

Academic Performance and Attendance Policy and Procedure

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All Colleges within the South Thames Colleges Group (the Group) are committed to ensuring the maintenance of a community in which both learners and staff can work or study to the best of their abilities. The Group ethos rests on the ideals of mutual respect and co-operation that provides the basis for the orderly conduct of the community at each College.

2 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to help and encourage students to achieve and maintain required standards of academic performance and attendance. Its aim is to ensure that when expected levels of academic performance and attendance are not reached, the Group takes consistent and fair action.
- 2.2 This Policy and Procedure applies to all students enrolled at a College in the Group.
- 2.3 This Policy and Procedure applies to academic performance and attendance only. This includes both on Group premises and any academic performance or attendance off Group premises, including but not limited to educational visits, work placements and work experience.
- 2.4 The Group Principal and Chief Executive is responsible for maintaining academic standards within the rules and procedures provided for in the Articles of Government. The exclusion of students for academic reasons has been delegated to designated posts as defined in the Articles of Government and set out in this Policy and Procedure and are Senior Postholders or a panel of Vice Principal's and/or Heads of School.
- 2.5 Any actions taken under the Academic Performance and Attendance Procedure are undertaken on behalf of the Group Principal and Chief Executive under a system of delegated authority.
- 2.6 The Group reserves the right to add to, or amend the Academic Performance and Attendance Policy and Procedures from time to time.

3 Operation

- 3.1 Where possible, minor performance and attendance issues should be dealt with informally by the staff member with responsibilities for the area where the performance issue has occurred, normally the student’s tutor.

- 3.2 The Group will endeavour to deal with any performance and/or attendance matters promptly and without undue delay and expects students to co-operate to achieve that aim.

- 3.3 Performance and/or attendance issues outside of College may need to be dealt with under this Policy and Procedure where it is considered that it has a direct bearing upon the student’s academic performance/attendance.

- 3.4 This Policy and Procedure sits alongside the Group’s Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure. If, after commencing this Policy and Procedure, the Group considers that the matter ought to be dealt with under either of these policies and procedures, the case under this Policy and Procedure will be ceased and transferred to the other procedure at the appropriate stage. The student will be notified of this decision and the reason(s). It shall be for the Group to determine the appropriate procedure to be followed and its decision shall be final.

- 3.5 All students will have the opportunity to be accompanied at any formal meetings or hearings under this Policy and Procedure by their parent/guardian, a student representative, or fellow student who is not implicated in the case. Legal representation will not normally be permitted in any meetings/hearings.

- 3.6 Students have a right to make a reasonable request to postpone any formal meeting/hearing under this Policy and Procedure for up to 1 week for any reason e.g. by reason of sickness or if their chosen companion is unable to attend. Only one postponement will normally be permitted and if, following such a postponement, the student does not attend on the re-arranged date, the Group may proceed with the meeting/hearing in their absence. The Group will inform the student of its decision, with reasons.

- 3.7 Other than in exceptional circumstances, the Group does not agree to meetings/hearings being recorded. The student and anyone accompanying them should not make electronic recordings of any meetings/hearings conducted under this Policy and Procedure. Where it is subsequently found that a student (or anyone accompanying them) has secretly recorded any meeting/hearing conducted under this Policy and Procedure, this may constitute

misconduct under the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and could result in disciplinary action.

- 3.8 All parties involved in this Policy and Procedure must ensure that they maintain, as appropriate, the confidentiality of the process within the Group and comply with the Group's Data Protection Policy. There may be circumstances in which the Group is required to make a disclosure, for example in order to fulfil a legal or regulatory obligation.
- 3.9 Although the timescales in this Policy and Procedure will usually be met, the Group has the right to extend timescales. In such circumstances, the parties concerned will be advised of the extension.
- 3.10 If the student has difficulty at any stage of this Policy and Procedure because of a disability, they should discuss it with their tutor as soon as possible. The Group will make any reasonable adjustments required to this Policy and Procedure. The student will be informed of any adjustment and the reasons for it. The Group retains the discretion to conduct the process as it thinks fit.
- 3.11 Students can make use of the support available by contacting Student Services at any time who are locally available at each College.

4 Academic Performance

- 4.1 The Group expects the following as part of a student's academic performance:
- 4.1.1 To consistently bring/have the correct learning materials for the class;
- 4.1.2 To take increasing responsibility for their own learning, including showing commitment over the academic year; engaging with additional activity and catching-up when required;
- 4.1.3 To ask for help if support is required to understand, participate in the learning activity or implement a support strategy;
- 4.1.4 To complete all parts of the programme of study including work experience and placements;
- 4.1.5 To complete 100% of class-work, homework and assignments as directed by members of staff and to submit the work to the set deadlines to the best of the student's ability;
- 4.1.6 To seek help and support from a tutor or Student Support Services if necessary;

- 4.1.7 To take responsibility for their own learning by ensuring they communicate often with their teaching and tutorial staff, for example, by taking full part in the Group’s system of induction and progress review events;
 - 4.1.8 To make learning successful for themselves and others by being a reflective, cooperative and collaborative learner;
 - 4.1.9 To make every effort to pass all assessments/tests;
 - 4.1.10 To use ProPortal to record their progress, achievements and future plans regularly setting and reviewing SMART learning targets within ProPortal.
- 4.2 Tutors are expected to regularly review the academic performance of students, giving timely feedback, identifying any concerns over performance at the earliest opportunity and providing appropriate support. All relevant information will be recorded on ProMonitor and the Group expects students to regularly update this through their view of the same tracking system; ProPortal. All progress and achievements (including any nominations, awards and/or prizes are also recorded on ProMonitor along with a commendation letter from the Vice Principal/College Principal where appropriate).
- 4.3 Heads of School and their Deputies as well as Head of Section, or their delegates, will monitor the performance of students against the Group’s standards and will support tutors in applying the values and procedures consistently and fairly.

5 Attendance

- 5.1 The Group expects student attendance to be 100%. The Group measures attendance as physical presence, including educational visits, work placements and work experience.
- 5.2 The Group’s attendance values are as follows:
- 5.2.1 Excellent attendance: more than 95%
 - 5.2.2 Good attendance: more than 90%
 - 5.2.3 Satisfactory attendance: more than 85%
 - 5.2.4 Needs improvement attendance: between 75% and 85% - this will trigger a Stage 1 support meeting
 - 5.2.5 Unsatisfactory attendance: lower than 75% - this will trigger Stage 2 or 3 of the formal procedure
- 5.3 Arriving more than 15 minutes late to class (or other academic event) will be treated as non-attendance.

5.4 Authorised absences will not impact on the student's attendance figures as above. All authorised absence requires prior staff permission. Authorised absences may include:

5.4.1 Job or University interviews;

5.4.2 Medical appointments;

5.4.3 Bereavement leave;

5.4.4 Recognised religious holidays;

5.4.5 Attending as a companion to another student's formal meeting/hearing;

5.4.6 Significant widespread travel disruption;

5.4.7 Illness supported by medical evidence such as a letter from a Doctor.

5.5 The Group retains the discretion to alter/amend the reasons for authorised absences at any time.

5.6 Tutors are expected to keep all absences under review and follow up in relation to any persistent absences.

5.7 Heads of School and their Deputies as well as Head of Section/Curriculum Managers, or their delegates, will monitor the attendance of students against the Group's standards and will support tutors in applying the values and procedures consistently and fairly.

6 Procedure for Performance and Attendance issues

6.1 Stage 1 - Informal Procedure (Initial Support & Concerns)

6.1.1 In the first instance, academic performance and/or attendance issues should be dealt with informally between the student and their tutor. The formal procedure should be used in more serious cases, or in any case where an earlier informal discussion at Stage 1 has not resulted in satisfactory improvement.

6.1.2 The student will be invited to meet with their tutor for an informal discussion. The discussion is to ensure that the student:

6.1.2.1 is aware of the concerns;

6.1.2.2 knows what is required to meet expected standards of performance/attendance, with targets set if appropriate;

6.1.2.3 is able to raise or address any factors which may be relevant e.g. health, fitness to study etc;

- 6.1.2.4 is made aware of the timescale over which an improvement is required;
- 6.1.2.5 is made aware that further poor academic performance/attendance and/or failure to meet the expected standards of performance/attendance will result in the application of the formal procedure.

- 6.1.3 The discussion and outcome, including any targets and action, should be confirmed in writing by the tutor and placed on ProMonitor.

- 6.1.4 Appropriate action may include:
 - 6.1.4.1 support;
 - 6.1.4.2 advice and guidance;
 - 6.1.4.3 recommending alternative academic pathways;
 - 6.1.4.4 coaching and counselling.

This list is non-exhaustive.

- 6.1.5 Following the discussion, the tutor will continue to monitor the student and provide regular reviews and feedback which will be recorded on ProMonitor.

- 6.1.6 This does not form part of the formal procedure.

6.2 Stage 2 – Formal Procedure (Enhanced Action Plan/Investigation)

- 6.2.1 If informal action does not bring about the required improvement, or where the shortfall(s) in academic performance/attendance are considered to be more serious, the tutor may refer the matter to Stage 2 which forms part of the Formal Procedure.

- 6.2.2 A curriculum manager will consider the following:
 - 6.2.2.1 the background i.e. the student’s academic/attendance history and current position;
 - 6.2.2.2 details of the performance/attendance issues;
 - 6.2.2.3 details of the support provided to date;
 - 6.2.2.4 details of ongoing concerns;
 - 6.2.2.5 any mitigating factors;
 - 6.2.2.6 impact on the College/Group (including staff and students);
 - 6.2.2.7 supporting evidence.

6.2.3 In some cases it will be necessary/appropriate to compile a report detailing the above.

6.2.4 The curriculum manager will then meet with the student (and parent/guardian, external agencies as applicable) to provide an enhanced action plan with updated targets/action and new timescales. This will form part of a first written warning which will remain current for 6 months from the date of issue. The student will be informed that failure to improve their academic performance/attendance within the new timescales will result in Stage 3 of the process being invoked, which could result in exclusion. This will be confirmed in writing and ProMonitor will be updated with the enhanced action plan and first written warning.

6.3 **Stage 3 – Final Intervention/Outcome**

6.3.1 If formal action under Stage 2 does not bring about the required improvement, or where the shortfall(s) in performance/attendance are considered so serious a referral will be made to a College Principal or Vice Principal for consideration. The tutor or curriculum manager will inform the student of the decision to refer the matter.

6.3.2 Where the College Principal or Vice Principal agrees that the matter should progress to Stage 3, the tutor or curriculum manager will prepare/update their report which will be used at an Academic Performance Hearing/Attendance Hearing. The report will include all details set out at paragraph 6.2.2 above.

6.3.3 It will not be necessary in every case of poor performance/attendance to carry out a further investigation or to obtain witness statements. In most instances, it will be sufficient for the student’s tutor to have gathered the appropriate evidence into their report.

6.3.4 The College Principal, Vice Principal or Head of School will write to the student (and their parent/guardian, external agencies as appropriate) as soon as possible inviting them to a formal Hearing. The invitation will confirm:

6.3.4.1 the requirement to attend a Performance/Attendance Hearing under the formal procedure;

6.3.4.2 the date, time and venue of the Hearing;

6.3.4.3 details of the persons attending the Hearing;

6.3.4.4 the opportunity to be accompanied;

- 6.3.4.5 the concerns about their performance/attendance and copy of the report produced by their tutor;
 - 6.3.4.6 the possible action that may be taken;
 - 6.3.4.7 any other relevant evidence;
 - 6.3.4.8 confirmation that any evidence and/or witness statements the student wishes to rely on should be provided at least 3 working days before the Hearing;
 - 6.3.4.9 confirmation that at the Hearing, the student will have the opportunity to ask questions, present their case and supporting evidence (as above) and present any relevant mitigating circumstances (e.g. health, need for support etc) they may wish to be taken into account.
- 6.3.5 The student will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the Hearing.
- 6.3.6 If a possible outcome is permanent exclusion, it will be decided to either convene a Panel to hear the case, consisting of 2-3 Vice Principals or Heads of School, or alternatively to nominate a senior postholder to hear the case. The Panel/Hearing Manager should have had no prior involvement in the matter.
- 6.3.7 However, in less serious cases, it may be reasonable to appoint a Hearing Manager acting alone. The Panel/Hearing Manager should have had no prior involvement in the matter.
- 6.3.8 Where relevant, the student's tutor or curriculum manager will attend the Hearing to present their report/findings of the investigation and to answer questions from the Panel/Manager. They will not participate in the decision making process.
- 6.3.9 At the Hearing, the Panel/Manager will normally:
- 6.3.9.1 introduce those present and explain why they are there;
 - 6.3.9.2 explain the purpose of the Hearing;
 - 6.3.9.3 explain how the Hearing will be conducted;
 - 6.3.9.4 the tutor will be invited to present their case and any supporting evidence including any witness statements (where relevant);
 - 6.3.9.5 the Panel/Manager may ask questions of the tutor (where relevant);
 - 6.3.9.6 the Panel/Manager will give the student the opportunity to present their case and any supporting evidence including any witness statements and/or mitigating circumstances (where relevant);
 - 6.3.9.7 the Panel/Manager may ask questions of the student;

- 6.3.9.8 the Panel/Manager will give the tutor and the student the opportunity to sum up their case;
- 6.3.9.9 the Hearing will then be adjourned so that the Panel/Manager can consider the evidence. All parties other than the Panel/Manager and any notetaker (if applicable) shall withdraw.
- 6.3.10 The Panel/Manager will conduct their considerations in private but may recall all parties to clarify any points made.
- 6.3.11 The Panel/Manager can modify the conduct of the Hearing where they consider it would be appropriate.
- 6.3.12 The Panel/Manager can adjourn the Hearing at any time if further investigation/consideration is required. The student can also request an adjournment. Such requests should not be unreasonably refused.
- 6.3.13 Following the Hearing, the Panel/Manager may take one of the following courses of action, according to the circumstances of the case:
- 6.3.13.1 take no further formal action;
- 6.3.13.2 recommend the issue is dealt with informally;
- 6.3.13.3 give a formal written warning if there has been either a repeated minor breach of performance/attendance, or a first but more serious breach of performance/attendance. Such a warning will remain current for 6 months from the date of the Hearing;
- 6.3.13.4 give a final written warning if there has been an insufficient response to a previous warning and performance/attendance is still unsatisfactory, or if there are serious shortfalls in performance/attendance. Such a warning will remain current for 12 months from the date of the Hearing;
- 6.3.13.5 exclude the student from the Group;
- 6.3.14 An exclusion means that the student will be unable to complete that academic year but would normally be allowed to enrol on any course in the Group in any future academic year subject to meeting course admission requirements. The decision to exclude the student will usually be with immediate effect.

- 6.3.15 The student (and, as appropriate, their parent/guardian, external agencies) will be informed of the outcome of the Hearing in writing with the notes of the Hearing normally within 10 working days of the Hearing, confirming:
- 6.3.15.1 the action taken (or the fact that no formal action was taken) and the reasons for that action;
 - 6.3.15.2 any action required of the student and the consequences of any recurrence of poor performance/attendance, including any dates for review;
 - 6.3.15.3 the right to appeal.
- 6.3.16 Any action taken or required (including a final written warning) will be placed on ProMonitor.

7 Appeals

- 7.1 The Group will ensure that appeals are dealt with impartially and heard without unreasonable delay.
- 7.2 Students have the right to appeal against any formal action taken against them in relation to their performance or attendance.
- 7.3 The right to appeal must be exercised within 10 working days of the date of the written decision.
- 7.4 The appeal, stating the grounds on which it is made (for example, that the formal action was wrong or unjust), must be in writing addressed to the College Principal.
- 7.5 If any new matters are raised in the appeal, a further investigation may need to be carried out. If any new information comes to light, the student will be provided with a summary including, where appropriate, copies of additional relevant documents and witness statements (where relevant). The student will have a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the Appeal Hearing, and they (or their companion) may comment on any new evidence during the appeal before any decision is taken.
- 7.6 An appeal will be heard by an Appeal Officer or an Appeal Panel. If the appeal is against exclusion the Officer/Panel will comprise of a College Principal and the Deputy Chief Executive and/or the Chief Executive of the Group who have had no previous involvement in the case.

- 7.7 The Group will aim for an appeal to be heard within 15 working days of the appeal being lodged.
- 7.8 The student (and, as appropriate, their parent/guardian, external agencies) will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the Hearing and will be asked to provide any relevant information/evidence at least 3 working days' before the Hearing. All parties will be provided with the relevant documentation at least one working day before the Hearing.
- 7.9 Attendance at the Appeal Hearing will include: The Appeal Officer/Panel, a person who made the decision being appealed and the student and their companion. A notetaker may also be present.
- 7.10 The Appeal Hearing will usually be a review of the fairness of the original decision. This will be at the Appeal Officer/Panel's sole discretion depending on the circumstances of the case. In any event, the appeal will be dealt with as impartially as possible.
- 7.11 At the Appeal Hearing the student will be asked why they are appealing and particular attention will be paid to any new evidence that has been introduced ensuring that the student has the opportunity to comment on it.
- 7.12 The conduct of the Hearing will be similar to that set out at paragraph 6.3.8 above.
- 7.13 The Appeal Officer/Panel may:
- 7.13.1 Confirm the decision; or
 - 7.13.2 Overturn the decision; and/or
 - 7.13.3 Impose any other action that the Appeal Officer/Panel considers appropriate to be taken in the circumstances including but not limited to:
 - 7.13.3.1 reducing the level of sanction;
 - 7.13.3.2 substituting a lesser sanction;
 - 7.13.3.3 changing the outcome;
 - 7.13.3.4 remitting the decision to be considered further.

7.14 The Appeal Officer/Panel shall send a letter and the notes of the Hearing to the student confirming its outcome normally within 10 working days of the Hearing.

7.15 The decision of the Appeal Officer/Panel shall be final.

7.16 An appeal against exclusion will not delay the exclusion, but where an appeal is successful then the student will be reinstated.

6 Records

6.1 The Group will retain copies of all notes of discussions and communications with the student (and where applicable their parent/guardian and/or other external agencies) relating to academic performance and attendance matters (both informal and formal).