



Fitness to Study Policy

Purpose

Truro and Penwith College takes the health, safety, and wellbeing of all learners seriously, we recognise this as being fundamental to their academic progress. We are committed to supporting learners so that they may both feel and function well, and we seek to provide a teaching and learning environment that is safe and conducive to study.

We therefore have a duty of care to respond appropriately to situations where concerns are raised about a learner. We will intervene if a learner's state of health presents a risk, either to themselves or to others, or where this results in unreasonable demands being placed on staff, or that the teaching and learning environment is compromised so that we cannot ensure the health and safety of both the learner concerned and those affected by the learner.

We may require a learner who is on course to interrupt their studies, this would always be at the discretion of a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT). Examples include, when a learner's conduct is presenting risks in how they behave and treat other people, how they function in managing their own health and safety and where this impacts on other learners, staff, college users or members of the public. We do this in recognition that there may be underlying physical or mental health concerns, substance misuse or difficult personal circumstances giving rise to or contributing to unacceptable conduct.

We further accept that we have a duty of care to ensure that an applicant is fit to study and may require them to delay their course start date.

This policy is intended to be supportive rather than penal in nature. It is for use where the staff recognises there may be an underlying health or social concern about a student, but their present conduct, disruption or risk is perceived to be serious or has the potential for escalation to a serious nature.

Definitions

Wellbeing – a condition in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life and can work productively and fruitfully.

Policy

It is part of the educational aim of the College to nurture a spirit of independence, self-awareness, and personal responsibility amongst learners. Learners must therefore take an

active part in the process by taking appropriate measures to manage their own health and wellbeing so that they can achieve and succeed. Many opportunities are provided to learners throughout the academic year to engage in activities delivered through the tutorial system, Student Services team and the Health and Wellbeing programme, to learn about and develop their own wellbeing.

The College therefore has an expectation that its learners should demonstrate that they are fit to study by showing both awareness and ability:

- Awareness of their own wellbeing, health, and safety and that of others; the risk of physical danger to themselves and others.
- Ability to communicate effectively with fellow learners, staff and other professionals through which ever method is usual to that learner; attend and engage in classes, tutorials and private study, with their usual support adjustments as necessary; submit coursework and engage with the assessment process within required timescales, with appropriate adjustments.

This policy applies to learners and applicants. It applies to learners where unacceptable conduct is observed on or close-by college premises and during study activities off-site such as outings, visits, residentials, field work or placements or when brought to the attention of the College. It applies to applicants where there is cause to believe at application that they may not be fit to study or where information requested by the College is not forthcoming within stated time periods.

We strive for consistency and sensitivity in these matters so any decisions will be reached through a team approach following consultation and advice from relevant individuals. The learner's views will form part of the consideration, as will the views of the learner's parents, guardians or advocates where appropriate, the staff's judgment of their awareness and ability to learn, study and interact with the rest of the College and the overview of the Programme Team Leader (PTL) with regard to the achievement, success and progression of the learner.

No learner can be withdrawn from their programme of study and/or the college without first consulting the learner, and where appropriate their parents, guardians, advocates or next of kin. Only the appropriate Senior Management Team (SMT) or Operational Management Team (OMT) can withdraw a learner in consultation with the Team Leader for Student Services, the learner's Programme Team Leader (PTL) and where appropriate the Safeguarding Officer and Director of Inclusive Practice.

Implementation

This policy should be implemented by any member of staff, in consultation with the relevant PTL, when a learner's health or wellbeing:

- is having a detrimental ability on their ability to achieve and succeed and enjoy college;
- and/or is disruptive to the teaching and learning environment;
- and/or is placing an unreasonable burden on staff;
- and/or is impacting on the learning of others.

If a learner has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) an EHCP review will need to be held in place of enacting the Fitness to Study Policy.

It is an alternative to other means of managing concern about conduct where there is sufficient indication that the conduct could be the result of mental, emotional, or physical ill health or disability, wellbeing or difficult personal circumstances. These indications should be of a serious nature but equally they should be addressed promptly as early intervention may result in earlier support and better outcomes for the learner by avoiding the situation becoming more complex. It is possible that the learner's studies may be the cause of the learner's mental health concerns and will need to be considered.

It is possible that such intervention may increase a learner's experience of distress rather than appearing as an opportunity to get help. The policy should therefore be used sensitively, ensuring that the learner and their parents, guardians, advocates or next of kin understand that the focus is supportive not penal.

Once the decision to implement the policy has been agreed by the member of staff, Programme Team Leader and Team Leader for Student Services, the necessary personnel to take the concern forward will be involved.

All information provided during the implementation of this policy will remain confidential for use within the policy and procedure and is subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Only staff directly involved in the process will be given access to confidential information.

Associated Documentation and Policies

- Student Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk
- Self-Harm and Suicidal Behaviour
- Mental Health
- Admissions Policy
- Data Protection
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Health and Safety