
Title:	Executive Summary: Consultation on Policy on Supporting Health, Fitness and Return to Study, Procedure on Support to Study, Procedure for Fitness to Study & Procedure for Supporting Return to Study
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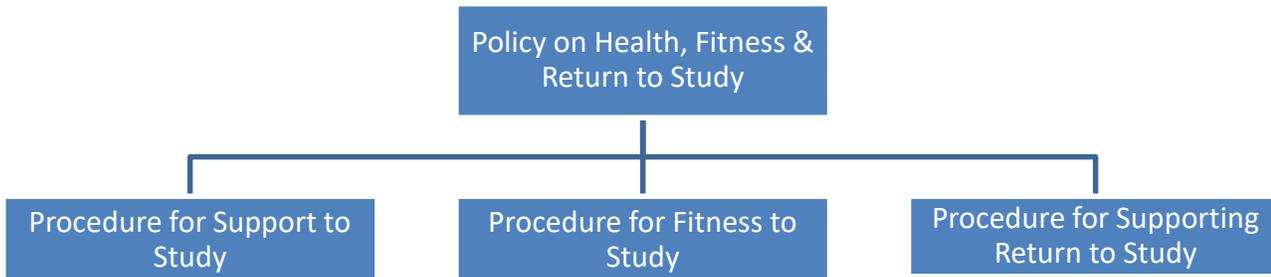
1. Background

- 1.1 The development of this policy and supporting procedures was instigated due to an increase in the complexity of appeals and complaints cases where there are health concerns. Schools also fed back the difficulties they face when supporting students with severe mental and physical health issues, which are impacting on their ability to study, learn and progress.
- 1.2 Prior to the development of the current draft documents, sector research was undertaken which highlighted that many institutions have developed 'Fit to Study' or 'Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study' policies and/or procedures. The common elements are that they all provide an infrastructure to support students effectively, enabling appropriate triaging of students to the correct support services.
- 1.3 Preliminary drafts included PGR students within scope but following discussions with the Manchester Doctoral College this has been amended and the policy and accompanying procedures only refer to taught UG & PGT students. Work is separately progressing for PGR students as part of the review of the Policy on Circumstances Leading to Changes to Postgraduate Research Study

2. Development Process

- 3.1 In March 2016 TLG approved a new approach to policy development which included the use of focus groups to allow the experiences of all stakeholders to feed into the development of a Manchester policy. The first focus group concentrated on understanding the experiences of colleagues in dealing with difficult and complex student health and wellbeing issues.
- 3.2 This group also established what help and advice staff and students might need and where they consider this should be available from. This feedback was used to inform a process mapping exercise which considered the journey of a student and the staff supporting them. Process maps are attached as Appendix 1 & 2.

- 3.3 The purpose of this first focus group was to ensure that staff experience underpins/forms the basis of the policy. As a result of the first workshop the model was developed of having an overarching policy and three supporting procedures. This model was developed in response to feedback which suggested the focus should be on support and finding routes back to learning and progression for students who faced unique difficulties. The attached process maps show that there are multiple routes back to study and that that return to study is also supported and monitored.
- 3.4 The second workshop allowed colleagues to consider the model of an overarching policy: ‘Policy on Health, Fitness and Return to Study’ and three supporting procedures:



- 3.5 Colleagues were also asked to consider the process maps and highlight any concerns that they felt had not been addressed from the previous focus group. Concerns which were highlighted included:

Resources: Colleagues were concerned that the process could take additional time and resource. In response to this, it is intended that the procedures will help to more clearly manage the considerable effort which is already occurring across the University to deal with a growing need for extra support. In addition, the Procedure for Fitness to Study provides a much needed triage mechanism for cases that Schools are struggling to deal with.

School role in Fitness to Study: Colleagues expressed a concern with regards to the role indicated in the Procedure for Fitness to Study, which had a working title of ‘Wellbeing Officer’. It was perceived that supporting students was too much work for one person. To clarify it is not the intention that this role provides the support but that it maintains a School oversight of the support activities that are currently in place, especially those cases which could be considered for referral to the Procedure for Fitness to Study. The role is intended to be the link between ‘Support to Study’ and ‘Fitness to Study’ and this has been expanded upon in the Procedure for Supporting Study in the hope of providing clarity on the expectation of this role.

Relationship of the Policy/ Procedures to other Policy/ Procedures: Colleagues indicated that thought needs to be given to the relationships between the new policy/ procedures and Fitness to Practice, Wellbeing Strategy, Policy on Mental Health and Conduct and Discipline regulations. This was noted and comments are being fed into the Review of the Policy on Mental Health. Colleagues from FBMH attended the focus group and felt that the new policy/ procedure would be helpful but that care would be needed to provide guidance for staff and students with regards when to use the different procedures. Consultation feedback from colleagues with experience of Fitness to Practice and Conduct and Discipline will be very welcome on this issue, which will inform the provision of guidance at implementation.

Fast Tracking serious cases: The policy and procedures were written to ensure the minimum of bureaucracy, whilst ensuring that decision making was well informed and followed the principles of Natural Justice; including ensuring students were always party to the information which was being considered, were given

opportunity to respond and to appeal. However, there is the ability to 'fast track' serious cases to safe guard staff and all students by taking immediate action, when necessary.

Training and Support for Staff: The feedback from the focus groups has been essential to support the provision of developing advice for staff and students on the new policy and procedures. The feedback from the focus groups will be used to develop guidance for colleagues on the procedures, criteria for referral and when to use these, rather than 'other' policies or procedures. In addition, the development of the documents has highlighted the need for staff training on supporting students with mental health conditions and consideration of the impact of interruptions on fees and visas. Flow charts have already been prepared that show at a glance the routes that should be taken to support the fitness and return to study of students.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 FTLCs are asked to oversee a consultation and collate feedback. The deadline for consultation is 12th May 2017. This timeline will allow for Senate approval in June 2017.
- 4.2 If it would be helpful to have one of the people involved with the drafting of the policy and procedures to a Faculty or other meeting as part of the consultation then please contact lan.Bradley@manchester.ac.uk.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the policy and procedures are published in September 2017 and that referral, under the Fitness to Study Procedure can commence from that date.

Appendix Contents:

1. Process Map/Flowchart 'Support to Study' & 'Fitness to Study' [Note: there are two versions (1a and 1b) with different formats as we have found different people have preferred the different styles]
2. Process Map/Flowchart 'Return to Study' [Note: there are two versions (2a and 2b) with different formats as we have found different people have preferred the different styles]
3. Draft Policy on Supporting Health, Fitness and Return to Study
4. Draft Procedure on Support for Study
5. Draft Procedure on Fitness to Study
6. Draft Procedure on Supporting Return to Study

All the above appendix documents can be found on the Consultations webpage on the TLSO website (under the heading of 'Current Consultations') at:

- <http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/consultations/>