University College Birmingham

Support to Study Protocol

1 - Introduction

University College Birmingham (UCB) seeks to maintain a safe, positive and productive learning and living environment and is committed to supporting the wellbeing of all members of its community. Equally, UCB expects all students to take responsibility for themselves and their own actions and to live in a way that respects the rights and dignity of others.

The Support to Study (StS) protocol aims to help individuals to participate fully and satisfactorily as students when they might be struggling because of health-related issues. It is not just about academic studies; it is also about the ability of a student to live in a way that respects the rights and dignity of themselves and others. There may be times when a student's physical or mental health may mean that they pose a risk to themselves, to other students or to the activities of the University and that risk needs to be understood across the University.

This protocol is underpinned by the principles of fairness, proportionality, transparency, timeliness, and student-centred decision-making in line with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework.

2 - Purpose and Scope

This Protocol describes UCB's staged programme of support for students whose behaviour has given cause for concern: Starting with an initial informal procedure for an individual student through to enhanced formalised support and the development of personal care programmes to the final stage which may involve full re-engagement with studies or temporary withdrawal of a student from study at UCB**. The most appropriate course of action will be determined by the nature of concerns raised and will be determined at Stage 1 (see section 5.1).**

This protocol is closely aligned to the existing Code of Conduct - Fitness to Practise[1] and external fitness to practise processes e.g. Nursing & Midwifery Council.

This protocol is designed to provide a suitable and coordinated response and aims to encourage early intervention and active collaboration between staff and students in managing situations where there are concerns regarding a student's capability to attend and live and/or study within the UCB community.

UCB takes a non-judgemental, consistent and sensitive approach to the management of these situations and recognises that different levels of response may be required according to the perceived level of concern and associated risks.

3 - When is this Protocol Applied?

The Support to Study protocol should be applied when there are concerns, for example student behaviour, disruption by a student or where the risk(s) presented by a student to themselves or

[1] Applicable to those students who are registered on any course that is governed by a professional body.

others is perceived to be of a serious, or potentially serious nature and impacts, or potentially impacts adversely the health, safety, wellbeing or academic progress of themselves or others. It should not be used for dealing with low-level academic concerns – in such circumstances, academic departments are expected to manage the situation through local processes.

For Apprenticeship students, the principles of the StS protocol will apply, but the apprenticeship Progress Review model will act as the primary route for discussing concerns and identifying support needs.

4 - General Principles

Any member of academic or support staff can initiate the Support to Study protocol. If a student identifies that they need support, they should contact UCB's support[2] and/or speak with their personal tutors.

Students will be:

- treated with dignity and respect
- actively involved in decisions wherever possible
- given clear information about the process, expectations, and possible outcomes

UCB will ensure:

- decisions are consistent and evidence-based
- processes are completed in a timely manner
- information used is relevant, necessary, and proportionate
- confidentiality is respected, subject to safeguarding duties

Where a student does not engage, UCB will make reasonable attempts to encourage engagement and consider alternative ways to support participation. Only where engagement remains absent and risks cannot be managed will progression to later stages be considered.

At all stages of the process, due consideration will be given to issues of confidentiality and data protection and UCB will take into account relevant legislation (e.g. GDPR and data protection, Mental Health Act 2025, Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010). (It should be noted therefore that others potentially impacted by the behaviour of an individual being taken through the protocol, will not normally be updated on the progress of it).

5 - Stages of Action

The stages of this protocol can be entered at any point depending on the level of concern and urgency although it is hoped that most situations can be remedied by early intervention at stages 1 or 2.

5.1 - Stage 1: Initial Student Meeting (ISM)

Once concerns have been raised about a student, the student will be invited to a meeting with:

[2] For example, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Disability & Neurodiversity Support, Speak Out & Support, The Guild.

- a member of staff from the student's academic department
- a member of staff in Student Support and Wellbeing and/or DNS (to provide advice on support available to the student)
- a representative from the Residential Community Team (if the concern relates to behaviour in UCB accommodation).

The invitation to the ISM will include:

- nature of concerns
- purpose of the meeting
- possible outcomes

The student is permitted to bring a companion for support, should they wish. The meeting will be led by the member of staff from the department/team most closely linked to the concern.

At the meeting, the student will be made aware of the precise nature of the behaviour that has caused the concern. The aim is to resolve the matter through informal discussions encouraging the student to access the appropriate support services offered by UCB and externally.

Based on the discussion with the student, the convener of the ISM shall decide next steps, which will be one of the following:

- No further action required
- Follow-up ISM planned
- Move to stage 2 of the Support to Study protocol – Student Support Review Panel (see section 5.2)
- Move to stage 3 of the Support to Study protocol – Referral to Registrar (see section 5.3)
- Move to consideration under the Code of Conduct - Fitness to Practise
- Move to consideration under the Code of Practice on Discipline.

Any involvement of next of kin will normally require the student's informed consent, except where there is a serious and immediate risk in line with safeguarding obligations.

5.2 - Stage 2: Student Support Review Panel

Where the findings of the ISM (Stage 1) is that concerns remain, and where Fitness to Practise or the Disciplinary processes are deemed not appropriate, a Student Support Review Panel shall be convened and chaired by a member of the Academic Management Team (AMT) to (i) discuss the previously identified concerns and any new areas of concern and (ii) assess the extent of support needed to help the student continue with their studies.

The Student Support Review Panel will operate independently and fairly and will comprise:

- Member of AMT (Chair)
- The student (accompanied by a friend / supporter if they so wish – they will not be permitted to represent the student)
- Member of staff who has raised concerns (to provide details of the concern). They will not be involved in the deciding the outcome of the panel

- A representative(s) from the student's academic department (normally Personal or Senior Department Tutor or Supervisor) - if different to above
- A representative(s) from Student Support and Wellbeing or DNS, and/or, if appropriate,
- A representative from the Residential Community Team, if the concern relates to behaviour in UCB accommodation
- Note taker.

The Chair will make a reasoned decision, considering the facts of the specific case, as to whether the student should attend all, part or none of this meeting, and this rationale should be noted.

The date, time and place of the meeting shall be notified to the student in writing at least five working days beforehand. This notification shall make clear the cause of concern and who will attend the meeting and will highlight any documents the student is required to provide at the meeting.

5.2.1 Health concerns

Where the concern covers health matters, UCB may seek an appropriate professionally qualified opinion which addresses specific issues (nature of condition, its current status, its severity, details of the way the condition adversely affects the student or others, and how it might be exacerbated). Other professional opinions may also be requested/provided.

Any medical or professional evidence that is requested will be proportionate and not unreasonably restrictive.

5.2.2 Failure to attend

If, having been properly notified, the student fails to attend, the meeting will proceed in the student's absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will rescheduling of the meeting be considered. The Chair of the panel must agree to any rescheduling.

5.2.3 Potential outcomes

The Student Support Review Panel is empowered to determine one of the following outcomes, potentially following further advice being sought as deemed necessary at the meeting:

- No further action required.
- Support Action Plan. Confirm full engagement and agreement by the student to a formal Support Action Plan to remedy the situation. The Support Action Plan shall be drawn up by the Chair of the Student Support Review Panel detailing clear objectives, behavioural expectations, milestones, timescales and review points and should be signed by the student as a clear agreed commitment and undertaking. It will also include any reasonable adjustments required to support the student.
- A recommendation for a period of temporary withdrawal by the student. A clear indication of expectations for return to study shall be provided to the student by the Chair of the Student Support Review Panel.
- Progress to Stage 3 of this protocol.
- Referral to Fitness to Practise process.
- Referral to Code of Practice on Discipline.

The outcome will be proportionate and clearly justified.

A written record of the meeting shall be made including all decisions made and action points agreed and will be sent to the student within 5 (five) University working days of the meeting. Parties involved in supporting the student will also receive a copy of the letter.

In all cases, the student should be made aware that if the agreed outcome actions with the Support Action Plan are breached, their case will progress to Stage 3 of this protocol.

If the student does not accept the decision of the panel, the case will automatically be escalated to Stage 3.

If the student agrees that a period of temporary withdrawal is the best course of action this will be requested on their behalf and supported by the Student Support Review Panel.

Return to studies following the period of temporary Leave of Absence will be subject to any conditions determined when the request to withdraw temporarily is approved.

5.3 - Stage 3: Referral to Registrar

It is anticipated that Stage 3 will be by exception and that the previous stages will be sufficient.

Stage 3 can be initiated:

- Following a referral from the Student Support Review Panel or if in the opinion of the Head of Department or Executive Director of Student Support and Wellbeing (or their nominee) a case is sufficiently serious and urgent to warrant an immediate referral without consideration of Stage 1 and 2, a case can be progressed under Stage 3.
- When a student fails to engage with Stage 2 of this process or does not accept the findings of the Student Support Review Panel.

In such circumstances, the Head of Department or Executive Director of Student Support and Wellbeing, or nominee shall submit a recommendation to the Registrar requesting an enforced Leave of Absence. The Registrar or, in their absence, a nominated member of Executive Management Team (EMT) will make a decision within 10 working days of receiving the recommendation.

Students required to withdraw will be given the opportunity to talk to named staff within Student Support and Wellbeing or any other appropriate teams to discuss financial issues; support and study implications and other issues which may arise (including UKVI considerations as appropriate).

6 - Return to study plan

If a student's registration is suspended, or a Leave of Absence is agreed as the result of the Support to Study protocol, the student will be required to provide proportionate and appropriate evidence of readiness to return (which may include medical or professional evidence where relevant) prior to being allowed to return to study.

Awaiting this evidence will not preclude planning for a return.

Once appropriate evidence has been received, a meeting with the Student Support Review Panel will be arranged to discuss the reasons for the Leave of Absence/suspension, the student's current state of health, and the coping strategies the student expects to employ in their return to study.

A Return to Study Plan should then be created with agreed actions to assist the student in their transition back to university life. A phased return will be supported, if appropriate and practicable. The Return to Study Plan will then be monitored by a designated member of the Panel and reviewed following the student recommencing their studies. Where there are new concerns or active risks then this will be referred for further consideration under the Support to Study protocol.

If the Student Support Review Panel consider that a student is not ready to return to their studies after a period of Leave of Absence, the Code of Conduct on Leave of Absence Procedures will be followed.

7 - Appeal Process

Appeals against a decision will follow the Stage 3 procedure outlined in the Code of Practice on Discipline.

Complaints about the process should be raised with the Student Support Review Panel Chair in the first instance. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, this can be raised further through the Student Complaints Procedure.

Students will receive a Completion of Procedures letter on conclusion of the Stage 3 appeal process and may refer the matter to the OIA.

8 - Timescales

UCB will aim to complete each stage of the process promptly (within 10 working days), recognising the potential impact on student wellbeing.

9 - Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

At all stages, UCB will consider its duties under the Equality Act, 2010, ensure reasonable adjustments are identified and implemented, and avoid escalating concerns where issues could be addressed through adjustments.

10 - Governance and Review

The Academic Regulations Committee is responsible for approving any amendments to this protocol. UCB will monitor StS cases to ensure consistency, identify trends, and improve practice in line with OIA expectations. This protocol will be formally reviewed by the Executive Director of Student Support & Wellbeing every two years or sooner as required by legislative, regulatory or operational changes. The next planned date of review is October 2028.

Approved: October 2026

Appendix 1: Support to Study (StS) protocol flowchart

