduct themselves in a way which has an adverse impact on those around them. This procedure is not designed to address academic performance issues (which should be dealt with under the normal academic assessment and monitoring procedures) except where poor academic performance is resulting from a fitness to study issue.

In order to maintain and enhance the College community, students need to conform to certain standards of behaviour. However, it is recognised that the cause of concern regarding fitness to study may include issues relating to a student's health, which may be appropriate. The College and University have disciplinary mechanisms in place to deal with students whose behaviour falls outside acceptable standards, detailed in the College and University Regulations.

Students should not place unreasonable demands on staff or other students, or result in unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students. The College has a duty of care to its community and is bound by health and safety legislation and the Equality Act, which means that it is obliged to take action if a student presents a risk to themselves or to others.

The level of risk to himself/herself, other students or others posed by a student will be measured by the use of a risk assessment process, which should be used throughout the procedure to provide a consistent means of assessing the risk to the student, other individuals and the institution. This process will be led by the Senior Tutor in close collaboration with health professionals. Even when no risk is involved, the fact that a student has a problem does not in itself justify or excuse inappropriate behaviour.

Once this procedure has been used (at any of the three stages) the behaviour observed will normally be considered under this procedure rather than under a



them, in a supportive and understanding manner, that concerns about their fitness to study have emerged. This would ordinarily be a Tutorial Adviser but might be the College Nurse or other member of the pastoral support team. Should the Tutorial Adviser or other member of staff require advice or guidance on this they should contact the Senior Tutor.

The student should be made aware of the precise nature of the behaviour that has caused these concerns to be raised. Normally the Tutorial Adviser, but on occasions the Director of Studies or other staff member, will attempt to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the student. The student should be given the opportunity to explain their own views on the matter, and be encouraged to think about using one or more of the support services offered by the University. It may also be appropriate to look into the possibility of applying academic or other support arrangements to enable the student to study effectively.

It is hoped that, in most cases, issues can be resolved at this level, and that the advantage of the support available. It may be necessary to obtain independent corroboration as to whether support offered is being taken up. The responsibility for providing this will lie with the student.

A review period should be determined by agreement between the Tutorial Adviser, Director of Studies (if applicable) and the student to allow the student to consider their own behaviour and seek advice from the support services available.

At the end of this period a meeting should be held to discuss any steps taken by the student to address the concerns. If the concerns have been addressed satisfactorily, this will be noted. Further meetings may be scheduled to continue to monitor the situation/progress and help ensure that continued support is provided to the student to enable them to study effectively. If, however, the concerns have not been addressed, a further review period may be agreed, or the case will move to the next stage of the policy.

The informal discussions, advice and any undertakings made by the College or University and/or the student should be documented for the benefit of the College, the University and the student, but should be kept confidential. Copies of

College support staff. The student may be accompanied to this meeting by a student or other friend or representative if they so wish. Representatives such as the University Mental Health Advisor or a member of the Disability Resource Centre may also attend for information and advice if felt appropriate by the Senior Tutor. In both the Stage 2 and Stage 3 processes the appropriate Tutorial Adviser should be the point of contact with the student and should ensure that the Senior Tutor is kept informed of all communications. The Senior Tutor should be the main point of contact with all other agencies and individuals and should keep records of the whole process.

The Senior Tutor should appoint a deputy if unavailable to act at any stage.

Before the meeting, a medical assessment may be sought from a qualified practitioner familiar with the Cambridge University system and the spectrum of student difficulties or from the University Occupational Health Service. The student will be encouraged to consent to this, as it will ultimately enable the Senior Tutor to make an accurate assessment of risk.

The medical assessment will be used to determine the following matters:

- the nature and extent of any medical condition from which the student may be suffering;
- the extent to which it may affect his/her fitness to study and manage the demands of student life;
- any impact it may have or risk it may pose to others;
- whether any additional steps should be taken by the College, in light of the medical condition, to enable the student to study effectively;
- whether the student will be receiving any ongoing medical treatment or support.

The student will be asked to authorise full disclosure to the College of the results of any medical examination. The College recognises that any such information will be handled, processed and stored accordingly in accordance with the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998.

whom.

The purpose of the meeting will be to ensure that:

the student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns that have been raised;

the student is made fully aware of the possible outcomes if difficulties remain.

The Case Review Group will order its proceedings at its own discretion and may call witnesses, including Student Services staff working with the student, and institute enquiries to assist its deliberations.

The Case Review Group may decide:

(a) that no further action is required;

or (b) to formally monitor the student's progress for a specified period of time. In this case an action plan will be agreed with the student, outlining any steps which the student will need to take and/or any support to be provided to the student, to address the concerns identified.

Regular review meetings with the student will need to be arranged with a nominated member of College staff, to ensure that the action plan is being appropriately followed and/or that reasonable support to enable the student to study effectively is being provided.

The student will also need to be informed of the consequences of any breaches of the action plan, which will normally involve their fitness to study being considered under Stage 3 of this Procedure.

or (c) to recommend that special academic arrangements or support are put in place by the student and approved by the relevant University authority.

The student will be informed that unless these arrangements remedy the concerns the student will be considered under Stage 3 of this Procedure.

or (d) with the consent of the student, to agree that their studies be suspended for a period of time with appropriate application to the relevant University authority.

or (e) to refer the case to the appropriate senior member of the College, to be considered under Stage 3 of this Procedure.

This will only be appropriate in the most serious of cases, where, for example, evidence of a serious risk to either the health and safety of the student or others has been identified, and it is thought that suspension, exclusion or expulsion of the student may be the appropriate course of action, or where a particular course of action has been recommended but the student does not agree.

The decision of the Case Review Group, together with a concise record of the meeting, should be sent to the student within 7 working days from the date of the



witnesses, including Student Services staff working with the student, in particular the University Mental Health Advisor, and institute enquiries to assist its deliberations, which may include requesting further medical assessments of the student. It will also consider any previous risk assessments.

The Chair of the Review Panel will ensure that all parties have access to all documents.

The decision it arrives at shall be confirmed by the Chair of the Review Panel having obtained a collective decision from members of the Panel.

The student shall be notified in writing of the decision, with reasons, within 14 working days of the meeting of the College Review Panel. It is advisable that the decision is communicated in such a way that support is available to the student at the time, preferably from the appropriate Tutorial Adviser or Senior Tutor.

The decision may include one or more of the following:

In this case the Review Panel will provide the student with an agreed action plan, outlining any steps which the student will need to take and/or any support to be provided to the student to address the concerns identified. Regular review meetings with the student will need to be arranged with a nominated member of staff (to ensure that the action plan is being appropriately followed and/or that reasonable support to enable the student to study effectively is being provided). The student will also need to be informed of the consequences of any breaches of the action plan.

That, following consultation with the relevant academic Department, and subject to the approval of the relevant University authority, special academic arrangements are put in place or an interruption of studies is agreed. The student will be informed of the consequences should these arrangements not be satisfactory.

To recommend that the College exercises its statutory power to suspend or exclude the student.

Any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

Any decision regarding suspension or exclusion should be communicated by the Senior Tutor to the University and to any support services who have been involved with the student.

## Return to Study

After a break in study, the student may make a request to the College for permission to return to the course. The decision as to whether to ask the student to return to the course will then be made by the Senior Tutor, who, if he/she considers this appropriate, will request authorization for the student to return from the relevant University authority.

To this end, the Senior Tutor, in consultation with relevant organisations such as

the University Counselling Service, the University Mental Health Advisor, the Disability Resource Centre etc., will identify the issues of concern that the College a Um\Uj Y`j b`fYgdYW`icZ`h\Y`gh XYbh`g`Z`h`Ygg`hc`gh Xm`

The Senior Tutor will also contact the relevant medical professional for an

Protection Act, the Mental Health Act, the Human Rights Act, the Equality Act 2010 and the general rights and expectations of a student of confidentiality. In cases where Stages 2 or 3 of the Fitness to Study Procedure have been invoked, the student should be informed, and discuss with the student whether any statutory services should be contacted.

The College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this Procedure it will receive personal sensitive data and data of a confidential nature pertaining to the student and other third parties, and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored accordingly.

# Appendix

## Crisis Situations

It is possible that a student may pose such an extreme risk to themselves and/or others that they require emergency assistance outside these procedures.

If a student poses an immediate risk to themselves or others, the Emergency Services should be contacted by dialling 999.

After the incident, the student should be contacted by dialling 999.

This should be followed up as soon as possible by notifying the Senior Tutor of the details of the incident and action taken.

The student should be notified that they have briefed the Emergency Services, bearing in mind the primary necessity to ensure their own safety.

The student should be notified of the action taken by the Emergency Services and pass this on to the Senior Tutor. The Senior Tutor (or nominee) will ensure that contact is made at the appropriate level of detail with the student, the appropriate Tutorial Adviser and Director of Studies, and that appropriate support is provided.

In the case of medical and veterinary students, incidents should be reported by the Senior Tutor to the Medical and Veterinary Progress Panel (Secretary: Ms Brenda Purkiss, email: [bap11@medschl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:bap11@medschl.cam.ac.uk)) for advice as to whether there might be Fitness to Practise issues to consider.