

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The overarching approach of this policy is the recognition that each student is an individual and will be treated with respect. Occasionally students face a personal, challenging situation and we will endeavour to take a fair and consistent approach in circumstances where students are unable to meet course requirements in terms of attendance; participation in class or completion of work; or the expectations of the College's code of conduct due to:

- a) Aspects of the student's personal life such as caring responsibilities
- b) Any Additional Learning Needs such as a Disability, Medical Condition or Impairment
- c) A mental health difficulty or illness

For those students who experience any of the above, it will be more appropriate to address concerns related to their attendance and behaviour through an approach based on a consideration of their fitness to study rather than adopting disciplinary procedures.

The College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this policy it will receive personal data of a confidential and sensitive nature and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored accordingly.

Normally, sensitive personal data and confidential information will only be disclosed to third parties with the express, informed consent of the student for the purposes of implementing this policy. However, there may be occasions where the College is obliged to disclose, notwithstanding that the student has refused consent.

These include:

- a) Where the student's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety of others
- b) Where the member of staff or the Colleges Group would be liable to civil or criminal penalty for failing to disclose.

The College's commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated through its determination that every student receives a high quality learning experience which will bring them success. The Fitness to Study Policy will be implemented in a manner which maintains each individual's attendance at college, if at all possible, and will follow other college policies in section 6.

2. INDICATORS OF CONCERN

- a) Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party (friend, colleague, placement provider, member of the public, employer, multi-agency partner, and parent) which indicates there is a need to address Fitness to Study.

- b) A student has told a member of the College's staff that they have a problem and/or provided information which indicates that there is a need to address their Fitness to Study.
- c) The student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying mental health issue. For example if a student has demonstrated mood swings or unusual behaviour, shown signs of depression, become withdrawn, aggressive, stressed, irritable or is becoming intimidating towards others.
- d) Behaviour, otherwise dealt with as a matter of Conduct, which is considered may be as a result of underlying physical or mental health problem.
- e) The student's poor attendance and/or progress in their programme appears to be related to an aspect of their personal circumstances, a mental health difficulty or a learning need.

Where concerns around Fitness to Study emerge the Curriculum Support Team Leader (for students based at English and Welsh Bridge Campus) and the Additional Learning Support Manager (for students based at London Road Campus) should be informed via a note on ProMonitor.

A concern may be raised by a Programme Leader or Curriculum Leader. The note should provide evidence of the problem, as they perceive it, along with a statement of the impact to do on their progress.

There are four stages to the Procedure

Stage 1 – Pre Entry

Stage 2 – Emerging Concerns

Stage 3 – Continuing or Strong Initial Concerns

Stage 4 – Immediate Serious and/or No Progress Concerns

It is not necessary to progress through each stage of the process in every case.

Identification of the appropriate stage of the procedure to use will be determined following risk assessment by the Manager (Additional Learning Support Manager or Curriculum Support Team Leader) leading the procedure in discussion with Group Vice Principal (Quality & Curriculum) or Director of A levels.

Where a serious risk is identified, the procedure may be entered at Stage 3 or 4 depending on the level of risk. Should a student be unwilling to participate in the procedures, the process will continue in their absence with all options remaining available.

3. PROCEDURES

Stage 1 - Pre – Entry

- It is the responsibility of prospective students to disclose any additional needs related to their mental or physical health at application point. This information does not normally adversely affect any offer of a place.
- We will ask for specific information from the students doctor (Appendix 1) regarding the students Disability/Medical Condition (anorexia nervosa, psychosis etc.) rather than accept any generalised information on the Disability/Medical Condition, if we feel it is relevant. This information will be used primarily to establish the best programme of study and to put any additional support requirements in place where this is reasonable.
- We will take into account our duty of care towards all students and staff, Health and Safety considerations and what can be reasonably be expected of teaching staff
- Wherever possible, we aim to include health professionals and other external experts in discussions and in all cases medical evidence will be required to inform the support plan agreed
- Where appropriate, we will draw up a risk assessment before an award of place can be made, an agreement from the individual student will be required to ensure they follow the Risk Assessment.
- Consent will be sought to share information we hold with all relevant staff members

Stage 2 - Emerging Concerns

This applies where emerging concerns about a student's health, safety or wellbeing are raised that are viewed by the Curriculum Support Team Leader or Additional Learning Support Manager as compromising their fitness to study.

- A panel meeting will be arranged within 10 working days involving relevant staff which will include the relevant Curriculum Leader. It is at the College's discretion to decide who the panel members are. The panel will be chaired by the Curriculum Support Team Leader or Additional Learning Support Manager.
- As a result of the meeting the following action will be taken:
- The panel will convene a meeting with the student, within 10 working days of the panel. In all cases involving students aged under 18, a parent or guardian will be invited to attend. If the student is over 18 years of age they are entitled to support but not from any legal representative.
- An action plan will be agreed with SMART monitoring targets to address the issues discussed. This may involve referral to external agencies.
- All outcomes from the meeting are to be recorded and stored securely, through the use of Pro Monitor (using Confidential Comments where appropriate) and communicated to the student (and parent/ guardian where they are under 18) within 5 working days.

- The targets should be reviewed by the Curriculum Support Team Leader or Additional Learning Support Manager in line with the SMART targets set and a decision made and communicated to the student as to whether they continue to be monitored at stage 2, be escalated to stage 3 or are considered fit to study and are removed from this process.

Stage 3 – Continuing or Strong Initial Concerns

- Applies when continuing or serious concerns about a student's health, safety or well-being.
- A panel meeting will be arranged within 10 working days involving relevant staff. It is at the College's discretion to decide who the panel members are. Where the panel is as a result of an escalation from stage 2 the Curriculum Support Team Leader or Additional Learning Support Manager will be involved. As will the relevant Curriculum Leader. The panel will be chaired by the Curriculum Support Director
- Discussions will involve establishing whether further Reasonable Adjustments or support can be put in place to enable the student to continue their studies.
- As a result of the meeting the following action will be taken.
- The panel will convene a meeting with the student within 10 working days. In all cases involving students aged under 18, a parent or guardian will be invited. If the student is over 18 years of age they are entitled to support but not from any legal representative.
- The outcome of this meeting may be to –
 - a) Recommend withdrawal from the course with a view to re-enrolling at a future date. This may or may not be the same course dependant on the nature of the concerns.
 - b) Transfer to an alternative course if the time period set by the college could accommodate this.
 - c) Allow the student to continue on their existing programme of study with additional support and monitoring including SMART targets and possible referrals for support.

The outcomes of this meeting should be communicated to the student (and parent or guardian if they are under 18) within 5 working days of the meeting.

- The targets should be reviewed by the Curriculum Support Director in line with the SMART targets and a decision made and communicated to the student as to whether they be moved back to stage 2, continue to be monitored at stage 3, be escalated to stage 4 or are considered fit to study and are removed from this process.

If a student is asked to withdraw from a course of study they will be asked to do this voluntarily. If the student refuses to enter into this agreement voluntarily, the Curriculum Support Director will consider whether the Conduct Policy is implemented.

Stage 4 – Immediate and Serious and/or No Progress Concerns

Stage 4 applies when there are immediate and serious issues where a student's actions or behaviours are putting the health, safety, well-being or academic progress of themselves or other individuals at significant risk and /or are likely to adversely affect the reputation of the College. Stage 4 may also apply where no progress from previous concerns at stage 3 has been made.

- If the case is the result of an incident which indicates immediate and serious issues, first responders should ensure they minimise any immediate danger to the individual or witnesses whilst not exposing themselves unnecessarily to personal danger.
- A member of SLT should be informed immediately (or another college manager in the event that no member of SLT is available)
- The student should be suspended and a Case Conference meeting convened within 10 working days.
- If the student has reached stage 4 as a result of a recommendation from the Curriculum Support Director following a stage 3 review a Case Conference meeting should be convened within 10 days of the decision being taken.
- The Case Conference will be chaired by the Curriculum Support Director and held with relevant staff to discuss the case in question.
- The Case Conference will result in a summary report which will make a recommendation on the student's fitness to study
- A stage 4 panel meeting will be convened within 5 working days of the Case Conference. The panel will be chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- In all cases involving students aged under 18, a parent or guardian should will be invited to the meeting. If the student is over 18 years of age they are entitled to support but not from any legal representative.
- Any medical reports relating to the student should be presented to the panel to facilitate the construction of a risk assessment in a panel pre-meeting.
- If the panel has convened as a result of an immediate and serious incident the risk assessment will inform whether a supportive action plan can be put in place in order for the student to remain at college. If this is the case, the action plan should be subject to a review meeting each month chaired by the Curriculum Support Director and involving the student and, if under 18, a parent/ guardian.
- If the panel has met as a result of an escalation from stage 3 the meeting will inform a decision on whether a supportive action plan can be put in place in order for the student to remain at college. If this is the case, the action plan should be subject to a review meeting each month chaired by the Curriculum Support Director and involving the student and, if under 18, a parent/ guardian.
- In both instances the panel may recommend to the Principal an exclusion from the college.
- No refunds will be given if a student is asked or leaves a course as part of the college's fees policy.

3. APPEALS

The student has a right of appeal where the decision has been made to exclude. All appeals should be made in writing to the Principal and CEO within 10 working days of the decision.

The Principal will then hold an appeal meeting from which their decision will be final

Exclusion as a result of the Fitness to Study policy being applied will preclude a student applying for another course at the college until the following academic year or a period of 6 months depending on when the exclusion has occurred. Should the student wish to apply for further study at a future date, the college will require evidence from an external professional that they are fit to return to study with reasonable adjustments if required and will convene a meeting with the student and external agency prior to attending an advice and guidance interview. This appeal is not valid for anyone excluded under the Student Conduct Policy.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Conduct Policy
- Quality Handbook
- Fees Policy
- ALS Policy
- HE ALS Policy
- Prevent Policy

Appendix 1: Fitness to Study Medical Assessment

Information for GP or other appropriate professional:

Shrewsbury Colleges Group aims to ensure all students can study and perform to the best of their ability, in a safe and comfortable environment.

On occasions, it is necessary to review an individual's fitness to study due their mental health or other health related issues. A medical or professional assessment is then required to help the college assess when / whether a student is a fit to continue with their studies, able to cope with the demands of the course (including placement) and college life and whether any adjustments need to be made. The student's consent in Section 1 allows you to provide this information and for us to contact you for further information if required.

Using the information provided in section 2 below, please comment as appropriate in Section 3. The information you provide will be treated in confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Many thanks for your support with this assessment process.

Once completed, please return this form to the Student Support Manager.

Ben Kovacs

Additional Learning Support Manager

Shrewsbury Colleges Group

London Road

Shrewsbury, SY2 6PR

benko@shrewsbury.ac.uk

SECTION 1 (To be completed by the student):

Student name	
Date of birth	
Student registration number	
Course (eg) A levels or Level 2 IT	

Student consent

I agree to my GP/other appropriate professional providing Shrewsbury Colleges Group with a medical assessment of my fitness to commence/resume my studies, both using this form and through follow-up communication, if required.

Student signature		Date	
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SECTION 2 (To be completed by College Student Support Staff):

The student's fitness to study or their return to study (following postponement), is being considered for the following reasons. The College seeks an update of his/her current situation and his/her ability to cope with the demands of academic study, undertaking placements and student life more broadly, including independent living.

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SECTION 3 (to be completed by appropriate medical or other professional)

Medical assessment of (name of student):

Date of commencement of care for current health condition:

Date of discharge (unless ongoing):

Frequency / Regularity of Appointments:

1. The nature and extent of any medical / health condition from which the student is suffering:

2. The extent to which the student's condition may affect his/her fitness to study and manage the demands of student life in relation to each of the following:

Please provide information below on the student's fitness to complete a programme of study, referring as appropriate to issues such as (but not limited to) ability to attend, reliability, dealing with stress, mood, motivation and physical health,

Empty content area for the policy and procedure document.

3. The impact the student's condition may have on, or risk it may pose to, self or others:

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Details of Appropriate Professional

Name	
Position	
Employer	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Signature	
Date	