

# Academic Policies and Procedures

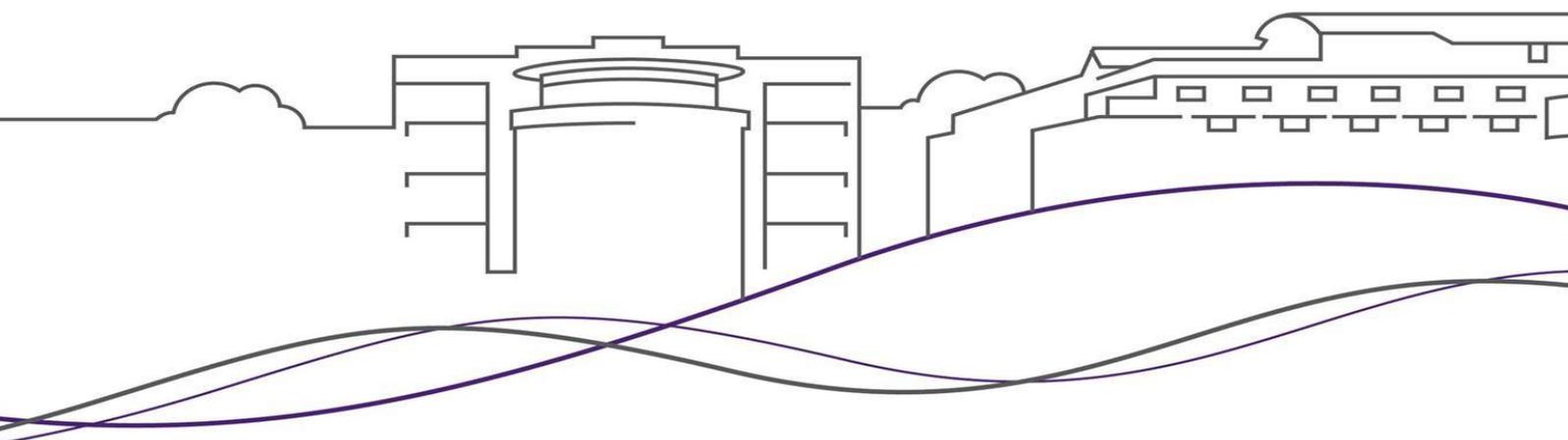


UNIVERSITY  
CENTRE  
SOUTH DEVON

 South Devon College

HIGHER EDUCATION

## (HEAPP5) Study and Wellbeing Review Policy and Procedure v4.0



## Document Control

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# Study and Wellbeing Review Procedure

## Contents

1. Scope and Purpose.....	3
2. Key Responsibilities .....	4
3. Data Protection and Confidentiality.....	4
4. Procedures.....	5
5. Assessment of Risk.....	5
6. Stage One .....	6
7. Stage Two.....	6
8. Stage Three.....	7
9. Impact on Academic Progress.....	8
10. Appeal.....	8
10.2 Appeals against interruption .....	8
10.3 Appeals against withdrawal .....	9
11. Return to Study .....	9
12. Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) .....	10
13. Appendix.....	11

# 1. Scope and Purpose

1.1 The College is committed to an ethos of equality and inclusivity, and aims to facilitate and promote positive health and wellbeing through the recognition and understanding of all relevant health conditions and disabilities. The College encourages all students to contact their tutor or the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) at the earliest possible opportunity. The College sees this as part of its wider agenda to empower and transform lives through education.

The Study and Wellbeing Review (SWR) policy provides a four-stage framework to guide practice in directing students to appropriate support, and to determine in a timely fashion what actions are needed where health, wellbeing or Fitness for Study concerns arise:

- Stage one refers to emerging concerns or low risk situations (see 7 below);
- Stage two refers to medium risk situations where concerns are ongoing (see 8 below);
- Stage three refers to high risk situations (see 9 below) where a student's Fitness for Study may be in question;
- Stage four refers to the process whereby students can request to return to study following a period of interruption (see 11 below).

1.2 The College is committed to supporting all students to fulfil their potential. Occasionally a student's circumstances or health may impact upon their own, or others' ability to fulfil that potential. This may be because of a student's extended absence, non-engagement with elements of their programme, health condition, wellbeing concern, or other circumstances that lead to an inability to progress in their programme, or that adversely affect others. These procedures are designed to outline the processes that the College will follow in such instances to ensure that issues can be dealt with in a clear, constructive and transparent fashion. Levels of risk will be assessed by the College on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with appropriate professionals. The appendix contains links to other relevant South Devon College policies and useful information.

1.3 These procedures are to be followed by South Devon College staff where significant concerns have arisen as a result of a student's extended absence, health condition, wellbeing or other circumstances that lead to an inability to progress in their programme, or that adversely affect others. The key purpose of these procedures is to ensure that the best interests of the student are met and to provide appropriate guidance and support.

1.4 This procedure runs parallel to other relevant policies for those programmes that are professionally accredited, e.g. in Clinical Education, where fitness to

practice policies are in place. These processes are normally managed within the section within which the programme is located; the outcome of these processes may also need to be reported centrally.

- 1.5 Students enrolled on professional or statutory regulated programmes with their own regulatory body (PSRB accredited) may require reporting of the outcomes of these processes to the relevant body as part of their mandate to protect the public and the profession; please see the specific programme handbook for details.

## **2. Key Responsibilities**

- 2.1 South Devon College aims to support all students to engage with their studies successfully. The College also has responsibilities in relation to the health, safety and wellbeing of all members of our community, including students, staff and visitors.
- 2.2 The Head of Higher Education is responsible for the overall management and implementation of these procedures. The Head of Higher Education may delegate this responsibility as appropriate to the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute). Members of staff are responsible for acting within the framework of these procedures where there are concerns as outlined in 1.2 above, or where a student refers themselves to a member of staff because of a significant concern.
- 2.3 Students are responsible for informing the College about their ability to study or otherwise. We recognise that there may be times when a student is unable to do this. Inability or refusal to do so may result in a student's study being interrupted until such time as the student is able or prepared to reengage with the College.
- 2.4 In an emergency situation where it is believed that a student's health or wellbeing condition presents an immediate risk to themselves or others the Fitness to Study procedures will not be invoked. In this situation the appropriate Emergency Services should be contacted and the Head of Higher Education should be notified as soon as possible. (See appendix for information about dealing with emergencies.)

## **3. Data Protection and Confidentiality**

- 3.1 The College is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), is

governed by Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and will treat all personal information (including sensitive personal information relating to students' mental, physical health or personal circumstances) as confidential within the terms of the legislation.

3.2 Personal information about a student obtained under this procedure will only be shared within the College amongst those members of staff who need to know that information in order to offer the student appropriate support, to enable the operation of this procedure, or where it is required, with accrediting professional, regulatory or statutory bodies.

3.3 The College may ask a student for his or her agreement to share personal information obtained under this procedure with relevant professionals outside of the College in order to offer the student appropriate support. The College will not normally share any personal information about a student without their agreement, but may do so in exceptional cases, where permitted by law.

3.4 International students should be aware that the College is required to report any interruptions to study or withdrawal to the UK Border Agency.

## **4. Procedures**

4.1 Where a member of staff has concerns about a students' health, wellbeing or their ability to engage with their academic programme of study, this should be reported to the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) in the first instance. Where a student self-refers to a member of staff, or reports concerns about another student, the member of staff should refer this information to The HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute). Depending on the circumstances the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) will identify and make contact with the appropriate person(s) or service(s) to establish the level of risk (low, medium or high) and appropriate actions in response. (See appendix: Guidelines for action in cases of risk of serious harm to self or others.)

## **5. Assessment of Risk**

5.1 Risk may be defined as the potential that a chosen action, choice of inaction or lack of consideration of a need for action will lead to an undesirable outcome. The notion implies that a choice that had or could have an influence on the outcome exists, or existed. In the context of this procedure, the risk can be to the individual student or member of staff, to others that might be affected by a student's actions or inactions, or to the institution, including its reputation.

5.2 Levels of risk will be assessed by the College on a case by case basis in conjunction with appropriate professionals. Where concerns arise, staff should record details of any incident and immediately notify the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute). It is the responsibility of the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) in conjunction with the personal tutor from the student's Section or other appropriate staff to assess levels of risk. Further guidance on risk is available via documents linked in Appendix 1 below.

5.3 Throughout the Study and Wellbeing Review process and any subsequent appeal, the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) will liaise with the student. During this liaison the Lead Coordinator will be mindful of the impact of the process on the student's wellbeing and put immediate and effective actions in place to support their wellbeing. These actions will not disrupt the Review process but are designed to support the student's current and future wellbeing.

## **6. Stage One**

6.1 Where concerns emerge about a student that appear to be low risk, limited actions should be taken as follows:

The student should be invited to meet informally with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. personal tutor/HE Lead, module leader) to discuss the concerns identified. At that meeting it should be made clear to the student that it is their responsibility to inform the College of any issues related to their fitness to study. The explicit causes/instances for concern should be explained to the student, with clear examples provided.

## **7. Stage Two**

7.1 A risk may be judged to be medium where an informal meeting with the student as defined in 6 above (low risk) has been held but no improvements have occurred in relation to the situation identified, or further issues have arisen. In such cases a Student Support Meeting (SSM) should be organised to consider what additional assistance is appropriate. An SSM is a formal meeting organised by the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) involving the student and appropriate members of academic and support staff.

7.2 Where the level of risk is judged to be medium the student will be asked to agree an action plan as a result of the SSM. This may include:

- 7.2.1 requiring the student to attend weekly appointments with a nominated member of staff for regular monitoring; and
- 7.2.2 requiring the student to engage with support services within the College or from external professionals, such as the student's GP or other relevant medical services.

7.3 The HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) will set a date for review of the student's progress against any agreed action plan (normally 10 working days) and will inform the student that inability or refusal to meet the conditions agreed may result in a student's study being interrupted until such time as the student is able or prepared to re-engage with the College.

## **8. Stage Three**

8.1 A situation will be judged as high risk if immediate interventions are required and/or previous interventions (low and medium risk) have not been successful or are no longer appropriate. In these cases the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute) will contact the Head of Higher Education (or designated substitute) in order that a Fitness to Study (FTS) Case Conference can be arranged. Attendees at the conference will include the Head of Higher Education (or designated substitute), Head of Curriculum, or designated substitute and other staff as necessary and appropriate to consider the case (e.g. the student's personal tutor, the HE Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator (or designated substitute), appropriate healthcare professionals, or other staff). The student will normally be invited to attend the case conference and may be accompanied by a friend or representative (not acting in a legal capacity). Where appropriate, this will be an evidence-based process drawing upon expert professional judgment - for example a registered health practitioner, a social worker, law enforcement or rehabilitation professional.

8.2 In exceptional circumstances, such as where there is deemed to be an unacceptable level of risk to members of the College community, a student may be interrupted from their studies and required to leave the College premises immediately, pending further investigation.

8.3 The FTS Case Conference may consider various options in relation to the student, including additional support strategies, a change in the mode of study, interruption from study or a recommendation to the HE Manager that the student be withdrawn from the College.

8.4 The decision of the FTS Case Conference will be communicated to the student in writing (normally within 10 working days of the conference by the Head of HE or designated substitute).

8.5 If it is deemed appropriate that the student should be interrupted from studies then they will also be informed in writing of the general procedures for return to study below, and of any particular arrangements specific to their case.

## **9. Impact on Academic Progress**

9.1 In cases where an action plan has been agreed and implemented as described above, failure to make academic progress, or to engage with the requirements of the programme of study, may result in the decision of the award assessment board to interrupt or withdraw the student from the programme.

## **10. Appeal**

10.1 Students have the right to appeal against any decision taken under these procedures. Appeals will only be accepted if there is evidence of procedural irregularity, bias or failure to reach a reasonable decision, or if the student submits further material circumstances which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration at the case conference. Guidance on the grounds for appeal and an appeal proforma are available from the [university@southdevon.ac.uk](mailto:university@southdevon.ac.uk)

### **10.2 Appeals against interruption**

10.2.1 Appeals against interruption must be made in writing to the Higher Education Faculty Office within 10 working days of notification of the interruption clearly outlining the grounds for appeal. The Higher Education Faculty Office will prepare an appeal file for consideration by the Vice Principal, Curriculum, or designated substitute.

10.2.2 The Vice Principal, Curriculum, or designated substitute will review the appeal and may overturn the decision to interrupt a student if they believe it appropriate. The decision of the Vice Principal Curriculum, or designated substitute will be final.

10.2.3 Where a student's appeal is rejected, a Completion of Procedures letter will

be issued.

### 10.3 Appeals against withdrawal

10.3.1 Appeals against withdrawal must be made in writing to the Higher Education Faculty Office within 10 working days of notification of the interruption clearly outlining the grounds for appeal. The Higher Education Faculty Office will prepare an appeal file for consideration by the Vice Principal Curriculum.

10.3.2 The Vice Principal, Curriculum, or designated substitute will review the appeal and may overturn the decision to interrupt a student if they believe it appropriate. The decision of the Vice Principal, Curriculum or designated substitute will be final.

## 11. During the interruption to studying

11.1 When a student's studies have been interrupted as part of the Study and Wellbeing Review process, the letter of notification will include details of how they can continue to access support as appropriate during their interruption. This support might include study, disability, wellbeing and/or employability support from the HE Student Support Hub and/or pastoral support from their Personal Tutor. The letter of notification will also include details of how and when college staff will contact the student during their interruption, as necessary.

11.2 If a student has chosen to interrupt their studies, they will continue to be able to access support from the Student Support Hub and pastoral care from their Personal Tutor for the duration of the academic year. If their interruption continues into the next academic year, any continued support will be subject to the approval of the Head of Higher Education in consultation with the programme team.

## 12. Return to study

12.1 Following any period of interruption from the College under these procedures, it may be appropriate for the student to return to resume their studies. The College will specify the minimum length of time of any interruption (normally this will be for the remainder of the current academic year) but **it is the student's responsibility to contact the College formally, giving at least six weeks' notice, if they wish to request to return to study at**

**the end of any period of interruption.** When a period of interruption is required, students will be informed in writing of the contact details and date by which they are required to formally contact the College with a request to return to study. If an interrupted student does not contact the College with a request to return, the interruption will automatically be extended for one further academic year and an official reminder and explanatory letter will be sent to their contact address(es). Thereafter, if the student still does not respond, they will be withdrawn from their programme of study.

12.2 Each student's case depends on specific circumstances but in all cases, return to study will be conditional upon satisfactory evidence of fitness to study and will normally require a Stage Four Case Conference to be called by the Support and Wellbeing Lead Coordinator, or designated substitute. Where relevant, the information required to support a request to return may be from a registered health practitioner, a social worker, law enforcement or a rehabilitation professional who has enough knowledge of the student's circumstances to be able to make an informed statement about the student's fitness for study. It may also take the form of an Occupational Health assessment report commissioned by the College to take account of relevant information. Students may also be required to produce a reflective statement (of approximately 1000 words), or to complete an equivalent task, to assist the College in making a decision about fitness to study. **The College reserves the right not to permit a return to study, and may permanently withdraw a student if the information presented at the Case Conference is deemed insufficient to mitigate any perceived remaining risk.**

12.3 The decision to permit a student to return to study will be made by a panel with membership aligned to a Stage 3 Case Conference who may impose such conditions as they deem appropriate to the relevant case (such as a return to study plan or a requirement for the student to attend regular review meetings).

12.4 In cases where a student has taken the decision independently to interrupt their studies, the College reserves the right to utilise the return to study process to determine if appropriate support is in place where needed, and if a return to study can be approved.

### **13. Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)**

If, after exhausting the Appeals process, the student remains dissatisfied with the College's final decision they may submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Contact details for the Independent Adjudicator are:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator  
3rd Floor Kings Reach  
38 - 50 Kings Road  
Reading  
RG1 3AA

Tel: 01189 599813

Email: [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk)

## 14. Appendix

Links to other relevant South Devon College policies and useful documents can be found here: <https://www.ucsd.ac.uk/student-life/essential-information/academic-regulations-and-procedures-and-policies/>

- South Devon College Safeguarding Policy  
<http://southdevon.ac.uk/about-us/safeguarding>