

Support to Study Policy and Procedure

Effective September 2024- present

Potential applicants should be aware that this policy is under review in light of newly introduced regulatory requirements from the Office for Students. It is anticipated that it will be republished before 31 October 2025. Once republished a summary document will be included on the University website summarising changes made.

Support to Study Policy and Procedure

Purpose of Policy	<p>The University is committed to supporting students and apprentices, herein collectively referred to as learners, and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health and wellbeing is key to academic achievement.</p> <p>The Support to Study (STS) policy and procedure is a supportive process used when a learner's health or wellbeing is having a detrimental impact on their (or others') ability to progress academically and/or live and study independently and safely in the university community. The aim is to ensure that wherever possible, learners are offered the right support to enable them to complete their studies and have a positive university experience.</p> <p>This policy and procedure supersedes the Fitness to Study procedure.</p>
Internal services involved	This document is issued by Student Services. Any copied or printed versions will be an uncontrolled copy. The definitive version is available from wellbeing@lancashire.ac.uk
Related regulations, policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Support, Wellbeing and Inclusive Support Privacy Notice • Student and Apprentice Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy and Procedure • Student Disability Policy • Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy • Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedure • Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy • Regulations for the Conduct of Students • Fitness to Practise Procedure
Enquiries to	Student Services, 01772 893020 / wellbeing@lancashire.ac.uk
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format, please email: wellbeing@lancashire.ac.uk or telephone 01772 893020
Senior Managers responsible	
VCG Lead	Andrew Ireland

Version	Approved	Effective from	Revisions made	Next Review
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1	18/05/22	01/09/22	14/04/22	01/05/24

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A. Introduction

The University seeks to maintain an environment which is safe and conducive to teaching, learning, research, and the wellbeing of all. As such, the University is committed to supporting learners and recognises the importance of their health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progress and university experience.

The university takes its duty of care to all members of the University community seriously. The Support to Study (STS) policy and procedure is intended to provide an effective framework to support learners where physical or mental ill health and/or disability is having an adverse impact on their studies and/or ability to live independently and safely, and/or is impacting on the health, safety, wellbeing, or academic progress of others. Notably, this policy and procedure may also be applied pre-enrolment.

This is not a disciplinary process, but a way of supporting learners to ensure that they can, wherever possible, continue to study with the appropriate levels of support in place to ensure their continued wellbeing. Issues which may otherwise be investigated as a disciplinary matter may be considered under the Support to Study Policy and Procedure if they are the result of an underlying physical and/or mental health and wellbeing difficulty.

Learners are responsible for the management of their own wellbeing. This policy and procedure is intended to facilitate collaboration between the learner, School, Professional Services, and external services, as appropriate. However, where a learner is unable or unwilling to cooperate in the management of their wellbeing, this policy and procedure makes provision for proceeding without input from the learner.

At any stage in the Support to Study process, a learner may be suspended from the University on an interim basis in accordance with Section E of the Regulations for the Conduct of Students.

B. Scope

The Support to Study Policy and Procedure aims to promote a positive and inclusive university environment which enables learners to engage effectively with all aspects of their studies, encouraging them to be proactive in seeking help and support at the earliest opportunity.

The policy and procedure applies to any University learner, at any stage of their study, and based at any of the University's campuses, and forms part of the Regulations.

There is a potential overlap between this policy and other University policies. The University reserves the right to suspend action under this policy and procedure if it considers that the matter would more appropriately be dealt with under another policy and/or procedure.

Any learner or prospective learner may raise a concern about their own requirement for support to study, and any learner or member of staff may raise a concern about another learner's need for support under the Support to Study Policy and Procedure. In addition, the University will consider concerns raised by persons external to the University including, but not limited to; the Police, GP or other medical professionals, placement supervisors, employers, family members and landlords or accommodation managers.

The policy and procedure may apply to a wide range of situations, including but not limited to:

- Learners who have disclosed they are having difficulties with their mental health, physical health and/or wellbeing and would benefit from support under this policy and procedure.
- Learners with complex circumstances relating to their mental health, physical health, wellbeing and/or inclusive support needs.
- Learners who are not attending, submitting work and repeatedly not responding to university contact for reasons thought to be connected to their mental health, physical health, wellbeing and/or inclusive support needs.
- Learners who regularly submit mitigating circumstances applications because of ongoing mental health, physical health and/or wellbeing concerns.
- Learners who pose a risk to themselves or others, or whose health, demeanour or behaviour is adversely affecting the teaching, learning and/or experience of others.
- Learners with support needs that fall outside the scope of the support and other services which the University can reasonably be expected to provide either directly or indirectly.
- Learners who are unable or unwilling to cooperate in the management of their wellbeing.
- Prospective learners with pre-existing conditions who require enhanced support to enable their transition to university.
- Learners who have behaved in a way that would otherwise be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, but evidence (from an internal or external source) has been provided to show that the learner's behaviour may be the result of an underlying mental health, wellbeing and/or inclusive support need.

C. Principles

- Wherever possible, adjustments will be made to the Support to Study Policy and Procedure to enable all learners to engage fully and positively with the process.
- This policy and procedure seeks to promote early intervention and active collaboration between learners, staff and third parties, where applicable, to ensure a consistency of approach.
- The University recognises that concerns about a learner's wellbeing may be raised by a variety of individuals, including, but not limited to, the learner themselves, staff, other learners, health professionals, employers and family members.
- Matters will be dealt with sensitively and in a coordinated manner across the University
- The University encourages all learners to seek help and support from the appropriate service(s) at the earliest possible opportunity. The University provides a range of support services that help learners in our academic community deal with aspects of university life that can inhibit learning. These support services do not replace those provided by external services such as those offered within the NHS.
- The University expects its learners to be able to live and work with others and to conduct themselves in ways which do not have an adverse impact on other members of the University and the local community.
- There are 3 incremental stages of the policy and procedure, however action can be initiated at any stage, depending on the situation.
- There is also scope within the policy and procedure to conduct Return to Study meetings and conferences for those learners who have had a break in study because of their mental health and/or wellbeing.
- Where a learner is unable or unwilling to participate in this procedure, the University will continue with the process where it is deemed necessary to do so, particularly if there is risk involved to the learner, other learners or staff.
- Learners may be accompanied and/or represented by a person of their choosing throughout this procedure, however, they cannot be represented by a lawyer acting in a professional capacity at any stage of the procedure, nor can this person represent the learner on their behalf.

- In most cases, learners will continue their studies with the University while the matter is considered, however where the University considers it appropriate, the matter may be referred to the Director of Student Services or nominee, for consideration of a temporary interruption to study in the best interests of the learner.
- Whilst this policy and procedure is intended to complement the Fitness to Practise Policy by supporting learners to manage their health and wellbeing, the Fitness to Practise policy takes precedence for learners on professionally recognised programmes.

D. Specific Procedure

The Support to procedure has three incremental stages depending on the perceived and/or assessed severity of the situation and potential seriousness of risk. However, action may be initiated at any stage of the policy and procedure:

Stage 1: Informal stage for low risk or emerging concerns - Initial Support to Study Meeting:

Stage 2: Formal stage for continuing or moderate concerns that are too serious to be handled informally - Support to Study Meeting and Return to Study Meeting

Stage 3: Formal stage for severe or enduring concerns - Support to Study Case Conference and Return to Study Case Conference

Appeals

Responsibilities

Stage 1: Initial Support to Study Meeting:

When a concern about a learner's health, safety or wellbeing is raised, the concerned member of staff or learner should liaise with the Achievement Coach and/or Year Lead, or nominee (e.g. Research Degrees Tutor), who can initiate Stage 1, taking advice from Student Services, as appropriate. The stage and date of the meeting should be recorded on Starfish using the appropriate meeting type.

Stage 2: Support to Study Meeting:

Student Services would coordinate any activity at Stage 2, with a Student Services Manager or nominee (e.g. Mental Health, Wellbeing or Inclusive Support Advisor) chairing proceedings. Normally a Stage 2 meeting would involve the learner, Course Leader or nominee (e.g. Research Degrees Tutor) and Mental Health, Wellbeing and/or Inclusive Support Advisor or Officer. Student Services will coordinate arrangements for scheduling the meeting, keeping a record of the meeting itself and recording the stage and date of the meeting on Starfish

Return to Study Meeting:

A Return to Study Meeting applies when a learner wishes to resume their studies following a period of interruption, having been supported under Support to Study Stage 2 prior to their interruption or having cited mental health or wellbeing reasons for their reason for interruption. Responsibilities align to Stage 2 Support to Study Meetings.

Stage 3: Support to Study Case Conference:

Student Services would coordinate any activity at Stage 3, with the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing Services, or nominee (e.g. Mental Health Clinical Lead or Wellbeing Manager) chairing the proceedings. Normally a Stage 3 conference would involve the learner, Dean of School or nominee, and Mental Health, Wellbeing and/or Inclusive Support Advisor or Officer. Student Services will coordinate arrangements for scheduling the meeting, keeping a record of the meeting itself and recording the stage and date of the meeting on Starfish. In exceptional cases, where there is believed to be significant and imminent risk, a Case Conference may convene with short notice and without the learner being present.

Return to Study Case Conference:

A Return to Study Case Conference applies when a learner wishes to resume their studies following a period of interruption, having been supported under Support to Study Stage 3 prior to their interruption. Responsibilities align to Stage 3 Case Conferences.

Appeals: A learner may appeal against the outcome of a Stage 3 Case Conference pursuant to Section M of the Regulations for the Conduct of Students.

Referrals to Support to Study

Any learner or prospective learner may raise a concern about their own requirement for support, and any learner or member of staff may raise a concern about another learner's need for support. In addition, the University will consider concerns raised external to the University including, but not limited to, the Police, GP or other medical professionals, placement supervisors, family members and accommodation providers.

Learners may access independent advice and support throughout their engagement with the procedure, for example from the Students' Union Advice Centre.

Student Services can be consulted at any point in the procedure to maintain a central record and provide guidance.

If the learner is on a professionally regulated course, there will be consideration of any implications for professional practice and, if so, whether the case should be referred to the Fitness to Practise Procedure or the learner should be referred for an assessment through Occupational Health. Any sharing of information/concerns would be carried out in line with the [Student Support, Wellbeing and Inclusive Support Privacy Notice](#).

Guidance for Conducting Meetings

Wherever possible, the following guidance should be followed when holding any meeting under this policy and procedure:

- The learner should be informed of the purpose of the meeting and be advised of any documents they may be required to share in advance of the meeting, including medical and other supporting evidence.
- Reasonable adjustments should be considered and implemented, where appropriate, and learners with Inclusive Support needs may be accompanied by a support worker (e.g. sign language interpreter).
- Learners may be accompanied and/or represented by a person of their choosing, however, they cannot be represented by a lawyer acting in a professional capacity at any stage of this policy and procedure. The learner should inform the meeting organiser in advance.
- It is advised that numbers attending are kept to the minimum and every effort is made to ensure the learner does not find it intimidating.
- The learner should be invited to the meeting, allowing a minimum of 5 working days' notice, except in exceptional circumstances. A copy of the policy and procedure should be shared with the learner in advance, with particular emphasis on the fact that it is designed to be a supportive process.

For all stages of the policy and procedure, a record of the date and category of the meeting or case conference will be logged on Starfish under Meetings.

- The learner should be informed of who will be present at the meeting and why.

- The meeting should be held in a private space, with the option of it being in person or online via Microsoft Teams. If online, it is on the understanding that all parties have the appropriate internet and WiFi capability to participate fully in the meeting and that cameras will be switched on throughout. Normally meetings will be held in person at Stage 3 of this policy and procedure.
- A standard agenda format will be used in all meetings.
- Where appropriate, a Support to Study Action Plan (template available) should be co-created during the meeting and shared with the learner within 5 working days after the meeting has taken place. This action plan will have a specific review date and the consequences of not keeping to the agreed action plan will be clearly outlined to the learner. This may involve moving to the next stage of the policy and procedure.
- In some cases, it may be established that there are no requirements for support and therefore this negates the need to create and share an action plan. Where this is the case, the Support to Study procedure can be closed with no further action.
- Where an action plan is put in place, a date should be set for a review meeting to review progress since the initial meeting. During the review meeting, as well as reviewing progress, further concerns will be discussed, as well as any further or ongoing support that would be helpful.

Stage 1: Initial Support to Study Meeting

Stage 1 is intended to be relatively informal, where there is low risk or emerging concerns about a learner's health and wellbeing and the impact this is having on their academic engagement or on others.

When a concern about a learner's health, safety or wellbeing is raised, the concerned member of staff or learner should liaise with the Achievement Coach and/or Year Lead, or nominee, who can initiate Stage 1, if appropriate, taking advice from Student Services, as appropriate.

The Achievement Coach and/or Year Lead, or nominee, will:

- Collate relevant information on the issues and concerns, consulting with appropriate colleagues

- Clarify what action has been taken up to this point
- Arrange to speak to the learner to discuss the concerns in a sensitive manner, referring to the Support to Study policy and procedure.
- Record the date, time and category of the meeting on Starfish under Meetings.

Outcome:

At the Initial Support to Study Meeting, the following outcomes will be considered:

- The Support to Study procedure will be closed as no further support requirements have been identified or are required; or
- The learner does not wish to engage with support. If applicable, referral to Stage 2 of this procedure or referral into a different University Process, which may include the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Framework (SEAM), Regulations for the Conduct of Students and/or Fitness to Practise.
- Referral for consideration under a different University policy and/or procedure; or
- Escalation to Stage 2 of the Support to Study procedure; or
- An action plan will be co-created and shared with the learner. This may include, but is not limited to, attending regular meetings with academic staff, engaging with University support services, such as; WISER, Achievement Coach, and/or Student Services, as well as with external professionals, such as; GP, mental health services, online services and Disabled Students' Allowance support (DSA).

If an action plan has been created, arrangements will be made for a review meeting, during which time progress against the agreed action plan will be reviewed.

Following the Stage 1 Review Meeting, any of the following decisions may be reached:

- If, following discussion with the learner, concerns are resolved, no further action will be taken and the Support to Study process is closed.
- If there has been some progress, an agreement can be reached to continue to support at Stage 1, with **one** further review of progress scheduled.
- If concerns persist or further concerns are raised, referral to Stage 2 of this procedure.
- If the learner fails to engage either by non-attendance at the meeting or by demonstrating no commitment to the action plan, referral to Stage 2 of this procedure or referral into a different University Process, which may include the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Framework (SEAM), Regulations for the Conduct of Students and/or Fitness to Practise.

The School representative would record the date and category of the meeting on Starfish under Meetings.

Stage 2: Support to Study Meeting

Where there are continuing or moderate concerns about a learner's health and wellbeing that have not been resolved at Stage 1, or it is felt the case is too serious to be handled informally, Stage 2 of the policy and procedure may be initiated. The purpose of the Stage 3 Support to Study meeting is to understand the learner's perception of the issues that have been identified, including the impact their ill health and/or behaviour is having upon them and/or the University community.

The lead person from Stage 1 or the member of staff with concerns would make a referral to Student Services for consideration of support under Stage 2 of this policy and procedure, sharing any associated documentation, including a copy of the Stage 1 Support to Study Action Plan, where one has been agreed. This would be completed using the [Support to Study Referral Form](#)

Student Services would coordinate any activity at Stage 2, with a Student Services Manager or nominee chairing the proceedings. Normally Stage 2 proceedings would involve the learner, Course Leader or nominee and Mental Health, Wellbeing and/or Inclusive Support Advisor or Officer.

Student Services would record the date, time and category of the meeting on Starfish under Meetings

Outcome

At the Stage 2 Support to Study Meeting, the following outcomes will be considered:

- The Support to Study procedure will be closed as no further support requirements have been identified or are required;
- The learner does not wish to engage with support. If applicable, referral to Stage 3 of this procedure or referral into a different University Process, which may include the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Framework (SEAM), Regulations for the Conduct of Students and/or Fitness to Practise.

- Referral for consideration under a different University policy and procedure; or
- Escalation to Stage 3 of the Support to Study procedure; or
- An action plan will be co-created and shared with the learner. This may include, but is not limited to, attending regular meetings with academic staff, engaging with University support services, such as; WISER, Achievement Coach, and/or wellbeing services, as well as with external professionals, such as; GP, mental health services, online services and Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

If an action plan has been created, arrangements will be made for a review meeting, during which time progress against the agreed action plan will be reviewed.

Following the Stage 2 Review Meeting, any of the following decisions may be reached:

- If, following discussion with the learner, concerns are resolved, no further action will be taken and the Support to Study process will be closed.
- If there has been some progress, an agreement can be reached to continue to support at Stage 2, with **one** further review of progress scheduled.
- If concerns persist or further concerns are raised, including following the further review at Stage 2, referral to Stage 3 of this procedure.
- If the learner fails to engage either by non-attendance at the meeting or by demonstrating no commitment to the action plan, referral to Stage 3 of this procedure or referral into a different University process, including the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Framework (SEAM), Regulations for the Conduct of Students and/or Fitness to Practise.

Stage 2: Return to Study Meeting

During any period of interruption from the University under these policy and procedures, a wellbeing hold may be applied to a learner's record, preventing them from re-enrolling until such time that they have engaged in a Return to Study Meeting.

A Return to Study Meeting will be arranged when a learner expresses a wish to resume their studies following a period of interruption, having been supported under Support to Study Stage 2 prior to their interruption.

Prior to making arrangements for a Return to Study Meeting, the learner wishing to resume their studies will be asked to complete a Supporting Statement, as well as submitting medical and other supporting evidence, as appropriate, ahead of arrangements being made for the meeting.

Student Services would record the date and category of the meeting on Starfish under Meetings.

Outcome

Following the Stage 2 Return to Study Meeting, any of the following decisions may be reached:

- Learner is permitted to resume their studies from an agreed date, with no conditions;
- Learner is permitted to resume to their studies from an agreed date, with conditions and/or additional reasonable adjustments or agreed support plan;
- Learner has not been able to demonstrate they are well enough to resume their studies, concerns persist, further concerns are raised, or the learner has failed to engage. In such circumstances, the following options will be considered:
 - Escalation to Stage 3 Return to Study Case Conference
 - An extension to interruption to studies, if permissible and agreed by all parties
 - A change to mode of study, if permissible and agreed by all parties
 - A change to programme of study, if permissible and agreed by all parties
 - A change to EX status - Exam without attendance, if permissible and agreed by all parties

Stage 3: Support to Study Case Conference

This stage will be invoked when severe or enduring concerns are raised about a learner that may be putting them or others at risk. These may be continuing concerns or a new significant concern which the University deems appropriate for immediate support under Stage 3.

Student Services would coordinate any activity at Stage 3, with a Student Services manager or nominee chairing the proceedings. Normally a Stage 3 Case Conference would involve the learner, Dean of School or nominee and Mental Health, Wellbeing and/or Inclusive Support Advisor or Officer. In exceptional cases, where there is believed to be significant and imminent risk, a Case Conference may convene with short notice and without the learner being present.

The Case Conference will be an evidence-based process, assessing risk to self and others and will be informed by medical and other supporting evidence, where appropriate. Appropriate evidence may include a letter from the learner's GP or a report from a Care Coordinator, Social Worker, Clinical Psychologist or Psychiatrist, for example.

Student Services would record the date and category of the meeting on Starfish under Meetings.

Outcome:

As an outcome of the Case Conference, the following outcomes will be considered:

- Continue to support at Stage 3, with the development of an action plan and **one** further meeting to review progress against the action plan.
- If, following discussion with the learner, concerns are resolved and there are no further support requirements; no further action will be taken and the Support to Study procedure will be closed;
- Referral for consideration under a different University policy and procedure;
- If significant concerns persist, further concerns are raised, insufficient progress is made against the action plan (if applicable), or if the learner does not engage either by non-attendance or due to being considered too unwell to engage, the following options are examples of what may be considered:
 - A learner led interruption to studies
 - A University led interruption to studies
 - A change to mode of study
 - A change to programme of study
 - Withdrawal from the University
 - Enrolment as 'Exam only' status - Exam without attendance

The learner will normally be informed of the decision within 10 working days of the Case Conference.

If the outcome is an interruption to study or withdrawal, a wellbeing hold will be placed on the learner's record. This will trigger support under a Stage 3 Return to Study Case Conference should the learner wish to resume their studies in the future. The wellbeing hold will also avoid a learner accruing further tuition fee liability.

Stage 3 Return to Study Case Conference

A Return to Study Case Conference will be arranged when a learner wishes to resume their studies following a period of interruption, having been supported under Support to Study Stage 3 prior to their interruption, or following an institution led interruption.

In these circumstances, a wellbeing hold would be applied to a learner's record, preventing them from re-enrolling until such time that they have engaged in a Return to Study Case

Conference.

Prior to making arrangements for a Return to Study Meeting, learners wishing to resume their studies will be asked to complete a Supporting Statement, as well as submitting medical and other supporting evidence, as appropriate, ahead of arrangements being made for a Return to Study Case Conference.

It is worth noting that this process may take several weeks and therefore ample time should be given between the sharing of the Supporting Statement and medical or other supporting evidence, and any potential re-enrolment date.

Following receipt of the Supporting Statement, medical and other supporting evidence, the learner should be invited to the Return to Study Case Conference, allowing a minimum of 5 working days' notice.

All other arrangements for the Case Conference will be as detailed in the Stage 3 Support to Study Case Conference part of this procedure.

Student Services would record the date and category of the meeting on Starfish under Meetings.

Outcome

Following the Return to Study Case Conference, any of the following decisions may be reached:

- Learner is permitted to resume their studies from an agreed date, with no conditions
- Learner is permitted to resume to their studies from an agreed date, with conditions and/or reasonable adjustments or agreed support plan
- Learner has not been able to demonstrate they are well enough to resume their studies, concerns persist, further concerns are raised, or if the learner fails to engage either by non-attendance or due to not being well enough to engage, the following options will be considered:
 - An extension to interruption to studies, if permissible
 - A University led interruption to studies if a learner led interruption is not forthcoming
 - A change to mode of study or programme of study
 - Withdrawal from the University
 - Enrolment as 'Exam only' status - Exam without attendance

Learners will normally be informed of the decision within 10 working days of the Return to Study Case Conference.

Appeals

Learners have the right to appeal against any decision taken under Stage 3 of this policy and procedure.

The learner may appeal against the outcome pursuant to section M of the Regulations for the Conduct of Students.

If a learner is not satisfied having completed the University's internal appeals policy and procedure, they will be entitled to request a review of the case under the rules of the scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The University will issue a Completion of Policy and procedures letter following the outcome of the appeal.

E. Appendices

Appendix A - Approving Bodies

Type of document	Validating Body (Expert committee or working group that has reviewed and approved prior to submission for final approval)	Final Approving Body	EIA
Strategy	Vice Chancellors Group	University Board and Academic Board	✓
University wide Policy & Policy and procedure	Information & Data Governance Group	Vice Chancellors Group	✓
Policies, & policy and procedures relating to academic standards and quality assurance	<u>Students, Teaching and Quality Committee</u>	Academic Board	✓

Professional Services Policy & Policy and procedure	Appropriate expert group	Head of Service	✓
Guidance	Appropriate expert group	Heda/Dean of Service/ School	-