



Nottingham Trent
University

Student Support Services

Support to study policy

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Introduction

Nottingham Trent University (NTU) is committed to providing a supportive environment for all students. The Support to Study Policy (the “Policy”) is for use where health, wellbeing and associated behaviour are presenting a barrier to effective learning, progression, and achievement. The Policy has been designed to facilitate a structured, personalised, and collaborative framework for staff and students to explore and resolve issues and thereby enable effective re-engagement with academic study wherever possible.

1. Scope

- 1.1 This Policy applies to all enrolled students at the University, across all modes of study, including; undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, professional students, apprenticeship students, students in Further Education, full-time, part-time and distance learning and applies to situations arising in the following settings:
 - University campuses; and
 - University related educational activities away from the University (such as field trips, placements, and study abroad/exchange).
- 1.2 This Policy is applicable to all students throughout their period of enrolment with the University, including those who are seeking a return to study and whose enrolment has previously been interrupted or suspended under this, or previous iterations of this Policy.
- 1.3 Alternative procedures will be implemented where appropriate (for example those within the Student Code of Behaviour, Protocol for Students Causing Serious Concern/Crisis Intervention, or a course-specific fitness to practise procedure) instead of, or in addition to, taking action under this Policy.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This Policy is intended as a supportive tool to address concerns about a student’s ability to engage with, and progress in their academic studies.
- 2.2 This Policy is designed to identify and implement actions through structured meetings and the creation of a supportive plan agreed with the student.
- 2.3 This Policy is intended to address concerns related to a student’s health, wellbeing, and associated behaviour where this is resulting in a detrimental impact on the student or on the wider University community. It supports a coordinated response when:
 - There are concerns around a student’s ability to engage in study and where local support has been unsuccessful;
 - Supportive interventions are deemed necessary by the relevant Academic School, and this is supported by the student’s appointed Case Officer;
 - It is a reasonable expectation that a mutually agreed action plan would support improvement; and

- Where other internal procedures are less appropriate or have been exhausted.

3. General Principles

- 3.1 Students are encouraged to seek and engage with practical and specialist support to mitigate any issues presenting a barrier to their learning, progression and achievement.
- 3.2 The Executive Dean (or their nominee) of the relevant Academic School is responsible for the initiation and implementation of this Policy. Concerns raised through this Policy will be dealt with according to the individual circumstances of the student, whilst seeking to ensure consistency of approach wherever possible.
- 3.3 In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to vary the procedures set out in this Policy where, in the reasonable opinion of the Executive Dean (or their nominee) of the relevant Academic School, it is deemed to be in the best interests of the student to do so.
- 3.4 When a student is asked to attend a Support to Study meeting or Support to Study Panel convened in accordance with this Policy, they are entitled to be accompanied by another person (for example, a friend, relative, Nottingham Trent Students' Union Information & Advice Service (IAS), a health professional or personal disability assistant). Legal representation is not permitted at these meetings.
- 3.5 If a student is unwilling or unable to attend a Support to Study meeting or Support to Study Panel the procedures in this Policy may still be followed in their absence where in the opinion of the Executive Dean or their nominee it is reasonable to do so. Written reports and/or statements in the absence of the student and/or their representative can be considered.
- 3.6 References in this Policy to specific University postholders shall be read as including reference to their nominees. In addition, to avoid potential conflicts of responsibilities, other staff members of the same or higher seniority may undertake tasks allocated to specific postholders.

4. Key Responsibilities

4.1 Academic School

The Executive Dean or their nominee, will appoint a Case Officer who is responsible for leading and implementing this Policy working in partnership with Student Support Services or other relevant departments within the University (e.g. Accommodation Services).

The Case Officer is responsible for nominating a school administrator who will:

- Provide administrative support throughout the case, e.g. record meetings and agreed actions and communicate these to the student concerned; and
- Complete tracking requirements to enable the University to develop good practice in supporting students through this Policy.

The Case Officer is responsible for signposting the student to Student Support Services for advice and guidance and to the provisions of this Policy.

4.2 **Student Support Services**

Student Support Services can provide advice and guidance to academic staff regarding initiating and implementing this Policy.

Student Support Services can provide students with general advice and guidance on the Policy and can support a student where requested.

4.3 **Students**

Students are responsible for providing appropriate information as requested by the Case Officer and/or Appeal Officer (where relevant).

Students are required to participate actively in agreed action planning as part of the Support to Study process.

5. Policy Overview of Process

5.1 The Policy is initiated normally by colleagues within the relevant Academic school who recognise that a student is unable to engage effectively in their academic studies despite any local initiatives to support engagement, progression, or achievement.

5.2 This Policy has two stages which reflect the degree of concern and the impact of the behaviour. In most cases, Stage 2 will be preceded by Stage 1, however, Stage 2 can be initiated directly by the relevant Academic School where there is a serious/acute concern. Stage 1 is led by a Case Officer who may invite any other relevant staff or professional support as required. Stage 2 is led by a Chair of the Support to Study Panel (see 6.15 for membership).

5.3 Where the circumstances of the situation might warrant immediate proactive management of a situation to ensure the wellbeing of the student, the Executive Dean or their nominee may invoke a protective suspension under the Protocol for Students Causing Serious Concern. A Protective Suspension is a neutral act and the provisions of this Policy may resume when the student is able to return to their academic study.

5.4 Students can appeal against decisions at each stage of the process (see Section 8 'Right of Appeal').).

5.5 **Stage 1 – Initial/Continuing Concern**

Stage 1 is designed to formally recognise and resolve initial or continuing concerns, where the student's health and wellbeing and associated behaviours are impacting negatively on the student or the wider student community. This could include the following non exhaustive examples:

- Non-engagement by the student with their studies, which has not been resolved through local interventions and processes.

- Conduct that is impacting the activities of the University or a placement provider or impacting the teaching, learning and/or experience of other students and where it is recognised that there could be an underlying physical or mental health reason for this behaviour that could be supported and resolved via this Policy and where the conduct is at a stage where it does not fall under the provisions of the Student Code of Behaviour.

5.6 Stage 2 – Serious/Acute Concern

Stage 2 is designed to recognise and resolve serious and acute concerns, where the student's health and wellbeing and associated behaviours are detrimentally impacting the student or the wider student community. This could include the following non exhaustive examples:

- Student support needs that are beyond the type or level of support which the University can reasonably be expected to provide (including, but not limited to, the student's health, wellbeing, and financial needs).
- Conduct that is impacting significantly the activities of the University or a placement provider or the teaching, learning and/or experience of other students and requires an immediate intervention and where it is recognised that there could be an underlying physical or mental health reason for this behaviour that could be supported and resolved via this Policy. The conduct is at a stage where it does not fall under the provisions of the Student Code of Behaviour.

5.7 This Policy is designed to be open and transparent, and the appointed Case Officer will advise the student of the progress of the case and direct the student to the provisions of this Policy.

5.8 Student Support Services will support the student and colleagues within the relevant Academic School during this procedure, where requested.

6. Stage 1 and 2 – Detail of Process and Possible Outcomes

Stage 1 Process

- 6.1 Stage 1 is initiated within the relevant Academic School where there is an initial or continuing concern.
- 6.2 The Executive Dean or their nominee, will appoint a Case Officer (for example. Personal Tutor, Year Tutor, Course Leader) who in turn can also be supported by Student Support Services.
- 6.3 The Case Officer may be required to work with other University staff, external professionals, and other persons as appropriate, to gather relevant information about the matter.
- 6.4 The Case Officer should contact the student via their NTU and personal email address (where available), to outline the concern and to invite them to a Stage 1 Support to Study meeting, normally with three working days' notice provided and advise the

student of the availability of independent advice from the IAS together with their right to be accompanied in accordance with paragraph 3.4.

- 6.5 The purpose of the meeting is to:
- Explain the concern(s) of the Case Officer;
 - Discuss the perceived impact/implications and the student's perception of the matter;
 - Allow the student opportunity to respond to the concern;
 - Identify any related support needs the student may have and agree an action plan; and
 - Allow the Case Officer to reach an informed decision on the matter.
- 6.6 The Case Officer may, in their discretion, continue with the Stage 1 meeting if the student is unable or unwilling to participate. The meeting can continue using written reports and/or statements in the absence of the student and/or their representative.
- 6.7 The student is entitled to be accompanied at the meeting and must confirm in advance, the role and identify of the person who will be attending with them.
- 6.8 If the Case Officer has invited a member of Student Support Services or other relevant parties to attend the meeting, they must inform the student in advance of the meeting.
- 6.9 Following the meeting, the Case Officer will determine what actions need to be taken and can advise the student of any implications on academic study/progress.
- 6.10 The student will be informed of the meeting outcome in writing within three working days of the Case Officer's decision, with reasons, and any actions to be taken. In the communication, the student will be advised of any academic implications to the decision taken and the availability of advice from the relevant University services on any potential implications on statutory financial support, scholarships, bursaries, external sponsorship, housing, and immigration status. A copy of the notes will be held on the student's file.
- 6.11 The student has the right to appeal against the Stage 1 decision (see Section 8 'Right of Appeal').

Stage 2 Process

- 6.12 Stage 2 can be initiated directly where there is a serious/acute concern or as a progression from Stage 1.
- 6.13 The Executive Dean or their nominee will appoint a Case Officer (e.g. Course Leader, Head of Department, Associate Dean).
- 6.14 The Case Officer will convene a Support to Study Panel (SSP), to consider the evidence and make decisions about the case. The Panel will:
- Listen to the concerns from relevant parties;
 - Identify support needs for the student; and

- Allow the Chair of the SSP to reach an informed decision.
- 6.15 The Support to Study Panel shall consist of:
- Executive Dean or their nominee (Chair);
 - Director of Student Support Services or their nominee;
 - Appointed Case Officer (or Academic School nominee);
- 6.16 The Case Officer may consult with other University staff or externally as appropriate, to gather relevant information about the case for the Support to Study Panel.
- 6.17 The student, who may be accompanied in accordance with paragraph 3.4 of this Policy, will be invited to the Support to Study Panel meeting. Also present will be the administrative staff appointed from within the relevant Academic School to take a formal record of the meeting.
- 6.18 The Case Officer will notify the student via their NTU and personal email address (where available) of the date of the Stage 2 Panel meeting, normally with three working days' notice. The email will include an outline of the concern(s) and advise the student of the availability of independent advice from the IAS.
- 6.19 The SSP, may in their discretion, continue with the Stage 2 Panel meeting if the student is unable or unwilling to participate. The meeting can continue using written reports and/or statements in the absence of the student and/or their representative.
- 6.20 The student is entitled to be accompanied at the meeting and must confirm in advance, the role and identify of the person who will be attending with them.
- 6.21 If the Case Officer has invited other University staff or external professionals to attend the meeting, they must inform the student in advance of the meeting.
- 6.22 Following the meeting, the Chair of the SSP will determine what actions need to be taken and can advise the student of any implications on academic study/progress.
- 6.23 The student will be informed in writing of the meeting outcome within three working days of the Chair's decision, with reasons, and any actions to be taken. In the communication, the student will be advised of any academic implications to the decision taken and the availability of advice from the relevant University services on any potential implications on statutory financial support, scholarships, bursaries, external sponsorship, housing, and immigration status. A copy of the notes will be held on the student's file.
- 6.24 The student has the right to appeal against the Stage 2 decision (see Section 8 'Right of Appeal').

Stage 1 and 2 Outcomes

Actions/Outcomes of the Stage 1 and 2 meetings may include one or more of the following:

- a) Implementation of appropriate support arrangements for the student, for example Statement of Access or a Notification of Extenuating Circumstances (NEC).
- b) A time-bound plan will be drawn up and agreed with the student. This will include supportive arrangements and any obligations on the part of the student (e.g., in respect of their conduct, engagement with studies, or support). The plan may also include next steps if the actions are not met (where relevant).
- c) A recommendation for the student to pause, vary their rate of study or withdraw from their course, subject to requirements under the University Regulations.
- d) A recommendation for the student to transfer to an alternative course, subject to the University's Admissions Policy and University Regulations and with the permission of the Academic School.
- e) A 'Formal Suspension of study' on the student for a stated period of time and/or exclusion from specified University facilities/activities, with or without conditions for any subsequent return to study or readmission to those facilities/activities (see Section 7 'Return to Study').
- f) Any other resolution deemed appropriate at Stage 1 or 2.
- g) Termination of the student's studies at the University (Stage 2).

7. Return to Study

- 7.1 Return to Study is used where a student has taken a significant time away from their course as part of the Support to Study policy.
- 7.2 A student returning to study should notify the Executive Dean of the relevant Academic School in which their course is held, in writing, **one month prior to a planned or intended date of return**, demonstrating they can meet the conditions detailed in the outcome letter.
- 7.3 The Executive Dean, or their nominee, will nominate a Case Officer to lead the return to study process (e.g. Course Leader).
- 7.4 The Case Officer will contact the student in advance of their return to:
 - Confirm the student's engagement with this process;
 - Arrange relevant meetings;
 - Review any evidence;
 - Agree or confirm a proposed date for Return to Study in consultation with the Executive Dean; and

- Invite the student to attend a Return to Study meeting with appropriate members of academic and support staff (including a School administrator to take a record of the meeting).
- 7.5 During the Return to Study meeting, an action plan will be agreed to support the student's successful transition back to study. The action plan will detail any conditions imposed and any support identified in respect of the student's return. The student will be provided with a copy of the action plan confirming their date of return to study.
- 7.6 If the student's request to return to study is delayed or declined, the Case Officer should contact the student via their NTU and personal email address (where available), the student, including the reasons, along with information on the process of re-application or appeal.

8. Right of Appeal

- 8.1 The Case Officer shall advise the student of their right to appeal in the Support to Study outcome notification, giving the contact details of the Appeal Officer.
- 8.2 The identity and seniority of the Appeal Officer will be influenced by the stage at which the outcome decision was made and the nature of the decision (see Table I – Appeal Officers).

Table I – Appeal Officers

Stage	Example of Appeal Officer	Appeal Decision considered by
Stage 1 Initial/Continuing Concern	Head of Department or nominee, independent of the Support to Study case.	Executive Dean/ Deputy Dean/ or Associate Dean (or nominee), independent of the Support to Study case.
Stage 2 Serious/Acute Concern	Deputy Dean or Associate Dean (or nominee), independent of the Support to Study case.	Support to Study Appeal Panel chaired by an Executive Dean or member of the University Leadership Team, independent of the Support to Study case.

- 8.3 An appeal must be made in writing and should be received by the Appeal Officer within the following timescales:

Table II: Appeal Timescales

Stage	Student	Appeal Officer	Acknowledgement to Student	Appeal Investigation
Stage 1 Initial/ Continuing Concern	Submit your appeal within ten working days of the date of the communication notifying you of the meeting outcome decision.	Head of Department or nominee, independent of the Stage 1 case.	Within five working days of the receipt of the appeal.	Appeal investigation held within 20 working days of receipt and decision communicated within three working days of investigation outcome.
Stage 2 Serious/ Acute Concern	Submit your appeal within ten working days of the date of the communication notifying you of the meeting outcome decision.	Deputy Dean/ Associate Dean (or nominee) independent of the Stage 2 case.	Within five working days of the receipt of the appeal.	Investigation Appeal Panel held within 20 working days of receipt and decision communicated within three working days of investigation outcome.
Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)	Request a review within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.	The University has no direct involvement with the student submitting the appeal.	Variable – OIA timescales.	Variable – OIA timescales.

- 8.4 A student is entitled to submit an appeal on one or more of the following grounds:
- The University failed to follow correctly its own procedure;
 - The student has significant new information or evidence which was not reasonably available at an earlier time; and/or
 - The outcome is considered to be wholly unreasonable and disproportionate to the conduct (mere disagreement with the decision is not grounds to consider it unreasonable).

When submitting an appeal, the student must provide associated evidence/information in support of the ground(s) on which the appeal is being made.

- 8.5 If the Appeal Officer is satisfied that there are valid grounds for appeal in accordance with paragraph 8.4, they (or the Appeal Panel in the case of a Stage 2 appeal) should consider the appeal. The Appeal Officer may decline the request for an appeal if in their reasonable opinion, it appears that the grounds for appeal are not fulfilled or are lacking in substance that further consideration would not be justified.
- 8.6 The appeal investigation should normally be considered within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal (excluding Bank Holidays and University closure days).
- 8.7 Where a Stage 2 appeal is received, the Appeal Officer will convene a Support to Study Appeal Panel which shall consist of:
- A member of the University Leadership Team not already involved in the Support to Study Case (Chair);
 - Executive Dean (or nominee);
 - Director of Student Support Services or their nominee;
 - School Lead (from Associate Dean, Head of Department, Programme/Course Leader, or nominee);
- 8.8 The student, who may be accompanied in accordance with paragraph 3.4 of this Policy will be invited to the Support to Study Appeal Panel meeting. Also present will be the administrative staff appointed from within the relevant Academic School to take a formal record of the meeting;
- 8.9 The Appeal Officer/Panel has the power to decide whether the original outcome decision should stand, be revoked, or be amended.
- 8.9 The Appeal Officer will arrange an appeal meeting/panel and should contact the student via their NTU and personal email address (where available), normally with three working days' notice.
- 8.10 The student will be informed of the meeting outcome within three working days of the Appeal Officer/Panel decision. In the case of a Stage 2 appeal, the written notification of the appeal outcome will also represent a formal '**Completion of Procedures**'.

9 Office of the Independent Adjudicator

- 9.1 In the event that the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Support to Study appeal process they may make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided they have been issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter (COP) referred to in paragraph 8.10. The COP will explain how they can submit a complaint to the OIA. The deadline to submit a complaint to the OIA is 12 months of the date of the COP.
- 9.2 In order to submit a complaint to the OIA, the student must first have exhausted the University's internal procedure and have received a COP from the University.

10. Record Keeping and Data

- 10.1 The University is governed by the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 and will treat all personal information (including sensitive personal information relating to students' mental and physical health) as confidential.
- 10.2 Personal information about a student obtained under this Policy will only be shared with members of staff who need to know that information and where it is necessary for any assessment of a student's needs and support required under this Policy.
- 10.3 The University will ensure that the student understands how their personal and sensitive personal information may be shared either internally within the University or externally with relevant third parties. Where it is possible to do so, information will be disclosed in accordance with terms agreed with the student.
- 10.4 Where a student has requested that their personal information is not disclosed, either within the University or externally with relevant third parties, the University will ensure the student is made aware of the implications of non-disclosure in relation to their case and their support. Where a student refuses to provide explicit consent for their sensitive personal information to be shared, but the University has determined that it has a duty to the student to provide them with adequate support, the University may decide to disclose such sensitive personal information internally or to other third-party professionals who may be best placed to provide the support required.
- 10.5 The University's duty of confidentiality will not apply in the following circumstances:
- Where it has an obligation to provide certain personal information under its Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements (such as healthcare, education, nursing etc.);
 - Where there may be an impact on the student's potential ability to practise with regard to PSRB;
 - Where disclosure is required or permitted by law; and/or
 - Where it is required to give instruction to its professional advisers who have a duty of confidentiality.