Fitness to Study Policy

Responsible Senior Manager:	Vice Principal Student Services
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Related Policies:	
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1. Introduction

There is a growing awareness within Further Education for the need to respond appropriately and effectively to instances where a student's fitness to study is being significantly impacted, or impacting on those around them, as a result of:

- Illness,
- Mental health difficulties,
- Psychological – personality or emotional disorders

This Policy addresses these issues and promotes positive attitudes towards Students with disabilities and challenging personal circumstances. It indicates the procedure and support available to both Students and staff when a student becomes unwell and/or presents a risk to self and/or other members of the College community.

2. Definitions

Fitness to Study relates to an individual's capacity to engage satisfactorily as a student, including in relation to academic matters and College life (behavioural and social expectations).

This Policy may also be used where there is a concern about a student's **Fitness to Practice**. This refers to students on courses with a practical component leading to registration with a professional, statutory or regulatory body.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support students and staff in managing situations that cause significant concern in order to fulfil the duty of care that the College has to its students.

4. Scope

This policy is only intended for use in cases in which the behaviour, disruption or risk presented by the Student is perceived to be of a serious or potentially serious nature.

This policy is not intended to give guidance on wider matters relating to Students with mental health needs, but is intended to ensure a consistent and sensitive approach to managing situations.

5. The Role of the College

It is the aim of the College to foster independence, self awareness and personal responsibility amongst Students. In this context it is also important that Students take an active part in the process, and take appropriate steps to manage their own health and wellbeing in order to fulfil their academic and social potential.

This Policy is for use when a Student's health or wellbeing may cause the College to consider the Student's fitness to study on a course, including within a placement, and/or as a member of the College community as a whole. These include (but are not restricted to) the following:

I. A Student is affected by a condition requiring a long period of absence and treatment.

II. Where doubts/concerns may be raised due to a pre-existing medical condition.

III. If participation in a compulsory element of the course (including work experience) is highly likely to have a negative impact on a pre-existing medical condition or mental health issue.

IV. Where there is consistent disruption to teaching, learning or support of other Students or when there are unreasonable demands made on staff/Students due to deteriorating physical/mental health of the Student.

V. Where there is an identified risk to others.

VI. The Student's personal conduct is not acceptable and is suspected to be as a result of a physical/mental health issue or significant personal issues which are ongoing.

6. Procedure and Key Responsibilities

It is possible that the use of any formal procedure may increase a Student's experience of stress. In order to minimise the risk of causing additional stress, the procedure should be used sensitively, ensuring that the Student understands the focus is on his/her best interests, and that all possible steps are taken to minimise additional concerns and anxieties experienced by the Student.

All members of staff must ensure that they consider the College safeguarding procedures alongside this procedure. If an incident occurs where there is critical concern, regarding immediate risk to self or others, a member of the Safeguarding Panel must be informed in accordance with the College safeguarding procedures.

In the case of a Looked After Child the Local Authority must be kept informed at all stages.

If a Student is unwilling or unable to take part in any of the support meetings the College may follow the procedure where it is reasonable to do so.

Support Stage 1

People involved	Actions
• Tutor • Student Advisor	• **<u>This stage is managed by the Tutor / Student Advisor</u>** • Where issues have been identified (attendance, progress, behaviour) the Tutor will meet with the student and set targets, recording this on ProMonitor/Insight • If the tutor believes that the cause of the issues is a physical or mental health condition they should submit a Fitness to Study Referral to the Student Advisor. • The Student Adviser will take the referral to the Safeguarding Panel who will agree a course of action. • If the Safeguarding Panel believes that the issues are not a result of physical or mental health conditions the Head of Student Services will contact the tutor and recommend that standard Capability Procedures are followed • Where the issues are recognised as a result of physical or mental health conditions the Student Advisor will meet with the student (and parent/carer where appropriate) and put together an Action Plan**.** This will be done in consultation with the Tutor. • **This will be Stage 1 of the Fitness to Study Policy** • The Student Services Administrator will record the decision on Insight/ProMonitor, record the actions and set a review check date for approximately 4 weeks (or earlier if deemed necessary). • The Tutor should continue to monitor the student throughout this period and use Insight/ProMonitor to record notes of meetings.

Support Stage 2

People involved	Actions
• Tutor • Student Wellbeing Manager or Student Advisor	• **<u>This stage is managed by the Student Advisor or Student Wellbeing Manager</u>** • The Student Services Administrator will contact the Tutor prior to the review date for an update. • Where improvements have been made the student will stay at Stage 1 and the tutor will continue to monitor progress and use Insight/ProMonitor to record notes of any meetings • Where the issues persist this will be referred to the Student Wellbeing Manager (or the Student Advisor may continue to work with the student) • The Student Services Administrator will arrange a meeting where the Student Wellbeing Manager will meet with the student (and parent/ carer where appropriate) to review the reasons preventing improvements and set new targets (including engaging with support) on the Action Plan**.** • These new targets should be agreed in consultation with the Tutor. • **This is Stage 2 of the Fitness to Study Policy** • The Student Services Administrator will record the new targets on Insight/ProMonitor and a review check date will be set in approximately 4 weeks (or earlier if deemed necessary). • The Tutor should continue to monitor the student throughout this period and use Insight/ProMonitor to record notes of meetings.

Support Stage 3

People involved	Actions
• Student Wellbeing Manager and Learning Manager	• **<u>This stage is managed by the Student Wellbeing Manager</u>** • The Student Services Administrator will contact the Tutor prior to the review date for an update. • Where improvements have been made the student will stay at Stage 2 and the tutor will continue to monitor progress. • Where the issues persist the Student Wellbeing Manager will ask Student Services Administrator to organise a meeting with the student (and parent/ carer where appropriate) and the Learning Manager to review the issues and barriers to improvement. • The student may also bring a support worker where relevant. • The Student Wellbeing Manager and Learning Manager will set new targets (including engaging with support) and the Student Services Administrator will record the new targets on Insight/ProMonitor. • A discussion will also take place on how effectively the student is engaging with the support offered. • **This will be Stage 3 of the Fitness to Study Policy** • The Student Services Administrator will set a review check date in approximately 2 weeks (or earlier if deemed necessary). • The Tutor should continue to monitor the student throughout this period and use Insight/ProMonitor to record notes of any meetings.

Fitness to Study Action meeting

People involved	Actions
• Head of Student Services • Learning Manager	• **<u>This stage is managed by the Head of Student Services</u>** • The Student Services Administrator will contact the Tutor prior to the review date for an update. • Where improvements have been made the student will stay at Stage 3 and the tutor will continue to monitor progress and use Insight/ProMonitor to record notes • Where the issues persist the Student Services Administrator will organise a meeting with the student and parent/ carer with the Learning Manager and the Head of Student Services. • The student may also bring a support worker where relevant • **This will be the Fitness to Study Action meeting** • At the meeting the Head of Student Services will invite the student, parent/ carer or support worker to give evidence. • A decision will be made on whether the College is able to continue to support the student with an Enhanced Action Plan or whether studies need to be suspended/ended. Insight/ProMonitor will be used to record notes and the Head of Campus and Director of Curriculum are informed of the decision. • If the student is unwilling or unable to attend a second meeting may be arranged. If the student is unwilling or unable to attend the rearranged date the meeting may still go ahead in their absence. • The Student Services Administrator will communicate in writing the decision to the student (and parent/carer where appropriate) within 5 working days of the meeting. • If the Student wishes to appeal, they must do so within 5 working days of the date of the decision to dismiss. Any Appeal should be made to the Vice Principal (Student Services) and should outline the reasons for the Appeal.

7. Appeals

The Student may appeal against a decision of the Fitness to Study Action meeting on the following grounds:

- The College failed to follow its own procedure.
- There is further material evidence, which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration at the meeting.

All appeals should be made in writing from the Student, or an appropriate adult acting on their behalf, to:

Head of Student Services
Havant and South Downs College (Alton Campus)
Old Odiham Road
Alton
GU34 2LX

Tel: 023 9387 9999

The Appeal request must be made within five days of receipt of the decision to dismiss the Student from College. Once an Appeal is lodged, the Student shall not attend College until the Appeal is heard.

A request for an Appeal must identify the grounds from the list above and provide a brief supporting statement.

The Appeals Panel consists of the Vice Principal (Student Services) and Head of Campus. Where the Vice Principal (Student Services) is also Head of Campus then another Head of Campus will be on the Panel. Students have the right to present their case in person to the Appeals Panel at an Appeal Hearing, with one other person in attendance if they so wish to support them, for example a Parent or Carer.

During an Appeal, the Panel may receive representations from the Student, Parents/Carers, Senior Tutor, Learning Manager, Tutor, Head of Student Services, Student Wellbeing Manager and any other person they deem appropriate. Evidence may be received in writing or orally, as the Panel determines.

The Panel, may either:

- Uphold the decision for the Student to be dismissed, or
- Reinstate the Student, with or without conditions as appropriate.

The findings of the Appeal will be communicated to the Student and, if appropriate, to his or her Parents/Carers, in writing.

The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

Not every meeting will be conducted in exactly the same way and will depend on the particular circumstances and nature of the appeal.

8. Returning to Study

Where a Student wishes to return to study after a previous withdrawal, their application will be considered under the guidance of the Admissions Policy and any concerns about a return to study will be managed according to the Fitness to Study Policy.

9. Student Fitness to Study Procedure-Student Flow Diagram

Support Stage 1

- If your Tutor has concerns over your fitness to attend College they will ask to speak to you on a one to one basis & your Parent/Carer will be notified of this (where appropriate).
- Your Tutor will ask a member of the Health and Wellbeing Team to meet with you.

Support Stage 2

- The Health and Wellbeing Team will arrange a Support Stage 2 meeting if there are still concerns. Your Parent/Carers will be invited to this meeting (where appropriate).
- Support Stage 2 meeting will consider your support needs and an action plan will be agreed with you, detailing the steps you will need to take and the support you will be offered.

Support Stage 3

- If concerns remain, or are increasing, a Support Stage 3 meeting will be arranged.
- The Student Wellbeing Manager and Learning Manager will be at this meeting and your parent/carers will be invited (where appropriate).
- At the meeting, your support needs will be discussed and new targets and support will be agreed.

Fitness to Study Action Meeting

- If there are still concerns the Head of Student Services will arrange a Fitness to Study action meeting.
- You will be invited to attend the meeting and you can bring a relative, friend, student representative or support worker with you. Your Parent/Carers will also be invited (where apprpopriate). In the event that you are unable or unwilling to attend, the meeting may go ahead in your absence. All the evidence will be discussed and a decision made as to whether you are able to continue at College.
- The decision made should be confirmed in writing to you and your parent/carer within 5 working days of the meeting.