

**The University of Manchester**

**Draft Procedure on Supporting Return to Study**

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**1 Purpose and Scope**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Procedure is to ensure that all students who have either taken an interruption or been suspended are fit to return to study and receive appropriate access to support services upon their return.
- 1.2 The procedure applies to all students and also allows subsequent action to be taken should the behaviours identified as a result of the Procedure for Fitness to Study reoccur.

**2 Key Roles and Responsibilities**

- 2.1 The Director of Student Life, or nominee, will oversee the approval of, and support for, the return of students who have interrupted/ been suspended under the Procedure for Fitness to Study.
- 2.2 After a period of absence, the decision as to whether a student is fit to return to study will be made by the Director of Student Life, in consultation with colleagues from Student Life and the Fitness to Study Officer in the School.
- 2.3 The Director of Student Life will identify the issues of concern that the University has in relation to the student's fitness to study, and Occupational Health will medically assess the student's ability to manage the demands of studying at University, drawing attention to the nature and extent of the student's previous problems and the University's concerns about them. Where necessary, additional specialist advice and/or an opinion from the student's own GP or specialist may be sought by Occupational Health.

**3 During Interruption/Suspension and Extending Interruption/Suspension**

- 3.1 Students will be encouraged to maintain contact with the named member of staff in the School<sup>1</sup> during their period of interruption/ suspension to advise of their progress and to facilitate a return to study when the student is well enough. This may not be possible for some students depending on their condition.
- 3.2 In most cases, students would be expected to have recovered sufficiently within the interruption/suspension period to be able to resume studies. In exceptional circumstances, a

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<sup>1</sup> This would normally be the "School Fitness to Study Officer" although they may delegate to another.

further period of interruption may be allowed (a total maximum of 24 consecutive months). If, at the end of the 24 month period, the student is not well enough to resume studies, their case will be referred back to Stage 2, the University Fitness to Study Review Panel, under the Procedure for Fitness to Study.

#### **4 Returning to Study**

- 4.1 Students will usually only be permitted to return from interruption, undertaken as a result of decision made under Procedure for Fitness to Study, at the start of an academic term for taught students.
- 4.2 Students will be expected to return to the same mode of study as they were originally undertaking, i.e., full-time or part-time. Where a request to return to studies includes a request to change the mode of study or the intensity of study, this may be considered by the Head of School or nominee.

#### **5 Notice of Return**

- 5.1 All students who have been interrupted/ suspended under the Procedure for Supporting Fitness to Study should indicate their intention to return three months before they are due to return to study. If the period of interruption/ suspension is less than three months then the indication of intention to return should be as close to that as practical. The 'Return to Study Form' should be sent to the Director of Student Life and to the Wellbeing Officer in the School. The School will attempt to contact the student and will offer support in relation to a potential return to study. The Director of Student Life will commence the return to study approval process.
- 5.2 The return to study process can take some time (e.g., due to the need for additional information from the Occupational Health Service or other specialists). Students should, therefore, begin the return to study process as early as possible and to comply with any deadlines given to them.
- 5.3 Requests to extend an interruption should be sent by students three months prior to the stated return date. Requests will be considered by the University Fitness to Study Review Panel, under Stage 2 of the Procedure for Fitness to Study.
- 5.4 If no 'Return to Study Form' or request to extend the interruption is received, students will be contacted 1 month prior to the agreed return date. At this point, the only option available to the student will be to be referred back to the University Fitness to Study Review Panel, under Stage 2 of the Procedure for Fitness to Study.

#### **6 Return to Study Approval Process**

- 6.1 The Division of Student Life will oversee the Return to Study Approval process.
- 6.2 The University Fitness to Study Review Panel or the Director of Student Life will have defined the conditions of return to study after an interruption, under the Procedure for Fitness to Study (Stage 1 & 2).
- 6.3 In order to assure the University that the conditions have been met, the student may be referred to an Occupational Health physician by the Director of Student Life. With the student's permission, the Occupational Health physician may need to contact their medical practitioner/specialist for updated information regarding their health issues/current condition.
- 6.4 Where conditions were placed upon the return of a student, the Director of Student Life will consider the Occupational Health report and any additional information, including any information which may be provided directly by the student.

- 6.5 The student will be asked to provide the Director of Student Life with a written statement of their views and any independent medical evidence they wish to be taken into account. The decision to allow the return of the student is the responsibility of the Director of Student Life. The decision will be issued to the student in writing, one month prior to the agreed return date.
- 6.6 In making the decision, the Director of Student Life, or nominee, will consider the student's individual support needs, including the requirement for any reasonable adjustments and may impose such conditions which they deem appropriate to the relevant case, such as a return to study plan or a requirement for regular progress checks.
- 6.7 If the student does not consent to referral to Occupational Health, or will not provide medical evidence, the Director of Student Life will decide whether there is sufficient information on which to assess whether the student is fit to return to study.
- 6.8 The student will receive a notification of eligibility to return to study, one month prior to the originally agreed return date, from the Director of Student Life.

## **7 Support to Study after Returning**

- 7.1 Once return to study has been approved, all students must attend a return to study meeting with the Division of Student Life and the Wellbeing Officer in the School. The on-going support of this student will be dealt with under the Procedure for Supporting Students.
- 7.2 Any further health issues, related to the same condition, which arise once a student has returned from interrupted or suspended under the Procedure for Supporting Fitness to Study, will be immediately referred back to Stage 2 of the Procedure, University Fitness to Study Review Panel.
- 7.3 New issues will be dealt with under the Procedure for Supporting Students.

## **8 Request to Return not Upheld**

- 8.1 If the Director of Student Life considers, after seeking advice, that the conditions of return have not been met, the student will be referred back to the Procedure for Fitness to Study, Stage 2.
- 8.2 The interruption will remain in place until such time as the case has been considered and a decision made by the Chair of the University Fitness to Study Review Panel.

## **9 Right of Appeal**

- 9.1 A student who wishes to appeal against a final decision of a Fitness to Study Review Panel to not allow them to return to study under this Procedure may do so under section 7 of the Policy on Supporting Health, Fitness and Return to Study available here: XXX.

## **10 General Matters**

- 10.1 Any functions of the Director of Student Life under this procedure may be delegated.