

Support to Study Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 The University welcomes a diverse Student body. It seeks to ensure that all students have the opportunity to study and perform to the best of their ability in a safe and comfortable environment while at university. The reality of University life means that students not only work in close proximity to each other and staff but may also live and socialise in close proximity to each other. While many students find studying and living in such an environment easy and enjoyable, others can find it more challenging.

1.2. The University has a commitment to the student experience and offers a range of student services and support to help students reach their potential while at university. While students are responsible for managing their own wellbeing, the University aims to work with and support students collaboratively.

1.3 The University has statutory obligations under Equality Legislation to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. However, the existence of medical conditions or other disabilities does not absolve students from their responsibility for their education or their responsibility towards other members of the Oxford Brookes community.

1.4 This policy is designed to minimise undesirable outcomes and barriers to students succeeding to their potential wherever possible. It is also designed to limit the possibility of students experiencing harm or harming others

2 Ethos and Support

2.1 The University is committed to an ethos of equality and inclusivity. It aims to facilitate and promote positive mental health and wellbeing by recognising and understanding all disabilities. The University encourages all students to contact the appropriate service at the earliest possible opportunity so that they are provided with the support they need to realise their full potential and complete their course of study.

2.2 Student support is based on partnership. For this policy to achieve its aims, both students and the university must work together to devise plans that have the best chance of succeeding. This policy aims to assist the student in identifying and accessing resources and support that will put them in the best position to develop as independent learners.

2.3 The policy is not intended to address a student's general support requirements, as established student support arrangements exist for this purpose. Students accessing sources of Mental Health and Welfare support will not be considered in itself to be a cause of concern.

2.4 The Support to Study Policy and accompanying procedure is not intended to be a legal process. The University does not normally use legal professionals to handle cases, and students are not expected to be required to do so either.

2.5 This policy is not intended to respond to crises. It should in no way distract from any emergency situation where it is believed that a student's behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or others. In this situation, emergency services must always be contacted on 999.

3 Policy Purpose and Scope

3.1 This policy and the accompanying procedures are to be followed where there are concerns that a student's mental or physical health, finances or personal circumstances significantly affect their ability to participate fully and effectively in their academic studies or life generally at Oxford Brookes University, including in their student accommodation.

3.2 The Support to Study Policy reiterates the University's commitment to supporting students in their academic progression. It lays out the framework for how concerns will be addressed in those cases where the range of supportive measures that the University may be reasonably expected to provide have been employed but have not satisfactorily resolved concerns.

3.3 The Support to Study process aims to assess whether students who begin to suffer from ill health, have a pattern of ill health or have significant and detrimental financial or personal circumstances need additional support to continue their studies or whether they may need to take time out from their studies.

3.4 The Support to Study Policy process can also be followed where the student's behaviour impacts others but where using the Student Conduct Procedures would be inappropriate or counterproductive.

3.5 The Support to Study Policy and related procedure applies to the entire student experience, not just a student's ability to engage with their studies. For example, unless informed otherwise, the University expects its students to be able to live independently and in harmony with others and not conduct themselves in a way that has an adverse impact on those around them.

3.5 The Support to Study Policy and associated procedures are different to fitness to practise, fitness to teach and fitness for study abroad placements. However, any outcome of the Support to Study process will be reported to teams considering these standards.

3.6 If a student wishes to take time out from their course for illness or other personal circumstances and feels that a period of 'time out' from their course will help, they should request [Approved Temporary Withdrawal](#).

3.7 The situations for which this policy has been developed are varied, complex, and often unique. Therefore, this policy may need to be adapted appropriately to respond to an individual student's circumstances. The Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services) will agree to any such variations after consultation with staff as they may deem appropriate.

3.8 This Support to Study Policy is intended to apply to situations where disciplinary action may not be appropriate, particularly where episodes of behaviour that could be considered misconduct or unreasonable demands being placed on staff and other students may arise from issues relating to a student's health and general wellbeing. Therefore, this Support to Study policy is principally designed to support students who face difficulties that may result in their actions or behaviour, giving other members of the University community cause for concern in the broadest sense. Nevertheless, at any point before or during the use of this Policy, the University reserves the right to initiate conduct procedures if deemed appropriate.

3.9 The University reserves the right to take measures following its Conduct Regulations to deal with behaviour that may be the result of health problems, particularly where a student's health or behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others or where the student fails to respond positively to supportive interventions. These measures shall include using the Vice-Chancellor's powers to immediately and temporarily suspend a student from access to all University facilities where the evidence of risk indicates that this is appropriate.

4 Our commitment to health, safety and wellbeing

4.1 At all times, the University aims to support individual students and allow them to decide how to engage with their studies. However, Oxford Brookes is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all its students, staff and visitors. In exceptional cases, this may require us to remove a student from studying with us on either a temporary or a permanent basis, or if it becomes apparent that the student's level of risk to themselves and others becomes too great to be safely managed within an educational setting

5 Key Responsibilities

5.1 The Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services) is responsible for the overall management of this policy and the accompanying procedures. References in the procedure to any University staff member include their appointed nominee. References to job titles include equivalences.

5.2 The Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing Support is responsible for implementing this policy and accompanying procedures.

5.3 The Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing Support shall maintain a register of all cases. They will work with relevant staff to ensure a well-informed and coordinated response to each case and the needs of each student. The Deputy Director of Academic Administration (Student Services) or nominee will undertake an annual evaluation of the use and impact of this policy and undertake any necessary remedial action or revision.

5.4 Staff are responsible for acting within the framework of this policy and the accompanying procedures when a student's behaviour gives them cause for significant concern.

6 Data Protection and Confidentiality

6.1 The University acknowledges that as a result of implementing this policy, it will receive personal sensitive data and data of a confidential nature pertaining to the student and other third parties and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored accordingly. Please see the [Confidentiality and Information Sharing Support to Study](#) statement for how information under Support to Study will be processed.

7 Review

7.1 The Deputy Director of Academic Administration (Student Services) or their designate will review this policy annually.

8 Process and Implementation:

8.1 The Support to Study procedure detailed below has three levels. Depending on the degree of concern and/or the perceived seriousness of the situation, action may be initiated at either of the levels in agreement with the Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing Support or designated person.

9 Level 1: Emerging and Low-level Concerns

9.1 The student should be invited via email to meet with a Student Support Coordinator (SSC) and the SSC's choice of other appropriate staff member to discuss the concerns and explore support. Research Degree or International students will follow the same process but meet with the Research Degree Team or International Student Compliance Team rather than an SSC. The explicit causes/instances for concern should be explained, with clear examples provided.

9.2 If concerns are raised about a student's behaviour in the community (e.g. non-Oxford Brookes accommodation), they can be raised with the Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing Services, who will decide if the University needs to take action and if so, whether this should be taken under the Student Conduct Procedures or the Support to Study Procedures. If the Support to Study Procedures are deemed appropriate, the Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing will nominate a relevant member of staff to speak to the student as per 10.2.

9.3 The student should be offered the opportunity to disclose any underlying physical or mental health condition and, if appropriate, the student should be encouraged to engage with support services offered by the University or available outside the University and assisted with referral if they wish to make use of one or more of these services.

9.4 The student and staff member should create a support plan within this session. The student should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and engagement in their studies in the context of their Level 1 support to study and agree with the member of staff concerned about how this can be monitored. The student should be informed that a continuation of concerns or any additional causes of concern will result in an escalation to Stage 2 of these procedures. The student should be provided with a summary of the discussion, which will include an action plan. A copy of the notes should also be recorded on ServiceNow.

9.5 If the Student does not engage at this level, there is a continued risk of non-engagement and/or concern about a Student's activities; the student must be escalated to Level 2 - Continued Concern.

10 Level 2 - Continued Concern

10.1 If the actions in Stage 1 have not resolved the concerns, or if, when conducting a risk assessment, the member of staff deems that the case is too serious to be dealt with under Stage 1, the case can be referred to Stage 2.

10.2 The staff member escalating the Level 2 notifies the Support to Study Administrator (via ServiceNow) of a Student about whom they have continued concerns. One of the Support to Study Senior Team (Head of Inclusive Support, Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing Services, Deputy Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing Services) will consider whether an escalation would be proportionate to the situation and, where appropriate, ratifies the escalation and confirms the Staff Lead for Level 2. This will all be communicated with the staff member who originally escalated the case.

10.3 The designated Level 2 Staff Lead should review the information provided to them regarding the student. If they believe that the student may need further support, they may invite the member of staff who raised the concerns to discuss them further with them. The Level 2 Staff Lead may seek advice from the Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing if required and relevant professionals may also be involved at this stage if appropriate

10.4 Where the student is a Student visa holder, the Level 2 Staff lead will liaise with the International Student Advice Team and International Student Compliance Team to discuss the optimal support process.

10.5 The student will normally be invited to attend the Level 2 meeting and may be accompanied by a person of their choice (not acting in a legal capacity). The Level 2 meeting panel shall consist of a Student Support Services Manager, another Student Support Services staff member and, when relevant, a member of faculty staff. This meeting can be in person or online.

10.6 The University will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the student is able to attend and may move the Level 2 meeting to facilitate this on up to two occasions only.

10.7 If the student has been given appropriate notice of the meeting and fails to attend, the Level 2 meeting will proceed without them present. The meeting will base its decision on the information available at that time.

10.8 At the outset of the meeting, the purpose of the meeting should be explained, particularly by emphasising that the intention is to work in partnership to find a way to empower the students to succeed in their studies and prevent negative outcomes from occurring.

10.9 Wherever possible, a jointly agreed continued concern plan will be made, and an agreement will be made about an appropriate period of time (but not more than a maximum of 4 weeks) to review the plan and what either party should do if they have further concerns in the interim. This may include:

a) requiring the student to attend regular appointments with a nominated member of staff for monitoring and;

b) requiring the student to seek help from support services within Oxford Brookes or external professionals, such as the student's GP or specialist service;

c) requiring the student to seek help from external funding sources;

10.10 If the Level 2 Continued Concern Plan does not sufficiently improve the situation, or the student has not engaged, the student will be escalated to Level 3 - Student at Risk Case Review Group. This should be discussed with the student in advance and explained as a supportive measure wherever possible.

10.11 Uncontactable Students at Level 1 - where there is evidence of risk or welfare concerns

Following a lack of engagement with Level 1, the case will be escalated to Level 2. Initial contact at Level 2 will be made by the Student Welfare and Support Advice team, and the following process will be followed to establish and assess the level of risk and vulnerability of the student before proceeding with the Level 2 process.

- 1 An email will be sent to the student's university and private email account
- 2 on the same day as the email being sent, a phone call will be made to the student's mobile number, and where unanswered (and it is safe to do so), a voicemail will be left asking them to contact us within 24 hours. The student will be advised that if we do not hear from them within 24 hours, we will contact their emergency contact in the first instance, but if there is no response from the emergency contact, we may also call the police.
- 3 If no response to the above contacts is received within 24 hours, the listed Emergency Contact for the student will be contacted.
- 4 If the Emergency Contact cannot contact the student or if we cannot get an answer from the emergency contact, the student will be reported to the Police as a welfare concern.

11 Level 3 - Student at Risk Case Review Group

11.1 If the Level 3 risk assessment highlights an unacceptable level of risk, or where a student first presents with a substantive risk, the Deputy Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing (or nominee) will call an urgent Student at Risk Case Review Group. Attendees at the group will include the Deputy Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing, a student representative from Brookes Union and other staff as necessary and appropriate to consider the case (e.g. the student's programme leader, appropriate healthcare professionals including the University Psychiatrist, accommodation or welfare staff). The student will normally be invited to attend the case review and may be accompanied by a friend (not acting in a legal capacity). If the student requests to bring a representative from Brookes Union, their role will simply be to support the student but not advocate on their behalf.

11.2 The University will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the Student at Risk Case Review Group meeting is held at a time that the student would be able to attend; however, if the student is unable to engage, it may be necessary to proceed in the student's absence due to the level of risk.

11.3 If the student has been given appropriate notice of the meeting and fails to attend, the Case Review Meeting will proceed without them present. The meeting will base its decision on the information available at that time.

11.4 The Student at Risk Case Review Group will decide on an appropriate course of action, which may include (but is not limited to) one of the following broad responses:

- a) That no further action is required.
- b) To formally monitor the student's progress for a specified period of time. An action plan will be agreed upon with the student, outlining steps which they need to take and/or support to be provided to help them address the concerns identified. Regular review meetings will be arranged with a nominated member of staff (to ensure that the action plan is being followed and/or that reasonable support to enable the student to study effectively is being provided). The student will be informed of the consequences of any breaches of the action plan.
- c) To recommend part-time study (where appropriate and available), Approved Temporary Withdrawal (ATW) or that reasonable adjustments, including special academic arrangements, be put in place. Such recommendations would need to be agreed upon by the relevant Faculty. The student should also be provided with guidance regarding the possible financial implications and be aware that part-time study may not be available to Student visa holders due to visa requirements. The student should be informed that unless these arrangements remedy the concerns to the University's satisfaction, other action may be taken.
- d) Where the student is on a placement not covered by Fitness to Practice procedures recommend that the student suspend the placement or (if available) switch programmes to a 'without placement' equivalent.
- e) To suspend or exclude the student from the University.
- f) Any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

11.5 The decision of the Student at Risk Case Review Group will be communicated to the student in writing by the Review Group Chair (normally within five working days of the conference). If it is deemed appropriate that the student take a temporary withdrawal, then the student will also be informed in writing of the general procedure for return to study below and any arrangements specific to their case.

11.6 Decisions taken by the Student at Risk Case Review Group are not subject to a student's consent, and therefore, a student has the right to appeal against such a decision (See Section 14 - Appeals).

11.7 Where appropriate, the Chair of the Student at Risk Case Review Group will make a decision in the meeting about whether the student's emergency contact should be informed and discuss with the student whether any statutory services should be contacted.

11.8 The Student at Risk Case Review Group should be held when there are at least 1.5 days left in the working week for the student to seek immediate emotional support following the outcome.

11.9 The student shall be informed of their right to appeal this decision and how to implement the appeal process.

12 Non-Engagement

12.1 The purpose of this procedure is to work in partnership with students to find ways of supporting them to progress in their education.

12.2 Whilst the procedure is not intended to be punitive, where a student is referred to the Support to Study process and does not engage with it, it may not be possible for them to continue their studies

12.3 Where proportionate to the situation, this may result in the student being escalated to the Academic Registrar or nominee for a final decision on the student's status at the University. Examples of outcomes include approved temporary withdrawal, behaviour dealt with through disciplinary action, or a recommendation made to the Vice Chancellor that the student is permanently withdrawn from the University.

13 Return to Study

13.1 After a period of Approved Temporary Withdrawal (ATW) or suspension on health grounds, the student may apply to return to study. This application will normally be considered by a Return to Study Panel Chaired by the original Student at Risk Case Review Group chair in conjunction with the Associate Dean (Student Experience) of the relevant Faculty and relevant members of staff previously involved with the student's support provision.

13.2 The Return to Study Panel will:

- a) Meet the student and consider evidence that the student has complied with any conditions agreed upon as part of the Support to Study procedure Level 3 (for example, accessing support services, accessing additional funding)
- b) If health-related, contact the relevant medical professional for an assessment of the student's ability to manage the demands of studying at University and for advice on any reasonable adjustments the University needs to make.
- c) Where previously withdrawn due to mental ill-health, require a second medical opinion from our University Psychiatrist to assess the student's ability to manage the demands of studying at the University and advise on any reasonable adjustments the University needs to make. The University will cover the cost of this meeting. NB - Students studying on a pre-registration Health or Social work programme will need to be deemed fit to practice by the Faculties occupational health service
- d) If accepted to return, make recommendations about a return to study plan, including regular review meetings.
- e) Where a student returns to study or applies to study a new course at Oxford Brookes following the implementation of the Support to Study procedure, the Return to Study panel will reinstate the Support to Study Process at Level 1. The SSC will hold regular review meetings with the student to monitor and support a return-to-study plan, including the effectiveness or any reasonable adjustments made by the University. Such review meetings may continue for part or all of the student's remaining time at the University.
- f) If a student is not deemed in a suitable position to return or to start a new course with us, the Chair of the Return to Study panel shall communicate this to them, detailing the decision and reasons behind it. This letter will also inform the student of the options available, including the option of permanently withdrawing from the University.

14 Appeals

14.1 All action plans agreed either informally during the first stage of this Policy or as an outcome of the Level 2 meeting will be implemented only with the consent of the student. A student cannot, therefore, appeal against such a decision; rather, they will withhold their consent. Should a student withhold their consent to an action plan, their situation will be escalated for consideration by the Student at Risk Case Review Group. Decisions taken by the Student at Risk Case Review Group are not subject to a student's consent and therefore, a student has the right to appeal against such a decision.

14.2 Students have the right to appeal against any decision taken under Level 3 of these procedures. Appeals will only be accepted if there is evidence of:

- procedural irregularity
- bias or failure to reach a reasonable decision
- if the student submits further material circumstances which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration at the Level 3 Student at Risk Case Review Group.

14.3 Appeals against a Level 3 Outcome

14.3.1 Appeals against a Level 3 outcome must be made in writing to the Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services) within ten working days of the Level 3 Outcome letter. The appeal must clearly outline the grounds for the request (see 14.2).

14.3.2 The Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services) or nominated representative will review the appeal and, after consulting with relevant staff, may overturn the Level 3 decision if they believe it appropriate. The Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration (Student Services) decision will be final.

14.3.3 The appeal decision communication shall include a Completion of Procedures letter so that the student may request that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) consider their situation at their discretion (see 14.4.1).

14.4 OIA

14.4.1 If, after exhausting the appeal against a Level 3 Outcome, the student feels there to have been an error of judgment or that due process has not been followed, they may request a review from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Responsibility and Implementation

The **Deputy Director of Academic and Student Administration** (Student Services) is responsible for the overall management of this policy and the accompanying procedures. References in the procedure to any University staff member include their appointed nominee. References to job titles include equivalences.

The **Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing Support** is responsible for implementing this policy and accompanying procedures.

The **Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing Support** shall maintain a register of all cases. They will work with relevant staff to ensure a well-informed and coordinated response to each case and the needs of each student. The Deputy Director of Academic Administration (Student Services) or nominee will undertake an annual evaluation of the use and impact of this policy and undertake any necessary remedial action or revision.

All Staff are responsible for acting within the framework of this policy and the accompanying procedures when a student's behaviour gives them cause for significant concern.

Related Documents

[Attendance & Engagement Policy](#)

Approved: Academic Board – 30 January 2025