

Support Through Studies Policy

1. Purpose of the support to study policy

- i. The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach we will take to best support you if you are experiencing significant or on-going challenges that are impacting on your capacity to engage fully with your studies.
- ii. It includes situations where there is a concern about:
 - Your health and wellbeing
 - Challenges with general student life
 - Where your behaviour poses or has a negative impact on others
 - Where there could be or is a risk to your or to others
 - The on-going impact of a disability
- iii. Whereas we have the Extenuating Circumstances Policy to offer support such as assessment extensions or deferrals when you may have a short-term challenge such as a minor illness, the Support to Study Policy focuses on situations which are on-going or have a more significant impact.
- iv. We will apply this Policy in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, including our duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary.

2. Identifying you may need support

- i. You may recognise that you need support because you are experiencing particular challenges. It may also be the case that a member of staff or another student identifies that you may or do need support.
- ii. If you are experiencing challenges in engaging with your studies, you should contact the Student Support Manager. This includes situations where you *think* you may be experiencing challenges, but you are not sure what to do or if you need some support.
- iii. If another student identifies that you may or do need some support, they should also report this to the Head of Higher Education or the Student Support Manager.
- iv. If a member of staff identifies that you may or do need some support, they will use one of the processes set out the sections below. The approach that will be used will depend on the nature of the concern and the action that is most relevant to the situation.

3. How we respond to different situations

- i. Each student will have individual circumstances and our approach in this policy is flexible so that we can respond to different situations.
- ii. There are four different ways in which we can respond to potential or actual situations:

- Checking-in conversation
 - Emerging or initial concerns
 - Ongoing or significant concerns
 - Very serious or critical concerns
- iii. In some instances, we may use these approaches sequentially if the level of our concern changes across time. Alternatively, we may decide that it is necessary to immediately use a particular approach (e.g. the significant concern), where the circumstances suggest that this would be in your best support needs.
- iv. You may bring a friend or family member to any meeting that is held between you and a member/s of staff about your circumstances.

4. Checking-in conversation

- i. A member of the Higher Education Delivery team may ask for a check-in conversation with you if they have identified a potential or actual challenge that you may be facing. You may also ask a member of staff for a check-in conversation if you have identified a challenge. The outcome of that discussion may be that no further action is needed or that further steps need to be taken to best support you. Those steps can be either:
- Straightforward support that can be put in place for you (e.g. a further scheduled check-in meeting) by that member of staff to oversee how you are doing.
- Or
- The member of staff will discuss your circumstances with either Student Support Manager or Head of Higher Education to assess if your situation and possible support needs should be considered further as an emerging or initial concern.
- ii. As part of the conversation, we will also advise you about this Support Through Studies Policy and the approaches we take to best support students including should their circumstances become more serious or complex.
- iii. A record of the meeting that you have with the member of staff will be made and you will be given a copy of that by email, along with the actions that have been agreed.

5. Emerging or initial concerns

- i. This approach will be used where a member of staff has evidence of an actual concern that they consider needs to be discussed and addressed. This evidence may be from you, from a member of staff or from another student.
- ii. A record of the concern will be made by the Student Support Manager who will ask to meet with you to discuss the concerns. The outcome of that meeting may be that no further action is needed or that further steps need to be taken to best support you. Those steps can be either:

- An action plan is put in place which will set out what has been agreed including support measures, as well as any actions required of you directly. An action plan template will be used to formalise this process.

Or

- The member of staff may discuss your circumstances with the Head of Higher Education to assess if your situation and possible support needs should be considered further as an ongoing or significant concern or a very serious concern.
- iii. As part of the conversation, we will also advise you about this Support Through Studies Policy and the approaches we take to best support students including should their circumstances become more serious or complex.
 - iv. A record of the meeting that you have with the member of staff will be made and you will be given a copy of that by email, along with the actions that have been agreed.

6. On-going or significant concerns

- i. This approach will be used where a member of staff has evidence of an on-going or serious concern that needs to be addressed. This evidence may be from you, from a member of staff or from another student.
- ii. A record of the concern will be made by the Student Support Manager, and they will ask to meet with you to discuss the concerns. The meeting will also be attended by another member of the Higher Education delivery team.
- iii. The focus of the meeting will be on finding an approach to support your circumstances and agreeing a timeframe for supporting you to get back on track and when the outcomes of those actions will be reviewed. The outcome of that meeting may be that either:
 - A new or amended action plan (if one is already in place) is agreed including support measures, as well as any actions required of you directly. An action plan template will be used to formalise this process. A date for a review of the action plan will be agreed.

And/or

- You may decide to interrupt your studies and intermit for a period of time. In that situation, there would also be agreement on how your circumstances will be reviewed after that period of time to assess if you are ready to return.
 - The member of staff will discuss your circumstances with the Head of Higher Education to assess if your situation and possible support needs should be considered further as a very serious concern.
- iv. Where it is not possible to agree a full outcome at the meeting, a further meeting will be scheduled to do so. We recognise that this may be necessary, for example, if you need to decide about the action to take (e.g. interrupting your studies).

- v. As part of the conversation, we will also advise you about this Support Through Studies Policy and the approaches we take to best support students including should their circumstances become more serious or complex.
- vi. A record of the meeting that you have with the member of staff will be made and you will be given a copy of that by email, along with the actions that have been agreed.

7. Very serious or critical concerns

- i. A Case Conference Panel may be used where a member of staff has evidence of a very serious or critical concern about the potential of you continuing with your studies and/or if there has been no change as a result of actions put in place from earlier meetings (including from *ongoing or significant concern* meetings). The evidence used by the member of staff may be from you, from another member of staff or from another student.
- ii. A record of the concern will be made by Student Support Manager, and a case conference will be set up (see paragraph iv below).
- iii. Where the serious or critical concern is additionally accompanied with evidence that your state of wellbeing means that you may be a risk to yourself or to others, we will undertake a risk assessment and may put in place temporary precautionary measures in line with the Emergency Powers Policy. This risk assessment will be undertaken prior to any further actions set out in this section of the policy.
- iv. The role of the Case Conference Panel is to consider the potential of you continuing your studies, including if you need to be withdrawn, or if you need a period of intermission.
- v. The Case Conference Panel involves several members of staff including:
 - The COO as Chair of the Panel (or if not available, a nominated representative from the Management Team)
 - The Head of Higher Education
 - The Student Support Manager
 - The Higher Education Administration Officer who will act as Secretary
- vi. You will be invited to meet the case conference panel. We will provide you with at least five working days' notice of the meeting date and time and will include information about the panel membership. You may choose to be accompanied by a friend or family member and should inform us in advance if you plan to do so.
- vii. If you cannot attend at the agreed time and there is good reason that aligns with our extenuating circumstances policy, the meeting will be rescheduled. You have the right not to attend the meeting or provide any further information. The meeting will go ahead, and the outcome will be based upon the information the panel has to make its decision.
- viii. The panel will normally be chaired by a senior member of National Centre staff but may include members from outside the organisation who have relevant experience. We will draw in external panel members where we do not have sufficient internal capacity and/or independence from within the National Centre. The panel will be supported by a member of staff who will take a record of the meeting.

- ix. The outcome of a Case Conference Panel can be that either:
- A revised action plan that sets out the steps of how you will be supported, actions you need to take, dates by which outcomes need to be shown and how the plan will be monitored.
 - A required interruption of studies for a specified period of time and/or any accompanying action plan to be completed before potentially returning to studies.
 - A required suspension from the course or a specified period of time with a specified review date and any required conditions that need to be met which, if not met, will normally result the National Centre withdrawing you from your course.
 - Required exclusion from certain aspects of the programme or parts of the National Centre.
 - Withdrawal from the programme and student status on the basis of a determination on balance of probabilities that you will no longer benefit from the programme and/or succeed in meetings its outcomes.
- x. We always aim to reach a decision on the most appropriate outcome in collaboration with you. However, this will not be possible in all circumstances, and the National Centre has the right to suspend or withdraw you from the programme where there is evidence to show that this is the right course of action.
- xi. You will be informed of the outcome of the case conference panel and the reasons for its decision within five working days of the meeting. We can share the decision with you in-person, but we will always confirm it formally in writing.

8. Appealing a decision of a case conference

- i. Decisions made under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of these procedures should be made with the agreement of the student
- ii. However, where a student feels that the process has not been undertaken correctly or feel a different decision should have been made, they should refer to the Student Complaints Policy, unless a very serious concern has prompted a case conference meeting. Where this step has taken place:
- iii. A student may appeal a decision on the following grounds:
- A procedural irregularity
 - Evidence of bias or prejudice within management of the process
 - Unreasonable outcome and/or disproportionate penalty
 - New evidence that you can demonstrate for good reason was not available when the process took place, and that this evidence is sufficient for there to be a possibility that the outcome could have been different had it been available.

- iv. It will not be possible to appeal the decision on any other grounds.
- v. A student can make an appeal within 15 working days of receiving the outcome of the disciplinary process. Information about how to appeal will be provided with that outcome. The National Centre may extend the deadline for submitting an appeal where there are reasonable grounds to do so, including those covered in the extenuating circumstances policy.

The appeal will be received by the CEO who will along with a member of the Board of Trustees review the case to determine whether the student has advanced valid reasons for the appeal. The CEO may delegate their participation in this decision to an individual who has not been involved in the case to date who may be the COO, an individual with relevant experience external to National Centre, or a further member of the National Centre Board of Trustees.

- vi. A student's appeal submission will be acknowledged by National Centre within five working days of receipt, and you will be informed within a further 15 working days if your appeal meets the grounds for appeal and how that has been determined.
- vii. Where it is decided that the student has not advanced valid grounds for appeal, this will complete National Centre's consideration of the matter and in confirming the outcome we will also provide you with information about your right to refer your case to the national Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
 - i. Where it is decided that the student has advanced valid grounds for appeal, we will confirm that we will consider your appeal through an Appeals Panel.
- viii. The Appeals Panel meeting will normally be held within 15 working days of National Centre confirming that you have advanced valid grounds for appeal. We will provide you with at least five working days' notice of the meeting date and time and will include information about the panel membership. You may choose to be accompanied by a friend or family member and should inform National Centre in advance if you plan to do so. Section 12 provides more information about this process.
- ix. If attendance at the agreed time is not possible and the Chair feels there is good reason, the meeting will be rescheduled.
- x. A student has the right not to attend the meeting or provide any further information. The outcome of the panel will be based upon the information it has to make its decision.
- xi. The Panel members will have no previous involvement with the case and will comprise:
 - A Chair who can be the CEO, a member of the National Centre Board of Trustees or an individual external to National Centre who has relevant Higher Education leadership experience.
 - Two other panel members who will either be senior members of National Centre staff or individuals external to National Centre with relevant Higher Education leadership experience or members of the National Centre Board of Trustees.

- xii. The National Centre will ensure that at least one Appeals Panel member is from the National Centre as a member of staff or a member of the National Centre Board of Trustees. The Appeals Panel will be supported by a member of National Centre staff who will act as secretary take a record of the meeting and will advise on process but will not take part in decision-making.
- xiii. The remit of that Appeals Panel is to consider the appeal and supporting evidence and agree the action that should be taken. It is not the remit of the Appeals Panel to reinvestigate the case but to consider the grounds for appeal that have been provided. The Appeals Panel will:
- Review the information provided by the student as well as the summary of case meeting panel should those not be provided by the student.
 - Meet with Chair of the case meeting panel.
 - Meet with the student to discuss the appeal submission.
 - Call witnesses
 - Take expert advice from any other relevant individuals
 - Meet privately to agree an outcome
- xiv. The outcome from an Appeal Panel can be to:
- Overturn some or all the decisions made by the Case Conference Panel and replace them with one or more new decisions.
- Or
- Amend some or all the decisions made.
- Or
- Confirm that the outcomes from the Case Conference Panel should stand.
- xv. The appeal panel also has the authority to make recommendations to the National Centre Academic Board about the application of this policy and any amendments that need to be made into the future.
- xvi. The student will be informed of the outcome, and the associated reasons, within five working days of the meeting. The outcome can be shared in-person but must always be confirmed formally in writing. If unhappy with the outcome from the appeal panel, information will be provided about how to refer the case to the national Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
- xvii. The National Centre will keep a record of any appeal panel meeting.
- xviii. Where a decision an appeal is successful, it may require the student to re-enter the Support Through Studies process at an early stage of the Policy.
- xix. In the event that the Case Conference Panel recommended suspension or withdrawal and the appeal overturns this, determine the timeframe and manner of the student's return to study will taking the interests of all parties into account.

9. Behaviour concerns

- i. Where we have concerns about your behaviour that may be connected with your wellbeing or need for additional support, we will decide if your situation should be considered through this Support Through Studies Policy or through the Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy. The Support Through Studies Policy will normally be used where there is evidence that your behaviour was primarily as a direct result of a specific physical or mental health condition or a learning difference. The Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy will be used where there is insufficient evidence to show that is the case.
- ii. In some situations, we may use the Student Non-Academic Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy *and* the Support Through Studies Policy. We will do so where there is evidence to show that your misconduct was due to a physical or mental health condition or learning difference **and** where your behaviour resulted in a significant impact (e.g. on another person, facilities etc).
- iii. Where it is appropriate to apply both policies, we will determine the sequence in which this happens to ensure that the process is proportionate, fair and reasonable.

10. Returning to study

- i. Where you have a period of intermission from your programme, we will set up a meeting between you and the Student Support Manager to talk through how you are doing and to see if you are fit to return.
- ii. We will normally ask for relevant medical or support service evidence so that we can further understand your readiness to return. We will not normally agree to your return where medical or support service evidence does not support that decision.
- iii. Your return to study will be authorised by the Head of Higher Education.
- iv. Where it is possible for you to return, we will discuss any on-going support that you may need from the National Centre or elsewhere (e.g. medical support). Once you are back, we will continue to schedule check-in meetings (or use other approaches sets out in this Support Through Studies Policy) with you until we agree that these are no longer needed.

11. Student Consent to the sharing of information

- i. Where a student discloses sensitive information (e.g. a mental or physical health condition) and does not wish to share this information with anyone else within the School, the capacity to provide support may be restricted or limited.
- ii. Acting within the Law, the School will seek the student's informed consent before disclosing sensitive information and consider the student's best interests before disclosing information to a third party.
- iii. However, if a staff member has reasonable belief that the student may be at serious risk to themselves or others, in the interests of safeguarding, or where there is a legal obligation to

disclose this information, this may justify the need to disclose this information without consent.

- iv. In this case, the staff member concerned should disclose the information to the Head of Higher Education, who will review whether it is necessary to contact the student's Emergency Contact given at the point of registration. The student should be notified prior to disclosing the information, even where the staff member intends to disclose without the student's consent.

Appendix 1
Risk Assessment and Temporary Precautionary Measures

- i. Following a report of a very serious or critical concern relating to your wellbeing or behaviour, the Head of Higher Education will undertake a risk assessment to consider if there is an actual or potential risk to:
 - You or any individuals in the National Centre community
 - National Centre premises or facilities
 - The overall reputation of the National Centre
 - Members of the public
- ii. This assessment and any subsequent measures we put in place do not pre-determine the outcome of the investigation. They are undertaken to ensure the duty of care to the National Centre community as well as its ongoing operation.
- iii. The outcomes of the risk assessment may result in measures being put in place to mitigate any risk and the Emergency Powers Policy may be used. These measures are temporary and precautionary and may include but are not limited to:
 - A non-contact agreement with another member of the community, and/or
 - Excluding a student from using part or all of premises or facilities and/or
 - Suspending a student from the programme
- iv. The student will be informed in writing of the decision for the measures, the period of time for which they will apply and, where applicable, when they will be reviewed.
- v. We will inform any other relevant individuals of any temporary precautionary measures where there is a duty of care to do so.
- vi. The student against may appeal a decision to put temporary precautionary measures in place. The appeal should be submitted in line with the Emergency Powers Policy guidelines, and the measures will remain in place while the appeal is being considered.
- vii. Wherever possible, and where there would be no impact on the specific temporary precautionary measures put in place, we will permit the student to continue with their studies where they are well enough to do so. Where this is not possible, we will consider putting in place a special scheme of study while temporary precautionary measures are in place (e.g. where a student has reasonable access to alternative resources that would enable the learning outcomes to be met). Any special scheme of study shall be approved by x.