

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

CAMPUS PLANNING GROUP

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR STUDENTS REQUESTING ONLINE STUDY**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper provides summary of the approval process which will be used to manage requests from students seeking to study online in the second half-session. The operation of the process will be kept under close review and modified, if required.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

| | Board/Committee | Date |
|---|------------------------|-------------|
| Previously considered/approved by | N/A | |
| Further consideration/ approval required by | N/A | |

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

CPG is asked to approve the approval process which will be used to manage requests from students seeking to study online in the second half-session.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 CPG at its meeting on 26 October approved proposals to manage the number of students seeking to study online in the second half-session. This paper provides details of the process that will be implemented to manage requests from students seeking exceptional permission to study online during the second half-session. As noted in the paper presented to CPG on 26 October, the approach to development of the timetable will be modified to remove the automatic provision of an online session for each planned on campus session. As such, only where a student is given formal approval will they be able to study fully online during the second half-session (NB this does not apply to students who are undertaking fully online programmes).

5. APPROVAL PROCESS

- 5.1 The approval process will be managed centrally due to curriculum flexibility meaning that students can be studying across a number of Schools and hence the need for a single institutional decision, and subsequent communication to Schools, on applications approved for exceptional fully online study for 2HS.
- 5.2 The University already has a number of provisions in place to support students which are relevant to the return to on campus study (e.g. hardship funds, cover for the cost of managed quarantine). It will be important that students seeking to study online in the second half-session are guided to make use of this support and that only where support cannot enable their return should a case for online study in the second half-session be considered. As such, a web page is being developed which will provide a set of FAQs signposting the range of support available and the application form which will be used to manage requests for online study will also signpost this support. Where an existing route to manage the identified issue does not exist, a case can then be submitted for approval. The various strands of support that will be highlighted are outlined below. As the approval process is new, it will be kept under close review as cases are submitted and should other reasons emerge that are not covered by the table outlined below, consideration will be given to whether additional support is need to help support students experiencing these circumstances.

| Reason for being unable to return | Support available |
|--|---|
| Cost of managed quarantine | In most cases, the University will meet the cost of managed quarantine. |
| Disability | Where a student is concerned that they will not be able to return due to a disability, they will be asked to contact the Student Advice & Support team for support |
| Medical or wellbeing concerns | Where a student has a specific diagnosis which may impact on their ability to engage with their studies, they will be asked to contact the Student Advice and Support team for support |
| Accommodation, travel and other costs | If a student is experiencing emergency financial hardship and is unable to meet basic living costs, they will be directed to our Money Matters pages for information on support that may be available. |
| Can't find accommodation | Students will be directed to information on the University accommodation pages. Reassurance will also be provided that there is no shortage of accommodation and that it should be possible to secure a part-year contract. |
| Travelling with dependents and associated managed quarantine costs | Guidance will be given on the University meeting the student's cost of managed quarantine and guidance on visa requirements |
| Prefer to study at home | The campus-based nature of the University will be stressed and it will be emphasized that simply a preference to studying at home is not sufficient reason not to return. |
| Visas and immigration | Students will be given guidance on the visa and immigration rules and the need for the University to comply with these. Where a student is sponsored, they will be reminded of the need to come to the UK in January. |
| Caring and parental responsibilities | Information on support available for parents and carers while studying will be highlighted including a reminder that funding for childcare may be available. |
| Travel Restrictions | As travel restrictions have largely been lifted, students should not be restricted in travelling to campus but where any issues remain they will be asked to contact coronavirus@ for further guidance. |

- 5.3 A small panel composed of the Dean for Student Support, Director of Academic Services & Online Education and Deputy Director of People will meet weekly to review applications. As part of the review process, where felt necessary, a discussion may be had with the student to better understand the difficulties they are facing to assess their support needs and to find an appropriate approach to study.
- 5.4 The flow diagram in Annex A provides a summary of the process. Where applications are approved, Schools will be provided with the names and IDs of those students given approval together with their course choices for HS2. The student will also be advised that approval has been given and will be told that their Schools will be in touch to confirm the arrangements for their online study. It is acknowledged that there are likely to be situations where small numbers of students (e.g. only 1 or 2) are studying online. Training will be available to support colleagues to adjust their delivery of teaching so that students continue to receive a high-quality learning experience. Where applications are not approved, the student will be advised of support available and to plan for return to campus in January. They will also be made aware that they can appeal the decision.
- 5.5 The existing form in the Student Hub which allows students to record their study location (online / blended) will be removed. This will exclude the possibility of students simply recording

themselves as wishing to study online without formal approval. Where students are those given approval for continued online study will be manually inputted into the student record (note this will require system development as the field is currently read only). The data in the Student Location field in SRS will be wiped prior to the second half-session so that only those given formal approval for online study will be recorded.

- 5.6 Where students are given permission to study online, this is for 2HS only as we transition back to on campus delivery in the longer term towards 2022/23. As such, active support will be provided to these students over this period to help them address the issues which have necessitated continued online study and enable them to prepare for a return to campus from next academic year. If their circumstances change over the second half-session such that they are able to return to Aberdeen and study in person, they will be facilitated to do so. Students will be advised to inform the university should their circumstances change in this way using the [existing process](#) used for such transitions in the first half-session.
- 5.7 It is intended that the approval process will be implemented from early November with a request to students that they contact us by the middle of December if possible. This will allow time to work with students where support is available to help them return and will also enable early notification of cases, where known. Student communication will emphasise the strong expectation that students should return to campus for the second half-session but will also give information about the approval route for online study where a student has exceptional circumstances.

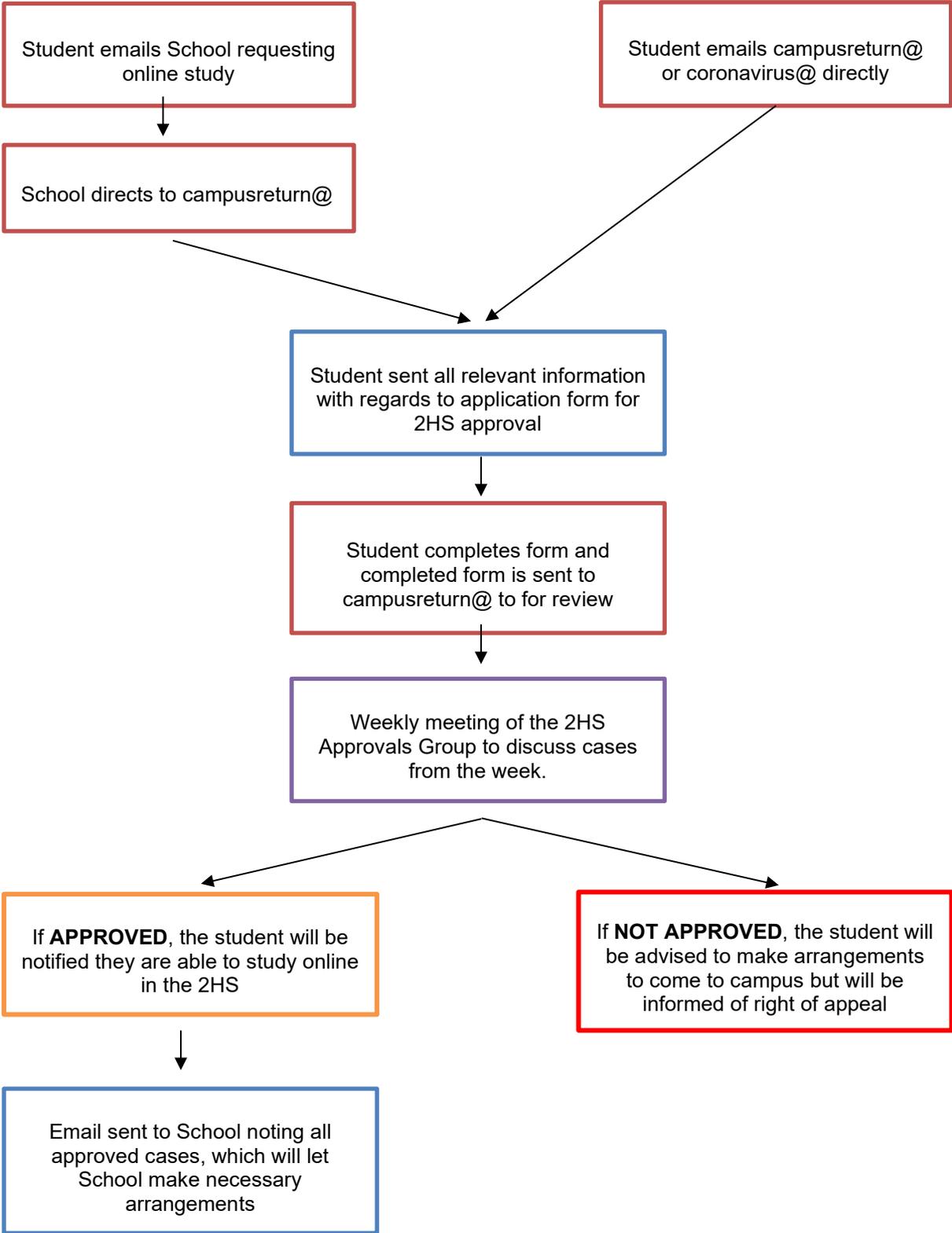
6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk), Gillian Mackintosh (g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk) or Nick Edwards (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk).

1 November 2021

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: *Open*

PROCESS FOR APPROVAL OF ONLINE STUDY FOR SECOND HALF-SESSION



Key

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| | Student/School |
| | Approvals Group |
| | Academic Services |