The Sysco Group

Fitness to Study Policy

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This policy is written in line with the Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), which are a key reference point for higher education providers in all parts of the UK.

Fitness to Study refers to a student's capability to participate safely and effectively in their academic, social, enrichment and, where applicable, residential activities. Sysco Business Skills Academy (SBSA) aims to take a positive and supportive approach in responding to students' physical and mental health needs, enabling them to learn successfully, reach their academic potential, and gain the most from their qualification.

The Fitness to Study Policy should only be implemented when other College policies or procedures are not suitable. At any time, if SBSA considers that the Disciplinary Procedure or another related policy would be more appropriate, it reserves the right to use those instead. This applies throughout the application process, during induction and for the duration of the course.

This procedure ensures that any student subject to Fitness to Study processes is treated fairly, transparently and respectfully, with decisions made promptly, proportionately and sensitively in response to significant concerns about their fitness to study.

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to encourage positive support for students whose health or wellbeing is affecting their own studies or those of others. It can be used when a student poses a risk to themselves or others. As part of SBSA's duty of care, there is an obligation to respond appropriately when there are serious concerns relating to a student's mental or physical capacity and the resulting impact on the student and the wider community.

This policy will be used in situations involving:

- Concerns regarding a student's ability to study and/or meet course learning outcomes, even with reasonable adjustments in place.
- Behaviour or circumstances that negatively affect the health, safety, wellbeing or learning of the student or those they interact with.

SBSA will respond in a non-judgemental, non-discriminatory manner, ensuring consistency and sensitivity while applying the level of intervention appropriate to the situation. External professional support may be recommended, and written confirmation of a student's fitness to study may be requested.

Early support is strongly encouraged, when assistance is in place and followed, crisis situations can often be avoided.

In managing student wellbeing, all relevant people, including students, their parents/guardians, carers, employers, external agencies and local authorities should be involved wherever possible. Failure to engage with support outlined in care plans, behaviour plans or risk assessments may lead to disciplinary action and potential removal from the programme.

This procedure promotes early identification, collaboration and robust assessment so that students can receive the support they need and avoid disciplinary outcomes wherever possible. However, where there are significant risks to health, safety or wellbeing, SBSA will act to fulfil its legal obligations and duty of care.

Legislation, Data Protection and Confidentiality

Students with mental or physical health conditions are entitled to reasonable adjustments and suitable support, in line with relevant legislation including:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019
- SEND Code of Practice

All personal and sensitive data will be managed according to the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR.

There may be situations where SBSA must share information even if the student withholds consent, such as when:

- A student's behaviour poses a safeguarding risk to themselves or others
- Failure to disclose information may result in civil or criminal liability for SBSA

A "reasonable adjustment" is a step taken to ensure that a learner is not placed at a substantial disadvantage because of a disability, difficulty or additional need. Adjustments must not compromise academic standards, health and safety, or the rights and interests of other students. Adjustments must also be financially and practically reasonable.

Support for eligible students may be funded through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), which aims to remove barriers to learning through reasonable adjustments.

SBSA follows procedures and guidelines designed to maintain fairness, order and the development of students' skills while recognising conditions that may affect their ability to complete their studies.

On occasion, students may become unfit to study or work, with or without realising it. This may occur if they display inappropriate behaviour, pose a danger to themselves or others, disrupt learning, or impede SBSA's operation. Students may also be considered unfit where prolonged or repeated absences caused by health conditions persist despite reasonable adjustments.

The Procedure

The procedure has two stages—informal and formal. Depending on the seriousness of the concern, SBSA may move directly to the formal stage. A student's willingness to engage will influence the actions taken; however, the process may continue without their participation if necessary.

At any point during the process, a student may be suspended on an interim basis.

Students have the right to be accompanied by a supporter of their choice (friend, family member, employer, or student representative). Legal representatives cannot attend in a professional capacity.

Informal Stage

When a concern arises, the staff member should seek advice from any of the below Student Support Services;

- Designated safeguarding lead
- Mental Health first aider
- SBSA student finance support
- Onsite mentor

If the Fitness to Study Procedure is deemed appropriate, an informal meeting will be arranged with the student by the staff member**.**

The meeting will explore the concerns and agree on next steps. The student will receive written confirmation of the agreed outcomes. These may include:

- The concerns have been resolved, and the Fitness to Study process is closed
- An action plan with a review date is needed
- Concerns remain, and escalation to the formal stage is appropriate

Records must be stored appropriately, respecting confidentiality.

Formal Stage

The formal stage is used when serious or ongoing concerns put the student or others at risk. This may involve continued issues from the informal stage or a new situation requiring urgent action.

A Fitness to Study Panel—consisting of the HE Manager, Managing Director and relevant curriculum support staff—will review the available evidence.

A meeting will be held with the student and, where suitable, their parent or guardian. Representatives from appropriate SBSA areas (e.g., Curriculum, Support Services) will attend. The meeting will explore all reasonable options to support the student in continuing their studies.

The student may submit evidence, and College staff will present relevant information. The meeting may be paused to gather further details, and additional meetings may take place. Once all information is considered, the panel will make a decision and notify the student in writing.

Possible outcomes include:

- No further action and closure of the process
- An enhanced action plan with review dates
- A voluntary interruption of studies
- A suspension for a defined period
- Withdrawal from the course
- Any other appropriate and proportionate action

Appeals

A senior manager not previously involved will investigate any appeal. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the HE Manager within five days of receiving the decision, stating the grounds for appeal.

The HE manager or their nominee will review the appeal and supporting evidence and issue an outcome within 15 working days.

Higher Education students who have completed the appeals processes will receive a Completion of Procedures letter confirming their right to request an external review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).