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# UNIVERSITY OF KENT

## Support to Study Policy and Procedure

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## UNIVERSITY OF KENT

### Support to Study Policy and Procedure

#### In an emergency

**Campus Security:01227 823333 or 999**

In an emergency situation where it is believed that a student's health or wellbeing presents an immediate risk to themselves or others, call the appropriate emergency services: 999 (and inform the University on ext.3333) or Campus Security on 01227 823333 (who will call 999).

If appropriate, the Support to Study Procedure can be used after the emergency has been responded to.

#### Introduction

1. The University of Kent is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progression and wider university experience. The University seeks to create a supportive environment that promotes independence, allows students to achieve their full potential and considers the safety and wellbeing of everyone in the University community.
2. The Support to Study Procedure can be followed when there are concerns that a student's mental or physical health is significantly affecting their ability to participate fully and effectively in their academic studies, or life generally at the University.
3. The Support to Study Procedure will be considered if, for example, there are:
  - Concerns from staff over a student's ability to study at the University and/or within a placement, even after reasonable adjustments have been put in place;
  - The student is disrupting the teaching, learning or support of other students and/or there are significant risk(s) to a student's wellbeing or academic work, or the wellbeing or academic work of other members of the University community;
  - The student is unable to participate independently and safely in general University life, for example socialising, extracurricular activities on campus, placements, field trips or living in University accommodation.
4. The Support to Study Procedure works alongside other formal University regulations, policies and procedures. These include:
  - [Academic Diligence](#)
  - [Student Discipline Procedure](#)
  - [Student Charter](#)
  - [General Regulations for students](#)
  - [Policy statement for students concerning Alcohol](#)
  - [Policy statement for students concerning Drugs](#)

- [Respect at Kent Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice](#)
- [Trans Student Support Policy](#)

Concerns regarding a Kent and Medway Medical School Student should be referred to the appropriate Kent and Medway Medical School policies and procedures.

5. Any action taken under this procedure will be limited to that which is necessary and proportionate to protect a student's interests and the interests of other members of the University community. The Support to Study Procedure is intended to be supportive, not punitive. It is also intended to be open, transparent and implemented sensitively.
6. The University has a responsibility under the Equality Act (2010) not to discriminate against students with protected characteristics and to make reasonable adjustments, if appropriate, to ensure that a student is not placed at a disadvantage. The University also has a duty of care to all members of its community and requires a timely and appropriate response when there are visible signs that a student's behaviour is having a negative impact on a student's functioning in a University community or on the wellbeing of others.
7. Support to Study should not automatically be applied where issues are documented via an Inclusive Learning Plan (ILP). The reasonable adjustments, as set out in the ILP, should be fully implemented and reviewed before considering Support to Study.

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## Support for Students

8. Students are encouraged to seek independent advice and support regarding this procedure from the [Kent Union Advice Centre](#) (Canterbury) located in the Mandela Building or [GKSUnions](#) (Medway) located in the Student Hub.
9. Students are expected to take up any appropriate support available to them from the University. This includes support from the Student Support and Wellbeing team, based in Keynes College, H Block (Canterbury), or Gillingham Building, G-05 (Medway). Taking advantage of such support as early as possible may avoid the need to invoke this procedure.
10. Any support provided is not expected to replace professional care and support which is the responsibility of a General Practitioner (Doctor) and/or other outside agencies.

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## Scope (to whom does this procedure apply?)

11. This procedure applies to all University of Kent students who are registered/enrolled on a full-time or part-time programme. Kent And Medway Medical School students are subject to alternative policies and procedures.
12. If at any stage in the process it is ascertained that the behaviour and/or engagement of the student was not due to significant wellbeing or mental health factors and/or where the student fails to respond positively to more supportive interventions, the student may be referred to the appropriate procedure(s) as set out in paragraph 4.

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## Responsibilities and the people who can initiate this procedure

13. The Director of Student Services has overall responsibility for this procedure, but the day-to-day implementation of the procedure lies with lead members of staff within the Academic Divisions and Student Services (Student Support and Wellbeing, Student Engagement, Student Conduct and Complaints Office).
14. Implementation of the Support to Study Procedure can be led by the following members of staff at each level of the procedure:

### Emerging/low level concerns

- Student Engagement Support Officer
- Senior Tutor
- Student Welfare Officer
- Student Support and Wellbeing Adviser

### Continuing/significant concerns

- Head of Student Mental Health
- Head of Disability, SpLD & Neurodiversity
- Mental Health Team Manager
- Disability and Neurodiversity Manager
- Head of Student Engagement

### Support to Study Panel for persistent/serious concerns

- Director of Student Services or nominee
- Deputy Director of Student Services and Head of Student Support and Wellbeing or nominee

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## Data Protection and Confidentiality

15. All Support to Study cases will be handled with the appropriate level of confidentiality, with information released only to those directly involved in the procedure for the purposes of investigating or responding to the concerns raised.
16. An exception applies where a student is subject to a disciplinary process as a result of concerns or conduct in the application of this procedure. Relevant confidential information will be made available to the necessary staff for the purpose of conducting the relevant procedure.
17. Records of meetings and supporting documentation (including medical documentation) held under this procedure will be stored securely and in accordance with the Student Services privacy notice and Data Protection law.
18. The University will collect data that has been anonymised in regards to Support to Study outcomes at each stage of this procedure, and any complaint submitted by a

- student to any regulators including the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), and use the data:
- a. Internally for reporting, evaluation, learning and training; and
  - b. Externally for discussion with regulators in the higher education sector.
19. Any documentation providing personal data, including special category personal data as defined by the Data Protection legislation, may be disclosed to University members of staff and regulators only for the purpose of dealing with the matter under this procedure, a complaint arising out of it and/or implementing any recommendations.
20. In all cases where it is deemed appropriate and legitimate to disclose sensitive information, a student's informed consent will be obtained, where possible. A student will be informed of the reasons for disclosing sensitive data and to whom it has been disclosed and the possible consequences of giving or withholding consent. If a student chooses to withhold their consent the decision will be respected subject to paragraph 21 below, but it may impact on the range of support options that can be considered.
21. There are occasions where the University may have to share information with appropriate internal/external professionals even if a student does not consent to this. These include:
- a. If a student's mental health has deteriorated to the extent of threatening their personal safety or the safety of others;
  - b. When the a student's behaviour is adversely affecting the rights and the health and safety of others;
  - c. Where a member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal proceedings if the information was not disclosed.
22. Staff will consult with appropriate colleagues in regards to Information Compliance if it is believed that there is a need to share confidential and/or sensitive information.
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## General Information

### Reasonable Adjustments

23. The University will make reasonable adjustments to this procedure where it is reasonable to do so to prevent a student from experiencing any substantive disadvantage as a result of a protected characteristic.

### Supporter

24. If a student is invited to attend a meeting under any stage of this procedure, they may be accompanied by a supporter. This could be a friend, relative, another member of the University or a representative of Kent Union/GKSU. If a student wishes to bring a supporter, the meeting organiser should be informed in good time before the meeting.
25. The Support to Study procedure is not a legal process, therefore a student should not be accompanied by a nominated legal representative without express agreement from the University, even if the nominated legal representative is a relative or member of staff. Request for a legal representative to be present should be submitted to [supporttostudy@kent.ac.uk](mailto:supporttostudy@kent.ac.uk) as soon as is practicably possible. Please note that legal

representation may delay the Support to Study process.

### Access to documents

26. A student will be provided with copies of all documentation considered by decision makers under this procedure.

### Proceeding in a student's absence

27. Although every effort will be made to ensure that the student is able to engage with the process, the meetings at any stage of this procedure, in whole or in part, may proceed in a student's absence where there is evidence that they cannot effectively engage in the process or this is reasonably considered by the University to be in a student's best interests.
28. Where a student is invited to a meeting under this procedure and does not attend, the meeting may proceed in their absence at the discretion of the Chair, as long as, in line with this procedure, they have received appropriate notice of the date and time of the meeting.
29. Any notes of the meeting, together with copies of any relevant documents, and the reason for the decision will be provided.

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## Emerging/low level concerns

30. Where a student's behaviour or wellbeing is causing an on-going concern, but not presenting any immediate crisis, the student will be approached and any concerns discussed with them. University staff can seek guidance on a confidential basis from the Student Support and Wellbeing Team as to who should approach the student, how best to do this and to get information regarding sources of further help.
31. The initial approach will normally be made by a Student Engagement Support Officer, Senior Tutor, Student Welfare Officer or Student Support and Wellbeing Adviser. The nature of the concerns should be clearly identified to the student who will be encouraged to discuss the issue(s). Information regarding internal and external support available will also be provided.
32. An action plan will be agreed with the student, and recorded by way of a written plan. It will include what actions are expected (for example to make a doctor's appointment), and what support will be put in place. This plan will be sent to the student and regularly reviewed by the member of staff they met with.
33. If there are continuing and significant concerns (for example if the student does not engage with the action plan or it has not been sufficient to address the concerns) then the student may be referred to the next stage of the procedure.
34. There may be situations in which, as an alternative to escalation, it may be appropriate to take no further action (for example, if the student has not engaged with the action

plan but is not causing any disruption to others), or to refer to the other procedures listed above in paragraph 4.

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## Continuing/Significant Concerns Meeting

35. A meeting with the student with regard to continuing/significant concerns will usually be considered if:
  - The student does not engage with the action plan and significant concerns continue;
  - The concern raised is too serious to be dealt with informally as an emerging/low level concern.
36. The concern should be raised with the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing in the first instance who will determine if the case should escalate to this stage.
37. If it is determined that a Continuing/Significant Concerns Meeting should be established, a member of staff listed in paragraph 14 will be appointed as chair.
38. The meeting will normally be attended by the person who initiated the emerging /low level concerns meeting and by other relevant academic and support staff (e.g. Student Engagement Support Officer). The emphasis of the meeting is to provide a supportive environment in which the concerns can be discussed with the student and any actions to support the student to re-engage with their studies can be developed and agreed.
39. To ensure that a student is prepared for the meeting, the Chair of the meeting will notify the student of:
  - The date, venue and time of the meeting at least 5 days before the meeting, (although there may be occasions where shorter notice is required);
  - The reason for the meeting and the nature of the concerns that will be discussed;
  - Whether there is a need to submit any specific documentation, such as medical evidence, ahead of the meeting;
  - Who will attend the meeting and the reason for their attendance;
  - A student's right to receive support during and after the meeting, if required;
  - Any supporting documentation that will be reviewed at the meeting at least 2 working days before the meeting.
40. The Chair of the meeting will decide on the how the meeting will be conducted and ensure the student's views are heard.

## Continuing and Significant Concerns Meeting Outcomes

41. The possible outcomes are:
  - A decision that no formal action is required. For disabled students, consideration may need to be given to the creation or review of an Inclusive Learning Plan (ILP), considering new information and/or medical evidence received under this process;
  - The revision and further monitoring of a support plan;

- A recommendation that a student takes a voluntary period of intermission from their studies in accordance with the University's intermission policy. If a student does not submit an appropriate application, the matter may be escalated to a Persistent/Serious Concerns Panel. Students for whom this recommendation is made should be referred to the Student Advice Centre for advice relating to the financial and other implications of intermission (e.g. student visa);
  - A recommendation to move to part-time study;
  - Escalation to a Persistent/Serious Concerns Panel.
42. A student will be informed of the outcome of the meeting within 5 working days and provided with a concise record of the meeting and any agreed support plan within 10 working days from the meeting date. A copy of the agreed support plan will also be sent to all who attended the meeting, to facilitate implementation.

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## Support to Study Panel for persistent/serious concerns

43. A Support to Study Panel for persistent/serious concerns may be initiated if:
- Previous intervention has not resolved the concern or that a student is not complying with a support plan agreed;
  - Concerns are established as being more severe than originally anticipated;
  - The concern is so serious that treating it at a lower stage of this procedure would not be appropriate;
  - A student's health and/or wellbeing are significantly affecting their ability to engage with studies, placements or University life;
  - There is immediate risk to the student and/or others.
44. Persistent/serious concerns are referred to the Director of Student Services or nominee, who will, if appropriate, convene a Support to Study Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to discuss circumstances of the concerns in order to decide what, if any, actions should be taken.
45. There may be situations in which, as an alternative to escalation, it may be appropriate to take no further action or to refer to the other procedures listed above in paragraph 4.
46. The Panel may include a combination of appropriate members from the following list:
- The Director of Student Services (Chair), or nominee;
  - Lead Person from previous meetings;
  - Other relevant University staff including Student Support and Wellbeing, Student Engagement and appropriate staff from the Division;
  - Secretary to the Panel.
47. The Secretary of the Panel will notify a student of:
- The date, venue and time the meeting will take place, where possible, at least 5 working days before the case conference (although the University will, where reasonably possible, provide longer notice);
  - The purpose of the case conference and the nature of the concerns raised;



- Whether a student needs to submit any specific documentation such as medical evidence;
  - Who will attend the case conference and the reason for their attendance;
  - A student's right to be accompanied by a supporter;
  - A student will also be able to submit any supporting documentation to the case conference and will be provided with copies of documentation to be considered at least 2 working days before the meeting.
48. The nominated lead person will present a summary of the case and of concerns which have resulted in the Panel meeting.

## Panel Outcomes

49. The possible outcomes are:
- No further action. If a student has disclosed a disability or medical condition for which they have not been receiving support, they will be referred to Student Support and Wellbeing for a further confidential discussion about any support requirements and the possible creation of an Inclusive Learning Plan.
  - The development and implementation of a support plan;
  - A recommendation to move to part-time study;
  - A recommendation that a student take a period of intermission in accordance with the University's intermission policy;
  - An involuntary period of intermission from studies if required;
  - A recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor or nominee that the student be permanently withdrawn from their academic studies. In such cases students will be provided with appropriate information on support available from University support services and medical professionals during this transition).
50. A student will be informed of the outcome within 5 working days and provided with a concise record of the Panel and, if appropriate, any agreed support plan within 10 working days from the Panel meeting date. If a support plan is agreed a copy of the support plan will be sent to all who attended the Panel meeting to facilitate implementation.

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## Return to study after an interruption

51. For a return to studies following an interruption, the student will need to provide evidence that the issues that presented concerns have been addressed. This could include evidence of having received appropriate medical or other support that may also be ongoing.
52. In order to fulfil this obligation, they will be required to submit satisfactory evidence, including an up-to-date medical report from an independent health professional. If students have any concerns about providing a report they should contact the Director of Student Services. If required the University may ask a student to see a medical professional of the University's choosing, such as Occupational Health.

53. The Director of Student Services (or nominee) will write to the student, usually one month in advance of their expected return date. A copy of this letter will be provided to the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing who will plan for a student to be contacted to discuss any support required for return to study.
54. The student will be invited to a Support to Study Panel, chaired by the Director of Student Services (or nominee) that will consider the evidence provided by the student and determine if they are fit to return to study. If it is not possible for a student to travel to the University, they may be able to arrange attendance via video call.
55. The Secretary of the support to study panel will notify a student of:
  - The date, venue and time the meeting will take place, where possible, at least 5 working days before the case conference (although the University will where reasonably possible provide longer notice);
  - whether a student needs to submit any specific documentation such as medical evidence;
  - Who will attend the meeting and the reason for their attendance;
  - A student's right to be accompanied by a supporter;
  - A student will also be able to submit any supporting documentation to the case conference and will be provided with copies of documentation to be considered at least 2 working days before the meeting.
56. The Panel may decide to:
  - Permit a return to study on an expected or requested return date. In appropriate cases, the Panel may impose conditions or require a new support plan;
  - Recommend part-time study, if appropriate;
  - Recommend the period of interruption is extended for a specific period;
  - Recommend to the Vice-Chancellor or nominee that the student be permanently withdrawn from their academic studies.
57. A student will be informed of the outcome within 5 working days and provided with a concise record of the Panel and, if appropriate, any agreed support plan within 10 working days from the Panel meeting date. If a support plan is agreed a copy of the support plan will be sent to all who attended the Panel meeting, to facilitate implementation.

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## Appeal

58. A student has the right to appeal against a decision taken at any stage of the Support to Study Procedure. The grounds on which a student can appeal are:
  - That there was an alleged procedural fault, bias or other inadequacy in the conduct of the Support to Study process of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the outcome might have been different if it had not occurred;
  - There was evidence that could not have reasonably been made available to the Case conference team and/or the appropriate panel of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the outcome might have been different if that evidence had been received.

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59. An appeal will be considered by the Director of Student Services. If the Director of Student Services has had prior involvement in the case the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience will consider the appeal. The appeal must:
- Explain the grounds for appeal and remedial action sought;
  - Provide all the necessary documentary evidence substantiating the grounds for appeal;
  - Be submitted within 15 working days of the letter notifying a student of the outcome of Support to Study meeting;
  - Be submitted in writing to Student Support and Wellbeing at [supporttostudy@kent.ac.uk](mailto:supporttostudy@kent.ac.uk).
60. **Appeals against the professional medical judgement of a consultant engaged by the University will not be considered as valid grounds for an appeal.**
61. An appeal will be acknowledged within 5 working days. The Director of Student Services or nominee will review the case file, including any documentation that has been provided as part of the appeal, and determine if the appeal is upheld or not. A student will be written to within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement of the appeal with a decision.
62. If an appeal is upheld the student may be referred back to an appropriate stage of this procedure.
63. If the appeal is not upheld there is no further right of appeal and the student may have recourse to refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (see paragraph 64).

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## The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

64. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints or appeals. When all the University's internal stages for dealing with Support to Study appeals have been exhausted, the University will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. Students wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity for an independent review by the OIA must submit their application to the OIA within 12 months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter. Full details of the scheme will be enclosed with the Completion of Procedures letter.

**Note:** Further information may be obtained from the OIA's website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

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Queries regarding the Support to Study Procedure should be directed to the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing.

June 2021 v3