

The University of Manchester

Procedure on Supporting Return to Study

Note: any reference in this Procedure to named officers should also be read as a reference in each case to a delegated nominee.

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1 Purpose and Scope

1.1 The purpose of this Procedure is to ensure that students whose student registration has been suspended or who have agreed to take a period of interruption under the Support to Study Procedure:

1.1.1 are assessed and confirmed as fit to return to study, prior to their return; and

1.1.2 appropriate support is made available to them, and appropriate information is shared with key colleagues (and, where appropriate, with partner organisations) to facilitate that, upon their return.

1.2 This Procedure allows subsequent action to be taken should the same or similar concerns identified under the Support to Study Procedure reoccur.

2 Key Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The relevant Support to Study Officer (as set out in the Support to Study Procedure, section 7.2) will oversee the return of students whose registration has been suspended or who have agreed to take a period of interruption under the Procedure on Support to Study.

2.2 The Occupational Health Service may be asked to medically assess the student's ability to manage the demands of returning to study/research at the University, taking account of the concerns which had arisen under the Support to Study Procedure and the student's current health and wellbeing. Where necessary, additional specialist advice and/or an opinion from the student's own GP or specialist may be sought by the Occupational Health Service.

3 During Suspension/Interruption

3.1 Where appropriate, students will be encouraged to maintain contact with the Support to Study Officer (who was involved when the concerns were considered under the Support to Study Procedure) during their period of suspension or interruption (for example, to advise on 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.

4 Returning to Study

- 4.1 Where possible, students will return from a suspension or interruption once deemed fit to study, but their return may only be practical at certain times of the year (for example, at the start of an academic year for taught students). The timing of their return might also impact their ability to undertake particular modules (if, for example, the module selection process has already been concluded) or engage with course related activities (such as fieldwork and/or study abroad). For students who have been suspended or been on a period of interruption for a lengthy period of time, there might be more significant consequences associated with a potential return (for example, there might have been considerable changes to course content/delivery, there might be issues in relation to the viability of their research, etc.). In such circumstances, the University will consult with affected students and explore the options available to them.
- 4.2 Students will normally 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 study includes a request to change the mode of study or return to a previous year of study, this may be considered by the Support to Study Officer with input, where appropriate, from relevant colleagues (such as the Head of School).

5 Notice of Return

- 5.1 All students whose student registration has been suspended or who have agreed to take a period of interruption under the Support to Study Procedure should indicate their intention to return to study by completing a 'Return to Study Form' and returning it to the Support to Study Officer at least one month before they are due to return (where an indicative timeframe has previously been set or, where not, before they wish to return). If the period of suspension or interruption is less than one month, then the Support to Study Officer will agree with the student the timescale for submission of the Form.
- 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 comply with any deadlines given to them.
- 5.3 If no 'Return to Study Form' is received, students will normally be contacted one month prior to any identified return date (or such other time as agreed if the period of suspension/interruption is less than one month).

6 Return to Study Approval Process

- 6.1 The Support to Study Officer (or delegate) will oversee the Return to Study Approval process.
- 6.2 The University will normally have identified the conditions of return to study after a suspension (and potentially interruption) under the Support to Study Procedure.
- 6.3 In order to assure the University that the conditions have been met and that the student is fit to return, the student may be referred to an Occupational Health physician. 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. The University may also or instead seek other appropriate medical/specialist input to help come to a view on whether a student is fit to return.
- 6.4 The Support to Study Officer will consider the Return to Study Form and any other relevant evidence which has been provided by the student or others (for example, an Occupational Health or other medical report). Where the Support to Study Officer is satisfied that any identified conditions of return to study have been met (and/or otherwise that the student is fit

to return to study) then they will work with the student to make arrangements for their return. As part of the process of considering whether the student is fit to return to study, the Support to Study Officer may seek further information from the student (and may ask to meet with them) or others and, where appropriate, consult with relevant academic and professional services colleagues. In making the decision, the Support to Study Officer will consider the student's individual support needs, including the requirement for any reasonable adjustments and may identify such conditions which they deem appropriate, such as a return to study plan or a requirement for regular progress checks.

6.5 In complex cases, or where the Support to Study Officer is not satisfied that identified conditions of return to study have been met (or otherwise that the student is not fit to return to study), then the student may be referred to a Support to Study Panel to determine whether they are fit to return and, if not, to decide on further appropriate outcomes (having regard to those available at Level 2 of the Support to Study Procedure). The process to be followed (for example, whether or not a meeting is held with the student) will be determined by the Chair of the Support to Study Panel having regard to the circumstances of the case. Where a meeting is held with the student, the meeting will be arranged in line with the principles identified in section 11 (Level 2) of the Support to Study Procedure. The decision will be issued to the student in writing and within 10 working days of the Support to Study Panel reaching its decision.

6.6 If the student does not consent to referral to Occupational Health, or will not provide medical evidence, the Support to Study Officer/Panel will decide whether there is sufficient information on which to assess whether the student is fit to return to study.

7 Support to Study after Returning

7.1 Once return to study has been approved, students will normally be asked to attend a return to study meeting with relevant staff within their School and/or Division of Campus Life (as appropriate). This meeting would normally be within one month of the return date and a record would be kept of the meeting.

7.2 If there is a reoccurrence of, or new, concerns (for the purposes of section 2.2 of the Support to Study Procedure), then they will be considered under the Support to Study Procedure. The Level at which the concerns will be considered further (i.e. Level 1 or Level 2) will be determined in line with the Support to Study Procedure.

8 Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing

8.1 The University will implement this Procedure in accordance with its confidentiality and data protection obligations and consistently with the [Registered Student Privacy Notice](#).

8.2 When implementing this Procedure, the University may be required to:

- a) disclose a student's personal data (and in some cases, special category data); and
- b) disclose information and evidence provided by other individuals (for example, witnesses, experts, etc.);

both within the University and, in some cases, externally (for example, to a student's emergency contact(s) or to a placement provider, for the purposes of safeguarding a student's health, safety or wellbeing, etc.). The University will ensure that all personal data is processed and disclosed in accordance with individuals' data protection rights. The University's [Student Emergency Contact Statement](#) also identifies circumstances in which the University may contact an emergency contact.

8.3 Additional layers of consent will be sought from students where appropriate. In these circumstances, if consent is not provided (for example, due to refusal or incapacity), the procedure will either continue on the basis of the information that is available or a decision might be taken by the University to share confidential information in circumstances where it is considered (which may arise from information which has been disclosed to the University) that a:

- a) student's health has deteriorated to the extent that it is threatening their personal safety;
- b) student is at risk of serious abuse and/or exploitation; and/or
- c) student's behaviour and/or conduct is adversely affecting the rights or safety of others.

[Student Emergency Contact Statement](#) also identifies circumstances in which the University may contact an emergency contact.

8.4 Advice around data sharing can be sought from the Information Governance Office. If the decision is taken that confidential information should be shared without the student's consent, the student must be informed of this unless it is determined that to do so will increase the risk of harm to the student or others. A record of the information shared should be maintained.

Document control box	
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Related policies/procedures/guidance etc:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to Study Procedure • Wellbeing • Student Mental Health • Policy on Recording and Monitoring Attendance • Policy on Circumstances Leading to Changes to PGR Study • Guidelines for monitoring student attendance
Policy Owner	The Director of Campus Life
Lead contact:	The Head of Advice and Response

Version amendment history		
Version	Date	Reason for change
1.0	25 April 2018	Original document (New Procedure)
2.0	19 th September 2022	Amended terms used for stages of the overall Support to Study Procedure as a result of update of the Procedure formerly known as Fitness to Study, now called Support to Study.