

# Fitness to Study Policy



<b>Review Period:</b>	<b>Annual and/or as required</b>	<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>January 2017</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>SMT or Designated Person</b>	<b>Date to be reviewed:</b>	<b>January 2018</b>

## (1) Introduction

- (1.1) Fitness to Study relates to an individual's capacity to engage satisfactorily as a student, including in relation to academic matters and life generally at the College. This policy covers issues relating to students' wellbeing, emotional and mental health, and health and safety, or the wellbeing and health and safety of other individuals. An effective framework is provided where a student's behaviour requires considered and sensitive management, rather than disciplinary action. This policy will help the College in addressing cases which are inappropriate to progress as disciplinary matters.
- (1.2) Students are entitled to reasonable adjustments if they have a Special Educational Need or Disability.
- (1.3) It is important, however, to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the individual support that can be provided within a Sixth Form College. Our staff provide outstanding care for all students, but there will be times when a student becomes unfit to study when, with or without their awareness of it, they may display inappropriate behaviour, endanger themselves or others, disrupt other students or hinder the proper functioning of the College.
- (1.4) There will be times when a student's physical or mental health are so affected that they are no longer able, despite support, within the College and externally, to maintain reasonable academic progress:
- We are not a distance-learning College and, while it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible on a temporary basis, prolonged periods of absence cannot be sustainable;
  - There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health can require support beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer;
  - Occasionally a student's ill health may present a health and safety risk to either themselves or those around them that is unmanageable in a mainstream educational setting.

- (1.5) There are therefore occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our judgement that, in the best interests of a student, continuing at College is no longer the best option.
- (1.6) This policy may also be applied if there are concerns about a student at the stage of preadmission to the College, which may result in a refusal of a place on application or during the induction period if it is identified that the College cannot meet the needs of the student concerned.
- (1.7) Staff who have any level of concern about a student's health or behaviour should consider use of this procedure. If there is a concern of this nature, it is appropriate to explore the student's health/behaviour and agree supportive action rather than enter into a disciplinary procedure. If a member of staff is unsure about whether to implement this procedure, they can seek advice and discuss their concern with the appropriate Student Achievement Tutor.

## **(2) Scope**

- (2.1) These procedures apply to full-time and part-time students or apprentices of the College when they are at the College, in the vicinity of the College, and when they are travelling to and from the College on college transport, or on a college organised trip, placement or event. The jurisdiction of this policy also extends to non-college related activity and will also apply when behaviour outside of the College has a detrimental impact on other students or College staff, e.g. cyber-bullying.
- (2.2) These procedures apply to Higher Education students but where relevant are subject to the University of Sunderland procedures as the case may be.
- (2.3) For apprentices, action will be taken in liaison with the relevant employer wherever possible.

## **(3) Indicators of Concern regarding Fitness to Study**

- (3.1) A student's Fitness to Study may be brought into question as a result of a wide range of circumstances. These include but are not limited to:
- Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party (e.g. friend, colleague, placement provider, member of the public, employer, multi-agency partner or parent) which indicates that there is a need to address Fitness to Study.
  - A student has told a member of the College's staff that they have a problem and/or has provided information which indicates that there is a need to address their Fitness to Study.
  - A student has not engaged with study for a period of time without any reason being given. Absence may be a cause of concern and a barrier to the student making the required progress.
  - 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 / distressed / irritable, or is becoming intimidating to others.

- Behaviour, otherwise dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which is considered may be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem.
- The student's academic performance, physical behaviour or demeanour is not acceptable and this is thought to be the results of an underlying physical or mental health problem.

#### **(4) Initial Support and Guidance to Students**

- (4.1) In advance of this policy being invoked, informal discussion(s) between the student and their Student Achievement Tutor may be initiated by either the student or the member of staff who has concerns. The informal discussion(s) should give the student the opportunity to explain their perception of the matter. At this stage the College will, with the students consent, inform the parents/carers of their concerns and include them in any decision making.
- (4.2) The student should be referred to one or more, as appropriate, of the internal or external support services offered by the College. It may also be appropriate to look into the possibility of applying special academic arrangements to enable the student to study effectively (e.g. supplying a Learning Mentor, making alternative arrangements for lectures/notes to be supplied). It should be made clear to the student where there are concerns relating to their mental and/or physical health and the impact upon the individual and/or other members of the College community, that such concerns exceed any usual pastoral role and will need to be referred onto specialist support (including multi agency partners).
- (4.3) 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. However if a decision is reached that following intervention the student is still not fit for study a decision will be made to proceed with this policy.

#### **(5) Stages of the Procedures**

- (5.1) Normally the procedures will be followed in the order of the stages set out below. However where there is a serious concern or risk to others, the health and safety of the student, other students and staff would be paramount and action taken accordingly.

#### **(6) Initial Concerns**

- (6.1) Any member of staff who is concerned that a student may be unfit to study by reason of a mental or physical health condition should refer in the first instance to the Student Achievement Tutor.
- (6.2) The Student Achievement Tutor will liaise with the students teachers to consider the concerns about the student's fitness to study which have emerged. The student will be required to follow an appropriate support plan. If this action does not remove the issue/concern the Student Achievement Tutor will advise to proceed with the Fitness to Study procedures.

## **(7) Stage 1 (Wellbeing Action Plan)**

A meeting will take place to make the learner aware of the nature of the concerns that have been raised, hear and consider the student's views and to ensure that they clearly understand the College's expectations regarding fitness to study and agree the best way to proceed. A record will be taken of any agreed actions with the student and will be monitored by the member of staff initiating the Stage 1. The various sources of support open to the student will be explained and an action plan put into place to support the student. The action plan will include a review period and a date for a further meeting to establish whether the required progress has been made. The student will be made aware that there is a recognised concern within the College.

## **(8) Stage 2 (Wellbeing Action Plan )**

(8.1) If the situation does not improve and the required progress is not made, , the case will be referred to Student Achievement Tutor, who will arrange a second stage meeting with the student. The concerns and available support will be discussed with the student, actions will be identified to address the concerns, and a review period will be agreed. A copy of the action plan will be sent to parents/guardian as appropriate. At the end of this period, a meeting will take place to review progress made and to consider whether the concerns still remain. If the student makes the required progress and the issues and concerns are no longer evident, no further action will be taken other than the usual support and monitoring of the student's progress. If the concerns remain and the student does not make the required progress, the Student Achievement Tutor will recommend to the Senior Student Achievement Tutor that the student progresses to Stage 3.

## **(9) Stage 3 (Wellbeing Action Plan)**

(9.1) If the situation does not improve and the required progress is not made, , the case will be referred to Senior Student Achievement Tutor, who will arrange a third stage meeting with the student. The concerns and available support will be discussed with the student and actions will be identified to address the concerns and a review period will be agreed. A copy of the action plan will be sent to parents/guardian as appropriate. At the end of this period a meeting will take place to review progress made and to consider whether the concerns still remain. If the student makes the required progress and the issues and concerns are no longer evident no further action will be taken other than the usual support and monitoring of the student's progress. If the concerns remain and the student does not make the required progress the Senior Student Achievement Tutor will recommend to the Director of Guidance and Student Support that the student progresses to Stage 4 . At this stage the student will be supported to consider their options and may include the option of voluntarily withdrawing from the college.

## **(10) Stage 4 (Wellbeing Action Plan)**

(10.1) If the situation does not improve and the required progress is not made, , the case will be referred to the Director of Student Support and Guidance, who will arrange the fourth and final stage meeting with the student. The serious concerns and support will be discussed with the student and actions will be identified to address the concerns and a review period will be

agreed. A copy of the action plan will be sent to parents/guardian as appropriate. At the end of this period a meeting will take place to review progress made and to consider whether the concerns still remain. If the student makes the required progress and the issues and concerns are no longer evident, no further action will be taken other than the usual support and monitoring of the student's progress. If significant or persistent concerns about a student's fitness to study remain, or if the Director of Guidance and Student Support has determined that the case has become too serious to deal with and the student chooses not to leave college, this will be referred to the Vice Principal – Curriculum, Quality and Student Support. The Vice Principal – Curriculum, Quality and Student Support, will discuss the concerns and support but may take a decision to exclude the student from College. A meeting will take place with the student before this decision is taken and the student will normally be informed in writing of the outcome within five working days. A copy will be sent to parents/guardian as appropriate.

(10.2) If the student chooses to leave college they may re-enrol to resume their studies on the same or alternative course, at a later date, when they become fit to study. This is subject to normal entry and funding criteria and additional assessments to establish that the previous concerns no longer exist.

(10.3) Students who are excluded may potentially put themselves in the position of being unable to enrol to study at this College at a future date.

## **(11) Appeals Procedure**

(11.1) In the case of a permanent exclusion from the College the student does have the right to appeal to the Principal. This appeal must be made in writing within 10 working days and the appeal will normally be heard within 10 working days of the request. In all appeals of this nature the Principal's decision will be final. The student will be informed in writing of the outcome of his/her appeal within 5 working days of the appeal hearing.

## **(12) Other Relevant Policies**

- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Attendance Policy and Guidelines
- Student Disciplinary Policy
- Single Equality Policy College Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy