

Owner:	Director of Student Services
Version number:	3
Date of approval:	2022
Approved by:	Student Experience Committee
Effective date:	May 2023
Updated:	May 2022

This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.

11J - Support to Study: Policy and Procedure

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy and the accompanying procedures are for BU staff and students.
- 1.2 This policy and the accompanying procedures are to be followed where 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 BU including in their student accommodation.
- 1.3 The aim of the support to study process is to assess whether students who have a pattern of ill-health or prolonged ill-health need additional support to continue with their studies, or whether they may need to take time out from their studies. Students who are affected by a sudden and serious life event, such as the death of a family member, or being the victim of crime, may also need to use a support for study process to take time away from their studies
- 1.4 , The process can also be followed where the students' behaviour is impacting on others but where the use of the Student Disciplinary Procedures would be inappropriate or counter-productive.
- 1.5 Support for study procedures are different to fitness to practise procedures, but concerns about whether a student is fit to continue with their studies in the short term may lead to concerns about their fitness to practise in the long term.
- 1.6 Student wishing to request time out from their studies for personal or health reasons should follow the 3U Interruption of Studies Procedures.

This policy and the accompanying procedures are designed to outline the action that BU will take in such instances to ensure that issues can be dealt with in a clear and transparent fashion.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The Director of Student Services is responsible for the overall management of this policy and the accompanying procedures. References in the Procedure to any University Officer include his or her properly appointed nominee. References to job titles include equivalences.
- 2.2 The Head of Student Support and Wellbeing is responsible for the implementation of this policy and accompanying procedures
- 2.3 Members of staff are responsible for acting within the framework of this policy and the accompanying procedures where a student's behaviour gives them cause for significant concern.

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

3.1 All student policies and procedures can be accessed [here](#). Of particular relevance may be:

- *3K Engagement Monitoring and Withdrawal Process*
- *3U Interruption of Studies: Procedure*
- *11H Fitness to Practise: Procedure*
- *11K Student Disciplinary Procedure*
- *11L - Third Party Involvement: Procedure*
- *Student Wellbeing Framework*
- *Unacceptable Behaviour Policy*

Policy

4. BU ETHOS AND SUPPORT

4.1 BU is committed to an ethos of equality and inclusivity and aims to facilitate and promote positive mental health and well-being through the recognition and understanding of all disabilities. BU encourages all students to contact the appropriate service at the earliest possible opportunity in order that they are provided with the support they need to realise their full potential and complete their course of study.

4.2 The Support to Study Procedure is an internal procedure and is not intended to be a legal process. BU does not normally use legal professionals in the handling of cases, and therefore it is not expected that students would be required to do so either. As such the engagement of legal professionals by students in relation to Support to Study is normally not permitted. Please refer to *11L - Third Party Involvement: Procedure* for further details¹.

5. DUTY OF CARE

5.1 At all times BU aims to support individual students and allow them to make their own decisions as to when to engage with their studies. However, BU owes a “Duty of Care” to **all** members of the BU community to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all its students, staff and visitors.

5.2 In exceptional cases, BU’s duty of care may require BU to remove a student from BU, on either a temporary or a permanent basis if that student presents a significant risk or disruption to themselves or to other members of the BU community.

6. DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1 BU is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation and will treat all personal information (including sensitive personal information relating to students’ mental and physical health) as confidential.

6.2 Personal information about a student obtained under these policy and procedures will only be shared within BU amongst those members of staff who need to know that information in order to offer the student with appropriate support or to enable the operation of these policy and procedures.

6.3 BU may ask a student for their agreement to share their personal information obtained under these policy and procedures with relevant professionals outside BU in order to offer the student appropriate support or to enable the operation of these policy and procedures. BU will not normally share any personal information about a student without their agreement, but may do so in exceptional cases where permitted by law.

6.4 BU does not routinely share information with parents or other third parties. However depending on the situation students may be asked if they consent to a next of kin or other third party being made aware of concerns in order that BU can work with them to offer support.

Procedure

7. INTRODUCTION

7.1 These procedures are to be followed:

- a) where a student's behaviour is giving cause for significant concern, and where it is believed either that there is an underlying disability or mental health condition, or that the use of the Student Disciplinary Procedure would be inappropriate or counter-productive. These procedures may be applied equally to those students who have a recognised mental health condition and those who do not.
- b) where a student has not engaged with study for a period of time without reason given. Absence may be a cause for concern, and staff should be aware of the wellbeing of students who are on programmes of study at the University as absence is often an indication that there is a possible need to be addressed.
- c) where there is concern about how well a student may manage their learning experience on a year abroad / placement / field trip. Students may have been receiving support and staff may be concerned as to how well a student may cope in an unusual environment even when support issues have been addressed.
- d) Where there is a concern that a student on a course with professional practise requirements may have issues that are more appropriately dealt with under this process initially
- e) where a student regularly submits extension requests and/or exceptional circumstances as a result of ongoing health concerns or disability support needs
- f) where a student's behaviour outside the learning environment (eg in an accommodation setting) is giving cause for concern or causing significant disruption to others.

7.2 BU reserves the right to follow the Student Disciplinary Procedures to deal with behaviour which is the result of physical or mental health issues, depending on the individual circumstances of the case. However, once this policy and the accompanying procedures have been used (at any of the following three stages) the behaviour will normally be considered under this policy and the accompanying procedures rather than under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

7.3 These procedures should in no way distract from any emergency situation where it is believed that a student's behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or others. In this situation, Emergency Services should be contacted on 01202 962222

8. STAGE 1 – EMERGING CONCERN

8.1 Where a student's behaviour first raises concern, this should be addressed informally as far as possible. Details of the concerns should be recorded by the member of staff identifying the concern and the student should be invited to meet with an appropriate member of staff within that student's Faculty (e.g. course leader, academic advisor), or a member of the BU Residential Services team (if the concerns relate to BU student accommodation), to discuss the concerns. The explicit causes/instances for concern should be explained, with clear examples provided.

8.2 If concerns are raised about a student's behaviour in the community (eg non BU accommodation) these can be raised with the Director of Student Services who will decide if any BU action is needed and if so whether this should be taken under the Student Disciplinary Procedures or the Support to Study Procedures. If the Support to Study Procedures are deemed appropriate the Director of Student Support will nominate a relevant member of staff to speak to the student as under 8.1

8.3 The student should be offered the opportunity to disclose any underlying physical or mental health condition and, if appropriate, the student should be provided with information about sources of professional support and advice available within BU.

8.4 The student should be informed that a continuation of concerns or any additional causes of concern may result in more formal action being taken under Stage 2 of these procedures. The student should be provided with notes of what was discussed. A copy of the notes should also be put on the student file.

9. STAGE 2 – CONTINUED CONCERN

9.1 If the concerns have not been resolved by the actions in Stage 1, or if the member of staff identifying a concern feels that the case is too serious to be dealt with under Stage 1, the case can be considered under Stage 2 and referred to the Faculty Education Services Manager, the Head of Residential Services (if the matter relates to BU student accommodation) or the Director of Student Services nominee.

9.2 The Faculty Education Services Manager, the Head of Residential Services or the Director of Student Services nominee should review the information provided to them in relation to the student and, if they believe that the student may need further support, they may invite the student and the member of staff raising the concerns to discuss the concerns further with them.

9.3 The Faculty Education Services Manager, the Head of Residential Services or the Director of Student services nominee may seek advice from the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing if required. Relevant professionals may also be involved at this Stage if appropriate

9.4 The student will normally be invited to attend the case conference and may be accompanied by a friend or representative (not acting in a legal capacity). Please refer to *11L – Third Party Involvement: Procedure* for further details².

9.5 The university will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the student is able to attend and may move the case conference to facilitate this on up to two occasions only.

9.6 Where, despite being given appropriate notice of the meeting, a student fails to attend, the case conference will proceed regardless. The meeting will base their decision on the information available to them at that time stage.

9.7 At this point the Faculty Education Services Manager, Head of Residential Services or Director of Student Services nominee should remind the student of BU's duty of care to every member of its community and inform the student that BU may take action in accordance with this policy and the accompanying procedures if it believes that the student may be putting themselves or others at risk.

9.8 The student will be asked to agree an action plan to bring about changes in the behaviour causing concern. This may include:

- a) requiring the student to attend weekly appointments with a nominated member of staff for regular monitoring; and
- b) requiring the student to seek help from support services within BU or from external professionals, such as the student's GP or the University Medical Practice.
- c) requiring the faculty or accommodation provider to make reasonable adjustments to ensure any identified additional learning or accessibility needs identified by ALS or a relevant healthcare professional are met

9.9 The Faculty Education Services Manager, Head of Residential Services or Director of Student services nominee will set a date for review of the student's progress against the action plan and will inform the student that failure to carry out the action plan may lead to action being taken under Stage 3 – Acute Concern.

10. STAGE 3 – ACUTE CONCERN

- 10.1 If concerns about a student have not been resolved by the actions in Stage 2 of these procedures, or a student's behaviour raises serious and immediate concern, the member of staff identifying the concerns should inform the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing as soon as possible.
- 10.2 The Head of Student Support and Wellbeing, in conjunction with other relevant staff, will carry out a risk assessment to identify formally the level of risk to the student and / or others and to consider whether continued study may put the student and / or others at unacceptable risk or exacerbate the student's difficulties. In addition to the student's course-related activities, their level of engagement with their studies and the quality of social interactions, consideration should also be given to the student's domestic situation. All available evidence should be included in the risk assessment.
- 10.3 The risk assessment will result in one of two possible outcomes:
- a) The level of risk to the student and / or others currently posed by the student is within acceptable levels. In this case, Stage 2 of these procedures should (continue to) be followed.
 - b) The level of risk to the student and / or others currently posed by the student is unacceptable. In this case, Stage 3 of these procedures will continue to be followed.
- 10.4 If the risk assessment highlights an unacceptable level of risk, the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing will call an urgent case conference. Attendees at the conference will include the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing and other staff as are necessary and appropriate to consider the case (e.g. the student's programme leader, appropriate healthcare professionals, accommodation or welfare staff). The student will normally be invited to attend the case conference and may be accompanied by a friend or representative (not acting in a legal capacity). Please refer to *11L – Third Party Involvement: Procedure* for further details².
- 10.5 The case conference may consider various options in relation to the student, including additional support strategies, interruption from study or a recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor that the student be withdrawn from the University.
- 10.6 The decision of the case conference will be communicated to the student in writing (normally within 5 working days of the conference).
- 10.7 If it is deemed appropriate that the student should be interrupted from studies then the student will also be informed in writing of the general procedure for return to study below and any arrangements specific to their case.

11. RETURN TO STUDY

- 11.1 Following any period of interruption from study from BU under these procedures, it may be appropriate for the student to return to resume their studies.
- 11.2 Each student's case depends on specific circumstances but in all cases, return to study will be conditional upon satisfactory medical evidence being provided. Medical evidence should be from a GP or relevant health professional who has enough knowledge of the student's circumstances to be able to make an informed statement about the student's health and wellbeing.
- 11.3 The decision to permit a student to return to study will be made by the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing in consultation with the faculty or Head of Residential Services, Conditions for return to study may be imposed as deemed appropriate to the relevant case (such as a return to study plan or a requirement for the student to attend regular review meetings).

12. APPEAL/COMPLAINT

12.1 Students have the right to appeal against any decision taken under Stage 3 of these procedures. Appeals will only be accepted if there is evidence of procedural irregularity, bias or failure to reach a reasonable decision, or if the student submits further material circumstances which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration at the Stage 3 case conference.

12.2 Appeals against interruption

12.2.1 Appeals against interruption must be made in writing to the Director of Student Services within 10 working days of notification of the interruption clearing outlining the grounds for request (see 12.1).

12.2.2 The Director of Student Services or nominated representative will review the appeal and after consulting with the student's Executive Dean and the Chief Executive Officer of the Students' Union, may overturn the decision to interrupt a student if they believe it appropriate. The Director of Student Services' decision will be final.

12.3 Appeals against Withdrawal

12.3.1 Appeals against withdrawal must be made in writing to the Vice Chancellor within 10 working days of notification of the suspension clearing outlining the grounds for request (see 12.1).

12.3.2 The Vice Chancellor or nominated representative will review the appeal and after consulting with the student's Executive Dean and the Chief Executive Officer of the Students' Union, may overturn the decision to withdraw a student if they believe it appropriate. The Vice Chancellor's decision will be final.

12.4 Complaints

12.4.1 If a student is not satisfied with any decision made by BU or a member of BU staff in accordance with any stage of these procedures, the student should follow *11F - Student Complaints: Policy and Procedure*.

12.5 OIA

12.5.1 If, after exhausting the Appeals Stage, the student feels there to have been an error of judgement, or that due process has not been followed, they may request a review from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Contact details for the Independent Adjudicator are³:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator
Second Floor
Abbey Wharf
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AB
Tel: 0118 959 9813
Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

General

13 REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

None.

14 APPENDICES

None.

³ Updated May 2015