

## **SUPPORT FOR STUDY POLICY**

### **1. PURPOSE OF POLICY**

The Support for Study Policy outlines the University's approach to supporting students who may be struggling with their studies due to health issues.

### **2. OVERVIEW**

The University of Aberdeen welcomes a diverse student body and aims to support all students through their studies. This includes students who have temporary or long-term physical or mental health conditions which may have an adverse impact on their ability to study. All students are encouraged to register with a GP on arrival in Aberdeen.

The University seeks to maintain an enabling environment which is safe and conducive to teaching, learning and research, and the wellbeing of all. There may be instances where a student's health or wellbeing causes the University concern regarding the student's fitness to study on a programme. This policy is to be used where the behaviour of a student is giving cause for concern, and where it is believed this may be caused by a health problem. At any stage, staff can approach Student Support for advice and to discuss concerns. The Support for Study policy applies to all students, and all aspects of University life.

Students are responsible for the management of their own wellbeing wherever possible. The aim of this policy, and of all staff involved, is to support the student in a collaborative manner. Where a student is unwilling or unable to cooperate in the management of their wellbeing, this policy makes provision for proceeding without input from the student.

In an emergency situation, staff should use their discretion. Depending on the circumstances, any of the following may be appropriate:

- where a student's behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or to others, the emergency services should be contacted by dialling 999;
- during office hours, Student Support can be contacted for further advice and guidance – the reception number is extension 3935;
- out of hours, Security can be contacted on extension 3939 and can provide further support and guidance, including contacting Student Support if required;
- staff in nearby offices can be contacted to provide support.

### **3. OPERATION OF THE POLICY**

There are two stages to the policy, described below. It is possible to start at either stage of the policy – it is not necessary to work sequentially through the stages. Use of the policy should be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where a student raises concerns about their wellbeing and the impact it is having on their studies;
- Where a third party raises concerns about a student's wellbeing or behaviour, and the impact it is having;
- Where a student's behaviour is impacting adversely on the health, safety or wellbeing of other students and/or staff and it is thought this behaviour may stem from ill-health;
- Where there is unacceptable behaviour which would normally be considered as a disciplinary matter which is thought to be due to an underlying health issue;
- Where a student's attendance record or academic achievement is not satisfactory, and it is believed to be the result of a health issue.

This policy does not replace existing Fitness to Practice policies where they exist.

While the policy is designed to be a supportive way of assisting students whose behaviour gives cause for concern and offers an alternative to disciplinary action, the University has a duty of care to all members of the University community and any allegations of inappropriate behaviour may still be investigated and action taken under the Code of Practice on Student Discipline.

In implementing this policy, the University will ensure that it offers and encourages students to seek appropriate support from the outset. In addition, the University is committed to working with the student concerned in a spirit of support and co-operation, and will seek to reach a mutually agreeable outcome wherever possible.

At any stage, the student will be entitled to be accompanied by a staff member, friend, relative or AUSA representative. As with any student who approaches Student Support, a confidential file will be kept including records of meetings and decisions taken.

#### **4. SUPPORT FOR STUDY STAGE 1 – EMERGING CONCERNS**

When initial or moderate concerns arise about a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour and the impact this is having on their academic engagement or on staff or other students, these should be dealt with locally by the appropriate member of staff. This may be the student's personal tutor, the School Wellbeing Co-ordinator, a member of Student Support or staff in halls of residence. Any of these may wish to discuss the issues with a senior personal tutor or a member of the Student Support team.

The concerns raised should be discussed with the student in an informal and supportive manner. The student should be given the opportunity to explain their perception of the matter. Possible outcomes from such a discussion might include:

- No follow-up action required;
- Referral to an appropriate support service e.g. Student Support, Counselling, a GP;
- Application for an appropriate reasonable adjustment e.g. extension to deadlines, interruption of studies;
- An agreement about changes to behaviour, with an agreed review period;
- Arrangement of a further meeting;
- A recommendation to consider the matter under Stage 2 of this policy.

Where an interruption of studies is under consideration, the student must be referred to Student Support for advice on funding arrangements and immigration matters, and may also be referred to the appropriate Registry Officer.

In the majority of cases, these actions should be adequate to enable the student to re-engage appropriately with their studies and the University community. However, if the student is unable or unwilling to discuss the concerns, the case should be referred to Stage 2 for consideration.

#### **5. SUPPORT FOR STUDY STAGE 2 – ONGOING, REPEATED OR MORE SERIOUS CONCERNS**

Referral to Stage 2 may be appropriate:

- where actions taken under Stage 1 do not resolve the issue;
- where concerns are more acute or recurring;
- where the student has not taken advantage of measures under Stage 1; or
- where the student's health, wellbeing or behaviour worsens or has an adverse effect on the health or wellbeing of others.

The particular process to be followed in dealing with a matter under Stage 2 will be at the discretion of the Head of Student Support (or her deputy) and will depend upon the circumstances of the matter. Normally, the student will be invited to a meeting with the Head of Student Support to discuss the concerns raised. Depending on the nature of the student's condition or circumstances it may be prudent for the Head of Student Support to have another member of staff present. In the same way the student can bring someone in support as appropriate. The Head of Student Support may speak with other relevant members of staff and/or ask other members of staff to be present at the meeting.

At the discretion of the Head of Student Support, a Support for Study panel may be convened to consider the matter. Such a panel will normally comprise the Head of Student Support, the Head

of Student Life and a Senior Personal Tutor. The Panel will meet with the student to discuss the concerns in a supportive manner. The student should be given the opportunity to explain their perception of the issues.

Possible outcomes of a meeting with the Head of Student Support, or a Support for Study panel may include:

- the provision of reasonable adjustments for the student;
- referral to an appropriate support service;
- the drawing up of an action plan, setting out how the matter is to be dealt with and any conditions placed on the students (for example, in relation to the student's behaviour or in relation to support that they should seek);
- recommendation that the student should temporarily suspend studies;
- recommendation that the student be suspended, excluded or expelled.

The decision of the Head of Student Support, or the Support for Study panel will be notified to the student in writing, with reasons and with any agreed action plan within 5 working days of the decision.

## **6. STUDENTS SECTIONED UNDER THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT**

For any student sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 and who is unable to interact with the University in the management of their wellbeing, an appropriate interruption of studies will be put in place. Prior to the student's return to study, and in order to ensure appropriate support is in place, the case will be considered under Support for Study Stage 2.

## **7. RETURN TO STUDY**

The University is committed to assisting students to return to study where appropriate, and supporting students making such a return. A return to study will be dependent on the student satisfying the Head of Student Support that they are fit to study, and that any conditions attached to their return have been met. A student should notify the Head of Student Support in writing of any request to return to study. The Head of Student Support will encourage and support the student to contact the School to discuss arrangements to facilitate their return to study.

## **8. MONITORING AFTER RETURN**

Once a student has returned to study, both Student Support and the School will have a role in monitoring the wellbeing of the student for a period of up to six months. If any concerns re-emerge, these must be raised promptly with the student.