

Health and Wellbeing Policy
(Incorporating the Support to Study Procedure)

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1.0 Introduction

The primary concern of the Harper & Keele Veterinary School is the health and wellbeing of our students. We are committed to the creation of a supportive learning environment and the purpose of this policy is to outline the School's approach to supporting students, and the arrangements by which health and wellbeing concerns are considered in relation to a student's ability to study. The School will support students to realise their full potential and successfully complete their studies, whilst also ensuring the health and safety of our students is considered.

The School acknowledges that unexpected or significant health and wellbeing concerns can seriously impact on a student's academic performance, for example:

- Minor or short-term problems may impact on a student's immediate capacity to study or undertake placement work, undermining academic progress.
- More significant health issues may cause concern for the student and those around them, and in some cases require intervention if a student is potentially at risk of harm to themselves or others, or if there is a significant detrimental impact on their studies and placement work.

The School and our partner Universities have a duty of care to respond appropriately to situations where there are substantial concerns relating to a student's mental and/or physical wellbeing and the impact upon the individual and/or other members of the University community. Each University partner provides a comprehensive and well-established range of services which are available to support the health and wellbeing of students, to include an individualised approach to student support.

The School provides a supportive and inclusive environment that will support students to reach their full potential. We will achieve these aims by:

- Supporting a culture in which challenges to our wellbeing are recognised and not stigmatised.
- Signposting students to proactive wellbeing interventions through a range of activities, workshops and engagement opportunities for students.
- Engaging with our University partners in raising awareness of mental health issues, and offering associated guidance and training to both staff and students.
- Encouraging students who encounter difficulties to seek support.
- Meeting individual support needs via a range of on-going supportive interventions and services, through the Student Services Wellbeing Teams, the Learner Support Services, Chaplaincy, Careers and Advice Services at each University, as well as the student's Course Team.
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are put in place to remove/reduce disadvantage or barriers that arise as a result of a student's disability, long term health condition, or mental health condition.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all students who are registered on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery programme including students studying on campus and those engaged in course related activities away from campus (such as placements and field trips).

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The Keele University Human Resources department have primary responsibility for policies and procedures related to the health and wellbeing of Vet School staff.

3.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an underpinning clear set of procedures, which can be used to support a student when their health, wellbeing and/or behaviours are having a detrimental impact on their ability to progress academically.
- Provide an underpinning clear set of procedures, which can be used to support a student when their health or wellbeing is being negatively impacted by the demands of university life.
- Provide an effective framework to support students in cases where such circumstances are having an adverse impact on the health, safety, wellbeing and/or academic progress of others.
- Ensure a consistent and sensitive approach to managing situations or behaviours, which have become problematic
- Encourage early intervention and active collaboration between all staff in managing situations where there are concerns regarding a student's fitness to study
- Ensure that the University has provided the student with appropriate, proportionate and reasonable support to assist them through their studies.

4.0 Responsibilities

The School aims to foster independence, self-awareness, resilience and personal responsibility in its graduates. In this context it is important that students take an active part in the management of their own health and wellbeing in order to fulfil their academic potential. This policy makes provision for a collaborative approach to the management of health and wellbeing of students and requires a joint approach to be taken by all parties to identify the most appropriate solution to any situation which may arise.

4.1 Responsibilities of the School

In implementing this policy the School and partner universities will:

- Remain mindful of their legal obligations including their duty of care and obligations to students under the Equality Act, including the obligation to make reasonable adjustments.
- Remain mindful of the confidential and sensitive nature of medical conditions, physical and mental health difficulties and fitness to study matters, and their obligations in respect of confidentiality and data protection legislation.
- Ensure there is a clear and robust mechanism for working with students to identify any health issues and appropriate support strategies while still ensuring that professional body requirements are met.
- Ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where possible while still ensuring that professional body requirements are met.

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- Encourage a safe and supportive community culture which is conducive to early intervention and supports students positively through the Academic Mentoring and Professional Tutoring system.
- Ensure there are clear referral pathways to appropriate support services at each partner university.
- Where necessary, to call on other policies such as the Student Conduct and Disciplinary Policy in instances where student behaviour has actively disrupted the ability of other students to learn, or where behaviour was demonstrably not in line with the School's expectation or the RCVS Code of Conduct.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Student

Students are expected to take steps to actively look after their own physical health and mental wellbeing. We actively encourage students to build social and support networks, keep up their hobbies and personal interests, take advantage of events and activities within the Student Union's, sports facilities, and other areas of the universities, aimed at maintaining a proactive approach to wellbeing and to encourage a positive work/life balance, making the most of their university experience.

Students are also expected to:

- Work with others within the School and University communities in order to promote a positive culture which supports the health and wellbeing of peers.
- Discuss any emerging wellbeing issues with an appropriate member of staff, usually their personal tutor or a member of Student Services, to allow early intervention and support to be put in place.
- Engage fully with the support services available on each campus if and when they or others are concerned for their wellbeing.
- Engage with the processes and procedures set out in this policy.
- Continue to maintain contact with support services, tutors and peers during periods of off campus learning.

5.0 Access to Services

5.1 The Harper & Keele Vet School has a tutoring system which is designed to ensure that all students have regular opportunities to review their personal, academic and career development as well as to discuss and support their personal welfare. Academic mentors, professional tutors and preceptors listen to students and provide encouragement and support as appropriate. An academic mentor is a member of academic staff who will be a student's first port of call for advice or direction to further support on academic and pastoral matters. The professional tutor or preceptor is a member of the veterinary profession who will provide support and guidance relating to the student's professional development. Academic mentors, professional tutors and preceptors are central to the provision of effective student development, guidance and support, with tutors working alongside subject tutors and support services at each campus, and will guide students towards appropriate support services as necessary.

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5.2 Vet students will have access to support services across both University campuses, however for an individual student the bulk of their specialised health and wellbeing support will be provided by the teams at their host University. Comprehensive guides to the support services at each University can be found by following the links below:

- Harper Adams University [Student Support](#)
- Keele University [Student Services](#)

6.0 Confidentiality, Disclosure and Retention

6.1 At all times, staff operating this procedure will adhere to the guidelines laid down within the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) to ensure that the appropriate level of confidentiality is maintained.

6.2 Where personal information is shared it is only released to only those who are part of the School's Health and Wellbeing procedures and other relevant officers of the host University as appropriate.

6.3 Any written records relating to a student's health, wellbeing or support strategies will be maintained in a secure location accessible only to members of the relevant teaching and support services and will be retained only for the duration of time specified in the host University's Records Retention Schedule.

6.4 In certain emergency situations, including an acute mental health crisis with a high risk of serious self-harm or harm to others, it may be necessary to share information with health, medical and/or emergency services in order to safeguard and facilitate appropriate care for an individual. Normally, the decision to contact next of kin, will be made by medical professionals.

6.5 In circumstances where it is considered that the sharing of information may assist in enhancing the student's learning, academic achievement, health, wellbeing and/or wider student experience, the School or University will seek a student's express consent to the information being shared. In these instances, information would be restricted to staff who are directly involved in the student's education, health and welfare. With the student's involvement, this could be achieved through face to face discussions with staff and the student in informal meetings as required. Students will be encouraged to disclose such information themselves and will be made aware of any potential implications of non-disclosure.

6.6 The services may collect and maintain anonymized data to assist in monitoring the services and resource planning. This data may include: the number of students seen, the number of face to-face contacts with students, the number of face-to-face contacts with staff or fellow students who are concerned about individual students and non-attendance. Data monitoring does not include any personal data.

6.7 For further information on how we use your data, please refer to the [Vet School Privacy Notice](#).

7.0 Health and Wellbeing Procedure

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The purpose of this procedure is to outline the School's arrangements to help all students realise their full academic potential and successfully complete their studies. The School acknowledges that there may be instances where a student's health or wellbeing causes concern regarding the student's ability to study the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine & Surgery course, including within a placement, and/or as a member of the University community. This may arise where, for example, there is a concern that:

- A student poses a risk to their own health, safety or wellbeing and/or that of other persons;
- The student's behaviour is, or is at risk of, negatively affecting the teaching, learning and/or experience of other students, for example in accommodation, lectures or through notable poor attendance;
- The student's behaviour is or is at risk of negatively affecting the day-to-day activities of the University and/or a placement provider.
- The student's behaviour is impacting adversely upon the health, safety or wellbeing of other students/or staff.

Situations which may trigger the implementation of this procedure may include, but are not limited to:

- There is a significant concern raised regarding the safety of a student or the impact they are having on others
- A student has not engaged in studies for a significant period of time without reasonable cause, for example, poor attendance over 2 weeks or more, or regular patterns of poor attendance.
- A deterioration in physical or mental health or a dramatic change in presentation and or behaviour
- There is concern about how a student might manage whilst on placement, field trip, or studying abroad, where the University might be unable to fulfil a duty of care, have taken into account reasonable adjustments.

8.0 Procedure and Levels of Concern

Concerns about a student's health or wellbeing should be acted upon promptly, as early action/intervention can often prevent a situation from developing into a crisis. This procedure incorporates three levels of concern. The cause for concern can result in the procedure being initiated at any level although it is hoped that most situations can be remedied by action taken at levels 1 or 2. The School and the student's host university reserve the right to vary the procedure as appropriate in the interests of fairness and/ or health and safety concerns for the individual or others. The particular level of concern and associated process to be followed will be at the discretion of the School or the support services at the student's host university (depending on the perceived seriousness of any health problem/risk).

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A non-exhaustive list of warning signs which might cause the procedure to be triggered is given below. It is most likely that the procedure will be triggered either when a number of these signs are seen in combination, or when there is a significant level of concern in a single area.

- Withdrawal from usual activities, interaction
- Lack of engagement or a reduction in engagement
- Poor attendance
- Reduction in quality of work
- Struggling to meet deadlines
- Lack of or a reduction in communication (e.g. ignoring requests to meet)
- Not looking after themselves (unkempt appearance, poor personal hygiene)
- Mood swings or a change in mood / behaviour
- Self-harm
- Expressing thoughts of suicide
- Change in eating habits – weight gain / weight loss
- Destructive or reckless behaviour
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Drugs misuse (including prescribed)
- Avoidance
- Social Isolation

8.1 Stage 1. Emerging Concern

Stage 1 procedures should be initiated when there are emerging, low risk concerns about a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour, and this is having an impact on their academic engagement or on other students and / or members of staff. These concerns may arise through early warning signs being observed or reported. Stage 1 will also be triggered when a student reaches contact stage 3 in the attendance monitoring procedure as set out in the School's [Academic Engagement Policy](#).

8.1.1 Stage 1 Process

The Stage 1 process can be invoked by any member of staff who knows the student and has primary responsibility for their needs. This is most likely to be the student's academic mentor, professional tutor or preceptor, but may also include members of support staff, module tutors or year leads.

The student should be invited to an informal 1:1 meeting with their academic mentor or preceptor within 5 working days of a concern being raised. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss any concerns and identify any underlying causes. The student may be accompanied in a supportive capacity by another enrolled student, a member of support staff or a member of the Students Union.

The aim of the meeting is to discuss the concerns that have arisen, seek the student's perceptions and identify any reasonable support measures which can be put in place. The student should be advised what action/behaviour has caused concern/and or potential risk giving clear descriptions and examples. It is important that factual language is used with the student to discuss the following:

- The nature of the concern should be identified, and the student encouraged to reflect on the issues, including the potential impact on themselves and others.

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- The student should be asked whether they feel that support is needed, and what types of support will help them to make changes to address the concerns; It is important to ensure that the student is supported in considering solutions and is guided towards obtaining additional support or reasonable adjustments.

A support plan should be agreed with the student which details the required type and extent of support needed, and the timeframe for review. Support may include:

- Reasonable measures to support an acceptable level of attendance and engagement with the programme.
- Reasonable internal support arrangements such as counselling, general wellbeing and academic guidance and expectations of engagement with support.
- Consideration of and referral to external support services or agencies.
- Clear communication of expectations and next steps particularly in cases where the meeting has been triggered by the student reaching Contact 3 under the attendance monitoring process.
- The matter being referred to another level of the procedure (eg Stage 2 or Stage 3) in cases where the meeting has prompted increased concern or the need for a more comprehensive plan.

A summary of the meeting and a copy of the support plan should be e-mailed to the student within 5 working days of the meeting, and a review meeting booked. The School Office will be informed of any expectations with regard to levels of attendance.

Review of the Stage 1 support plan: The academic mentor should review the circumstances with the student within 2-4 weeks of the initial meeting. The review can be face-to-face or via Teams. Students should be reminded at this stage that a continuation of the same or any additional concerns/risks could result in escalation to **Stage 2** of this procedure.

8.1.2 Stage 1 Outcomes

The possible outcomes from Stage 1 are:

- No further action required.
- Referral to appropriate support services.
- If the discussions during the meeting raise more serious concerns regarding the student's Fitness to Study, they may be referred to Stage 2 of the procedure.
- If the student does not attend the Stage 1 meeting or shows no commitment to the support plan. consideration should be given to if there are any enhanced welfare concerns which would require escalation to Stage 2 of the process.
- If the Support to Study process has been triggered by the student reaching Contact 3 in the attendance monitoring process and the student does not meet the attendance target agreed in the action plan, they will be moved to Red as described in the [Academic Engagement Policy](#)..

8.2 Stage 2. Continued or Significant concern

Stage 2 of the Support to Study procedure may be implemented when there is continued concern about a student's engagement or ability to study which has not improved following initial intervention at level 1, or enhanced, more significant concerns/risk regarding a student's health and wellbeing or other concerns affecting the student's ability to operate within the academic context.

8.2.1 Stage 2 Process

The Stage 2 process should be led by the academic mentor in partnership with an appropriate member of support staff.

The student should be invited to attend a meeting with their academic mentor and member of support staff.

The student should receive the invitation at least 5 working days before the meeting and include the following additional information:

- an outline of the purpose of the meeting;
- a request for any documentary evidence required for the meeting;
- a list of the members of staff present at the meeting;
- reference to the student's entitlement to be accompanied in a supportive capacity by another enrolled student, a member of support staff or member of the Student's Union
- in addition, the student is entitled to be supported by a professional support worker at the meeting (examples of professional support workers would be a sign language interpreter or Mental Health Worker/Disability Adviser as appropriate to their needs).

The meeting should be a supportive process and should include:

- identification/explanation of the issue/concern/risk (providing clear and specific examples), and any past relevant information;
- an opportunity for the student to give their perspective on the issues and if appropriate a history of events, past experiences and helpful strategies or support for managing these issues;
- a review of the student's standing at the University (academic and in relation to other processes such as academic misconduct, student discipline, academic warnings/non-engagement) and the implications thereof;
- clarification of the student's responsibility at the University (e.g. to be 'well enough' to study and to be respectful of others);
- consideration of what would be helpful or make a difference to the student in relation to their support and in order to minimise the concerns/risks;
- information in relation to appropriate support available and, if necessary, referral to any support services as appropriate;
- identification of a support plan to support the student with clear targets to be reviewed within 2-4 weeks;

A summary of the meeting and a copy of the support plan with clear articulation of the potential next steps should be e-mailed to the student within 5 working days of the meeting, and a review meeting booked.

8.2.2 Stage 2 outcomes

The possible outcomes from Stage 2 are:

- No further action required.
- Referral to appropriate internal or external support services.
- Drawing up of a Stage 2 support plan, to be reviewed within 2-4 weeks to include details of the actions for the student, school and support services to improve the situation and the requirement to attend regular monitoring meetings during the period of review.
- If the discussions during the meeting raise more serious concerns regarding the student's fitness to study, or identify a need for urgent definitive action they may be referred to Stage 3 of the procedure.
- Leave of absence/study break to be agreed with the student.
- If the student does not attend the Stage 2 meeting or shows no commitment to the support plan they will be referred to the Vet School Health & Conduct Committee.

8.3 Stage 3. Serious Concern

Stage 3 of the procedure should be used where there is serious or persistent concern/risk about a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviours, safety and/or ability to study and cope at the University. In most cases escalation to this stage will follow attempts to address concerns through stages 1 and 2. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to proceed directly to stage 3.

Examples of when it may be appropriate to proceed directly to stage 3 are:

- Where a health care professional/occupational health advisor considers that the health, wellbeing and ability to study is significantly affected by the students' condition
- When all other options to deal with the situations have been explored locally and a wider University perspective is required
- When a higher stage of decision making and authority is required;
- Where there are serious concerns regarding risk to the health and safety of the student and/or where there is a perceived threat and risk to others
- Where an immediate temporary suspension is considered to be in the best interests of the student or the University.

8.3.1 Stage 3 Process

Stage 3 should be led by the Deputy Head of School (or nominee). The student should be invited to a Stage 3 Fitness to Study Panel meeting. The panel should consist of:

- Harper Adams Director of Academic Services (or nominee) in the case of a Harper hosted student or the Associate Director of Student Services (or nominee) in the case of a Keele Hosted student – Chair
- Deputy Head of School (or nominee)
- Member of Support Services from the non-host institution
- The student's academic mentor

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- Representatives from relevant support services at the host institution

The panel should be constituted within 10 working days of the case being referred. The student will be informed of the meeting by letter at least 5 working days before the meeting is due to take place. The letter should include:

- the purpose of the meeting
- a request for any specific documentary evidence (e.g. medical evidence)
- an outline of the members of staff present at the meeting
- reference to the student's entitlement to be accompanied by an enrolled student, Students' Union representative or staff member. Students with disabilities may alternatively, choose their support worker, or students undergoing therapy or counselling may choose to bring their therapist or Counsellor, including the University's Counsellor.

The purpose of the panel is to ascertain the facts of the case and to discuss an appropriate course of action. Witnesses, including from external sources, such as an appropriate practitioner deemed suitable by the Fitness to Study Panel, may be called to provide oral evidence or to provide written statements.

In some cases where an immediate risk of harm is presented, it may be appropriate to undertake immediate action to safeguard the student/others. This action may include contacting an external party, including (but not limited to) the Police, relevant NHS service and/or the student's emergency contact. This action will only be undertaken when it is deemed necessary to prevent harm.

8.3.2 Stage 3 Outcomes

- Dismissal of the case
- No further action
- Further reasonable support or adjustments agreed
- The student is referred for appropriate medical assessment
- The student is withdrawn from placement
- Permission for the student to continue with the programme with appropriate written advice and guidance
- Permission for the student to continue with the programme under supervision
- Permission for the student to continue with the programme with a written warning
- A period of voluntary Leave of Absence is recommended
- The student is referred into the Fitness to Practice process.
- Temporary suspension of the student from studies until specified criteria for readmission, as set out in the outcome letter, have been addressed Temporary suspension pending outcomes of consideration of the case under the Fitness to Practise procedure.
- The student is withdrawn from studies.

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8.3.3 Voluntary Leave of Absence

If, following discussion with the Fitness to Study Panel and the relevant support services, the student wishes to take a voluntary Leave of Absence in order to access appropriate help and support, they should follow the Vet School Leave of Absence procedure.

8.3.4 Compulsory Leave of Absence

The panel may decide to impose a compulsory leave of absence to allow the student to seek external help and support. A compulsory leave of absence will be based upon the outcome of a formal risk assessment through the Fitness to Study Panel. Any leave of absence under these circumstances should be greater than 15 days' duration but normally no more than 12 months' duration, during which time a student is not undertaking any study. The student will be required to complete their award within the maximum period of registration.

Any student who is subject to a compulsory leave of absence may be prohibited from participating in School and University activities and may either be prohibited from entering the University premises or have restricted rights to enter the premises (including residential accommodation); and/or on exercising the functions or duties of any office or committee membership in the School, University or the Students' Union.

The terms of the period of any compulsory leave of absence will be notified to the student in writing, depending on the circumstances of the case. If leave of absence is recommended the panel should make sure that both they and the student are fully aware of the implications. The student should be given a clear indication of the proposed return date and regular reviews should be built in.

8.3.5 Temporary suspension

Where there is concern in relation to student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour, the School may impose immediate conditions on that student to ensure that a full and proper investigation can be carried out and/or to safeguard the student or others whilst the concerns are being considered. In the event that the University believes that a student presents a threat of harm to themselves, other students and/or members of the University or to University property, the University may temporarily suspend the student. Temporary suspensions are precautionary for the safety of the student wellbeing or that of staff or students and are in place until such time as the student has been assessed by a medical professional, accessed support services both within and outside of the host University or until the School has obtained further information where necessary.

For the purposes of this procedure, temporary suspension is defined as a partial or total ban on attendance at the University, including at learning, teaching or assessment activities, including placements; and/or on participation in School and University activities, and/or on attendance at or access to specified facilities or parts of each University (including residential accommodation); and/or on exercising the functions or duties of any office or committee membership in the School or University. In consultation with the Student's Union the temporary suspension may also include a ban on exercising the functions or duties of any office or committee membership within the Students' Union.

A temporary suspension will be based upon the outcome of a formal risk assessment through the stage 3 Panel. The temporary suspension will be for a specific period of time.

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In each case of temporary suspension, the student will be informed in writing of the specific restrictions placed upon them, of the timescale and manner by which the suspension will be reviewed and of their right to appeal.

All efforts will be made, as far as is possible, to reduce the impact of any temporary suspension on the student's studies. A temporary suspension will be reviewed 4 weeks from the date that it came into effect or earlier upon receipt of the outcome of an internal investigation, evidence of external developments or significantly altered circumstances of the student. The temporary suspension shall normally remain in place until such time as any investigation and or confirmation from a health care professional has been obtained.

9.2.4 Termination of Studies

If the Fitness to Study Panel concludes, taking into account the individual circumstances of the case and any supporting medical evidence, that there is no reasonable prospect of the student re-engaging with their programme, a recommendation will be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the host University that the student is permanently withdrawn from the University. This recommendation should only be made in the most serious cases and be based on a risk assessment conducted by the Fitness to Study Panel.

9.2.5 Returning to study

The decision to allow a student to return to study will be made by the Fitness to Study Panel, taking into account evidence from the student, staff, health professional(s) and study needs assessment reports where appropriate. The student might be required to meet with the Panel to clarify aspects of the evidence provided to assist the Panel in making its decision. If the student is required to meet with panel members, or a sub-group of it, they may be accompanied by support worker, enrolled student, Students' Union representative or staff member. The Panel must be assured of fitness to study, taking into account the willingness and capacity of the student to comply with any conditions imposed, and the ability of the University to meet the identified support needs upon return.

The Panel's recommendation will be confirmed in writing, including any conditions of return to study and notified to the student within five working days of the panel hearing.

10.0 Right to appeal

Where the Fitness to Study panel makes the decision to terminate a student's studies, or to not permit a student to return to studies following a leave of absence, the student has the right to appeal the decision. Appeals should be made to the student's host University.

- Harper Adams University hosted students should appeal in writing to appeals@harper-adams.ac.uk

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- Keele University hosted students should appeal in writing to appeals@keele.ac.uk

Appeals should be made in writing within 10 working days of notification of the original decision. Appeals can only be made on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity;
- New material evidence which was not previously, reasonably, available
- Bias or reasonable perception of bias

The appeal will be considered by both the Harper Adams Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Keele Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students) who will consider all the evidence upon which the original decision was made and any additional evidence submitted by the appellant, and agree an outcome.

The outcomes of the appeal may include one from the following, non-exhaustive list:

- Appeal dismissed;
- Decision overturned with a different outcome to that agreed by the Fitness to Study Panel, albeit that the student remains not able to study;
- Decision overturned with the appellant permitted to resume their studies within the terms set out by the Appeal panel.

The Panel's decision in relation to the appeal is final and concludes the University's procedures. Once the University's appeals procedure has been exhausted, the student will be issued with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter from their host University and advised to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. The OIA will determine whether the student's complaint is eligible under its rules.