

Support to Study Procedure

Approved by Student Life Committee 31st October 2024

1. Support to Study Procedure

1.1 Support to Study relates to the ability of the student to meet their obligations and responsibilities as a member of the University community including their willingness to engage with the support services that are offered to them, and the extent to which the support services available are adequate to address the student's needs.

2. Application of the procedure

2.1 The procedure applies to all students currently registered at the University of York, including those on a Leave of Absence, but with the exception of students studying with the Hull York Medical School ('HYMS'¹). This includes but is not limited to:

- Undergraduate Students
- Postgraduate Taught Students
- Postgraduate Research Students
- Foundation Students
- Apprentice Learners
- Distance Learners
- Online Courses Students
- Mature Students
- Centre for Lifelong Learning

2.2 The University recognises that where the successful completion of a programme would lead to the student being placed on the Register of a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body ('PSRB'), the University's relevant Fitness to Practise Policies and Procedures will normally be applied. These procedures can be run concurrently or sequentially, depending on whether the Fitness to Practise concerns require that study be suspended pending the outcome of any consideration. Where Fitness to Practise implications emerge for students who are in the Support to Study process they will be referred appropriately.

3. Context

3.1 The University is committed to fostering a supportive community of learning where students are able to participate fully in their academic studies and wider student experience. The University aims to provide a positive and supportive approach to the management of physical and mental health to support academic achievement and student experience. We expect our students to act responsibly and to behave in ways that do not compromise either their own wellbeing or that of other members of the University community. We also recognise that, in some circumstances, students may

¹ HYMS Student are covered by the HYMS Fitness to Practise Policy (<https://www.hyms.ac.uk/assets/docs/codes-of-practice/code-of-practice-on-fitness-to-practise-medicine.pdf>)

experience difficulties or have conditions that may require additional support in order for them to be able to meet their responsibilities.

3.2 The University provides a range of support services that help students in our academic community deal with aspects of student life that can inhibit learning. These support services do not equate to those provided by medical/therapeutic services such as those offered within the NHS, as the University is primarily an educational institution.

3.3 In applying this procedure we will keep the student at the heart of the process. Every effort will be made to involve the student at every stage and will communicate in a clear and timely fashion about how the process is being progressed.

3.4 The procedure enables the University to provide an appropriate and coordinated response to allow students to succeed in their academic goals.

3.5 This procedure describes how we will discharge our duty of care in response to concerns about students' fitness to study and/or attend. It enables the University to respond appropriately to situations where there are substantial concerns about a student's welfare and/or their impact on the safety or welfare of others.

3.6 The University recognises that there are sometimes circumstances where suspension or termination of the right to attend and/or study is in the best interest of a student and/or of the community.

3.7 This procedure can be applied on its own or in parallel with any other University policy or procedure. A student who is subject to the Support to Study procedure and who is being supported through it is not deemed to be exempt from any other process if they fail to comply with University Regulations, such as Regulation 7 and the Non Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Procedure.

3.9 This procedure is drafted bearing in mind the University's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the University's obligations under relevant data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation. It operates in conjunction with the University's student support services and is intended to form part of the University's commitment to an ethos of safeguarding and supporting students' welfare and the student experience in general. It is also mindful of the University's legal obligations and duties to its staff and third parties. It may operate in conjunction with other University policies and procedures, such as but not limited to the University's Mental Health Policy, Disciplinary Procedure and guidelines, Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Exceptional Circumstances Affecting Assessment procedures. Information recorded as part of the Support to Study procedure will be shared and stored in accordance with the University's procedures and processes relating to sensitive personal data².

4. When should the Support to Study procedure be used?

4.1 Where a student has a medical, psychological or emotional problem(s) which cannot be managed through voluntary engagement with appropriate support services, then this should be undertaken with reference to: Student Life and Wellbeing

² <https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/dp/your-info/students/>

- a. their ability to meet the reasonable academic requirements expected of a student on the programme concerned; and/or
- b. their ability to meet the necessary social and behavioural requirements for a student within our academic community.

4.2 The Support to Study procedure may be applied when one or more of the following is the case, allowing for any adjustments required under equality legislation:

- a. There are significant concerns about a student's ability to fulfil academic progress requirements without serious detriment to their own physical or mental health or the safety and wellbeing of other members of the University community;
- b. Other support processes within the University have been offered and have been exhausted;
- c. A student has been detained under a section of the Mental Health Act, taking into account considerations of capacity and the student's involvement in the Support to Study procedure.

4.3 The procedure has two levels of intervention –

- Level 1: Support Planning and Review
- Level 2: Case Review and Support Planning which may result in a referral to the Academic Registrar (or their delegated officer) for a decision to suspend a student from study or to terminate their registration.

The procedure can be invoked at either of the above levels, depending on the seriousness.

4.4 A referral to the Support to Study procedure can be made by the student concerned or any member of University staff. Typically this is likely to be:

- a student instigating the procedure (for themselves)
- the relevant Academic Department via its Head of Department or Head of School or relevant Chair of Board of Studies (often prompted by the student's Supervisor) or their delegate
- a Senior member of College Staff
- a member of the Student Education and Experience Directorate Management Team or their Deputy
- a member of Directorate Management Team or their deputy
- a departmental student support officer or equivalent.

4.5 Any departments may locally agree ways of discussing concerns and considering what other support may be offered prior to making a referral as best fits their structures and processes, including having roles who typically refer, but this does not prevent any member of staff from referring if they feel it appropriate. Fellow students may raise concerns via the Academic Department or College to which the student of concern belongs.

4.6 A referral for consideration for a student to be considered under the Support to Study procedure should be completed on the [Support to Study Referral Form](#). A decision can be taken to invoke the procedure by the Deputy Head of Student Support or any member of the Student Life and Wellbeing Directorate Management Team, or their deputies. In reaching a decision, they may wish to discuss the case with appropriate colleagues if the circumstances are unclear. The decision will be recorded centrally.

4.7 The Panel Chair will be appointed as a primary point of contact for the student for the Support to Study. The Panel Chair will be allocated from an approved list and will not be a member of the student's department.

4.8 Students may access independent advice and support during the procedure, for example from the advice services at [University of York Students' Union](#).

5. Procedure

5.1 Prior to a referral being submitted, the referrer must have exhausted the following options to attempt to engage the student.

- Arrange an in person meeting to discuss the concerns they have with the student
- Ensure the student is signposted into the relevant support services
- Refer the student into the Student Wellbeing Officer and / or Student Hub
- Have a review meeting with the student to discuss progress after the concerns have been raised. This should be no sooner than two weeks after the initial meeting, unless there is significant concern or risk

5.2 If the above has been completed and there are still ongoing concerns regarding the student then the referrer can make a referral, attaching the evidence of the support that has been offered, trialed and how successful this has been.

5.3. Access Meeting.

5.3.1 Once a Support to Study Referral has been received, the Deputy Head of Student Support will convene an Access Meeting.

This meeting will consist of an appointed member of Student Life and Wellbeing and the student, with occasional attendance from a Departmental Representative if deemed appropriate.

5.3.2 The referrer needs to be prepared to be clear with the student about the reason for the referral in the meeting as the meeting will discuss the reasoning for the referral, what support is currently in place, what support could be in place and what are the ongoing safety risks or concerns.

5.3.4 Following the meeting the representative from Student Life and Wellbeing will prepare a brief summary, containing actions for the student and will recommend whether:

- No further need for another Access meeting
- A follow up meeting to take place
- Need for a Support to Study escalation

5.3.5 This should be sent to the Deputy Head of Student Support who will review these and decide whether to invoke Support to Study. This note should be added to the relevant Case Management system.

5.3.6 It is expected that this will be sufficient for most situations.

5.4 Level 1

5.4.1 This Level of the process should be initiated when the student's department or college have raised concerns with the student and the expected improvements to engagement in support and the student have not taken place. It can also be initiated if the concerns raised are too serious to be dealt with informally (for example if there is a clear risk of harm to self or significant harm or disruption to others). In these cases, a Support to Study Process will be initiated at Stage 1.

5.4.2 The student will be informed of the concerns and will be invited to attend a meeting (with a minimum of five working days' notice) with a Support to Study Panel Chair (from a list approved by the), at least one representative from the student's academic department, and one from the student's college.

5.4.3 Where relevant, colleagues from support departments will be invited in an advisory capacity. A member of the student's College team will also be in attendance to offer support and capture any actions in the action log as well as a summary of key discussion points.

- a. The student can, if they wish to, be accompanied by a representative from University of York Students' Union advice services. If deemed appropriate and by prior agreement of the Panel Chair, students may be accompanied by another member of the University or other appropriate supporter. This includes the Student Life and Wellbeing Representative who convened the Access meeting

During the meeting:

- i. the concerns about support to study will be outlined to the student, who will have an opportunity to respond.
 - ii. A written action plan will be produced by the College representative
 - iii. A review period will be agreed
- b. After the meeting the written action plan is shared with the student after approval from the Panel Chair and all invited to attend a review meeting next semester or in three months.

5.5.4 At the review meeting the action plan will be revisited and the outcome should be documented and indicate whether the situation has been resolved. The outcome of this review meeting should be conveyed to the student in writing.

If concerns are ongoing and progress is being made a further review meeting will be scheduled the case will continue to be reviewed.

If, following review(s), the concerns have been resolved or the student fails to engage, the case will be closed.

5.6.5 If support at Level 1 does not address the concerns after two review meetings, for example the student does not agree to the action plan or engage with the support services offered; the panel will review the known risks to the student and any risks that might be posed to the broader community and determine in the case warrants escalation to Level 2. These should be sent to the Deputy Head of Student Support to consider.

5.7.6 A record of the decision to move to Level 2, and any communications with the student in relation to the case, should be maintained on the casefile.

5.7.7 If the student is too unwell or declines to attend the Panel meeting, the meeting may instead take place or be deferred as decided by the Panel Chair based on known risks and concerns. This enables an action plan to be formulated '*in absentia*' in relation to the next steps to be taken. The action plan would then be communicated to the student in writing. This may include escalation to Level 2 as outlined in 5.6.5.

5.8 Level 2

5.8.1 This Level of the process should be initiated where there are serious or persistent concerns about a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviours, safety and/or ability to study and cope at

University or where there are considered to be serious concerns about risk to the student and/or others. Level 2 should be reserved for the most high risk of cases that have either been escalated through Level 1 or have been directly referred to or supported by a member of the Student Life and Wellbeing or the Student Education and Experience Management Team.

5.8.2 A Level 2 Support to Study case will be overseen by a Support to Study Panel Chair. Also in attendance will be a Departmental Representative, College Representative and a minute taker. The Panel will operate fairly and seek to avoid bias, placing the welfare of the student at the heart of their considerations. They will seek to provide the student who is the subject of the procedure the opportunity to express their views and to provide information that they wish to have taken into account in the consideration of their case. The Panel Chair will ensure that the reasons for decisions taken under the procedure are communicated clearly to the student.

5.8.3 The role of the Panel Chair is to consider whether the student is fit to undertake their studies and meet the assessment requirements of their programme and whether they will be able to do so without risk of harm to themselves or others.

5.8.4 The Panel Chair will take care to avoid undue delay, allowing that exact timescales may depend on the individual circumstances in each case.

5.8.5 The meeting may also involve:

- if requested by the student, a person chosen by the student to accompany and support them [such as a representative from University of York Students' Union]. The supporter is present to provide support to the student; they cannot 'speak for' or 'represent' them, but may speak to the student or ask clarifying questions.
- Members of professional staff from within the Student and Academic Services Directorate
- the Student Life and Wellbeing Representative who convened the Access meeting
- the University Medical Adviser if appropriate
- Others deemed relevant by the Panel
- Others requested by the student and agreed by the Panel.

5.8.6 For the avoidance of doubt, formal rules of evidence shall not apply, but students can submit information or documentation to the panel at any time.

5.8.7 The meeting will hold a discussion of the case and will, where possible, agree actions which will be captured in an enhanced written action plan, shared with the student, to include:

- a date for review (6-8 weeks but no more than twice per semester)
- support for the student
- agreed measures relating to the student adhering to the action plan and engaging with the procedure
- consequences of the failure of the action plan, e.g. actions arising which may include recommendation for an agreed Leave of Absence, suspension, termination of studies or the student's failure of their programme.

5.8.8 At the review meeting the outcome should be documented and indicate whether the situation has been resolved. The outcome of this review meeting should be conveyed to the student in writing.

If, following review, the concerns have been resolved, the case will be closed.

If, following review, concerns remain but progress is being made the case may continue at this level or may be stepped down to Level 1 if risks have reduced or remained constant over two consecutive review meetings. This decision is made by the Panel Chair in consultation with the Panel.

5.8.9 If support at Level 2 does not address the concerns, for example the student does not agree to the action plan or engage with the support services offered; the panel will review the known risks to the student and any risks that might be posed to the broader community and determine if the case warrants a recommendation of an enforced leave of absence or withdrawal from the programme of study. The student will be able to submit information or documentation to inform the process at any stage.

5.8.10 Minutes and agreed outcomes from the meeting will be recorded centrally, and may be referred for consideration under any other relevant University procedure. The student will be informed of any such referral.

5.8.11 If the student is too unwell or declines to attend the Panel meeting, the meeting may instead take place or be deferred as decided by the Panel Chair based on known risks and concerns. This enables an action plan to be formulated '*in absentia*' in relation to the next steps to be taken. These next steps would then be formally communicated as soon as practically possible to the student.

5.8.12 Exceptionally, an enforced Leave of Absence or Withdrawal may be considered, where:

- a. There are serious concerns about a student's mental or physical ability, or behaviour which we have reason to believe to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty and there is a significant impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others and which compromise their ability to live, study or work in the University environment;
- b. A student refuses or is unable independently to engage with the range of support with which we expect them to connect (for example in situations where they themselves do not recognise that they are not fit to study and/or to attend). The University requires this independence to ensure that all our students have the opportunity to attain the degree or qualification for which they are studying;
- c. Other avenues are not appropriate or have been exhausted. Typically the procedure will be applied where it can be demonstrated that all other reasonable adjustments have been made or exhausted and concerns remain.

5.8.13 In the event that the Panel Chair determines that the student is unable to safely attend the University either temporarily or permanently, they must consult with a member of the Student Life and Wellbeing or the Student Education and Experience Management Team before submitting the recommendation to the Academic Registrar (or a nominated deputy) with their approval.

5.8.14 Withdrawal from study via the Support to Study Procedure does not prevent a student reapplying to the same or different course in the future.

6. Return to study plan

6.1 In the event that a student's registration is suspended or a Leave of Absence is agreed as the result of the Support to Study process, they will be required to demonstrate that they are fit to return to study. In order to fulfil this obligation, the University requires certification from the University Medical Advisor with regards to the student's physical/mental health and level of

functioning. It is recognised that the University's Medical Adviser may also need to contact other professionals involved in the student's care, typically their General Practitioner or equivalent, to form a clear view of the student's ability to return to study. Awaiting this certification should not preclude planning for a return.

6.2 Once this has been received, a meeting with the Support to Study Panel should be arranged to discuss the reasons for the Leave of Absence/suspension, the student's current state of health, and the coping strategies the student expects to employ in their return to study.

6.3 A Return to Study Plan should then be created with agreed actions to assist the student in their transition back to University life. The action plan will then be monitored by a designated member of the Panel and reviewed following the student recommencing their studies. Where there are new concerns or active risk then this can be referred for further consideration under Support to Study.

6.4 Decisions regarding a student's return to study following either a Leave of Absence or suspension of studies should be made by the panel with the student's involvement where possible. If the student is not able to be present or involved, the student must be informed in writing of any proposals with relevant records held centrally to ensure oversight of the process. The panel may, if necessary, request further information or opinion as regards a student's fitness to return.

6.5 If the Panel does not determine the student fit to return to study then they will make a recommendation that the period of Enforced Leave of Absence is further extended.

7. Appeal Process

7.1 Appeals will follow the procedure outlined for appeals against academic decisions as outlined in [Regulation 6](#) for students on taught programmes and [Regulation 2](#) for students on research programs. If a student is unsure which of these applies to them they can contact their Independent Facilitator or email study-support@york.ac.uk for this to be confirmed for them.

7.2 Complaints about the process should be raised with the Panel Chair in the first instance who may then also raise this with the Deputy Head of Student Support as appropriate. In the event that a satisfactory resolution cannot be found this can be raised further through the [Complaints Process](#).

8. Governance Framework

8.1 This procedure will be subject to approval by the Student Life Committee. It will be owned and reviewed by the Deputy Head of Student Support . An annual report of activity taken under this procedure will be produced for the Student Life Committee by the Deputy Head of Student Support .

8.2 This procedure will be formally reviewed every two years, or sooner if deemed necessary.