



St Helens College



University Centre  
St Helens

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# Fitness to Study Policy



METROMAYOR  
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION



## **Introduction**

The College is committed to high quality advice, guidance and support for all its students to support successful completion and progression.

The College recognises the importance of students' health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progress and College experience. Students are expected to take a proactive part in the process by managing their own health and wellbeing and engaging with any support, so they can fulfil their academic potential.

All action within the College is taken with full regard to the Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding Policies.

### **1. Scope and Purpose**

This policy applies to any student admitted to or enrolled by the College.

There may be occasions where the health or wellbeing of a student deteriorates to the point where it raises questions about their fitness and suitability to continue their studies.

The College is committed to promoting equal opportunities and fair and consistent treatment of all.

This Policy will be used to support staff in all areas of the College to deal with instances where concerns have been expressed over a student's health or wellbeing which have led to:

- concern from staff about a student's fitness to study at the College and/or ability to meet the learning outcomes of the course, notwithstanding reasonable adjustments;
- a negative impact on the health, safety, wellbeing and/or learning of the student and/or others with whom the student has contact.

It provides a supportive framework within which health and wellbeing issues are hoped to be resolved.

Problems may manifest themselves in a variety of different forms including, for example, damage to the student's health; disruption of the studies of other students; unsustainable demands being made of staff; treatment under the Mental Health Act.

This Policy will normally be applied in relation to concerns which arise on the College premises or whilst engaged in a course activity whether at the College, an approved partner organisation and/or placement provider. However, incidents which occur outside the College which raise concerns about a student's fitness to study and where it is considered necessary to protect the safety, interests and reputation of the College, its staff or students, may also be considered under this Policy.

This Policy will apply where students present with difficulties due to their physical health, mental health or wellbeing. However, the College reserves the right at any stage in the Policy to alternatively refer to the Student Behaviour Policy, where a student's attitude or behaviour poses a risk of harm to either themselves or others, or where students do not engage positively with supportive interventions.

This Policy has three stages, based on the level of support needed by the student and/or the seriousness of risk posed by the health or behaviour of a student. Depending on the concern raised, it may be appropriate to escalate straight to a higher level. Students are encouraged to engage with the College and access all support available to them, if they choose not to do so, then this Policy may continue without their involvement.

Communication with Parents/Carers should be made at each stage of the Policy unless contra-indication to do so. Other relevant authority/agency/employer contact may be made as required. If the student is Looked After or a student with an Education, Health and Care plan the relevant Local Authority will be consulted.

## **2. Stage 1 – Emerging Concerns**

When a concern about a student's health, safety or mental wellbeing is raised by a member of staff they should seek support & guidance from the Learning Support Manager before raising concerns with the student. A Welfare Disclosure Form (appendix 1) should be completed. The member of staff may seek advice and guidance from their Head of School.

The nature of the concern should be explained to the student, and they should be encouraged to discuss the issues, (it is possible that they will not have realised the impact of their actions). If appropriate, this is an opportunity to remind the student that support is available both within and external to the College. It should also be explained that a continuation of the same or any additional concerns could result in an escalation to Stage 2 of this Policy.

It is anticipated that the student will respond positively, co-operate and access the available support or, where appropriate, modify their behaviour.

The meeting should be followed up immediately with a note on ProMonitor that includes any agreed actions, unless inappropriate. Standard ongoing monitoring should continue with the student.

If the student is unwilling or unable to respond positively, the member of staff should discuss the situation with their Head of School and seek guidance from Learning Support Manager. The College may then decide to invoke Stage 2 of the Policy.

## **3. Stage 2 – Serious or Continuing Concerns**

Where continuing or serious concerns about an individual student's health, safety or mental wellbeing are raised, the member of staff should speak to Learning Support Manager before their Head of School arranges a meeting with the student.

Together they can assess the student's perception of the impact that their health and/or behaviour is having upon them and/or the wider College community, and ensure the student understands the College's expectations regarding fitness to study.

If the student is on a professionally regulated course, there will be consideration of any implications for professional practice.

An Action Plan will be drawn up, setting out any reasonable support measures and any conditions that the student is required to adhere to, which may relate to their health and wellbeing, academic studies and/or behaviour.

The Action Plan will include a review date, and it will be made clear that failure to adhere to the Action Plan may result in Stage 3 being invoked. The student will be required to confirm acceptance at the meeting. A copy of the agreed Action Plan will be noted on ProMonitor and where appropriate sent to their parent/guardian unless there is a contra indication to do so.

It is expected that the student will respond positively to the Action Plan and co-operate fully, access the outlined support and/or modify his/her behaviour accordingly.

If the student does not engage positively or fails to adhere to the Action Plan, or if the meeting gives rise to more serious concerns about the student's fitness to study, the matter should be referred to the Director for Supported Learning. It is then likely that Stage 3 will be invoked.

#### **4. Stage 3 – Significant or Persistent Concerns**

This Stage will be invoked when significant or persistent concerns are raised about an individual student's fitness to study that is putting the health, safety, wellbeing or academic progress of him/herself or other members of the College community at significant risk.

The Curriculum Director will hold a Stage 3 Meeting to establish the facts and discuss an appropriate course of action.

The Stage 3 Meeting will normally comprise:

- The Curriculum Director
- Head of School
- Student
- Parent or Carer (where appropriate)
- Head of School, Programme Tutor and Progress Coach (if applicable)

The following staff may also be invited to attend, as appropriate:

- Senior Designated Officer for Safeguarding and/or a member of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team
- External health professional and/or other appropriate agency staff
- Other relevant College staff

The outcome of the Stage 3 Meeting may be one of the following:

- that no further action is required; or
- to agree an Enhanced Action Plan; or
- to recommend a suspension of the student's studies to enable a full assessment of the circumstances with regard to the student and his/her course of study to be carried out.
- to recommend that the student is withdrawn from their course of study

If the student is on a professionally regulated course, the Stage 3 Meeting will also consider whether there are implications for professional practice.

The outcome of the meeting will be noted on ProMonitor.

## **6 Enhanced Action Plan**

If the agreed action is an Enhanced Action Plan, this plan will have a review date. It will be made clear that if the student does not adhere to the Enhanced Action Plan, this could result in further action under this Policy, including a suspension or withdrawal of studies.

## **7 Suspension of Studies**

If the agreed action is a suspension of studies, the terms of the suspension will be specified, including any arrangements relating to access to support services, or the College estate, or whether the student can continue with their studies and/or assessments, and if so in what form.

It is important to note that a suspension of studies is not a disciplinary sanction.

## **8 Actions following a Suspension of Studies**

A suspension of studies will be reviewed in the light of any developments or upon receipt of any other evidence received. Such a review will not normally involve a hearing or submissions made in person.

The student will be required to provide, or co-operate with the College in obtaining, satisfactory evidence that the original concerns are overcome or under control before being permitted to return to study. Any failure to co-operate with the College may result in the suspension remaining in force.

The relevant Curriculum Director will review the circumstances and any evidence and will consult with relevant staff. The Director may decide:

- that the student is fit to study and should be permitted to resume the course, This will normally be subject to an Action Plan identifying relevant support measures and any conditions. Regular review meetings will be arranged so that the student's progress can be monitored, and support modified if necessary
- to recommend to the Vice Principal that the student remains unfit to continue and should be suspended for a further specified period

- to recommend to the Vice Principal that the student is not fit to study and should be withdrawn from the course and the College.

The decision and associated reasons will be provided to the student and/or parent/carer in writing within 10 college working days of the review.

It may only be possible for a student to return to study at certain points in the academic calendar, depending on the particular circumstances of the student and the course of study.

If a student decides to voluntarily withdraw from their studies at any stage of the Procedure, the College will be entitled to request satisfactory evidence that the original concerns have been overcome or under control before the student can be re-admitted in that or any following academic year.

## **9 Appeal**

In the case of a decision to suspend the student for a specified period or that the student be withdrawn, the student may appeal against the decision of the Vice Principal by writing to the Deputy Principal.

The Deputy Principal will meet with the student to discuss the decision and either:

- a. Confirm the original decision
- b. Change the original decision

The student can take someone to support them to the meeting who must be one of the following: a member of College staff, a fellow student, a parent/carer or a professional advocate. The student will be told of the decision within 3 college working days of the meeting.

## **10 Confidentiality and Disclosure**

There may be occasions where the College judges that it would be in the best interests of the student to disclose sensitive information, for example, to the student's designated Emergency Contact or to an external agency such as the Community Mental Health Team or GP. In these circumstances, the student's informed consent should be obtained wherever possible.

If the student chooses not to provide consent, the implications of non-disclosure should be made clear. However, there may be rare occasions where if the student's consent is withheld or it is impracticable to obtain it, when confidentiality may be broken, for example,

- If the student is putting their life at risk or at risk of serious harm
- If the student is putting the life of someone else at risk or risk of serious harm

- If their mental health has deteriorated to a serious level such that they are unable to maintain daily living routines and relationships
- A student is at risk of serious exploitation or abuse
- If the student's behaviour is adversely affecting the rights of others
- If staff are being placed in a position in which their professional integrity is compromised.

### Students on Work Placements

The College has a responsibility to a work placement provider to ensure that students placed with them are capable of undertaking the placement. In addition, it is also the responsibility of the College to ensure that work placement providers have all the relevant information to be able to support the students during the work placement. Careful consideration must be given to what information can and/or should be provided to the work placement provider. This should be openly discussed with the student and their consent obtained. If consent is refused this may affect the decision as to whether the student can be placed with the work placement provider.

Staff should consult with the Designated Senior Safeguarding Officer where there is a need to disclose information without consent.

### **11 Emergency Situations**

In cases of emergency, staff or students should contact their Head of School and/or the duty safeguarding member of staff who will co-ordinate appropriate response depending on the situation.

## FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

## WELFARE DISCLOSURE FORM

<b>Student's Full Name</b>	
<b>Date of Birth</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Course of Study</b>	
<b>Curriculum School</b>	
<b>Programme Tutor and/or Progress Coach (if applicable)</b>	

<b>Details of any known medical conditions, prescribed medication and any possible side effects</b>
<b>Does the student have any learning difficulties and identified disabilities, and if so, what are they?</b>
<b>Identified Concern</b>

**How is this concern manifesting itself?**

**Details and dates of any actions taken so far**

**Agreed action plans**

**Further information**

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<b>Name of referring Staff Member:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

This form should be sent to your Head of School and a copy sent to Senior Designated Safeguarding Officer.