

## Support to Study Procedure

### Effective from 1 September 2022

This document should be read in conjunction with the Support to Study Policy.

The procedure is applicable to **all registered students**. It sets out how the University will support students who, **due to health issues or disability**, may be struggling with their studies or with being in the University environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Newcastle University is committed to supporting all students' health and wellbeing and we believe that empowering you to manage any health issues or disabilities is critical to your student experience and academic outcomes.

However, we recognise that there may be some instances where your health or disability may affect your ability to study effectively or be part of the University community, and you may require some additional support. For example, if:

- Your health or disability creates a risk to your own health, safety and wellbeing, or that of other members of the University community;
- Your behaviour is (or is at risk of) negatively affecting the teaching, learning or experience of other students, or the day to day activities of the University or placement/year abroad provider;
- Your support needs fall outside the scope of what the University can be reasonably expected to provide, either directly or indirectly.

In these instances, this procedure may be initiated. It is important to note that this is **not** a punishment, but rather a way of providing you with some additional support to help you succeed in your programme of study.

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## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

We understand that there are times when you may need some additional support or guidance throughout the Support to Study Procedure. You may find it helpful to seek advice or support from the following services:

- [Student Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Student Progress Service](#)
- [Student Advice Centre of the Students' Union](#)

If you are required to attend any formal meetings throughout this process (i.e. at either Level 2 or 3 of this procedure), you may choose to be accompanied by a friend or supporter. Please see the [guidance on the role of a friend or supporter](#), which sets out what your friend or supporter can expect of any meeting and the specific role they will play in the process.

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## SUPPORT TO STUDY PROCEDURE

*For a glossary of terms used within this procedure, please see [Appendix 2](#).*

The Support to Study Procedure has three levels. Although most Support to Study cases will begin at Level 1, it is important for you to note that the Procedure can be invoked at any level and it does not need to progress through each level in order.

- **Level 1: Informal Support**

Additional support will normally be provided to you via your Academic Unit (usually from your personal tutor/supervisor, or School wellbeing advisor).

- **Level 2: Formal Support**

This usually takes the form of formalised support from your Academic Unit with additional support from the Student Health and Wellbeing Service. You will work together to develop and agree an appropriate Action Plan in an attempt to help you engage with your studies.

- **Level 3 Fitness to Study Considerations**

If your situation is assessed to be a more significant concern, or support at Level 1 or 2 of this procedure has not allowed you to meet the requirements of your programme, you may be referred to an impartial 'Fitness to Study' panel for further consideration of what the most supportive and appropriate course of action may be.

### **Level 1: Informal Support**

If concerns have been raised about your capability to study, your personal tutor/supervisor will normally contact you to arrange an initial meeting to discuss the concerns. This meeting is intended to be supportive and non-confrontational and will give both you and your tutor/supervisor the opportunity to address any issues and think about ways in which support might be put in place for you to help you to continue your studies.

Additional support may include, for example:

- Directing you to support services (such as the Student Health and Wellbeing Service, your GP, or external services);
- Talking to you about whether a Student Support Plan might be appropriate so that more long-term adjustments can be put in place to support you;
- Supporting you to submit a Personal Extenuating Circumstance (PEC) form to request appropriate adjustments for your assessments;
- Discussing whether it might be appropriate for you to take a voluntary interruption of study to allow you to concentrate on your health for a period of time, and how you would go about doing this.

Your personal tutor/supervisor will normally arrange follow-up meetings with you, at least once a month, until you both agree that further meetings are no longer required.

### **Level 2: Formal Support**

In some cases, it may be appropriate to put more formal support in place for you. This could be because your circumstances suggest that additional support is needed beyond what your personal tutor/supervisor can provide, or because Level 1 provision has not been able to address the concerns raised about your ability to study.

You will be invited in writing to attend a formal meeting with your Academic Unit and, where appropriate, the Student Health and Wellbeing Service. In advance of the meeting, you may be asked to submit additional information or evidence – such as medical evidence. It is important to note that if you choose not to attend this meeting or engage with the process, the meeting may still go ahead, and your circumstances will be considered without your input.

During this meeting, you will normally be asked to work with your Academic Unit and the Student Health and Wellbeing Service to develop an Action Plan to address the concerns about your capability to study or be in the University environment; this will most likely include a plan of how additional support can be put in place for you through regular meetings or adjustments to your programme of study. This action plan will outline the next steps; if you do not agree to it, you will be advised that your case may be referred to Level 3 of this Procedure.

### **Level 3: Fitness to Study Considerations**

If your situation is assessed to be of a more significant concern, you may be referred to an impartial 'Fitness to Study' panel to further consider your circumstances. A 'more significant concern' means that one or more of the following criteria applies:

- The serious concerns raised about your capability to study or be in the University environment under Level 2 of this procedure have not been resolved;
- There are serious concerns about your behaviour that would need to be addressed beyond level 2 of this procedure;
- The circumstances reported are particularly serious and highlight that remaining in the University environment and/or continuing with your studies may not be in your best interests;
- There is evidence that your studies or being in the University environment is having a negative impact on your health;
- There is evidence that your behaviours or health issues pose a risk to, or are having a negative impact on, you or others.

The purpose of a Fitness to Study panel is to gather information to make a decision as to whether continuing your studies is in your best interests and the best interests of those around you. The Fitness to Study panel will consist of two impartial members of the University's Academic Appeals Panel, and the Director of the Student Health and Wellbeing Service (or their nominee). You will be informed in advance of the names of the people who will form part of the Fitness to Study Panel and if you have any concerns about the impartiality of any member, you may write to the Head of the Student Progress Service via

[casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk) within 5 working days of being informed of the panel members to request a review of the Panel membership.

Before the Fitness to Study panel hearing, you will be invited to provide a written statement and submit any medical or personal information which you believe helps explain your current circumstances. In addition, you may also be asked to provide your consent to share additional medical information such as your Student Support Plan (SSP), where appropriate.

See: [Appendix 1](#) for advice on how to compose a written statement

During the Fitness to Study panel hearing, you will be given the opportunity to answer questions from the Panel about your health and its impact on your studies. Details of your engagement with your Academic Unit and the Student Health and Wellbeing Service will be sought and provided in advance of the hearing (a case report). The Panel may also ask for further information from other key areas of the University, such as the Accommodation Service.

You have a right to request that the Panel considers any additional evidence you may have, or for additional witness statements to be taken into account. You will receive a full set of the hearing papers at least 7 days in advance of the hearing.

The [Operational Guidance for Student Committee Hearings](#) outlines what you can expect from the Fitness to Study Panel hearing.

If you are unable to attend the hearing, you can ask for it to be rescheduled to a more convenient time, by emailing the committee secretary via [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk). It is important to note that if you do not attend the hearing, it will usually still go ahead in your absence, and a decision will be made based on the information available to the Panel.

Where possible, you will be informed of the outcome of the Fitness to Study panel hearing in person. This will be followed up by a full 'Statement of Reasons' which outlines the reason for the decision. You will also be given details of how to appeal any decisions you are unhappy about.



## INTERIM SUSPENSIONS

There may be some instances where the University decides to place you on an interim suspension from your programme of study until your case can be considered by a Fitness to Study panel, for example, if there are serious concerns for your safety or the safety of other members of the University community.

An interim suspension is **not** a punishment, but rather a precautionary measure designed to protect you and others. Interim suspensions usually only remain in place until a Fitness to Study panel hearing can be held to fully consider your individual circumstances.



## APPEALS

You have the right to appeal against any Fitness to Study panel outcomes or interim suspensions imposed on you, but your reason for appeal must be one (or more) of the following:

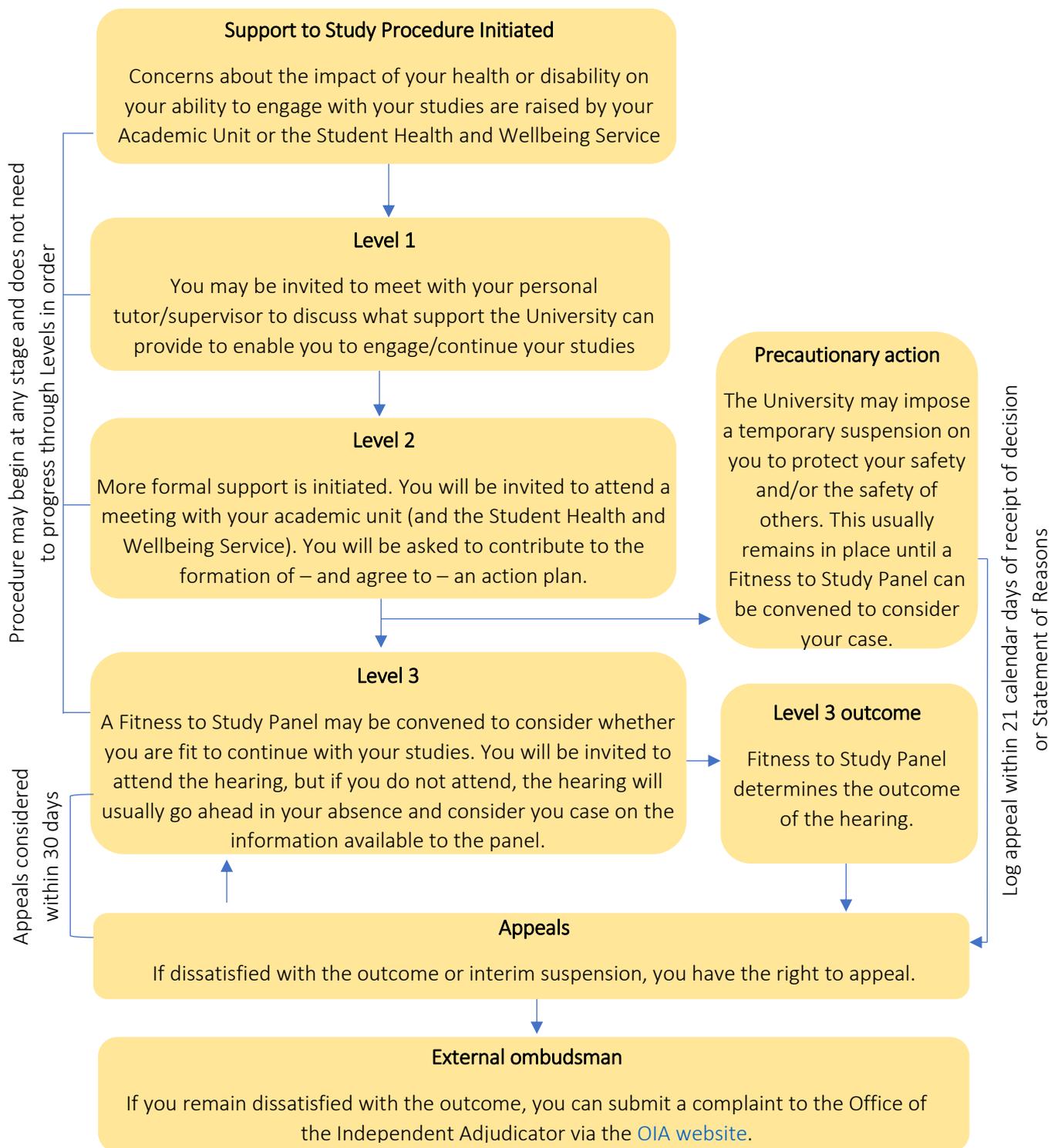
- There is new material evidence available which was not reasonably available at the time the original decision was made;
- Procedural irregularity;
- Bias or prejudice;
- The decision reached was perverse in that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.

If you wish to make an appeal against a Fitness to Study panel decision or interim suspension, you should submit a personal statement outlining your reasons for appeal, alongside any accompanying evidence.

Appeal requests must be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar via [casework@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:casework@ncl.ac.uk) within 21 calendar days of the date of the Decision Letter.

If you remain dissatisfied with the final decision once all University Procedures have been completed, you can seek an external review by submitting a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) via their [website](#). Complaints to the OIA must be submitted within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

## Quick guide: Support to Study Procedure



## APPENDIX 1: Guidance for writing a statement for Level 2/Level 3 Support to Study

Statements provided as part of the Support to Study process are personal in nature, and so every student will be different in terms of what they want to include in their statement. However, in the preparation of your statement, it may help you to think about the following:

- What difficulties are you currently facing? Are these new or ongoing?
- What steps have you taken to address these difficulties and/or to seek additional support for yourself and what has been the effect of this?
- What impact have these difficulties had on your ability to study, engage with your University work, or live within the University environment?
- Have you received any medical or other treatment? Could you provide details of this, or any medical evidence?
- What support do you currently have around you? (family, friends, medical support, therapists, etc.)
- How do you think that your current circumstances/health issues/difficulties may be affecting other people?
- How do you plan to address the concerns raised about you?
- What would be your desired outcome of the Support to Study process?

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## APPENDIX 2: Glossary of terms and roles

An **Academic Appeals Panel** is a panel of Academic and/or Professional Services University employees appointed by the University Education Committee to investigate matters related to student academic progress and/or student welfare.

The **Academic Registrar**, or nominee, is the senior University employee with overall responsibility for the Support to Study Policy and Procedure.

An **Academic Unit** is the School or Institute your programme of study belongs to. For example, the Academic Unit for Mechanical Engineering is the School of Engineering; the Academic Unit for Fine Art is the School of Arts and Cultures.

An **Action Plan** is a formal document created collaboratively between you and your Academic Unit. It outlines specific actions that you will need to take and support that may be put in place in order for you to continue your studies or remain within the University environment.

An **Appeal Adjudicator** is a Dean or other member of the Academic Appeals Panel with no prior involvement in or close connection to the case and appointed by the Head of the Student Progress Service to consider formal appeals against Support to Study decisions.

An **Authorised Person** is a person with relevant experience and expertise nominated by the Head of School within the Academic Unit to coordinate and manage formal support under the Support to Study Procedure. The Authorised Person may be, for example, a Senior Tutor,

Degree Programme Director, Director of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Director of Postgraduate Studies.

**Capability to Study** means you are able to engage successfully with your programme of study and remain within a University environment. It does not just include whether a student is maintaining good academic standards; sometimes a student may be performing well academically, but their course or the University environment may be having a negative effect on their health; or their health conditions or behaviours may be putting others at risk. All of these factors are considered when assessing a student's capability to study.

**Degree Programme Directors** are the academic colleagues responsible for overseeing specific degree programme. They are responsible for considering requests for adjustments made by students, such as adjustments to the mode or pattern of study, or interruptions of study.

The **Head of Student Progress Service** is responsible for considering referrals to Level 3 of the procedure, holding case conferences, and where appropriate, initiate Level 3 Fitness to Study hearings, including the appointment of panel members.

**Students** are responsible for reading and adhering to the [Student Charter – Rights and Responsibilities](#), which sets out the University's expectations of students. Students are expected to cooperate with the Support to Study Procedure, including by agreeing to abide by Support to Study Action Plans.

The **Student Health and Wellbeing Service** is responsible for providing wellbeing support to students and for working with disabled students to create Student Support Plans. The Student Health and Wellbeing Service can initiate Level 2 formal support under this procedure and can also request Level 3 Fitness to Study Considerations.

A **Student Support Plan (SSP)** is a formal document created in conjunction with the Student Health and Wellbeing Service. SSPs outline the reasonable adjustments the University will make to support a disabled student.