

Fitness to Study Policy

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Policy/Procedure Title and Number | Fitness to Study policy |
| Issue Date | March 2020 |
| Author | Nikkie Almond– Head of Student Engagement |
| Approved by | Corporation Board |
| Approved date | March 2020 |
| Review date | March 2023 |
| Issue Number | 1 |
| Impact Assessed | yes |

1. Introduction

Abingdon and Witney College is committed to being an inclusive learning environment where all students can achieve their full potential. We will engage our best endeavours to meet the needs of students with learning needs, medical conditions, disabilities and mental health needs. We will make all reasonable adjustments so that barriers are removed to enable academic success.

2. Context

This policy relates to students and prospective students who experience significant health needs, including mental health.

There may be times when the physical or mental health of students is so affected that academic progress is unable to be maintained. In very rare situations where support is required beyond what is reasonable, it is useful to bear in mind that;

- on a temporary basis only, it may be reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible with attendance due to ill (physical or mental) health. Prolonged periods of absence may not be sustainable, as many courses cannot be taught long distance.
- There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health requires support beyond the expertise or capacity that the college can reasonably offer.
- Occasionally ill health may also present a health and safety hazard and in this situation a risk assessment will be undertaken. Sometimes risks cannot be managed at an appropriate level in the college environment.
- There may be other circumstances such as pregnancy or gender reassignment surgery where the principles of this policy will apply.

Although Abingdon & Witney College and its staff will do everything in their power to support student success, there are occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our collective judgement that to continue at the college is no longer in the best interests of the student. The College takes advice from the College Nurse, and external health providers in making these decisions.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework under which to assess the College's ability to provide appropriate levels of support to individuals with illness, medical or mental health needs that may impact on their ability to learn or impact on others around them including students, staff and college visitors.

4. Support for Students

Through its marketing materials, application and interview processes, the college aims to ensure that prospective students feel confident to declare their health needs when choosing and starting a course. The college will work with the prospective student and, where necessary, seek advice from external health professionals to assess any additional support needs. The aim of this is to ensure that Abingdon and Witney College is a suitable environment for these students. Where necessary, the College will make a referral to specialist agencies.

The College recognises that some students may choose not to disclose any mental health needs or may not wish the college to contact their professional support providers outside the college. In these cases, we respect their right to confidentiality but if it cannot be evidenced in a risk assessment that there is a minimal impact on the health and safety of the student and others, the College may seek professional advice and this may impact the student's ability to enrol or remain on their course.

When serious mental health needs come to light after the applicant has started college, the student may need to take a break from their studies while the college seeks professional advice about the suitability of the college environment for the student. This will always be a last resort option. At this point the college will require a new or updated risk assessment to be completed prior to any return to studies.

Should a student's behaviour indicate that they present an immediate danger to themselves or others, a member of the College Leadership Team will attend urgently; Student Services will be informed and appropriate records updated. **The personal safety of all concerned is paramount.**

5. Definitions:

Fitness to Study

Students must be able to benefit from and pursue the programme of study for the required period with a reasonable chance of progression and successfully complete the qualification. As a vocational education and skills provider, the College is also required to consider the suitability of the student to work in the relevant industry, and as such may determine that an individual would not feasibly be able or appropriate to seek work in any given industry based on their health, mental health, criminal history or any other relevant reason, such as their inability to gain essential security clearance for the industry.

Students must be able to function independently in academic and community environments. It is recognised that some individual SEND students with Educational, Health and Care plans (EHCP) may be working towards developing their independence and these outcomes will be part of their plan.

Students' mental or physical health needs should not unduly disrupt the learning, research and work of others in the college community.

The diversity of our student community means that journeys to success will vary greatly.

Reasonable Adjustment

Taking reasonable steps to ensure that learners are not placed at a substantial disadvantage due to their disability, difficulty or additional need.

The criteria for judging 'reasonable' includes consideration that they do not compromise academic standards, health and safety or the relevant interests of others, including other students. The College has a duty of care to the College community and considers the health and safety of everyone to be paramount. All reasonable adjustments should be practical and financially reasonable.

6. Procedures for dealing with students with significant mental health needs

- A meeting will be arranged with a Learning Support Coordinator for any students who disclose to the college about their mental health needs, or if their mental health issues become apparent.
- At this meeting, a risk assessment involving the curriculum staff will be considered which forms the basis for the decision on whether or not the student will be accepted or continue at college.
- This decision will be made firstly by a Learning Support Coordinator and the Admissions panel, and the student will be informed of the decision by the Learning Support Coordinator.

7. Right of Appeal

- The College recognises that in some instances the student may not be happy with the outcome of the Fitness to Study assessment and may wish to challenge the outcome.
- There is an appeals process whereby students are invited to appeal in writing to the Assistant Principal Student Engagement within 5 college days of being notified of the outcome stating clearly the grounds on which they are appealing. The following are acceptable grounds for appeal:
 - The College has failed to follow the Fitness To Study Process as set out in this document
 - There is substantial evidence which has not been considered or has recently come to light, which you believe will materially impact on the outcome of the assessment.

The Assistant Principal Student Engagement will respond within 10 college days, and this decision is final.

8. Attendance at college

It will not be appropriate for a student to attend college if:

- They have not been deemed fit to attend college by a health professional, or by the Admissions panel
- An agreed support plan and/or risk assessment have not been completed or complied with as a result of a lack of co-operation by the student
- They have withdrawn from their medical/health support or treatment, including discharging themselves from hospital against medical advice
- They are unwilling to comply with the routines/strategies for their support and/or safety outlined in their support plan/risk assessment/PEEPs
- All reasonable avenues for supporting the student in college have been exhausted, or there is an apparent safeguarding risk for others

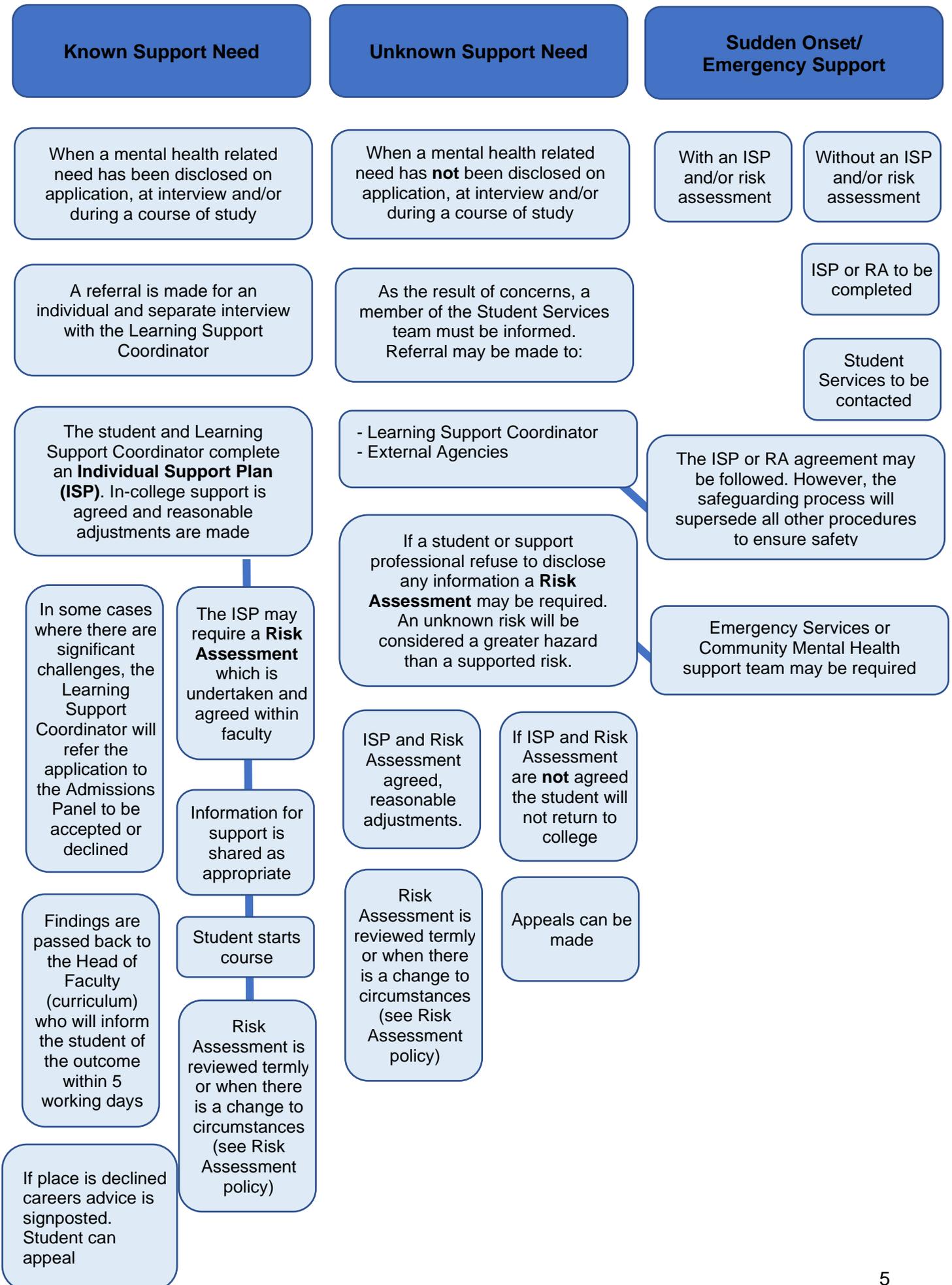
In all cases, we will explore ways to support students studying from home or from hospital, which will usually mean the student needs to have access to the college intranet and college email system to access work and have contact with their tutors. There may be limits to the academic support we can provide and indeed, the work the student can complete.

9. Additional Policies

Safeguarding & Prevent
Admissions Policy
Complaints Procedure

The process

APPENDIX 1



Return to college after Mental Health concern/ Safeguarding concern

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Student number: | | |
| Student name: | | |
| Meeting date and those in attendance | | |
| Date absence started | | |
| Date absence finished | | |
| Risk Assessment | No risk assessment | New/ updated risk assessment |

Other agencies involved:

| Name | Role | Contact details |
|------|------|-----------------|
| | | |
| | | |

General outline of concerns

What was discussed and what support has been put in place?

Is the student taking any medication? Please list here:

If required has a medical care plan been updated? Yes/No/NA

ProMonitor updated Y N

Review date (within 10 working days)

Recommendations

Signed by student &/or supporter.....

Signed by Student Services Adviser.....

Review

Signed by student &/or supporter.....

Signed by Student Services Adviser.....