

POLICY AND PROCEDURE: HEALTH, WELLBEING & FITNESS TO STUDY

1 What is Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to study?

- 1.1 The term 'Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to study' as used in this policy relates to the entire student experience, and not just a student's ability to engage with their academic studies. The University's academic and other regulations require that students participate in their studies and broader student life in an appropriate manner (with reasonable adjustments where appropriate), without putting their own wellbeing and/or safety at risk and without putting the wellbeing and/or safety of other students, staff, or third parties at risk. Being able to meet these requirements (if appropriate, with reasonable adjustments) demonstrates a student's continuing fitness to study.
- 1.2 Where a student has disclosed that they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term impact on their ability to undertake normal daily activities as a student, the University will make reasonable adjustments to enable them to continue their studies and meet the learning outcomes for their course.
- 1.3 The University recognises that on occasion a student's physical health or mental wellbeing may deteriorate to a point where it becomes impossible for them to be able to continue with their studies. Whilst the University has a general duty of care to all within its community and a responsibility to take action to support those in distress, the University is an academic community and the support and care facilities it is able to provide for its students are those that are appropriate to an academic community.

2 The purpose and scope of this policy

- 2.1 This is a supportive policy which can be used when a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour is having a detrimental impact on their ability to progress academically and/or to function at university. It should be used for any student whose ability to cope with university life, to study or progress on their course in a self-sustaining way (with reasonable adjustments where appropriate) is compromised as the result of their health, wellbeing or a disability. It is an alternative to disciplinary procedures where there is concern that a student's behaviour may include issues relating to ill-health, mental health, personal stress or disability.
- 2.2 Should a concern regarding a student's fitness to study or wellbeing arise, this policy ensures that any steps taken will consider the best interests of the student and their right to make informed choices about the options available to them and ensure the provision of appropriate reasonable support and adjustments, ensuring a consistent and sensitive approach to managing situations.
- 2.3 Concerns should be acted on promptly as early intervention and support can result in better outcomes for the student and may avoid the situation becoming more complex.

3 **When to use this policy**

3.1 The Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy should be considered as an alternative to other means of managing concern about academic conduct or progress where there is concern that a student's behaviour, attendance and academic progress could be the result of mental or physical ill health or disability or have an impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of other people. Cause for concern may arise from a wide range of circumstances, including (but not restricted to) the following:

- Concerns about the student's wellbeing are raised from a third party, for example academic staff, a friend, placement provider, housemate, medical professional, or Student Services professional.
- A student has told a member of staff that they have concerns about their health, wellbeing and fitness to study.
- A student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying health issue, for example if they have demonstrated mood swings or unusual behaviour; shown signs of depression; become withdrawn, aggressive and/or distressed.
- Behaviour, which would otherwise be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which it is considered may be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.
- A student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety or wellbeing of others.
- A student's academic performance or physical behaviour is not acceptable and this is thought to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.

3.2 Students should be involved in the management of their own wellbeing wherever possible. However, there may be times where a student is unwilling or unable to work within these procedures. Lack of engagement with this policy may lead to the University invoking formal disciplinary procedures against the student.

Procedure

4 Level 1 - Initial Support and Guidance to Students

4.1 Level 1 should involve informal discussion(s) between the student and their personal tutor, Course Co-ordinator, a Student Services professional or another appropriate member of staff and may be initiated by either the student or the member of staff. The informal discussion(s) should give the student the opportunity to explain their perception of the matter.

4.2 Should staff feel that they are not confident about dealing with a situation they are encouraged to seek advice from Student Services. To ensure appropriate levels of confidentiality, this advice may initially be sought without disclosing details of the student concerned. Additionally the Student Services webpages may be helpful: <http://www.fxplus.ac.uk/study/student-services>

- 4.3 The student should be encouraged to use the support services offered by the University. It may also be appropriate to look into the possibility of applying special academic arrangements to enable the student to study effectively (for example, making alternative arrangements for lectures/notes to be supplied, exploring whether a support worker may be provided). It should be made clear to students when their needs exceed the usual pastoral role of an academic tutor and they will need to be referred on to specialist support.
- 4.4 The support services available at the University to which students may be signposted if it is felt they will be of benefit, and which the student should consult are:
- Student Services (via www.compass.fxplus.ac.uk);
 - Chaplaincy;
 - FXU;
 - Accessibility & Inclusive Learning Service; and/or
 - ASK Academic Skills.
- 4.5 It is hoped that in most cases issues can be resolved at this informal stage, and that students will respond positively, taking advantage of the support available. Any plans agreed between the member of staff and the student should be set out in writing to the student so it is clear what has been agreed.
- 4.6 Further meetings may be scheduled to monitor the situation and progress made by the student. If the concerns have not been addressed, support has not been sought, and/or progress has not been made, the case should move on to the next stage of the policy through referral to Student Services.
- 5 Level 2 – Case Conference**
- 5.1 Should the preliminary action as outlined in section 4 be unsuccessful, and there are continuing and/or further emerging concerns about a student's health, safety, mental well-being, and/or ability to study, level 2 should be invoked.
- 5.2 The member of staff with primary responsibility for the student (for example, personal tutor, Course Co-ordinator, Year Tutor, or a Student Services professional) should convene a case conference (at which the student may or may not be present). The case conference will usually include those who can best provide expert and specialist advice on the case being considered and those who need to be there because of their relationship with the student. The case conference will usually include:
- An senior member of academic staff from the student's academic department or an academic representative from the student's course team as appropriate.
 - A representative from Student Services (if Student Services are not planned to be in attendance, the member of staff calling the case conference should discuss the matter with the Director of Student Services or the Head of Wellbeing in advance of setting the date and time of the meeting).

- A representative from FXU.
 - A representative from Quality Assurance & Enhancement.
 - The conference will usually be chaired by the representative of either the academic department, Student Services or QAE.
- 5.3 If they are invited to attend, the student will usually be given at least five working days' written notice of the meeting and will be informed of the purpose of the meeting. They will also be provided with any documents which will be considered by the meeting, and asked to provide any documentation they may wish considered.
- 5.4 The student may request to attend all or part of the case conference which the conference may agree or not. If the student requests attendance and this is not permitted, they must be informed of the reason(s) for this decision. If the student does attend, they may be accompanied by a currently enrolled student of the University or an elected member of the FXU. The student may also be accompanied by a support worker (for example sign language interpreter or mental health worker/disability adviser) as appropriate to their needs.
- 5.5 The outcomes available to the case conference are:
- No further action required
 - To monitor the student formally for a specific period of time. An action plan will be agreed with the student detailing any steps the student will need to take and the support to be provided to the student. Regular review meetings will be arranged with the student and a nominated member of staff. The student should be made aware of what will happen if the action plan is breached, which will normally involve their case moving to level 3.
 - To recommend a specific academic arrangement be put in place. This may include a recommendation for the student to intermit from their studies. Such a recommendation should be agreed by the student's academic department and the student. If the student does not agree, the case will move on to level 3.
 - To refer the case to a case conference convened under level 3 of this procedure. This will be appropriate in serious cases, for example where there is evidence of a serious risk to the health and safety of the student or others in the University community. A referral to level 3 of this procedure would be made when it is considered that intermittence or withdrawal may be the appropriate course of action or if the student has not agreed to a recommendation or action plan made under level 2.
- 5.6 It is expected that as soon as possible following the case conference the student will attend a meeting with the Course Co-ordinator (or designate) and relevant Student Services professional (other participants may be present on the recommendation of the case conference) in which any decision(s) made will be outlined and explained to the student.

5.7 A record of the meeting and its outcomes, recording agreed actions, will be made and distributed to all attendees within five working days.

6 Level 3

6.1 Level 3 may be initiated due to:

- a referral to Student Services following a level 2 case conference;
- persistent and/or serious concerns raised about a student's actions, behaviour, health, safety, or mental well-being that are putting the health, safety, well-being and/or academic progress of themselves or other members of the University community at significant risk will, exceptionally, cause level 3 to be initiated without reference to levels 1 and 2;
- an urgent notification relating to significant concerns about a student's actions, behaviour, health, safety or mental well-being to the Director of Student Services or designate, Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement, Director of an academic department, Head of Subject, Course Co-ordinator and/or Security.

6.2 Student Services will initiate the convening of a case conference by notifying the student's academic department. That department will invite to attend those who can best provide expert and specialist advice on the case being considered, and those who need to be there because of their relationship with the student including their Course Co-ordinator or designate. The case conference will usually include:

- An academic representative from the student's course team
- A representative from Student Services
- A representative from FXU
- A representative from Quality Assurance & Enhancement
- A senior member of academic staff from outside the student's academic department will chair the conference

6.3 Wherever possible, the student will be given at least five working days' notice of the case conference in writing, and informed of its purpose. They will also be provided with any documents which will be considered by the case conference, and asked to provide any documentation they may wish it to consider.

6.4 The student may be accompanied at the case conference by a currently enrolled student of the University or an elected member of the FXU. The student may also be accompanied by a support worker (for example, a sign language interpreter or mental health worker/disability adviser) as appropriate to their needs.

6.5 Exceptionally, where it is felt that a student's behaviour is deteriorating quickly an immediate emergency case conference may be called without the usual five (5) days' notice. An emergency case conference may be held via a conference call, telephonically or electronically as appropriate. Any decision arrived at by the emergency case conference must be agreed collectively. An emergency case conference must be

followed by a further case conference, which will normally be held within four weeks of the emergency case conference, to review the situation.

- 6.6 Prior to the case conference medical assessment may be sought, usually from the student's GP or medical practitioner. The student will be asked to authorise full disclosure to the University of the results of any examination. The University recognises that the information disclosed will constitute "sensitive data" for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998 and it will be handled, processed and stored accordingly. Should the student refuse to undertake a medical examination, the conference may either continue this procedure based on the information already in its possession, or use another appropriate means to address the issue.
- 6.7 In the event that student is unable to attend the case conference the University will make reasonable efforts to enable them to do so, for example by moving the case conference to a time or location with which the student feels comfortable.
- 6.8 Alternatively, the student may ask the case conference to consider the case in their absence on the basis of written reports which may include a written statement from the student or their representative.
- 6.9 The case conference may order proceedings at its discretion and may call external professional(s) where required.
- 6.10 The case conference may consider various options including:
- A short-term intermittence to allow the student to be assessed by a medical professional, access support services both within and outside the University or for the University to obtain further information. A short-term intermittence will be reviewed within four weeks.
 - Intermittence with conditions for a period of up to two academic years.
 - A requirement to withdraw – if the conference concludes, taking into account the individual circumstances of the case and any supporting medical evidence, that there is no reasonable prospect of the student re-engaging with their course within their period of registration a recommendation will be made to the Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement that the student be required to withdraw. This recommendation should only be made in the most serious cases. Should this occur, it must be reported by the Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement to Academic Board.
 - Any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.
- 6.11 Following the case conference the agreed course of action will be communicated to the student by the Course Co-ordinator (or designate) and appropriate Student Services professional within five working days of the case conference at which time the student may again be accompanied at the meeting by a currently enrolled student of the

University or an elected member of the FXU. The student may also be accompanied by a support worker (eg sign language interpreter or mental health worker/accessibility adviser) as appropriate to their needs. It will also be made clear why the University is requiring this course of action. A letter will be sent to the student from the Director of Student Services copied to QAE within 48 hours of this meeting to confirm the agreed outcomes/actions. The letter should be sent by registered mail to all addresses held by the University for the student.

7 Return to study

- 7.1 Each student's case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context out of which concern arose but in all cases return to study will be dependent upon satisfactory medical evidence of fitness to study and the provision of information about appropriate support services with a recommendation of the benefit of continuing to study with support. Evidence submitted should be from a recognised health professional who has sufficient knowledge of the nature and extent of the student's previous problems and the University's concerns about them to be able to make an informed statement of the student's renewed ability to manage the demands of studying at university-level.
- 7.2 In cases where the University has any continuing concerns about the individual's health, wellbeing and fitness to study, it may require a second medical opinion. In this case a student may be asked to submit themselves for medical examinations by doctors/specialists nominated by the University, at the University's cost, to allow the situation to be properly evaluated. Students will only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical advice, the University is satisfied that the individual is fit to study and able to comply with any conditions imposed on their return.
- 7.3 The decision to permit a return to study will be made by the Head of Subject or course co-ordinator in conjunction with the Director of Student Services (or designate) and a representative from Student Administration who will be satisfied of the student's fitness to study, compliance with any conditions imposed, compliance with academic regulations and availability of support upon return. The University may require a meeting to be held with the student prior to their return to inform the decision-making process by both the University and the student of the student's fitness to return to study.
- 7.4 In any case where a student returns to study following the implementation of this policy, the University may decide that there should be regular review meetings with the student that can be used to support and monitor a return to study plan and provide staff with an agreed context in which to provide ongoing pastoral care. If so, the student must provide their continued co-operation in this respect and such review meetings may continue for part or all of their remaining time at the University.

8 Appeal

- 8.1 Any student wishing to appeal the decision of a case conference should follow the University's appeals procedure. This should be notified to Quality Assurance & Enhancement within twenty working days of the student's receipt of the decision.

VERSION CONTROL

PURPOSE/CHANGE	AUTHOR	DATE
Original document for approved at AQSC.	Student Services/QAE	November 2015
Updates to the clauses below following approval at Academic Board: 6.1; 6.10;	Student Services/QAE	12/07/2017