

Student Health and Wellbeing Policy



**Harper Adams
University**

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Student Health and Wellbeing Policy

1. What is the purpose of this policy?

The purpose of this policy is to outline our approach to mental health and wellbeing support for students and the arrangements by which both mental and physical health concerns or difficulties are considered in relation to a student's study, with the aim to help all students realise their full academic potential and successfully complete their studies.

2. Who is this policy for?

The policy applies to all students throughout their period of enrolment with the University. We encourage prospective students with disabilities (comprising either/both physical and mental impairments) to share details with us at the application stage. This enabled us to plan support arrangements from the beginning their time with us. We take our legal obligations under the Equality Act very seriously including, in appropriate cases, making reasonable adjustments.

3. What are our principles and approach?

We aim to provide a **supportive environment** that will help students with mental health difficulties, physical difficulties and/or medical conditions to reach their full potential. We also aim to promote positive mental health and well-being. We implement these aims by:

- Supporting a culture in which challenges to our wellbeing are recognised, talked about and not stigmatised.
- Providing proactive wellbeing interventions through a range of activities, workshops and engagement opportunities for students.
- Adopting a university wide approach to raising awareness of mental health considerations, and offering associated guidance and training to both staff and students.
- Encouraging students with difficulties to seek support.
- Meeting individual support needs via a range of on-going supportive interventions and services, through the Student Services Wellbeing Team, the Learner Support and Academic Guidance Teams, Chaplaincy and Careers Service and the student's Course Team.

We recognise the confidential and sensitive nature of medical conditions, physical and mental health difficulties and other circumstances affecting study and **respect confidentiality and data protection** legislation. All data relating to a person's physical or mental health is regarded as sensitive, personal data which will be treated as confidential and only be disclosed with the student's express consent. Where it is considered that the sharing of information may assist in enhancing their learning, academic achievement, health, wellbeing and/or wider student experience, we will seek their express consent before information is shared. In exceptional cases, where consent is withheld, or it is impracticable to try to obtain it, confidentiality may be broken. These include:

- When the student's mental health has deteriorated to the extent of threatening his/her personal safety
- When the student is at risk of serious abuse or exploitation
- When the student's behaviour is adversely affecting the rights and safety of others
- Where the member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal procedure if the information were not disclosed (for example, if a crime had been committed).

Staff should consult with either the University Secretary, Director of Academic Services or Head of Student Services if they believe there is a need to break the commitment to confidentiality, unless there is an immediate risk of harm to the individual or others. Other than in a crisis situation, initial discussion should not identify the student until the grounds for breaking confidentiality have been established and agreed.

We expect our **students to be able to take responsibility for following the advice and guidance that accompanies this support** (see Section 4). We see this as a natural extension of their university experience because enrolling into higher education is a major event in life and involves a significant number of changes. We advise our students to allow for such changes as: transitioning to a new environment; separation from family and friends; managing financially;

and, for international students, adjusting to a new culture, the University is committed to supporting these transitions.

We recognise that for the majority of individuals, life as a student is a fulfilling and valuable experience and whilst difficulties may arise, particularly in the first few months of commencing studies, usually these difficulties disappear after talking things through with friends, relatives or staff. However, some problems are more persistent or pose a greater risk to academic success. We take a **proportionate approach**, to address health and wellbeing difficulties as follows:

- Minor: Acute or short-term problems which may impact on a student's immediate capacity to work and in turn, undermine academic progress without appropriate intervention. Examples include: illness, grief, injury, periods of low mood.
- Major: Long-term or chronic difficulties. Examples include: chronic illness, specific learning difficulties, mental health difficulties and/or acute mental health crises.

In all cases where concerns regarding a student's ability to study successfully are presented, the Support to Study Framework will be followed (see Section 6), at the appropriate level. This sets out how the University will support a student in difficulty through intervention and adjustments, as well as the expectations on the student to engage with this support and communicate with staff. Where a student does not, or is unable to, engage in support or treatment to maintain or improve their mental or physical health, the University may escalate the steps of the Support to Study Framework with a view to *specify* the circumstances within which a student may be permitted to continue as an enrolled student.

We **recognise the impact of different situations on those supporting students** especially when in some cases, significant self-harm and suicidal thoughts and behaviours can be demonstrated. It is acknowledged that it can be difficult for all involved. In these cases, support for other students (e.g. housemates) will also be factored into arrangements and will be provided by Student Services. Human Resources and the Employee Assistance Programme support staff.

4. Student Responsibility

We expect all students to take responsibility for looking after their own mental and physical health and wellbeing in order to remain 'fit to study.' Wherever possible students are encouraged to engage in physical exercise using on-campus facilities and the abundance of green spaces on campus and nearby, or in some cases in and around the home environment. The Students' Union arrange and promote a range of events and activities through its clubs and societies our students to try new things or keep up their pre-existing hobbies to maintain their wellbeing and provide a work/life balance. Further guidance can be sought from the Student Adviser, Ellen Deighton, who will be able to offer advice, signpost to activities and give you tips on how to take advantage of your surroundings and access to different opportunities to aid your wellbeing.

5. Fitness to Study and Support to Study

There may be instances where a student's health or wellbeing causes the University concern regarding their fitness to study on a course, including within a placement, and/or as a member of our University community. This may arise where, for example, the University is concerned that:

- A student poses a risk to his/her own health, safety or wellbeing and/or that of other persons
- The student's behaviour is, or is at risk of, negatively affecting the teaching, learning and/or experience of other students, for example in accommodation, lectures or through notable poor attendance;
- The student's behaviour is or is at risk of negatively affecting the day-to-day activities of the University and/or a placement provider.

This framework sets out how we may respond to instances where a concern is raised regarding a student's fitness to study and the type of action the University may take to manage the matter and support the student. Staff dealing with this procedure will:

- Consider what internal and external support is available for students;
- Work holistically with appropriate colleagues to support the student with their wider student experience;
- Seek appropriate guidance from staff with relevant expertise across the University when implementing the procedure.

The framework might be implemented where:

- There are a number of worrisome third-party reports regarding a student, from friends, flat-mates or staff
- A student has not engaged in studies for a significant period of time without reasonable cause, for example, poor attendance over 2 weeks or more, or regular patterns of poor attendance.
- There is concern about how a student might manage whilst on placement, field trip, or studying abroad. The support provided will consider reasonable adjustments.

This framework promotes good working practices with students in difficulty or with impairments and provides guidance to ensure that problematic situations are managed sensitively and consistently. The guidance outlines the procedures necessary to respond swiftly to those occurrences when a student presents as unwell and his/her ability to study sufficiently well to succeed may be compromised.

Our aim is to establish a suitable response, by staff, in circumstances where it is not considered appropriate to apply other student procedures (see Section 7 below).

6. Support to Study Framework

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
When:	Initial concerns emerge about a student's fitness to study (for example early warning signs have been observed or reported)	<i>Continued</i> concern about a student's fitness to study which has not improved following initial intervention at level 1, or <i>significant</i> initial concern about a student.	The most serious level of concern can be reached either through progression from Levels 1 and 2 or directly if there are <i>significant</i> and / or <i>immediate</i> concerns about the student's fitness to study
Who:	A member of staff who knows the student, normally the Course Manager or Course Tutor, or occasionally, the Student Wellbeing Officer, should approach the student in a supportive way and indicate that there is a concern about the student's fitness to study.	<p>The meeting should be led by a member of the Course Team (either Course Manager or Course Tutor), along with the Student Wellbeing Officer. Cases that have progressed from level 1 should include the member of staff who initiated level 1 proceedings.</p> <p>The meeting may also include other staff who are familiar with the student's situation and their support needs such as the Head of Learner Support or Head of Student Services.</p> <p>The leading staff member from the Course Team, should approach the student in a supportive way and indicate that there is <i>continued</i> or <i>significant</i> concern about the student's fitness to study.</p>	<p>A meeting between two members of the University's staff (typically one each from the student's course team and Student Services but not necessarily so) and the student.</p> <p><i>And:</i></p> <p>Fitness to Study Committee who will consider recommendations.</p>
When:	<p>The leading member of staff will then ask the student to meet with them, giving at least 24 hours' notice, providing a copy of this policy and procedure. The meeting should be sent as a calendar appointment with the appropriate attachments. The student should be informed of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may need to bring (for example, medical evidence). The University will continue to follow the procedure where a student is unwilling or unable to participate, where it is considered reasonable to do so.</p> <p>The leading member of staff will ask the student to meet with them, giving at least 24 hours' notice, providing a copy of this policy and procedure.</p>		

<p>Purpose:</p>	<p>The aim of the meeting is to discuss the concern(s) about the student, seek the student’s perceptions and response and to identify any additional, reasonable, support needs;</p> <p>Other appropriate members of staff might be consulted to assist with the matter, or attend the meeting, to provide support (advise who this will be);</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The student may be accompanied, if they wish, by an enrolled student, Students’ Union representative or staff member, for support. Students with disabilities may alternatively, choose their support worker, or students undergoing therapy may choose to bring their therapist or counsellor</p> <p>It should also be made clear to the student that it is their responsibility to maintain their fitness to study and that there is a recognised concern within the University.</p> <p>The meeting should be conducted with sensitivity and discretion, firstly outlining the concerns, seeking the student’s response and reassuring them of the purpose of this procedure (and ensuring that they understand it).</p>	<p>The aim of the meeting is to discuss the concern(s) about the student, seek the student’s perceptions and response. The student will be advised that recommendations will be made to a Fitness to Study Committee. Staff may also seek appropriate input from other relevant members of staff or departments and consider any relevant documents which may include letters, statements, attendance records, medical notes and correspondence.</p>
<p>Actions</p>	<p>A clear action plan being put in place, with the student’s agreement</p> <p>Non-exhaustive list of actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable adjustments in relation to assignment submissions and the spreading out of deadlines (i.e. avoiding pinch points) • Reasonable adjustments in relation to exam load scheduling • Reasonable internal support arrangements such as counselling, general wellbeing and academic guidance and expectations of engagement with support • Consideration of and referral to external support services or agencies • Clear communication of expectations and consequences • Reasonable adjustments in relation to engagement with their studies identified through the operation of our Student Engagement Policy 	<p>Make recommendations, to the Fitness to Study Committee, including those in the following non- exhaustive list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action is taken; • Matter referred back to an earlier stage of the procedure; • Further action plan agreed and put in place; • Further reasonable support or adjustments agreed; • Clear expectations are agreed in relation to attendance; • The student is referred for appropriate medical assessment; • The student is withdrawn from placement; • Student be permitted to continue on a part-time basis; • A period of voluntary interruption is recommended; • The student should be suspended / excluded / withdrawn from studies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The matter being referred to another level of the procedure (e.g. Level 2 or Level 3) in cases where the meeting has prompted increased concern or the need for a more comprehensive plan <p>In any situation where it is not possible to reach an agreement, the member of staff will determine appropriate outcomes and recommended actions.</p>		
Review	<p>The student and leading member of staff should set a time for a further meeting to review the situation and any progress or continuing concerns. The email or letter, from the leading staff member to the student, should clearly indicate the time and place of this review meeting.</p>	<p>The student and leading member of staff should set a time for a further meeting to review the situation and any progress or continuing concerns. The consequences of not adhering to the action plan should be clearly outlined to the student. The consequences may include suspension or withdrawal from studies.</p>	<p>Fitness to Study Committee will hold a case conference attended by relevant members of staff and, at the discretion of the University, relevant external professionals.</p> <p>The student will not normally be present, but may, at the discretion of the Chair, be invited to attend part of the meeting. The purpose of the case conference is to discuss the matter, consider any relevant evidence/reports and any action already taken and consider recommendations from the first meeting.</p> <p>The committee will comprise of the Director of Academic Services (or nominee) as Chair, along with staff members who are familiar with the student's situation and others who are independent of the student, as determined by the Chair.</p> <p>Typically, this will include at least three of the following, or their nominee, in addition to the Chair, who is deemed to be independent of the student: Head of Student Services; Student Wellbeing Officer, Mental Health Adviser; Counsellor; Learner Support Manager and the student's Course Manager or Course Tutor.</p>
Follow Up			

	The student should also be informed that the same or additional causes of concern could result in their fitness to study being more widely considered by moving to Level 2.	Regular review meetings should be set up with the student and communicated to those involved, by the leading member of the Course Team.	The actions arising out of the case conference will be agreed, documented and circulated to all in attendance by the Chair of the Fitness to Study Panel who has authority to implement the decision of the panel. All actions should have specific time frames where appropriate and adherence to such time frames will be a condition of any continuation or re-entry to programmes of study.
Correspondence	The student should be sent an email or letter, by the leading member of staff, within <u>5 working days</u> , summarising the meeting and actions that have been agreed, including review points. All Level 1 correspondence should be circulated to/between the Course Manager, Course Tutor and Student Wellbeing Officer.	A short summary of the meeting, the agreed action plan and the consequences of non-compliance should be sent to the student, by the leading member of the Course Team, within 5 working days of the meeting.	Outcomes will be communicated to the student, within 5 working days, by the Chair. Where withdrawal from the course of study is determined, a letter should be sent via registered mail to the address at which the student has most recently confirmed as their home address <i>and</i> their University accommodation. The same letter should be sent to all of the student email accounts known to the University.
Exceptional Escalation	In a situation where there is a perceived imminent danger to the student or others, serious risk of damage to University property or our reputation, the Vice-Chancellor is empowered to take immediate action to temporarily suspend the student from their studies and exclude them from the University's property, for a time period to be determined at their discretion. Such an action would invoke the Level 3 Fitness to Study procedures which would be expedited as promptly as possible but normally within seven days of a temporary exclusion or suspension being applied. Concerns about a student's health or behaviour should be acted upon promptly, as early action/intervention can often prevent a situation from developing into a crisis. This procedure incorporates three levels of concern. The cause for concern can result in the procedure being initiated at any level although it is hoped that most situations can be remedied by action taken at levels 1 or 2. The University reserves the right to vary the procedure as appropriate in the interests of fairness and/ or health and safety concerns for the individual or others. The particular level of concern and associated process to be followed will be at the discretion of the University.		
Return to Study	Each student's case will vary depending upon the context and specific circumstances out of which the original concern arose. In all cases, return to study will be dependent upon evidence of fitness to return study and evidence of sustained, meaningful engagement with appropriate support systems by the student. The committee must also be assured of fitness to study, taking into account the willingness and capacity of the student to comply with any conditions imposed, and the ability of the University to meet the identified support needs upon return. Evidence that the committee will consider in making its judgement, may include:		

- A statement from the student setting out their desire to return to study, their engagement with treatment to improve and maintain their health, their intentions relating to future treatment, as well as their written permission for the University to request a written statement from the student's key health professional. The student should seek guidance on who the University considers is suitably qualified as the key health professional who should make this assessment.
- A statement from staff outlining any areas of concerns in relation to the student's health about which they specifically seek advice or evidence from a health professional, in relation to the student's ability to cope with the demands of higher education.
- A statement from the student's key health professional. Evidence submitted from the student's key health professional should have sufficient knowledge of the student and their treatment and the demands of higher education, in order to make an informed assessment regarding feasibility return to study. In particular, specific reference should be made to the student's capacity to return to and commit to study, including an indication of the key health professional's judgement of the student's ability to cope with a number of requirements for higher education level study.

The University reserves the right to request its own appointed health professional to provide their independent judgement of the student's ability to cope with the routine demands of higher education study, alongside the associated reasonable adjustment needs.

7. Relationship with other Policies

Action relating to:	Is Dealt with via:	Possible referrals:	External
Cases relating to students who have a pattern of poor engagement with their studies may be referred through to this Policy.	Student Engagement Policy	N/A	
Cases where dependency on either drugs or alcohol is recognised as a serious health problem with consequences for assessments of fitness to study.	Drugs and Alcohol Policy		
Request for extensions.	Arrangements for claiming Mitigating Circumstances	N/A	
Changes to your registration and therefore visa sponsorship	Student Visa Sponsorship Policy	Home Office	

8. Redress

Appeals against any outcome of the Fitness to Study Committee's consideration of level 3 concerns, or return to study arrangements, should be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, in writing, within 15 working days of the date of the outcome letter. Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity;
- Unreasonable disproportionate decision;
- New material evidence which was not previously reasonably available

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will review all written documentation and may, at their discretion, invite you to a meeting to discuss any points of contention and consult with other University staff and external appropriate professional. You will normally receive an outcome within 28 working days of you submitting your appeal.

9. Covid-19 Pandemic: Exceptional Supplementary Health & Wellbeing Guidance

Supplementary Guidance: In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the University has revised its existing Health and Wellbeing Policy for students who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable or extremely vulnerable and where there could be a detrimental impact to their overall health and/or wellbeing.

If a student wishes to make a request for consideration to study remotely on the above basis, then they should contact their Course Tutor or Course Manager in the first instance. Students who are classed as clinically vulnerable would need to provide evidence from a medical professional to support studying remotely due to the impact on their overall health and/or wellbeing. In some cases, the option to study remotely may not be possible due to professional accreditation and/or module outcomes, so postponement would need to be considered. Where a student is granted permission to study remotely, the arrangements will be reviewed according to prescribed timescales. These review points will be agreed within the Support to Study Framework.