

Support to Study Policy

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Middlesex University

Support to Study Policy and Procedure

Introduction

1. Middlesex University is committed to supporting students to achieve their potential, and to engage in safe and successful study and university life. To achieve this, the University works to ensure barriers to engaging in safe and successful study are removed where possible and that adequate support is in place for students who require it.
2. For some students, there will be times during their studies when their physical, mental or emotional health is significantly disrupting their own ability to engage in safe and successful study or wider university life, or may impact on the wider university community, including other students, or staff, or has the potential to do so.
3. This policy sets out how the University addresses the impact of significant health concerns in an assertive, supportive, timely and transparent way to ensure student health is prioritised whilst remaining in study through a robust support plan, or to ensure decisive action is taken to protect future study whilst a student needs time away from studies to recover or rehabilitate.

Scope

4. This policy applies to students studying in the UK, due to support structures, legal and legislative context, local arrangements apply in international campuses.
5. This policy applies to all enrolled students on a full or part-time programme and to students who have interrupted their studies.
6. Where concerns arise about an applicant's health or health related behaviour before they become a student, this policy may be applied alongside our admissions policy.
7. Concerns about behaviour impacting the safety of others or the effective running of the University that are not considered to be linked to health or wellbeing difficulties will be addressed under conduct and discipline policy.
8. For students on programmes where Fitness for Practice is a consideration, it may be more appropriate to address concerns through Fitness for Practice. This may be on grounds of health. The application of policy will be taken on a case by case basis, focused on what elements of a student's studies, placement or university life is impacted, or is likely to be impacted.
9. Partner organisations are expected to provide support to students in the spirit of this policy, recognising that organisational structures and referral routes may be different. Partners will have clear escalation and response routes for where there are concerns about students' ability to engage in safe and successful study and university life, in line with the principles below.

Guiding principles

10. The University is committed to making applicants and students aware of the support that is available to them via university support services and, where relevant external sources of support.

11. The University will have due regard to its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments, in the application of this policy.

12. This policy is intended to support students to remain in study wherever possible, if this is what the student wants, through identifying support that can mitigate identified concerns or risks.

13. Where a student's health or health related behaviour is not compatible with immediately remaining in study, the focus will be on protecting future opportunity to complete study and ensuring support is identified to facilitate a return to study in future.

14. The views, opinions and wishes of the student will always be central to decisions made when these are shared by the student and where possible will be a collaborative process to identify concerns and support.

15. Every effort will be made to enable student participation in discussions, case conferences and panels, including reasonable adjustments, alternative arrangements and rearranging to meet a student's availability.

16. In cases where a student is unable to engage with the University due to the acute or severe nature of their health condition (such as a student being detained under the Mental Health Act or hospitalised in critical or intensive care) the University commits to making timely decisions to protect future study in the student's best interest.

17. The University commits to making clear to students what the reasons for concerns are, including giving specific examples of behaviour(s) that have led to concerns being identified.

18. The University commits to keep accurate records of meetings that are held under this policy and sharing these with the student.

19. The University commits to organising meetings in a timely fashion and at a date and time that a student is reasonably able to attend.

20. The University commits to communicating a clear plan of action and next steps following a meeting under this policy

21. The University commits to a proportionate response to concerns raised under this policy and starting any proceedings at the lowest level of intervention given the nature of concerns raised

22. A student's privacy, dignity and confidentiality will be central to the operationalisation of this policy, with information about a student's ill health being shared only with colleagues that need to know and in line with the University's responsibilities under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Definitions

23. **Support to Study:** a supportive university process used to respond to significant health concerns that may affect a student's ability to engage in safe and successful study or university life. Support to Study is not a disciplinary process.

24. **Significant health concern:** a physical, mental or emotional health difficulty that substantially affects a student's ability to engage in independent, safe and successful study or may pose a risk to the student or others without appropriate support or intervention.

25. **Health-related behaviour:** behaviour that is reasonably believed to be linked to a student's physical, mental or emotional health and which may affect their engagement in study or university life, or the wellbeing of the wider university community.

26. **Safe and successful study:** engagement in academic study and university life, including placements, in a way that allows a student to participate effectively and without significant risk to their own wellbeing or the wellbeing of others.

27. **Recommend / Recommendation:** advice or guidance offered to a student to help address identified concerns and support continued engagement in study. Recommendations are not mandatory, but ongoing concerns may lead to further consideration under this policy.

28. **Require / Requirement:** a mandatory action or condition set by the University where more immediate or assertive intervention is necessary to protect wellbeing or support safe and successful study. Requirements will be proportionate to the concerns and clearly explained and may include conditions for remaining in or returning to study.

29. **Reasonable adjustments:** changes or adjustments made by the University to remove or reduce barriers to study for disabled students, in line with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

30. **Interruption of studies:** A temporary pause in a student's studies, either chosen by the student or required under this policy, to allow time for recovery or support, with the intention of enabling a future return to study.

31. **Care and Concern pathway:** The University's process for raising and coordinating responses to concerns about a student's wellbeing, safety or ability to engage in study.

32. **Support plan:** An agreed or required set of actions, support and review points intended to address identified concerns and support a student's engagement in safe and successful study.

33. **Proceeding in absence:** Continuing a meeting or panel where a student is unable or unwilling to attend, based on available information and in the best interests of the student and the wider university community. Where this happens, the student will be informed

of the outcome and given the opportunity to share relevant information.

When this policy applies

34. This policy will apply when a student's ability to engage in independent, safe and successful study and/or wider university life is brought in to question, including timetabled activity, placements, socialising, extracurricular activity, field trips, and living in university accommodation, as a result of a student's health, wellbeing or behaviour reasonably believed to be linked to health.

35. This policy is used where concerns cannot be effectively managed through routine academic or student support alone.

36. Circumstances include, but are not limited to when a student:

- a) is unable to manage their physical, mental or emotional health independently even with the introduction of reasonable adjustments and/or support.
- b) has health or health-related behaviour which significantly disrupts their studies or university life.
- c) has health or health-related behaviour which significantly disrupts the studies or university life of other students.
- d) has health-related behaviour which is considered a risk to themselves, other students, staff or the wider university community or has the potential to do so without assertive intervention.
- e) hospitalised or so unwell that they are unable to attend and engage in study for a prolonged period, in line with our Attendance and Engagement policy.
- f) behaves in a way that suggests they may have lost some contact with reality, such as seeing or hearing things that other people cannot see or hear.

Identifying significant health concerns

37. Any member of the university community, including a student themselves can raise a concern about a student's health impacting on their ability to engage in independent, safe and successful study and/or wider university life.

38. Concerns should be raised through the University's Care and Concern pathway.

39. The decision to take forward a case under Support to Study, and at what level, sits with the Care and Concern team in collaboration with other members of the university community, including the student themselves, and where relevant the programme team, accommodation team, or other relevant university staff

40. Students will be given an explanation in writing as to why their case is being addressed through Support to Study and a rationale for why the level has been decided upon

Immediate action required to ensure community safety

41. Under Support to Study, the Director of Student Life or their nominee may suspend a student from the university or take other appropriate precautionary action to limit their access to campus or facilities with immediate effect where they have a reasonable belief that the

student is in immediate danger or that they present an immediate safety concern to others as a result of their health or health-related behaviours.

42. Suspension under this policy is a temporary and precautionary measure and is not a disciplinary sanction.

43. If a student is suspended under Support to Study the concerns will be addressed at a Level 3 panel as soon as is reasonably practicable, usually within 10 working days.

Support for students

44. Engaging with university support teams may negate the need for concerns to be addressed under Support to Study. Support remains available to any enrolled student regardless of whether they engage with Support to Study.

45. A student who is invited to attend a support to study meeting at any level can be accompanied by a friend, family member, or someone external to the University with a support role such as a care coordinator or personal adviser.

46. A student who is invited to attend a support to study meeting at any level is encouraged to seek support from the Students Union Advice Team

Levels of concern and escalation routes

47. The policy identifies 4 levels of intervention where Support to Study can be applied.

48. Concerns can begin to be addressed at any level, depending on the nature and severity of the concern and can be escalated up through levels where support does not appear to be addressing concerns, or be deescalated where some concerns remain but appear to be improving.

49. At all levels, a student's views and wishes are sought and held centrally to any decision making

Level 1 – Discuss

50. At level 1, a student will be invited to meet with relevant staff from the University to talk through concerns and identify supportive next steps. This will always include a staff member from Student Success and Support, a member of the programme team such the programme leader, or if the concerns arise from accommodation, a member of the accommodation team.

51. The purpose of the meeting is to have an open and transparent discussion about concerns regarding a student's ability to engage in independent, safe and successful study and to consider what support, not already in place, could mitigate these concerns.

52. If a student is invited to attend a Level 1 support to study meeting and chooses not to engage, the case may be escalated to the next level.

53. If a student is unable to engage, due to ill health, the case may be escalated to the next level.

54. Outcomes can include:

- a) a support plan including identifying appropriate university support, externally funded support such as Disabled Students Allowance, and/or external support such as NHS signposting or referrals or specialist third sector support.
- b) consideration of whether, application of extenuating circumstances, deferral or interruption of studies could be helpful in supporting the student.

55. The student, staff attendees and any staff identified as providing support under the policy will receive a written summary of any agreed next steps and review period, in a timely manner – usually within 5 working days. A student can request the summary is shared more widely to facilitate support being implemented

Level 2 – Recommend

56. At level 2, a student will be invited to a case conference to meet with relevant staff from the University to talk through concerns and identify supportive next steps.

57. A student may be invited directly to a level 2 meeting or a case may be escalated from level 1, if the initial next steps have not mitigated the concerns, or a case may be deescalated from level 3 where concerns are partially addressed but the situation continues to need assertive addressing under support to study.

58. This meeting will be chaired by The Head of Student Success and Support or their nominee, and a member of the faculty such as the Head of Department, or if the concerns arise from accommodation, a member of the accommodation team.

59. The student will receive a written invitation to attend the meeting, which will summarise the concerns and reason the student is being asked to attend the case conference.

60. The purpose of the meeting is to seek the views of the student on the concerns raised, to consider the implications of the concerns raised on the student's ability to engage in independent, safe and successful study and to consider what, if any, support could mitigate these concerns.

61. Following an open and transparent discussion with the student, the case conference will make a list of recommendations to the student to support them remaining in study, or, where the case conference does not consider that the student will be successful in study currently a recommendation to interrupt their studies with a clear rationale from the recommendation.

62. A recommendation is advice or guidance given to a student following consideration of concerns under this policy.

63. Students are not required to follow recommendations. However, if recommendations are not followed and concerns remain or escalate, the University may need to consider further action under this policy, including escalation to a higher level of Support to Study.

64. Outcomes can include:

- a) no formal action is recommended
- b) action under another university policy or procedure is recommended
- c) a recommended course of action to mitigate concerns raised such as a recommended support plan, identifying specific university support, external support such as Disabled Students Allowance, and/or external support such as NHS referrals or specialist third sector support
- d) recommendation to apply for extenuating circumstances or deferral
- e) recommendation to interrupt studies, move out of accommodation or change mode of study if the option is available

65. A note taker will be present at a level 2 case conference and will provide the student and staff attendees with a summary of the meeting discussions (not verbatim notes) the student will have the opportunity to confirm that the summary is an accurate reflection of this discussion held and/or make any corrections or amendments. These will usually be issued to a student within 10 working days of the meeting being held.

66. The student, staff attendees and any staff identified as providing support under the policy will receive a written summary of any agreed next steps and review period, in a timely manner – usually within 10 working days. A student can request the summary is shared more widely to facilitate support being implemented.

67. If a student is invited to attend a Level 2 case conference and is unable or unwilling to attend, the meeting may proceed in their absence with the concerns being discussed and recommendations agreed. A note taker will still capture discussion summary and this will be shared with the student.

Level 3 – Require

68. At level 3, a student will be invited to a Support to Study Panel to meet with relevant staff from the University to talk through concerns and identify supportive next steps to allow for current study to continue, or to protect study in the future.

69. A student may be invited directly to a level 3 meeting if there are new immediate and significant concerns that are impacting or have the potential to impact on the student's or the wider community's safety or a case may be escalated from level 1 or level 2, if the previously identified support plan(s) have not mitigated the concerns.

70. This meeting will be chaired by The Director of Student Life or their nominee, and a member of the faculty such as the Deputy Dean, and if the concerns arise from accommodation, a member of the accommodation team.

71. The student will receive a written invitation to attend the meeting, which will summarise the concerns and reason the student is being asked to attend the panel.

72. A panel will be held in two parts, with the student being invited to the first part of the panel.

73. The purpose of part 1 panel is to seek the views of the student on the concerns raised,

to consider the implications of the concerns raised on the student's ability to engage in independent, safe and successful study and to consider what, if any, support could mitigate these concerns.

74. Following an open and transparent discussion with the student, part 2 panel will take place without the student.

75. The panel will discuss the student's case and agree a set of required actions to support the student remaining in study, or, where the panel does not consider that the student can remain in study currently a requirement to interrupt their studies with a clear rationale for the decision.

76. A requirement is a mandatory action or condition set by the University following a Support to Study Panel, where it has been determined that immediate and assertive intervention is necessary to protect the student's wellbeing, the wellbeing of others, or the integrity of safe and successful study.

77. Requirements will be proportionate, time-limited where possible, and clearly linked to the concerns identified.

78. If a student is required to interrupt their studies, the panel will make clear what conditions need to be met before a return to study can be considered.

79. Outcomes can include:

- a) Require a student to engage with specific support plan to remain in study
- b) Require a student to leave university accommodation within a specific timeframe
- c) Require a student to interrupt their studies until they are well enough to return to safe and successful study, usually no longer than 12 months
- d) Require a student to change mode of study if the option is available
- e) Any other action considered supportive, appropriate and proportionate

80. Wherever possible the outcome of the panel will be shared with the student in a follow up meeting, usually within 3 working days of the panel date.

81. A note taker will be present at a level 3 panel and will provide the student and staff attendees with a summary of the part 1 and part 2 panel discussions (not verbatim notes). The student will have the opportunity to confirm that the summary is an accurate reflection of the discussion held and/or make any corrections or amendments. These will usually be issued to a student within 10 working days of the meeting being held.

82. The student, staff attendees and any staff identified as providing support under the policy will receive a written summary of any agreed next steps and review period, in a timely manner – usually within 10 working days. A student can request the summary is shared more widely to facilitate support being implemented.

83. If a student is invited to attend a Level 3 panel and is unable to attend due to ill health, or is unwilling to attend, the meeting will usually proceed in their absence with the concerns being discussed and requirements agreed.

84. If the meeting proceeds in a student's absence, the panel will decide a course of action based on the information available to them, and in the student's and university community's best interest.

85. A note taker will still capture discussion summary, and this will be shared with the student.

Level 4 – Return to Study

86. Any student who interrupts on health grounds or is interrupted under Support to Study will be encouraged to stay in contact with the University during their interruption and will be assigned a named adviser from Student Success and Support.

87. A return to study meeting can be held with any student who has chosen to interrupt on health grounds, including those who have followed a recommendation to interrupt at level 2, and would benefit from a meeting prior to their return to consider what support would be helpful to enable a safe and successful return to study.

88. A return to study meeting will include the student, and relevant university staff, usually a member of support staff and a member of the programme team.

89. Where possible this will be staff who have prior knowledge of the difficulties the student was experiencing that led to an interruption.

90. A return to study meeting should be held before the student re-enrols, up to 3 months prior to planned return and usually no later than 2 weeks before the start of the new term.

91. A return to study panel will be required for all students who have been required to interrupt their studies under Level 3.

92. A student will be invited to a return to study panel usually around 3 months before anticipated return date.

93. The membership of a return to study panel will be similar to a level 3 panel

94. The focus of the return to study panel will be focusing on progress or change student has made during their interruption and what support, if any, can be identified to support a return to study. A review of the conditions set for return to study at point of interruption will also take place.

95. A student may be asked to provide medical evidence from their general practitioner, or other health or social care professional that demonstrates a level of recovery compatible with a return to study

96. At this stage outcomes can include:

- a) Return to study with recommended support
- b) Return to study with required support
- c) Not able to return to study, interruption continues
- d) Return to a different mode of study if the option is available
- e) Any other action considered supportive, appropriate and proportionate

97. If a period of interruption has been longer than 12 months, a student may not be able to return to the same or similar programme, as the passing of time may have resulted in significant modification or change to the programme, particularly programmes with PSRB requirements. The University will take reasonable steps to keep impacted students informed of any changes during their absence.

Review

98. A student can request a review of a panel decision made at level 3 or level 4 support to study.

99. A request for review should be submitted in writing to the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Education and Student Experience via CareAndConcern@mdx.ac.uk within 10 working days of the letter advising student of the panel decision.

100. The request for review should set out clearly the basis on which the request is being made, along with any relevant evidence.

101. Grounds for review are:

- a) New or undisclosed evidence or information that was not made available to the panel at the time of original decision making
- b) The decision made by the panel was disproportionate in response to the concerns identified
- c) There was a procedural error that had an adverse impact on the outcome of the panel

102. The Pro-Vice Chancellor or their nominee will decide whether the request for review is on the grounds permitted.

103. If it is they conduct a review of the decision, or nominate a suitable colleague, who has not previously been involved in the case to conduct a review.

104. Possible outcomes of a review are:

- a) Level 3 Panel to be reconvened, with membership recommendations, which may include a new panel, not previously involved in decision making
- b) To substitute the panel's decision with their own
- c) Panel's original decision stands

105. A student will be informed of the outcome of the review in writing, as soon as possible

and usually within 20 working days of the request.

106. The review is the final point of internal decision making and a student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter within 30 days of the outcome letter.

107. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the review, they can make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education within 12 months.

Appendix: Support to Study

A guide for students at Middlesex University What is Support to Study?

Support to Study is a supportive university process used when there are concerns about how your health or wellbeing may be affecting your ability to study safely and successfully, or take part in wider university life.

It is:

- Designed to support you to remain in study wherever possible
- Used when concerns cannot be managed through routine academic or student support alone
- Not a disciplinary process

The focus is always on your wellbeing, your safety, and protecting your future study.

When might Support to Study be used?

Support to Study may be used if your physical, mental or emotional health, or behaviour linked to your health, is affecting:

- Your ability to engage in your studies
- Your participation in university life (including placements, accommodation, or activities)
- Your wellbeing, or the wellbeing or safety of others
- This might include situations where:
- You are finding it difficult to manage your health, even with support
- Your health is significantly disrupting your studies
- You have been unwell or hospitalised for a prolonged period
- There are concerns about risk to you or others

How are concerns raised?

Anyone in the university community — including you — can raise a concern through the Care and Concern process. A specialist team will look at the information and decide:

- Whether Support to Study is appropriate
- What level of support is needed
- Who should be involved

Where possible, this will be done with you, not about you.

The Support to Study levels – explained

Level 1 – Discuss

This is usually the first step. You will be invited to meet with staff to:

- Talk openly about what's going on
- Understand any concerns
- Identify support that could help

What might happen:

- A support plan is agreed
- You are signposted to university or external support
- Options like extenuating circumstances, deferral or interruption are discussed

You'll receive a written summary of what was agreed.

Level 2 – Recommend

This is used if concerns continue or need a more structured conversation. You will be invited to a case conference where staff will:

- Listen to your views
- Consider how your health is affecting your studies
- Make recommendations to support you

Important to know:

- Recommendations are not mandatory
- You can choose whether to follow them
- If recommendations aren't followed and/or concerns continue, the case may move to Level 3

You'll receive a written summary and can ask for corrections.

Level 3 – Require

This level is used where there are serious or immediate concerns about wellbeing or safety. You will be invited to a Support to Study Panel, which:

- Includes senior staff
- Has two parts (you attend the first part)
- Focuses on what is needed now to support you or protect your future study

At this level, the University may set requirements, which are mandatory. Requirements might include:

- Engaging with specific support
- Changing study arrangements
- Temporarily interrupting your studies
- Leaving university accommodation

Any requirements will be:

- Clearly explained
- Proportionate
- Time-limited where possible

If interruption is required, you'll be told what needs to be in place for a return to study.

Level 4 – Return to Study

If you interrupt your studies for health reasons, Support to Study continues to support you. Before you return:

- You may have a return to study meeting or panel
- The focus will be on what's changed and what support will help
- You may be asked to provide medical evidence

Possible outcomes includes

- Returning with recommended or required support
- Continuing interruption if more time is needed
- Returning in a different mode of study (where available)

Your involvement and support

You can:

- Bring a friend, family member, or support professional to any meeting
- Seek advice from the Students' Union Advice Team
- Ask for reasonable adjustments to help you take part in meetings
- Ask for written summaries to be shared more widely to support you

If you're unable to attend a meeting due to ill health, the University will make every effort to enable your participation. In some cases, meetings may go ahead in your absence to protect your best interests — you will always be informed of the outcome.

Immediate safety concerns

In rare situations, the University may need to take immediate precautionary action, such as temporarily suspending your access to campus. This:

- Is not disciplinary
- Is a short-term measure
- Will be followed by a Level 3 panel as soon as possible

Can you ask for a review?

Yes. You can request a review of a Level 3 or Level 4 decision if:

- There is new evidence
- The decision was disproportionate
- There was a procedural error

You'll be told how to do this and the timescales involved.

If you're still unhappy after the review, you can take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

Remember

Support to Study exists to:

- Help you succeed
- Keep you safe

- Protect your future study

If you're unsure why Support to Study is being used, or what it means for you, ask — staff will explain and support you through the process