



Wellbeing and fitness to study policy

Policy Details	
Produced by	Head of Student Services
Date produced	August 2016
FOI Class Reference	
Version number	001
E&D Group approval date	n/a
Review by	June 2017

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STATEMENT OF POLICY PURPOSE

Seevic College is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to his or her academic progression. This policy outlines the process and procedures to be followed when a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour affects their ability to cope at college, to study or progress on their course or when their health, wellbeing or behaviour poses a risk to the health and safety of self and/or others.

APPLICABILITY

To whom: This procedure applies to all students enrolled at Seevic College, including students on any work placements, that offer qualifications on behalf of the college regardless of their background or protected characteristic which are; age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

DEFINITION

This policy should be used for any student whose ability to cope with college life, to study or progress on their course is compromised as the result of their health, wellbeing, behaviour or a disability.

General Procedure Content

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The college is committed to supporting student wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health and behavioural issues is critical to student learning and academic achievement. Additionally, the college has a duty of care to all within its community and a responsibility to take action to support those in distress, or causing significant concern or presenting a risk to self or others. This will include, for instance, situations where students show visible signs of illness, mental health difficulties, or emotional or behavioural disorders that may have a negative impact on their health, safety, learning and wellbeing.

- 1.2.1 This policy outlines how the management, teachers and support staff of Seevic college will sensitively consider a student's behaviour which requires necessary intervention outside of regular disciplinary action.
- 1.2.2 Recommend a co-ordinated approach to the management of a situation where mental or physical functioning
- may not permit a student to benefit from the educational opportunities afforded to him or her at a particular time or
 - is adversely affecting the student experience of others or
 - requires support at a level that has extended well beyond that which can reasonably be expected of the College.
- 1.3 This procedure has three levels of concern. The cause or causes for concern can result in entering the procedure at any level although it is hoped that most situations can be remedied by action taken at stages 1 or 2.
- 1.4 Concerns about a student's health or behaviour should be acted upon promptly.
Early action/intervention can often prevent a situation from developing into a crisis.
- 1.5 The procedure aims to ensure that:
- The best interests of the student are considered in relation to their personal situation, their health, wellbeing and/or any disability they may experience
 - Students are supported to study to the best of their ability, and wherever possible to meet the required learning outcomes and complete their course
 - Students who are experiencing difficulties in relation to their health, wellbeing and/or disability are supported to address their difficulties at the earliest appropriate point
 - Students are able to make informed decisions regarding options available
 - Any reasonable adjustments that the student may be entitled to are considered and where appropriate put in place
- 1.6 Staff from college faculties and from central support services work together where appropriate so that students experience a consistent and fair process
- 1.7 If staff are unsure about a student's wellbeing they should seek advice and discuss their concerns with the support staff at the college.

2. Stage One

Concerns emerge about a student's health and safety and ability to study based on deterioration in health, appearance or behaviour

- 2.1 A member of staff who knows the student (e.g. tutor, student mentor) should approach the student in a supportive way and indicate that there is a recognised concern about the student's wellbeing. The nature of the concern should be clearly identified and, if appropriate, information should be provided about support available through the college (e.g. Counselling Services) and the student reminded about external support such as the student's GP. (NB counselling cannot be made mandatory for a student)
- 2.2 The student and member of staff should agree on actions to be taken and the actions recorded in the student's file and a copy given to the student. A review date should be agreed and included in the file note.
- 2.3 The staff member should explain to the student that the same or additional concerns for health, wellbeing or fitness to study may lead to their fitness to study being more widely considered in stage two.

3. Stage Two

Continued concern about a student's health, safety and ability to study related to a significant deterioration in appearance, health or behaviour or a significant initial concern about a student. For students under the age of 18 years of age, a parent or guardian will usually be informed

- 3.1 The student will be invited to attend a meeting with the HOSS and their CAM and the member of staff expressing concern. The student should be made aware of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may need to bring. The student should be informed of the meeting in writing at least 24 hours before the date of the meeting. The student may be accompanied by a friend or family member. Students with disabilities may also be accompanied by a support worker as appropriate to their needs.
- 3.2 The purpose of the meeting will be to outline concerns and ascertain the student's perception of the issues identified and also to ensure that the student clearly understands College expectations regarding fitness to study. It will be important to identify and agree an action plan following the meeting. The consequences of not adhering to the action plan should be clearly outlined to the student. A short summary of the meeting, the agreed action plan and the consequences of non-compliance should be sent to the student within 3 working days of the meeting. The meeting must be documented and recorded centrally on ProPortal. Regular review meetings should be set up with the student and the frequency of these reviews should be agreed at the meeting.

4. Stage Three

The most serious level of concern can be reached either through progression from stages 1 and 2 or directly if there are significant concerns about the risk to the health and wellbeing of the student, safety of self, students, staff or to others. At this stage, parents or guardians would usually be informed if the student is less than 18 years of age

- 4.1 An intervention stage 3 meeting will be convened by the HOSS or Deputy Principal to ascertain the facts as known and to discuss an appropriate course of action. If appropriate mental health professionals will also attend. Others may be called to provide information or to provide written statements and notes from previous stages provided to the chair in advance of the meeting
- 4.2 During intervention stage 3 relevant staff, external professionals and the student if appropriate will be invited to outline their concerns.
- 4.3 The case conference may consider various options including a break from study, part time study, study from home, the support needed by a student, a period of interruption or a recommendation for withdrawal or exclusion of the student.
- 4.5 The actions arising out of this meeting will be agreed, documented and circulated to all in attendance and to the student. All actions should have specific time frames where appropriate and adherence to such timeframes will be a condition of any re-entry to programmes of study.
- 4.6 If the meeting considers that withdrawal or exclusion is the best course of action this must be recommended by the chair in the meeting and will subsequently be approved via the Deputy Principal. Subject to withdrawal or exclusion being approved by the Deputy-Principal, a letter will be sent to student's registered address.
- 4.7 In the event that the student is unable to attend the stage 3 intervention meeting for whatever reason, the meeting may go ahead in their absence.
- 4.8 If an incident occurs where there is an immediate risk to self or others, the designated lead safeguarding officer and deputy principal will make an immediate professional judgement to protect the wellbeing of the student.

5. Returning to Study

- 5.1 Students should be informed of the procedures to be followed for returning to study as soon as possible.
- 5.2 Each student's case will vary depending upon the context and specific circumstances out of which the original concern arose. In all cases return to study will be dependent upon evidence of fitness to study such as a GP's letter and of appropriate support systems. Evidence submitted must be from a recognised health worker such as a mental health professional, doctor or psychiatrist who has sufficient knowledge of the student and the demands of education in order to make an informed decision regarding return to study. In particular, specific reference should be made to the student's capacity to return to study.
- 5.3 The decision to allow return to study will be made by the relevant academic leader in liaison with academic and support staff. In consultation with appropriate professional colleagues there must be assurances made regarding a student's fitness to study, compliance with any conditions imposed, regulatory requirements, and the availability of support upon return.
- 5.4 Regular review meetings should be arranged with the student's faculty so that student progress can be monitored and student support modified if necessary.
- 5.5 When return to study is not deemed to be an option and the student wishes to challenge this, the existing complaints and appeals policies and processes should be followed.

6. Consent, confidentiality and data protection

6.1 Data protection

- 6.1.1 All College staff are governed by the requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1984 and 1998. Under these acts, all data relating to a person's physical or mental health is regarded as sensitive, personal data. The College's policy on Data Protection contains guidance on the use of sensitive information e.g. details about a student's mental health or condition and should be consulted by staff. In general, all personal data of a sensitive nature given to a member of staff by a student should be treated

as confidential and should only be disclosed with the student's consent. Sensitive data, for the purpose of this policy, is deemed to be information given in confidence concerning, for example, a student's ill-health or disability, including mental health issues.

6.2 Confidentiality

6.2.1 In all cases where, in the member of staff's judgement, it would be in the student's best interests to disclose sensitive information (e.g. so that appropriate support may be provided) the student's informed consent should be obtained where possible. It will be necessary to inform the student why there might be a need to disclose sensitive information, who will have access to this information, and the likely consequences of giving or withholding consent (e.g. additional support strategies such as reasonable adjustments including additional examination arrangements). Once consent has been obtained, it is the responsibility of the person passing on the information to ensure it is done on the terms agreed with the student.

6.2.2 If the student chooses not to provide their consent this decision should be respected. In this scenario, the implications of non-disclosure in terms of additional support should be made clear. However, there exist rare occasions when the student's consent is withheld, or it is impracticable to try to obtain it, when confidentiality may be broken. These include:

- When the student's mental health has deteriorated to the extent of threatening his/her personal safety
- When the student is at risk of serious abuse or exploitation
- When the student's behaviour is adversely affecting the rights and safety of others
- Where the member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal procedure if the information were not disclosed (e.g. if a crime had been committed).