Support to Study Policy

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Support to Study Policy

Introduction

The college recognises the importance of our student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic performance, progression, and wider student experience. The phrase 'support to study' refers to a student's capacity to fully engage with college life, both academically or otherwise, without unreasonable detriment to their wellbeing and whilst maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour.

The purpose of this policy is to support students in their learning journey. It is design to respond to the individual's needs as they change. As a College, we will work with the students to help them remain 'on track' and achieve successful outcomes.

The Support to Study Procedure is intended to be supportive and:

- Ensure the best interests of the student are being considered in relation to their personal situation, behaviour, health, or wellbeing
- Ensure that the student is receiving adequate support
- Ensure that disability related reasonable adjustments have been considered and where appropriate put in place
- Enable the student to progress, meet the required learning outcomes and complete their course
- Agree an action plan to support student progression with clear responsibilities and expectations

This policy relates to an individual's capacity to participate fully and successfully as a student, in both their studies, and life generally at Bird College. The College recognises that there are times when a student's behaviour, wellbeing, and/or health may disrupt their studies or pose risk to themselves or others. The purpose of this policy is to:

a) Provide a clear procedure which can be used when a student's behaviour, wellbeing, and/or health significantly impacts their academic performance, and/or their ability to function within the College environment which is difficult nor possible for the College to manage.

b) Be supportive of students and ensure they are safe and able to proceed with their course.

c) Provide a consistent, co-ordinated, and sensitive approach to managing situations or behaviours which have become problematic and where it is not considered appropriate to apply other internal procedures such as the 'Student Disciplinary Procedure' or 'Attendance Policy'.

d) Encourage early intervention and active collaboration of all staff and external agencies in managing situations where there are concerns regarding a student's ability to progress.

e) Clarify procedures expectations for both staff and students in managing such situations.

f) Ensure that the college has provided the student with appropriate, proportionate, and reasonable support to enable them to complete their programme of studies. Where feasible,

this will include input from relevant members of staff (Counsellor, Physiotherapist, Equity and Inclusion Lead, Learning and Wellbeing Officer, Vocal care, Heads of Department), ensuring that reasonable adjustments are in place, funding available is accessed, whilst also clarifying the expectations of the College.

When to use this policy

This policy can be initiated in instances where a student's health, wellbeing or behaviour is a cause for concern. For example:

- **Health Concerns:** When a student's physical or mental health significantly impacts their ability to engage with their studies or College life.
- **Behavioural Issues:** A student's behaviour raises concerns about their wellbeing or the wellbeing of others and is believed to be linked to underlying health issues (please refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information).
- **Academic Performance:** When a student's academic performance is adversely affected by health or wellbeing issues, leading to poor attendance, missing deadlines, or unsatisfactory academic progress.
- **Safety Concerns:** If there are concerns about the safety of the student or others due to the student's health or behaviour.
- **College Impact:** When a student's actions negatively impact the College community and reputation, including other students and staff.

The scope of the policy

This policy applies to all levels and programmes of study delivered at Bird College. It applies to students throughout the period of their registration with the college.

This policy is not intended to replace disciplinary procedures or to address general academic underperformance. The College has an Extenuating Circumstances procedure, which may need to be considered in any decision relating to a student's health and wellbeing.

Relevant Legislation and Related College Policies

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Attendance policy
- Extenuating Circumstances

- Disciplinary and complaints
- Student Charter
- Safeguarding Policy
- Low BMI and Disordered eating Guidelines
- Students Giving Cause for Concern
- Alcohol and Drugs Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Gender Identity and Sexuality Policy
- Discipline and Complaints; Regulations and Procedures
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Student Code of Conduct

Support to Study Procedure

The college recognises that concerns about a student's capability to engage with their studies can be raised by a variety of individuals including staff, other students, health professionals or family members, as well as the student themselves.

The procedure seeks to promote early intervention and active collaboration between students, staff, and other third parties when applicable, to ensure a consistent approach to the support provided to the student.

Examples of circumstances that may trigger this procedure are:

- Elongated periods of absence from a student's programme of study because of an illness, or ongoing injury
- The student has told a member of staff that they have a problem and/or provided information which raises concern regarding their ability to engage with the programme of study
- The student's behaviour indicates that they may have a medical condition or other significant issue which is having an adverse impact on their health and their ability to engage with their studies
- The student's academic performance or their behaviour gives cause for concern, and this is thought by the person raising the concern to be because of an underlying medical condition

Structure of the procedure

The procedure has 2 stages. The levels represent the degree of concern and/or the perceived seriousness of the situation.

1. Informal Stage: Initial and/or Emerging Concerns

2. Formal Stage: Severe and/or Enduring Concerns

The procedure can be used, and issues resolved at any stage. If the concerns at Informal Stage are not remedied by the recommended and agreed actions, the Formal Stage will be instigated. If the situation merits it, the college may start at a formal stage without the need to undertake an Informal stage.

All meetings should be recorded, copies of agreed action plans should be kept in a suitable, confidential place for the duration of the student's programme of study.

Who can instigate the procedure?

The Informal Stage of the procedure can be instigated by a relevant member of staff who has contact with the student. For example:

- Personal Tutor
- Counsellor, Resident Physiotherapist, Heads of Department, Learning and Wellbeing Lead
- Teaching Staff

The Formal stage can only be instigated by the Dean of Students. This decision will be made following consultation with the member(s) of staff raising the concern, and the relevant support staff.

Informal Stage: Emerging and/or moderate Concerns

The Informal stage should be used when there are emerging concerns about a student's health, wellbeing and/or behavior and the impact this has on their ability to progress on the programme.

Concerns may include but are not restricted to:

- Health: a deterioration in mental or physical health, such as long-term injury, chronic illness, or long-term mental health difficulties.
- Personal conduct: how the student conducts themselves in response to the requirements of the college environment.
- Attitude: How the student conducts themselves in relation to others, attendance, ability to meet deadlines, sit assessments, progress, or ability to participate in College life.

At this Stage, the concern should be reported to the Learning and Wellbeing Officer who will arrange a meeting with the student and their Personal Tutor if the student wishes the Personal Tutor to attend. The student will be notified that the meeting is being called under the Informal Stage of this policy, provided with clear information in writing as to why there is cause for concern, as well as information about the Support to Study procedure, with particular emphasis on the fact that it is designed to be a supportive process.

This Stage of the procedure is intended to be informal; the student can be accompanied by a friend. Where it is suspected that the concerns are due to a mental or physical health difficulty, the relevant

Student Wellbeing Service staff will be asked to provide further information on the student. If this is the case, the student will be informed.

Action/Support Plan

An action plan, with timeframe will be agreed during the meeting. This action plan will set out any action that the student will need to take and the level of support which will be offered to the student, which may include referrals to both internal services (i.e., Learning Support, Counselling, Physiotherapy) as well as external agencies ((i.e. GP, University of Greenwich). Where assessment is imminent, the student may be advised to consider the Extenuating Circumstances procedure, if appropriate. The Learning and Wellbeing Officer will also discuss with the student other types of support such as limited timetable, regular check-ins, additional classes, adjustments to the timetable so the student can access external support, and meeting with specific members of staff.

A date will be set for a mid-way meeting to review the agreed action plan and assess whether progress has been made.

A final meeting will take place 2 weeks after the mid-way meeting.

Informal Stage: Possible Outcomes

1. The action plan was completed, and no further action is needed it.
2. The student continues to be supported, the initial concerns have decreased, and the student's health/wellbeing has increased
3. The student is progressing well, they are aware of the support available to them and how to access it should they need it.
4. Recommendation that the student defers assessments and extenuating circumstances are submitted
5. Referral to the formal stage of this procedure

Formal Stage: Severe and/or Enduring Concerns

The Formal Stage of the procedure should be used where there are persisting concerns following the Informal Stage, where the student does not access support, or when there are severe and/or enduring concerns about a student's health, wellbeing, behaviour, safety, and or/ability to study, and where a more formal response from the college is needed.

This stage would be used when it is considered that interruption, temporary exclusion, suspension, or withdrawal may be the appropriate course of action, or if the student has not agreed to a recommendation or failed to engage with the action plan made under the Informal Stage.

Having consulted the member(s) of staff who have raised the concern, the Dean of Students will convene a Support to Study Panel within fifteen working days from the decision to take this course of action. The student will be provided with at least five to ten working days' notice of the date of the Support to Study Panel meeting. Evidence which will be presented at the meeting should also be sent to the student in advance. The student will also be requested to submit any evidence, at least one working day, in advance of the meeting. This process could be accelerated with the agreement of both parties.

The Panel may include: Academic Registrar, Dean of Students, Learning & Wellbeing Officer, Heads of Department, Equity and Inclusion Lead, Assessment and Curriculum Data Coordinator, Personal Tutor, or another appropriate member of staff, a representative from relevant Student Wellbeing Services (e.g. Counsellor, Physiotherapist), and a nominated secretary.

During the Support to Study Panel meeting, the student's point of view should be heard and considered and there should be an opportunity for the student to provide explanations for the behaviour/health/wellbeing issues that caused concern about their ability to engage with their studies. It may be in the student's best interests to disclose sensitive information so appropriate support can be provided in advance and/or during the process.

The student may wish to bring a friend of family member to the meeting for support. If the student is out of contact or if there is reason to believe a student may be currently unable to make informed decisions (for example, due to a mental health crisis) or is perceived to be at risk of harm, the meeting will still take place in the student's absence. The Panel where appropriate, will take care to protect the confidentiality of personal information, subject to necessary action to safeguard the student's welfare. In exceptional circumstances, it might become necessary to share personal data with relevant agencies.

Relevant personal history should also be made available.

The panel will seek to involve the student concerned and may consult with others when appropriate.

The student should be made aware and or reminded of the circumstances/behaviour that led to the concerns being raised and, if appropriate, the risks perceived by the College. The student's views will be heard and considered and there should be the opportunity to explore with the student any explanations for the behaviour/health/wellbeing issues, which has caused concern under this policy.

The student will have the opportunity to discuss the various options available to them if and when they are fit to make informed decisions. Where the Panel is convinced that the health, safety, or wellbeing of the student, or others, is at significant risk, the college may enforce an outcome.

In cases where interruption or withdrawal is the outcome, the Panel will consider and make explicit what evidence is required before the student is able to return to study. This will usually include medical evidence, such as a Physical Fitness Assessment Report conducted by either the College's physiotherapist or an externally sourced therapist, or a Mental Health report.

If the process starts at a Formal Stage, an action plan will usually be agreed at the meeting with the student, detailing any steps the student will need to take and the support to be provided. Regular

monitoring meetings will be arranged with the student and a nominated member of staff. The Support to Study panel will nominate a staff member based on the specific needs of the student and may be the Counsellor, Physiotherapist, Learning and Wellbeing Officer, Personal Tutor, or relevant member of the academic and/or professional staff.

If a student has been referred from an Informal Stage, a further action plan should be agreed detailing any steps the student will need to take and the support to be provided. Regular monitoring meetings should be arranged with the student and a nominated member of staff.

Formal Stage: Possible Outcomes

1. The action plan was completed, and no further action is needed it.
2. The student continues to be supported, the initial concerns have decreased, and the student's health/wellbeing has increased
3. The student is progressing well, they are aware of the support available to them and how to access it should they need it.
4. Recommendation that the student defers assessments and extenuating circumstances are submitted
5. Recommendation that the student is required to take a leave of absence from their studies at the college whilst appropriate means of addressing the cause for concern is being considered. This will be reviewed in 4 weeks.
6. Recommendation or enforcement of an interruption of studies, agreed by the student or exceptionally enforced by the college. For example, the student may be required to take a leave of absence from their studies whilst recovering from illness or injury.
7. Recommendation or enforcement that the student withdraws from their studies, agreed by the student, or enforced by the college for example, due to inability to fulfil the requirements of the programme such as chronic injury, long term illness, or long-term mental difficulty. This recommendation should only be made in the most serious cases.
8. Enforce a permanent exclusion. For example, due to behaviour that negatively impacts the student's learning, that of their peers and the College environment, for example persistent absenteeism or failure to meet the agreed actions as outlined in the action plan at levels 1 and 2. This recommendation should only be made in the most serious cases.

In reaching these decisions, due care and consideration will be exercised to avoid as far as possible the student being placed in a more vulnerable situation, or a situation that increases the vulnerability, or affects the wellbeing of other students.

The agreed outcome will be communicated in writing to the student by the Dean of Students within five working days of the agreement.

If relevant, the student will be informed of the 'Return to Study' procedure and process, as set out below.

It will be made clear to the student by the panel that this procedure is quite separate from the College's Disciplinary Procedures. It will also be made clear in writing, why the College is recommending this course of action.

Temporary Precautionary Suspension

Where serious and/or urgent concerns about a student's health/wellbeing/behaviour have been raised in accordance with this procedure, the Dean of Students (or other nominated member of the Executive Team) may temporarily suspend a student if they consider the student poses a significant risk to their own health, safety, or wellbeing or to that of other students or staff.

The student will be notified within two working days of any decision to suspend via email and by letter to the address registered with the college. In such cases, key staff will be notified of the suspension.

Any suspension under this procedure is precautionary and does not mean that any final conclusions have been drawn, or that a decision has been reached.

The suspension will be reviewed on a regular basis, usually every two weeks during term-time, by the Dean of Students to determine whether it is reasonable in all circumstances for it to continue, to be revoked, or be amended in some way; for example, the imposition of conditions, in order to minimise its impact upon the student and their studies.

A student who is suspended may ask the Dean of Students for temporary permission to attend college, for example, to attend a counselling session or an assessment. Such request must be made in advance and in writing.

A student who is suspended may also ask the Dean of Students to review the suspension, for example, based on new medical evidence. Any such request must be made in writing.

Case Conference

A case conference can be called by the Dean of Students after consulting with relevant staff at any stage of the procedure. However, this will normally only be in exceptional cases; for example, where a student's health is such that they cannot engage with the process and will not be able to do so for the foreseeable future. The case conference may compromise of any individuals who have been involved in the case thus far, or who may need to be involved to ensure a complete picture of the situation is available. Depending upon the student's circumstances, they may be invited to make a written submission, which may include independent evidence, for consideration. All meetings will be minuted.

Although a student may be invited to the case conference, it is not expected that this would usually happen. A case conference may be held prior to and/or following any meeting with the student.

The case conference will determine whether the student's ability to engage with the course is impaired and any actions to be taken. Such actions may include:

- Reasonable adjustments being put in place for the student to engage with learning and undertake assessments
- Recommendation for an action plan, setting out how the matter will be managed and any requirements to be placed on the student, along with details of relevant support services. A copy of this plan will be provided to the student
- Recommendation of an interruption of studies, agreed with the student or enforced by the college

The proceedings and determinations of the case conference will be recorded and circulated to all in attendance, made available to the student and kept on record by the Dean of Students.

Returning to Study

The procedure for considering a return to study should be made clear to the student at the time of their suspension/interruption.

The student should provide, or the Dean of Students may request, independent confirmation of the student's ability to resume their studies. The precise nature of the evidence required will be dependent on the individual circumstances in each case, but it is expected that this will involve medical documentation. The Dean of Students may set questions/requirements which form the basis of the evidence required; for example, the student's ability to manage the demands of the course, their engagement with any treatment, previous and potential future triggers for relapse, or causes for concern.

The Deputy Principal together with the Dean of Students can make the decision to allow the student to return to study. The decision will be based on the evidence provided and the student's own views of their health and wellbeing.

Where a student returns to study after interruption under this procedure, the Dean of Students will consult with members of support staff regarding arrangements and reasonable adjustments that might be needed to support the student upon return.

Students who interrupted their studies must meet with the relevant support services in the College to discuss their current health and wellbeing.

The College will determine the on-going arrangements to support and review the progress of the student to minimise risk of a recurrence decline in health, including regular review meetings to ensure that the student is able to continue with their studies.

Appealing a decision

Please refer to the College's Appeal procedure for further information.

Support to Study Guidelines

Informal Stage: Guidelines

Informal Stage Initial meeting

The Lead Person should contact and/or approach the student, in a sensitive and understanding way, to request a meeting. They should explain that this is as a result of concerns that have been raised about their health/wellbeing/attitude/behaviour. This will be done in person and by email. The student should be informed that they can be accompanied at the initial meeting. This can be, for example, a friend or a relative.

At the meeting:

- The student should be made aware of the precise nature of the concern(s) being raised. (Clear examples will be helpful).
- The student should be given the opportunity to give their views on what is happening.
- The member of staff should consider with the student what would be helpful and make a difference to the student in order to best support them.
- The student should be made aware of the relevant support available to them, both internally and externally.
- An action plan should be agreed. It would be useful to discuss with the student whether it would be appropriate to share the action plan with other members of staff and obtain the student's consent to do so.
- It should be made clear to the student at this stage that a continuation of the same or additional concerns could result in escalation to the Formal Stage of this procedure.

Informal Stage Review meetings should include:

- Review of the student's progress against the action plan
- Explanation/exploration of any further concerns arising
- Explanation/exploration of further/ongoing support needed
- Agreement of whether further action is required

Formal Stage: Support to Study Panel Guidelines

The student should be invited to attend a Support to Study Panel meeting by the Dean of Students in writing. Students should be given at least 5 working days' notice.

The invitation to the meeting should include:

- Date, time, and venue of the meeting
- The purpose of the meeting

- Where appropriate, documents which will be presented at the meeting
- Whether the student needs to provide any specific documents (e.g. medical evidence).
- A suggestion that the student may be accompanied by someone in a supportive capacity (for example, a parent, a friend), but not by someone acting as a legal advocate.
- Disabled students may also be accompanied by a Support Worker as appropriate for their needs.
- A list of people who will attend the meeting and the reason for their attendance.

A copy of the Support to Study Policy and Procedure.

In preparation for the meeting the Dean of Students will write a summary report of the present and past relevant/key issues. This information will be circulated with the people attending the meeting.

The student should be encouraged to prepare in advance of the meeting. They should obtain any necessary documentation and reports and given consent to the Dean of Students for disclosure of medical records. The student may wish to write a short summary report for the meeting.

It may be helpful to convene the meeting for an initial 30 minutes, before the student arrives. This will allow those who had had no prior involvement with the student/issues to familiarise themselves with the information, the process, and allow them time to understand the issues and possible options.

The Panel will consider the following:

- A summary of presenting situation, concern(s) being raised, and past relevant information.
- An opportunity for the student to give their perspective of current issues and if appropriate history of events, past experiences and helpful strategies or support for managing the issues.
- Clarification of relevant expectations and Regulations.
- Clarification of the student's personal responsibility at college (for example, to be 'well enough' to study).
- Identification of any further information which may be required such as medical evidence.
- Clarification of the options available to the student at this stage.
- Consideration of what would be helpful to make a difference to the student in relation to the options available.
- Clarification of agreed options/actions and support options that the student is encouraged to access.
- Explicit clarification of the consequences of failing to complete the agreed actions, and/or a continuation of the causes for concern.
- Agreement of any interim monitoring measures.
- Agreement of a date to meet again to review the situation.

Documentation

A copy of notes from reviews/Panel meetings and agreed action plans should be sent to the student and all other attendees no more than 5 working days after the meeting has taken place.

Action plans can be shared with other appropriate staff as deemed necessary.

All documentation should be kept securely, in accordance with the Data protection Act.

Non-Engagement

At any stage, if a student is invited but fails to attend a schedule meeting at any level, contact should be made with the student to ascertain the reason for their absence. Another meeting should normally be arranged. If contact is unsuccessful and the student does not attend the re-arranged meeting or engage with the process, the following actions should be taken:

- At Informal Stage, the Learning and Wellbeing Officer should discuss the situation in the student's absence with the Personal Tutor, Head of Departments, or the Assessment and Curriculum Data Coordinator.
- At Formal Stage, the situation should be discussed by the Panel in the student's absence. If there are straightforward options about how to proceed, agreed expectations, support options and plans should be communicated to the student with a timescale for completion and date of review.

Support to Study Form

Meeting Report and Action Plan

Name of Student	
Programme	
Date	
Present	

Stage:
Concerns Raised
Raised by:

Checklist

GP Details on EBS		Referral to Vocal Care	
Emergency Contact		Specific Learning Difficulty	
Attendance Policy and Procedure		Mental Health Difficulty	
Completion of EC Forms		Long-Term Medical Condition	
Referral to Learning Support		Assessments (progression)	
Referral to Physiotherapy		Wellbeing Consent	
Referral to Counselling		Needs Consent	

Disability		Specific Mental Health Difficulties	
Specific Learning Difficulties		Long-Term Medical Conditions	
Inclusion Plan		Entitlement Form	

Record of Notes

Action Plan

Objective	Tasks	By who	Completion/ Review date

Student's Name:		
Student's Signature:		Date:
Lead Person's Name:		
Lead Person's Signature:		Date:
Date of mid-way meeting if applicable:		
Date of final review meeting:		

Mid-Way Meeting	
Date	
Present	

Record of Notes

Action Plan

Objective	Tasks	By who	Completion/ Review date

Student's Name:		
Student's Signature:		Date:
Lead Person's Name:		
Lead Person's Signature:		Date:

Final Meeting	
Date	
Present	

Record of Notes/M

Action Plan

Objective	Tasks	By who	Completion/ Review date

Case Review Outcome

Student's Name:		
Student's Signature:		Date:
Lead Person's Name:		

Lead Person's Signature:		Date: