



Richmond upon
Thames College

Policy Name: RuTC Student Mental Health Policy

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Policy Responsibility: Head of Student Services

Approved By: CMT

For Action By: All College staff and students

For Information to: All College staff, students and parents/carers

Policy Statement

'Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organisation)'

This means students *'feeling good, feeling that their life is going well and feeling able to get on with their daily lives.'* (Public Health England, ND)

1. Scope and purpose

Richmond upon Thames college believe that all students have the right to live and be educated in an environment which is supportive, caring and safe, and where there is mutual respect, courtesy, kindness and co-operation. The College aims to promote positive mental health for every member of the student body, through universal, whole college approaches and targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. Approximately 1:8 children and young people will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health disorder, with girls aged 17 – 19 having the highest rates at 23.9%. Teachers are the professionals that young people are most likely to seek support from (NHS Digital, 2018). Mental health can be affected by a number of elements including genetic, social, personal, economic and environmental factors. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

This policy describes the college's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing and managing mental ill-health.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide procedures to be followed to support students suffering mental ill health

2. Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of students, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Post Held	Name	Telephone/ Contact
Assistant Principal Student Experience	Sharon Cousins	115
Head of Student Services	Deborah Stephenson	151
Safeguarding and Equalities Officer	Cait Orton	150
Student Engagement Team Leader	Hope Stubbings	299
Welfare & Engagement Advisor	Nichole Anthony	245

Welfare & Engagement Advisor	Hazel Coppin	110
Welfare & Engagement Advisor	Dezrika Ramsey	350
Community Liaison Manager	Ged Boyer	161
College Counsellor	Lynn Bannister	226
Inclusive Learning Team Leader (where there is an EHCP)	Paul Smyth	173
Head of Inclusive Learning	Rekha Patel	424
Student Liaison Assistants	Debbie Beadle Dennis Cannon Duffy	

3. Strategies to Promote Positive Mental Health

Richmond upon Thames College is committed to supporting students, widening participation, improving attendance and increasing retention and achievement and supporting progression for all students. The college also recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progress and works through the tutorial system and enrichment programme to promote positive mental health and support students who may have mental ill-health.

To promote student Mental Health, the college undertakes to:

- Provide a supportive culture, ethos and environment where it is acceptable and normal to talk about mental health and that can serve as a buffer to difficult circumstances.
- Have a variety of pathways to the identification of need, such as admission applications, additional forms at enrolment, tutorial system, counselling and Student Services, so that students aren't missed.
- Have an Open door policy in Student Services (Advice Hub).
- Ensure that key staff have Mental Health First Aid (Youth) training.
- Support the development of skills and characters traits such as self-management, compassion and team work.
- Provide teaching and learning and tutorials that helps students to build important life skills helping them to realise that their abilities are not fixed and that they can influence their future through their own action e.g. planning and goal-setting activities, reflection, self-monitoring.
- Provide a pastoral system with an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and the wider community including other agencies.
- Have clear policies on equality and diversity, bullying and behaviour and challenge any incidents relating to these.
- Have a positive climate to enhance belonging and connectedness.
- Raise awareness of mental health issues and sources of support through a variety of communications methods such as the Virtual Learning Environment, posters, leaflets, displays, visiting agencies and the tutorial Scheme of Work.
- Have clear referral procedures for students, parents and staff where there are concerns about Mental Health
- Provide access to Counselling services
- Work with agencies such as Off the Record and MIND to provide targeted enrichment sessions.

- Provide staff development events that contribute to a greater understanding of student mental health amongst staff

4. Mental Health Difficulties and Diagnosed Mental Ill-Health

A student may choose to disclose concerns about having Mental Health Difficulties or Mental Ill Health at any time during their interactions with staff at Richmond Upon Thames College, so all need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

4.1 Disclosures of Mental Health Difficulties

Disclosures may be made prior to enrolment at either application or at interview. If this occurs the procedures in **Appendix 2** should be followed.

4.2 Identification of mental health difficulties after admission to College

Disclosures may also be made following enrolment to any member of staff. If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and Level 1 confidential comment added to Pro-monitor, including:

- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

This information should be shared with the Safeguarding Team who will store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. Where the student is expressing suicidal intent or is actively suicidal the Student Suicide Safety Procedure in **Appendix 1** should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Duty Officer. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Designated Safeguarding Leads or College Counsellor.

4.3 Warning signs of emerging mental health difficulties

College staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Safeguarding Team as stated in the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide

- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

4.4 Diagnosed/Undiagnosed Mental Ill-health

If possible it should be identified whether the student has already sought help for their mental health difficulties and if so which professionals/agencies they are under the care of. It is also helpful to know whether they have received a diagnosis in relation to the Mental Health difficulties. If they have, the external agency may be contacted, with the student's consent, so that support can be co-ordinated.

5. Support for Students

Richmond Upon Thames College is committed to supporting both students with existing mental health difficulties and those whose mental health issues emerge during their time studying at the College. All students have access to a range of support services that are available to offer appropriate information, advice and guidance with the aim to support students who have problems, issues or disabilities that might interfere with their ability to achieve academically or to get the most out of their time in College. Support may involve:

- Safeguarding and welfare support
- Additional Learning Support

5.1 Safeguarding and Welfare Support

Where a student has been referred to the Safeguarding Team after a disclosure or due to concerns, an assessment will be made. The following members of staff may be of particular help:

The Counsellors

The College counselling service provides confidential counselling for students who ask for such support. The student can self-refer or be referred by a member of staff with the student's consent. It is appropriate for those who have mental health difficulties. The counselling service offers once a week therapeutic sessions during term time and in addition may liaise with other internal or external professionals as appropriate.

The Welfare and Engagement Advisers

The Welfare and Engagement Advisers will support students with Mental Health difficulties from their designated curriculum areas, providing additional pastoral support to that offered by tutors and the teaching team. They are located in **C12** and this room with **C15** provides a safe space for students when distressed.

The Safeguarding and Equalities Officer

The Safeguarding and Equalities Officer, as one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads, acts as a point of contact for referral and will also support students where relevant. They will also liaise with external agencies where appropriate.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Community Health Services, Social Services and Other Relevant Agencies

Counsellors, the Welfare and Engagement Advisors and the Safeguarding and Equalities Officer make links with local community health services, e.g. CAMHS and local adult mental health services and any other appropriate agencies.

5.2 Additional Learning Support

Any member of staff who is made aware that any student has a mental health difficulty may refer them for additional support to the head of Inclusive Learning and/or Head of Student Services. An assessment of their learning support and other needs will then be undertaken and appropriate support put in place. If required, a **Risk Assessment** will be completed in consultation with the Commercial Facilities Manager.

Inclusive Learning Team Leader

In consultation with the Head of Inclusive Learning, s/he will arrange additional learning support appropriate to each individual (this may include in-class or one-to-one support) and liaise with the examinations section to support application for exam concessions. S/he may also offer advice and support to students and staff regarding reasonable adjustments to be made and may be included in cases conferences and liaison with outside agencies where appropriate.

Individual Learning Plan

An individual care plan will be drawn up for students causing concern or who receive a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health, where there is not an Educational, Health and Care Plan in place. The process will involve the student, the parents where appropriate and follow advice from relevant health professionals where available. It can include:

- Details of the student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the College can play
- Any appropriate reasonable adjustments

This will be revisited throughout the year by the tutor and student. The ILP will include SMART targets and progress reviews to help the student and teachers monitor progress and make referrals when necessary.

Subject teachers and Tutors will be able to support students with additional learning support needs and will have a general oversight of every student's progress.

5.3 Liaison with Exams

The Head of Inclusive Learning may need to be in liaison with the Examinations section to gain exam concessions or agreement on suitable examination conditions. Students need to be aware that the decision of the exam board is final and they are encouraged to make an early application through discussion with the ALS team.

5.4 Liaison with Parents/Carers and Other Agencies

Each case will be considered on its own merits but the following general guidelines will apply:

- If a student is under 16 the school is expected to disclose any needs with the College and the College will inform the school of any concerns, the school will then undertake to liaise with the parents/carer.
- If a student is under 18 and is open about their situation, then the College will keep the parents/carer informed of any concerns.

- If a student is over 18 they may give consent for the College to discuss any concerns with an appropriate adult.

The Assistant Principal Student Experience, ALS Manager and/or Student Services Manager and Designated Safeguarding Leads will undertake liaison with any other agencies.

5.4 Educational Visits and Trips

Please consult the College's guidelines and policy on visits. As part of preparation for any visit or placement it is important that the student's parent/guardian is aware of the importance of disclosing any medical issues, including mental health, that could possibly arise on the trip or placement.

5.5 Careers Advice

Careers advisors are available to discuss future career paths and applications to higher education. Such help could include advice on types of organisations and the particular requirements of a job as well as choice of higher education courses or institutions, completion of the UCAS form and student personal statements.

There is a section on the UCAS application form which relates to disability or special needs. This enables higher education institutions to take the individual needs of students into consideration. In order to ensure full support at a student's chosen higher education institution, a brief outline of a mental health problem might be helpfully included in a UCAS reference, where the student is in full agreement.

6. Disciplinary Issues

All students are subject to the rules and disciplinary procedures of the College. However, where a student is known to have mental health difficulties or where the student is exhibiting behaviour giving cause for concern, the student's case must be referred to the Head of School. In conjunction with the Head of Student Services and/Head of Inclusive Learning and the Assistant Principal Student Experience, the Head of School will decide whether the student needs support rather than using the disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary action may need to be taken where it is vital to stop serious disruption to others or if there is a threat to the health and safety of students or staff.

7. Fitness to Study

If a student's condition worsens whilst at college, some leeway on the completion of work or attendance requirements may be considered. If the student's difficulties cause problems for the completion of their programme or there are behavioural problems the teacher or tutor will advise the appropriate Head of School who may instigate **The Fitness to Study Procedure** (see Appendix 4)

8. Crisis/Emergency

Fortunately, the occurrence of emergency situations in College involving students with mental health problems is rare. However, such situations can be disturbing. Examples might be: where a student is exhibiting behaviour that is alarming to other people or a student is threatening to harm others.

If these situations arise the Duty Manager and/or Student Liaison Assistants may be called. In the first instance they will ensure the student and other students or staff are kept safe. Student Liaison Assistants are trained to use appropriate restraint measures if required to keep the student and others safe.

If the student is threatening to harm themselves the Student Suicide Safety Policy (Appendix 1) should be followed.

One of the College Safeguarding team will then be called to help support the student and make appropriate referrals by following the Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy. If the student is under 18 then they will contact the student's parents or carers.

9. Returning to College

Following an absence from College for mental health recuperation, a student will need to attend an interview to gauge their fitness to study. This meeting should be led by the Deputy CEO Curriculum and Quality, Head of Student Services or other nominated Student Services Officer where relevant, and may include other members of staff as required such as, the Head of School, Inclusive Learning team Leader, College Counsellor or a Safeguarding Officer. The aim is to establish that the student is well enough to return and to agree what reasonable adjustments might be made by both the student and the College to support a return to study.

10. Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, the College will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support and actions that may need to be taken to safeguard their wellbeing. Support may be provided either in one to one or group settings and sharing of information will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering. Discussion may involve:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, the College will highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Staff Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe.

The [MindEd learning portal](#)¹ provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD including Mental Health First Aid (Youth) training will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with one or more students.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, Student Services will organise training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with HR, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

11. Related Policies

- Admissions Policy
- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Partnership Agreement
- Health and Safety Policy
- Tutoring Policy
- Fitness to Study Procedure
- Educational Visits Policy

12. Acknowledgements

- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust – www.cwmt.or.uk
- Papyrus – Prevention of Young Suicide
- Public Health England, Toolkit for colleges
- Public Health England – The Mental Health of Children and Young People in London
- MHFA

Student Suicide Safety Procedure

Procedure Statement

Richmond Upon Thames College is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of their mental health and wellbeing. It is acknowledged that suicide is the leading cause of death in young people and the College has an important role in helping to prevent young suicide. We believe every suicide is a tragedy and recognise there are a number of contributory factors surrounding a suicide. The reasons are often complex and individual to that person. The College aims to remove barriers to help seeking by promoting an open approach to Mental Health difficulties.

We recognise that suicidal thoughts are common in young people and aim to provide an environment with safe spaces and opportunities for students to share their feelings. This means that staff may be told that students are feeling distressed and low. They may not express suicidal thoughts but where there is a concern the student should be encouraged to talk to the Student Services Team. Key members of the team have undergone Mental Health First Aid training in order that they can explore the feelings of the student in relation to suicidal ideation and suicidal intent.

If a member of staff becomes aware that a student is behaving or communicating in a way that indicates there is a risk of them committing suicide the safety of the student will be paramount.

In all incidents staff should:

- **Ensure their own personal safety and the safety of other students in the vicinity**
- **Ensure the student is not left alone**
- **Seek immediate help**

Risk of Immediate Harm

If a student is acting or has acted in a way where immediate assistance is required e.g. taken an overdose, harming self, follow the steps below:

Call for assistance from those nearest to you and ensure a First Aider is called immediately to administer medical help.

Call the Duty Officer who will involve other members of staff as appropriate.

Emergency services should be called if applicable.

Risk of Suicidal Intent but no action taken

The staff member must:

Reassure the student, listen without judgement, do not dismiss the young person's feelings and do not try to give advice. Inform that you will need to share the information they have disclosed.

Contact the safeguarding team immediately by calling the safeguarding telephone number x300 or bringing the student to C15.

Hand the student over to the safeguarding team.

The Safeguarding Team will:

Find out if the young person is thinking about suicide and if they have a current plan and if they have the means to carry out this plan.

Find out about prior and recent behaviour e.g. recent suicide attempts

Find out about resources i.e. personal support such as friends, family, other professionals they are involved with.

If the Safeguarding Team believes there is a likelihood of suicide being attempted the student will be taken to the College's closest Accident and Emergency Department (West Middlesex Hospital Trust) and parents informed. NB: this includes if the student is over the age of 18 as personal safety supersedes confidentiality.

If the student refuses this course of action and leaves the College against the advice of the Safeguarding Team the police will be contacted on 999 and the parents informed.

It is acknowledged that staff may be distressed by students discussing intentions of suicide and support is available through the HR Assistance scheme.

Applications, Interview and Enrolment Procedure for Students with Mental Health Concerns

Richmond Upon Thames College is committed to offering an appropriate programme of study, with support, to students with mental health concerns. This support will be designed to meet individual requirements within resource constraints. However, care will be taken to ensure that we are not setting a student up to fail as we are aware that this may compound any existing mental health problem. We aim to ensure that a student is able to meet the demands of the course, has the potential to succeed and adhere to the Student Partnership Agreement.

Disclosure of Mental Health difficulties during the admissions process:

Every applicant at Richmond upon Thames College has the entitlement to disclose additional learning support needs and have an assessment of these needs in relation to their educational programme.

Students will be encouraged to discuss their needs prior to admission. This can be done on the student's own initiative or someone else may do this on the student's behalf (with her/his permission). Information about a mental health difficulty may be made on the application form and/or may be discussed at interview. At all times it will be made clear that any information imparted will only be used in the student's interests and with her/his full knowledge. It is our aim to make anticipatory arrangements for a student's support needs.

Full-time students

At the College interview, applicants who have identified themselves as having a mental health difficulty *as part of an educational health and care plan (EHCP)* will be seen by a member of academic staff and a member of the Additional Learning Support team at which point a suitable programme of study is discussed. It may be necessary for the College to contact the appropriate mental health worker e.g. a psychiatrist or community psychiatric nurse (CPN). This would be in order to look into the care plan and medication as well as establish any factors the College needs to be aware of. If there were any doubt about the student's mental health in terms of coping with the demands of the chosen course, the College would ask the applicant's permission to write to their mental health worker for her/his view.

Where the student does not have an EHCP that states the support needed in relation to a mental health difficulty, but the student declared this to the College, contact will be made by one of the Student Services team to discuss their needs. They will then liaise with other members of staff as relevant.

If there is no previous information and an interviewer has concerns during the interview, they will not make a course offer at the time but consult with the Head of Inclusive Learning and/or Head of Student Services after the interview. A second interview can then be offered. An admission decision will then be made and a written record kept of the facts and the outcome. This information will be kept confidential.

Once a programme has been agreed, the ALS team will undertake an assessment of support needs. If required, a Risk Assessment will be completed in consultation with the Health and Safety Manager.

Part-time students

If an applicant identifies as having a mental health difficulty, the Inclusive Learning team will contact the applicant but will not be present at the interview stage. An assessment will be undertaken of the suitability of the programme and any special support needs the student may have. The process would follow the same pattern as for full-time students in that an admission decision would be made and a written record kept of the facts and the outcome. This information will be kept confidential.

If a student with a mental health difficulty enrolls onto a programme that does not require an interview and discloses their condition, then the ALS team will contact the teacher/applicant to arrange any support that may be needed to ensure successful completion of the course.

Appeals Procedure

There is an admissions appeals procedure that can be used by any applicant. Normally a decision on an appeal is made by the Assistant Principal Student Experience in consultation with the Head of Student Services and/or Head of Inclusive Learning along with other relevant support staff.

Assessment and Disclosure of Information

Students are encouraged to make disclosures about mental health difficulties and give as much information as possible to ensure that we meet our obligations under the **Equality Act 2010**.

The Inclusive Learning team will undertake an assessment of support needs and plan any reasonable adjustments that are to be made. This may include:

- 1:1 Support
- In class support
- Additional tutorial support
- Examination concessions
- Guidelines on time management and classroom behaviour
- Additional educational resources

Once the learning support needs of the student have been assessed, the College will put in place other necessary measures, which could include:

- Access to counselling
- Financial support
- Co-ordination with external agencies

The Head of Student Services and head of Inclusive Learning will have access to relevant information about all students with mental health difficulties. In addition, for full-time students, the Tutor will have access to information about their support provision. For part-time students, a named person who will usually be the Head of School would have access to this information. If a student has made a disclosure, this information will be placed on the College management information system which is managed in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Post-16 Mental Health: useful sources of information

Websites

In an emergency dial 999.

If not an emergency there are the following sources of support who may help.

Make an appointment with your GP, your nearest NHS walk-in Centre, or call NHS direct **111**

The **Samaritans** helpline: 116 123 (24 hours, free from any phone) email jo@samaritans.org

Childline: 0800 1111 (runs a helpline 24 hours for children and young people in the UK. Calls are free and the number won't show up on your phone bill)

<https://papyrus-uk.org> **PAPYRUS:** 0800 068 41 41 (is a voluntary organisation supporting teenagers and young adults who are feeling suicidal.)

<https://otrtwickenham.com> – **Off The Record:** 02087441644 - offers counselling for students who live, work or study in the area.

www.relatelondonsw.org – **Relate:** 020854923318 – counselling for young people

<http://studentsagainstdepression.org/> **Students Against Depression** is a website for students who are depressed, have a low mood or are having suicidal thoughts.

<http://www.bullying.co.uk/> **Bullying UK:** 08088002222 offers support for both children and adults affected by bullying.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/> **Young Minds** The voice for young people's mental health & well-being, includes advice for young people and a Parent Helpline.

<http://www.mind.org.uk/> **MIND-** Mental Health Charity – Urgent help link and A-Z of mental health that is particularly useful.

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/> **Anxiety UK:** 03444775774 Most anxiety-related issues covered in detail

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/anxiety.asp> **Moodjuice** Excellent CBT-style approach to anxiety. **NOTE:** same website also offers info on depression, suicide, psychosis & many other conditions

<https://www.nopanic.org.uk/> **No Panic:** 08449674848 - General information on anxiety and details of a youth helpline.

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/> **Time to Change** General resources and personal stories about MH

<http://www.stem4.org.uk/> **Stem4** Most MH conditions aimed at teenagers, parents and teachers. App called Calm Harm that provides tasks that help resist or manage the urge to self-harm.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/> **Mental Health Foundation** Very good resources, advice and an A-Z of MH issues and conditions.

<https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/> **Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust** Many, well-written NHS self-help booklets

<https://www.cwmt.org.uk> **Charlie Waller Memorial Trust** - support and advice on Mental Wellbeing

<https://www.b-eat.co.uk> **BEAT**: 03456347650 –, support for those with eating disorders

Exam Stress

<http://www.studentminds.org.uk/exam-stress.html>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/content.php?r=16171-dealing-with-exam-stress>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories/14-ways-to-beat-exam-stress/#.WQnc-WddHcs>

<http://theconversation.com/how-to-overcome-exam-anxiety-67445>

Fitness to Study Procedure

STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE PURPOSE

Richmond Upon Thames College is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of mental health and wellbeing in relation to academic progression. A positive approach to the management of mental health and behavioural issues is critical to student learning and academic achievement. Additionally, the College has a duty of care to all within its community and a responsibility to take action to support those in distress, or causing significant concern or presenting a risk to self or others. This will include, for instance, situations where students show visible signs of illness, mental health difficulties, or emotional or behavioural disorders that may have a negative impact on the health, safety, learning and wellbeing of the student and others. This Procedure outlines the process and procedures to be followed when a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour affects their ability to cope at college, to study or progress on their course or when their health, wellbeing or behaviour poses a risk to the health and safety of self and/or others. The procedure may also be used when a student has undergone a significant period of hospitalisation and is returning to the college. The procedure applies to all students enrolled at Richmond Upon Thames College regardless of their background or protected characteristic which are; age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This Procedure is not intended for use during the interview or Admissions process but during a student's time studying at College.

1. Introduction

1.2 These guidelines:

1.2.1 Clarify a suitable response by teaching and support staff in circumstances where it is not considered appropriate to apply disciplinary procedures. This may arise when a student's behaviour requires considered and sensitive management rather than disciplinary sanction.

1.2.2 Recommend a co-ordinated approach to the management of a situation where physical or mental ill-health may not permit a student to benefit from the educational opportunities afforded to them at a particular time or where it is adversely affecting the student experience of others or requires support at a level that has extended well beyond that which can reasonably be expected of the College.

1.3 This procedure has three levels of concern. The cause or causes for concern can result in entering the procedure at any level although it is hoped that most situations can be remedied by action taken at stages 1 or 2.

1.4 Concerns about a student's health or behaviour should be acted upon promptly. Early action/intervention can often prevent a situation from developing into a crisis.

1.5 The procedure aims to ensure that:

- The best interests of the student are considered in relation to their personal situation, their health, wellbeing and/or any disability they may experience.
- Students are supported to study to the best of their ability, and wherever possible to meet the required learning outcomes and complete their course.
- Students who are experiencing difficulties in relation to their health, wellbeing and/or disability are supported to address their difficulties at the earliest appropriate point.
- Students are able to make informed decisions regarding options available.

- Any reasonable adjustments that the student may be entitled to are considered and where appropriate put in place

- 1.6** Staff from College curriculum areas and from central Student Services work together where appropriate so that students experience a consistent and fair process
- 1.7** If staff are unsure about whether to implement this procedure, they should seek advice and discuss their concerns with the Head of Student Services and the Heads of School. In order to work within the boundaries of confidentiality and data protection these initial concerns need to be discussed without using the student's name.

2. Stage One

Concerns emerge about a student's health and safety and ability to study based on deterioration in health, attendance or behaviour.

- 2.1** A member of staff who knows the student (e.g. teacher tutor, Welfare and Engagement Adviser (WEA)) should approach the student in a supportive way and indicate that there is a recognised concern about the student's wellbeing. The nature of the concern should be clearly identified and, if appropriate, information should be provided about support available through the College (e.g. WEA's or Counselling Services) and the student reminded about external support such as the student's GP. (NB counselling cannot be made mandatory for a student). If a student is already working with external services, evidence of diagnosis and support needs should be asked for if they have not already been shared with the college.
- 2.2** The student and member of staff should agree on actions to be taken and the actions recorded on Pro-monitor. SMART targets may be set in relation to the actions. A review date should be agreed and included in the file note.
- 2.3** The staff member should explain to the student that the same or additional concerns for health, wellbeing or fitness to study may lead to their fitness to study being more widely considered in stage two. The student's Pro-monitor page should be updated and have the appropriate badge added so staff recognise the concern and the need for support.

3. Stage Two

Continued concern about a student's health, safety and ability to study related to a significant deterioration in attendance, health or behaviour and interactions or a significant initial concern about a student. For students aged 18 years of age or under, a parent or guardian will usually be informed

- 3.1** The student will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head of School, the member of staff expressing concern and the member of the safeguarding team working with the student. The student should be made aware of the purpose of the meeting and advised of any documents they may need to bring. The student should be informed of the meeting in writing at least 24 hours before the date of the meeting. The student may be accompanied by a friend or family member or by a representative from the Students' Union or Student Services if requested. Students with disabilities may also be accompanied by a support worker as appropriate to their needs.
- 3.2** The purpose of the meeting will be to outline concerns and ascertain the student's perception of the issues identified and also to ensure that the student clearly understands College expectations regarding fitness to study. It will be important to identify and agree an action plan following the meeting, including the support needed and who will provide this. The consequences of not

adhering to the action plan should be clearly outlined to the student. A short summary of the meeting, the agreed action plan and the consequences of non-compliance should be sent to the student within 3 working days of the meeting. The meeting must be documented and recorded centrally. Regular review meetings should be set up with the student and the agreed named staff member who will also be the central point of contact regarding the student. The frequency of these reviews should be agreed at the meeting. The students Pro-monitor page should be updated and have the appropriate badge added so staff recognise the concern and the need for support.

4. Stage Three

The most serious level of concern can be reached either through progression from stages 1 and 2 or directly if there are significant concerns about the risk to the health and wellbeing of the student, safety of self, students, staff or to others. At this stage, parents or guardians would be informed if the student is aged 18 years of age or under, except in exceptional circumstances.

- 4.1** A Team around the Student conference will be called by the Head of School, to ascertain the facts as known and to discuss an appropriate course of action. The Chair will be the Head of School. Either the Assistant Principal Student Experience, Head of Student Services, Head of Inclusive Learning, Safeguarding and Equality Officer, Community Liaison Manager or their nominated representative will also attend, dependent on the circumstances. A teacher tutor and a minute taker may also be present. Consideration needs to be given to the number of staff present so that the student does not feel overwhelmed. If appropriate and agreed with the student the Counsellor will also attend. Others may be called to provide information or to provide written statements and notes from previous stages provided to the chair in advance of the meeting.
- 4.2** During the case conference relevant staff, external professionals and the student if appropriate will be invited to outline their concerns
- 4.3** The student will also be invited to attend at one point during the proceedings and may have a friend or family member or member of the Students' Union accompany them for support. Students with disabilities may also choose their support worker.
- 4.4** The conference may consider various options including a break from study, part time study, study from home, the support needed by a student, a period of interruption or a recommendation for withdrawal or exclusion of the student.
- 4.5** The actions arising out of the case conference will be agreed, documented and circulated to all in attendance and to the student. All actions should have specific time frames where appropriate and adherence to such timeframes will be a condition of any re-entry to programmes of study.
- 4.6** If the case conference considers that withdrawal or exclusion is the best course of action this must be recommended by the chair to the Deputy CEO Curriculum and Quality for approval. Subject to withdrawal or exclusion being approved by the Deputy CEO, a letter should be sent via registered mail to all the student addresses known to the College. The same letter should be sent to student's registered email account. The students Pro-monitor page should be updated and have the appropriate badge added so staff recognise the level of concern and the need for support.
- 4.7** In the event that the student is unable to attend the conference for whatever reason, the conference may go ahead in their absence. If appropriate the student may be involved by phone or skype. In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Deputy CEO Curriculum and Quality, or in his / her absence the Assistant Principal Student Experience, a hearing may go ahead without the student being on campus where they present a potential risk to themselves or others.

In these circumstances all reasonable efforts must be made to ensure their opinion is fairly represented.

- 4.8** If an incident occurs where there is an immediate risk to self or others, safeguarding and duty officer procedures should be followed

5. Returning to Study

- 5.1** Students should be informed of the procedures to be followed for returning to study as soon as possible.
- 5.2** Each student's case will vary depending upon the context and specific circumstances out of which the original concern arose. In all cases return to study will be dependent upon evidence of fitness to study such as a GP's letter and of appropriate support systems. Evidence submitted must be from a recognised health worker such as a mental health professional, doctor or psychiatrist who has sufficient knowledge of the student and the demands of education in order to make an informed decision regarding return to study. In particular, specific reference should be made to the student's capacity to return to study.
- 5.3** The decision to allow return to study will be made by the Deputy CEO Curriculum and Quality or Head of Student Services in consultation with appropriate professional colleagues from the student's faculty if applicable. There must be assurance of fitness to study, compliance with any conditions imposed, regulatory requirements, and the availability of support upon return.
- 5.4** Regular review meetings should be arranged with the student's curriculum area so that student progress can be monitored and student support modified if necessary.
- 5.5** When return to study is not deemed to be an option and the student wishes to challenge this, the existing complaints and appeals policies and processes should be followed.
- 5.6** If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study process, including when safeguarding procedures have been invoked, he/she may appeal to the Deputy CEO Curriculum and Quality within 10 working days

6. Consent, confidentiality and data protection

6.1 Data protection

- 6.1.1** All College staff are governed by the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations. Under these, all data relating to a person's physical or mental health is regarded as sensitive, personal data. The College's policy on Data Protection contains guidance on the use of sensitive information e.g. details about a student's mental health or condition and should be followed by staff. In general, all personal data of a sensitive nature given to a member of staff by a student should be treated as confidential and should only be disclosed with the student's consent. Sensitive data, for the purpose of this policy, is deemed to be information given in confidence concerning, for example, a student's ill-health or disability, including mental health issues.

6.2 Confidentiality

- 6.2.1** In all cases where, in the member of staff's judgement, it would be in the student's best interests to disclose sensitive information (e.g. so that appropriate support may be provided) the student's

informed consent should be obtained where possible. It will be necessary to inform the student why there might be a need to disclose sensitive information, who will have access to this information, and the likely consequences of giving or withholding consent (e.g. additional support strategies such as reasonable adjustments including additional examination arrangements). Once consent has been obtained, it is the responsibility of the person passing on the information to ensure it is done on the terms agreed with the student.

6.2.2 If the student chooses not to provide their consent this decision should be respected. In this scenario, the implications of non-disclosure in terms of additional support should be made clear. However, there exist rare occasions when the student's consent is withheld, or it is impracticable to try to obtain it, when confidentiality may be broken. These include:

- When the student's mental health has deteriorated to the extent of threatening his/her personal safety
- When the student is at risk of serious abuse or exploitation
- When the student's behaviour is adversely affecting the rights and safety of others
- Where the member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal procedure if the information were not disclosed (e.g. if a crime had been committed).

6.2.3 Staff should consult with the Assistant Principal Student Services or Head of Student Services if they believe there is a need to break the commitment to confidentiality. Initial discussion should not identify the student until the grounds for breaking confidentiality have been established and agreed upon.

7. Related Policies/Documents

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

RUTC Student Mental Health Policy

Equality Policy Statement

College Health and Safety Policy

General Data Protection Regulation Policy

Complaints Procedure

8. Acknowledgement – Guildford College Group

Flow Chart for Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Procedure

Appendix One

STAGE 1

Concerns emerge about a student's health and safety and ability to study.

STAGE 2

Continued concerns about a student's health and safety and ability to study.

STAGE 3

Significant concerns about the risk to the health and wellbeing of the student, safety of self, students, staff or to others.

This stage can be reached through progression from **Stages 1 and 2.**

MEETING

- Meeting with student and a member of staff who is known to them e.g. tutor, student mentor.
- Information about support services made available

MEETING

- Parent/guardian informed for students aged 18 years and under.
- Meeting with student and HS and HSS and member of staff expressing concern.
- Minimum 24 hours written notice given for date of meeting.
- Student can be accompanied by friend, family member or representative.

CASE CONFERENCE

- Parent/guardian informed for students aged 18 years and under. **(Under 25 for vulnerable adults).**
- Convened by **the Chair (CD).**
- Attended by **Chair, HSS and/or APSE, WEA, tutor, other applicable staff and a minute taker.** ☒
- **Student will be invited** to attend part of the proceedings and can be **accompanied by friend, family member or representative**
- Other professionals as appropriate
- If the student cannot attend for whatever reason, the case conference can take place in their absence.

OUTCOME

- Agree/record actions & filed. Pro-monitor badge added.
- Review date set & followed up by the member staff.
- Student advised that continued concerns can lead to **Stage 2.**

OUTCOME

- Short summary of the meeting and actions on file. Pro-monitor updated.
- Summary of meeting, actions and consequences of non-compliance sent to student **within 3 days of meeting.**
- **Regular meetings** set up with agreed named member of staff, who also acts as main contact.

OUTCOME

- Actions agreed, documented and **circulated to all in attendance and to the student.** Pro-monitor updated.
- Compliance with actions will be a **condition to any re-entry to the programme of study.**
- If the case conference results in **withdrawal or exclusion**, this must be recommended by **the Chair** and agreed by the **Deputy CEO Curriculum & Quality.**
- Withdrawal letter should be sent by registered mail to all known addresses and sent to all email addresses.



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Telephone: 020 8607 8000

Direct line: 020 8607 8000

Email: @rutc.ac.uk

Date

Name and address details

Dear Name

Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Meeting

The College is committed to supporting student wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health and behavioural issues is critical to student learning and academic achievement.

We would like to invite you to a Health, Wellbeing & Fitness to Study meeting when we will discuss our concerns regarding your well-being at College.

The meeting will be with

If you are unable to attend please would you let(staff member) know as soon as possible. The meeting may still go ahead in your absence.

You are welcome to bring a friend, family member or representative from the Students' Union or Student Services to attend with you.

The meeting is scheduled:

Date:

Time:

Place:

Please come toand we will meet you there.

If you have any concerns about this matter or are unable to attend then please do not hesitate to contact me on

Yours sincerely (faithfully)

Name