

# Support to Study Policy and Procedure

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## Introduction

### Purpose

1. This Policy relates to the management of concerns regarding a student's capacity to participate fully both academically and in life generally at Northeastern University London (the University). The concerns are likely to arise from information received about a student's health and/or wellbeing (including, but not limited to, physical health, mental health, disabilities, and caring responsibilities).
2. The purpose of this Policy is to provide a suitable and coordinated response to concerns about a student. These concerns may be raised by any member of the University community.

### Scope and Definitions

3. This Policy applies to all registered students on the following programmes:
  - 3.1. Mobility courses
  - 3.2. Undergraduate double degrees programmes
  - 3.3. Postgraduate taught programmes (from 2023-24)
  - 3.4. Degree apprenticeship programmes (from 2023-24)
  - 3.5. Postgraduate research programmes (from 2023-24) For students registered on other programmes being delivered by the University, please refer to the policy on [Canvas](#).
4. For postgraduate research programmes please refer to [AQF17 Research Programmes of Study](#).
5. This Policy should be used when a student's capacity to participate as a student is a cause for concern. This concern may arise from a wide range of circumstances, including (but not limited to) the student's behaviour and/or engagement with their studies. Students may be referred to this policy from other University policies including, but not limited to:
  - 5.1. [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
  - 5.2. [Declaration of Criminal Convictions Risk Assessment Policy and Procedure](#)
  - 5.3. [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
  - 5.4. [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)
  - 5.5. [Misuse of Substances Statement](#)
  - 5.6. [Prevent Policy](#)
  - 5.7. [Student Disability Policy](#)

5.8. [Student Welfare Policy](#)

5.9. [Undergraduate Student Attendance Policy](#)

5.10. Student Pregnancy and Parent Policy

6. The decision to invoke this Policy will normally be made by a member of Student Support and Development (SSD) or Academic Support (AS) in consultation with the faculty and/or other relevant staff. The Student Welfare Oversight Group, as set out in the [Student Welfare Policy](#), or a Student Attendance Panel as set out in the [Undergraduate Student Attendance Policy](#) may also recommend to SSD/AS that this policy be invoked where the Group/Panel has concerns about a student's level of engagement and wellbeing. In the unlikely event of a situation where there is an immediate risk of harm to students or staff, a member of the [Senior Management Team](#) (SMT) will have the authority to invoke this Policy and temporarily suspend a student(s). In these circumstances, SSD will be notified as soon as is practicable.
7. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'student' refers to anyone on an undergraduate, postgraduate taught or mobility programme.

## General Principles

8. The University is committed to supporting student wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health is crucial to learning and academic achievement.
9. The University expects its students to be able to live independently and in harmony with others, to engage with their programme of study, and not to conduct themselves in a way which has an adverse impact on those around them.
10. Some students may require additional support or accommodations to successfully engage with their studies. The University has the capacity to put into place detailed Learning Support Plans for disabled students, students with learning differences and those with mental health conditions. (See [Student Disability Policy](#).) Students should be signposted to [Student Support and Development](#) (SSD) or other relevant services at the earliest opportunity in order to support their studies and prevent disengagement or deterioration in their health or mental health.

## Immediate Risk of Harm

11. If a student is reasonably considered to pose an immediate risk of harm to themselves and/or others, they are likely to require emergency assistance. In such cases, the individual(s) who identifies the incident should contact the emergency services. They must also report it

immediately to a member of SMT either directly or by appointing a person to do so. The SMT member will assess and manage the incident by applying one or more of the following:

- 11.1. Contacting the student's emergency contact, if it is considered reasonable to do so.
  - 11.2. If the student is a mobility student, a member of the Northeastern Global Experience Programme Management Team will be contacted and informed of the situation.
  - 11.3. Any other appropriate and proportionate action.
12. Following the incident, the member(s) of SMT who assessed and managed the situation in the paragraph above will determine the next course of action based on all the relevant circumstances and the perceived risk to the student and other members of the University and either:
- 12.1. Refer the case to Stage 1 of this policy where there is considered to be minimal risk of harm to the student or others and little likelihood of disruption to teaching or the smooth running of the University.
  - 12.2. Invoke a temporary suspension,<sup>1</sup> with immediate effect, where there is considered to be a risk of harm to the student or others or a likelihood that their continued attendance could be disruptive. A student who is subject to a temporary suspension is prohibited from entering University premises and from attending University events until further notice. The temporary suspension may, exceptionally, be subject to qualification, such as limitations on communications with students, faculty or staff, on permission to take an examination, or to enter the University premises to attend a meeting with University staff. The terms of suspension will be specific to each individual case and the student will be notified as soon as is practicable by email to their University email account. A temporary suspension does not affect the student's status as a member of the University.
  - 12.3. If the student is a mobility student, a member of the Northeastern Global Experience Programme Management Team will be included in the decision.
13. The decision to temporarily suspend a student will be reviewed within two working days by the member of SMT in consultation with the Registrar (or nominee), and a member of the Northeastern Global Experience

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<sup>1</sup> This is not the same as a temporary exclusion as a penalty imposed by the Disciplinary Panel under the Student Disciplinary Procedures.

Programme Management, if relevant. This review is intended to ensure that the suspension is reasonable and proportionate in light of the information available. The decision to continue to suspend a student will be reviewed at least every five days and made on the basis of any new information.

14. The suspended student may, if they choose, contest the suspension in writing to the member of SMT directing the suspension. This written representation should be considered by the member of SMT and the Registrar when reviewing the suspension to ensure all relevant information is considered.
15. A student who has been suspended will be referred to Stage 2 of this policy at the earliest opportunity.

## Procedures

16. If a student or member of staff is concerned about another student's welfare or mental health, they should encourage the student to seek advice from [Student Support and Development \(SSD\)](#). If this proves difficult, the person with that concerning information should seek advice themselves from SSD. If the concern is about safeguarding or Prevent, the Head of Student Support and Development should be informed. Where the concern is related largely to academic engagement or attendance, students or staff should seek advice from the student's Academic Advisor.
17. The identity of the individual raising a concern to SSD will remain confidential as far as it is practical to do so. However, the priority will be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the student about whom there are concerns.
18. All concerns or disclosures should be raised as soon as possible with SSD in a confidential and professional manner. Those raising a concern or making a disclosure should provide examples to illustrate their concern or disclosure. The examples may include reports about situations that have arisen, or behaviour observed, which show a decline in the student's health and wellbeing, or where there is a belief that the student is at risk of harm to self or others. For further information on confidentiality please refer to the [Student Confidentiality Statement](#).
19. If the SSD feels it is necessary to intercede and involve either other members of staff or external professionals, this will be done sharing the minimum information required to enable support or intervention.
20. Where concerns are largely or fully related to academic engagement or attendance, the student's Academic Advisor will be able to offer advice

and support. Where the Academic Advisor considers that wellbeing issues may underlie poor engagement, they may contact and work cooperatively with SSD in order to ensure students receive appropriate guidance and support.

21. The Policy contains the following stages:

21.1. Stage 1: Initial Support

21.2. Stage 2: Formal Procedure

## Stage 1: Initial Support

22. A member of SSD and/or Academic Support will arrange and attend a meeting with the student and a member of the student's faculty and/or their Academic Advisor to discuss the concern or disclosure raised and support available. The team supporting the student should include as a minimum both a member of professional services (SSD/AS) and a member of faculty to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach. It should be made clear to the student that the University has a duty of care to support students and to ensure that they are able to study.

23. The team supporting the student shall have the discretion to implement a Support Plan, giving details of:

23.1. Steps the student and the University should take, including any short-term support or reasonable adjustments agreed, in order to enable the student to continue to study without further difficulty or disruption.

23.2. What will happen if the student does not agree or engage with the Support Plan e.g., this could result in their ability to study being further considered and their case being referred to Stage 2.

24. The team may recommend that the student receive a Learning Support Plan as set out in the [Student Disability Policy](#).

25. The team may recommend to the student that they undertake a voluntary [Change in Circumstances: Break in Studies](#).

26. The team may request that the student obtain a medical or psychological assessment in order to help inform the University about what support and accommodations would be appropriate.

27. The team may recommend any other appropriate or proportionate action. This could include a direct referral to Stage 2 if, following the meeting, it becomes apparent that the student is at serious risk of harm to themselves or others, that they are likely to continue to behave in a manner that is disruptive or distressing or they fail to engage with their support plan or their programme of study.

28. The Support Plan will include a review date where the effectiveness of the support and the student's wellbeing and engagement will be reassessed. This period should normally be between two and four weeks but may be longer or shorter, if felt appropriate in the circumstances. On or near the review date, a review meeting will be held with the student, faculty member and/or the student's Academic Advisor, and SSD staff member(s). At this meeting:
  - 28.1. the Support Plan may be ended, if it is felt the issues of concern have been addressed adequately;
  - 28.2. the Support Plan may be extended for another defined period;
  - 28.3. the Support Plan may be revised if additional or alternative support is needed; or
  - 28.4. a decision may be taken to refer the student to Stage 2 if the student is not engaging with the support and/or their studies, if behaviours of concern continue, or if it is considered that the student's wellbeing is too poor to engage with study.
29. SSD and the member of faculty or the student's Academic Advisor will normally make more than one attempt to engage the student with the Stage 1 process if they are reluctant, before proceeding to Stage 2.

## Stage 2: Formal Procedure

30. This stage will be invoked
  - 30.1. Directly by a member of SMT if there has been a concern about the student being at immediate risk of harm or where serious concerns have been raised about their capacity to appropriately engage with study (see paragraph 16)
  - 30.2. Following a referral from Stage 1 due to either:
    - 30.2.1. SSD/AS referring the student because they have not agreed to and/or failed to engage with the Support Plan.
    - 30.2.2. The student's wellbeing is judged by SSD to be so poor that continuation at Stage 1 is not appropriate.
31. Referrals are made in writing by completing the [Support to Study Referral Form](#). The completed form and accompanying documentation should be emailed to the Head of Student Complaints Appeals and Discipline where it will be processed. Accompanying documentation must be in English and may include emails, Learning Support Plans, medical records.

32. Within seven calendar days of receipt of the form it will be considered by the Academic Registrar (or nominee in their absence), who will confirm the case falls within the remit of this policy or, if it does not, the Academic Registrar will advise of the correct policy and procedures to follow.
33. The Academic Registrar shall have the discretion to apply one or more of the following:
  - 33.1. Stay the case pending the outcome of another procedure. On completion of the other procedure, the Academic Registrar shall have the discretion to apply an outcome listed below.
    - 33.1.1. Assemble a Support to Study Panel (SSP) to consider the case.
    - 33.1.2. Any other outcome that is appropriate or proportionate.

### Support to Study Panel

34. The Support to Study Panel (SSP) will hear cases that have been:
  - 34.1. Referred from Stage 1 Initial Support.
  - 34.2. Referred by a member of SMT as a result of a student being assessed as an immediate risk of harm and being suspended temporarily.
35. The SSP will normally consist of the Academic Registrar and two others, from a group of all staff selected by the Academic Registrar, including at least one member of faculty.<sup>2</sup> The Academic Registrar (or their nominee) will chair the SSP and appoint a Secretary.
36. In the event that a member of the panel is unable to attend the meeting, the Chair of the Panel may appoint an alternative member with the agreement of the student. Should the alternate not be agreed, the meeting should be postponed until the full panel can convene.
37. Where the student is studying on a mobility programme, a member of the Global Experience Programme Management Team will be a member of the panel.

### Support to Study Panel Procedure

38. The Secretary to the SSP shall:
  - 38.1. Invite the student to the meeting through their University email address. The student will be advised of the date and time of the meeting a minimum of seven calendar days in advance.

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<sup>2</sup> The panel members shall be free of any bias or any reasonable perception of bias.



- 38.2. Invite to the meeting the member of SMT who managed the incident resulting in temporary suspension, or the member of SSD and the faculty member or Academic Advisor who met with, or attempted to engage with, the student at Stage 1 of the procedure.
39. In the case where witnesses to relevant incidents/behaviours etc are identified by either party, the Chair will determine whether or not their testimony is likely to be relevant and whether they should be invited to attend the panel.
40. The Secretary will provide the student with:
  - 40.1. The membership of the SSP. The student will be informed of their right to object to a panel member on the basis of possible bias or conflict of interest. Any objection and the reasons(s) for it must be made to the Secretary in writing by no later than four calendar days of the date of the Secretary's communication.
  - 40.2. The procedural and logistical arrangements of the SSP.
  - 40.3. The identity of the other attendees at the SSP meeting. This may include the members of SSD and faculty who managed Stage 1 of the procedure, any other member of the University or any external expert that the Chair considers to have relevant information.
  - 40.4. The student's right to be accompanied to the meeting by a person to provide support during the meeting. The accompanying person's role is to provide support and they may not participate directly in the proceeding or address the SSP. The accompanying person must normally be a student, faculty or staff member at the University.
41. The student will be requested to acknowledge receipt of the letter and their intention to attend the meeting within five calendar days of the Secretary's communication. If the student does not respond, the case may be considered in their absence. Should the student wish to be accompanied, they will be required to provide the name of their chosen person at least three calendar days in advance of the meeting.
42. The Secretary will provide the SSP with:
  - 42.1. An invitation to be a SSP member, in writing, giving a minimum notice period of seven calendar days.
  - 42.2. The procedural and logistical arrangements of the SSP meeting.

- 42.3. A hard copy of the documents received by the Academic Registrar.
- 42.4. The identity of the intended attendees for the SSP meeting.
- 43. If the student is unable to attend the SSP meeting for good reason, the meeting can be rearranged. The rescheduling of the SSP meeting requires approval from the Chair of the SSP. The request must be made in writing outlining the reason for requesting the rearrangement of the SSP meeting along with supporting evidence if available.
- 44. It is preferable that all parties attend the meeting in person. At the discretion of the Chair, the parties can attend via video link. Where it is impracticable for the parties to attend the meeting, the Chair may accept written statements in evidence.
- 45. If the student fails to appear without good reason and does not notify the Secretary that they do not wish to appear, the SSP may deal with the case in their absence.
- 46. The order of proceedings:
  - 46.1. Introduction of those present.
  - 46.2. The member of SSD, the faculty member and/or Academic Advisor involved in Stage 1 or the member of SMT making the referral to Stage 2 shall make their case to the SSP.
  - 46.3. The student shall have the opportunity to state their case.
  - 46.4. The SSP shall have the opportunity to question the parties.
  - 46.5. The Chair shall have the discretion to amend the order of the proceedings.
- 47. The SSP may impose time limits on oral addresses and submissions.
- 48. Due to the sensitive nature of the meeting, observers will not normally be permitted, and any witnesses will remain outside when not providing testimony.
- 49. All parties shall withdraw while the SSP reaches its decision in private.
- 50. The SSP may adjourn proceedings in the first instance for a period not exceeding 20 working days, and its findings or decision may be deferred accordingly.
- 51. The Secretary of the SSP will securely store a record of the meeting and the decision of the SSP, in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation.

### Powers of the Support to Study Panel

- 52. Possible outcomes from the SSP meeting may include:

- 52.1. A temporary suspension of the student for a period of up to three weeks to allow the student to be assessed by medical professionals and to access external support services with the help of SSD. The temporary suspension will be reviewed a minimum of two working days prior to its expiration, and further temporary suspension can be imposed up to a total of six weeks, after which the SSP should consider the impact on the student's academic studies and review whether a Break In Study or other resolution may be more appropriate.
  - 52.2. Where appropriate, an enhanced action plan can be agreed which may include, but is not limited to, a requirement for the student to engage with the University or external services and/or to give permission for information sharing between the University and the NHS or other external services. The enhanced action plan will also include an explicit time frame for any actions and a date for review by the SSP.
  - 52.3. A requirement for the student to take a Break in Studies for a period up to 12 months.
  - 52.4. A requirement to withdraw - if the Panel concludes, taking into account the individual circumstances of the case and any supporting medical evidence, that there is no reasonable prospect of the student re-engaging with their programme, or the limits of reasonableness have been reached at that time (in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#)), the student will be required to withdraw. This requirement should only be made in the most serious cases.
  - 52.5. Any other requirements or outcomes considered to be appropriate or proportionate.
53. The SSP should decide whether a student can continue to attend the University during an appeal process on a case-by-case basis. In making that decision the SSP must take into account:
- 53.1. The impact non-attendance will have on the student's studies in the event that the student successfully appeals the decision.
  - 53.2. The likely impact of the student's attendance on other students' learning.
  - 53.3. The likely impact of the student's attendance on faculty and staff and their ability to carry out their normal duties.

## Communication of Outcomes

54. The outcome of the panel must be communicated promptly and efficiently by the Secretary of the SSP, as outlined below:

- 54.1. Once a decision has been made, the student must be informed as soon as is practicable by email to their University email address, so the student does not miss learning if to continue with studies, but in any event within two working days.
- 54.2. SSD should be informed as soon as is practicable.
- 54.3. The Head of Discipline (HoD) or the Academic Director for Student Mobility Programmes should be informed.
- 54.4. Relevant faculty members should be informed of the outcome as soon as is practicable if the student has been suspended or required to take a Break in Study or to withdraw.
  - 54.4.1. Should the student have scheduled tutorials and/or lectures that day, those faculty members should be informed as a priority.
  - 54.4.2. Other relevant faculty teaching or supporting the student should also be informed if the student has been suspended or required to take a Break in Study or to withdraw.
55. All those informed will be reminded that the case is confidential and the details should not be shared with any others without prior approval from the Academic Registrar. The Academic Registrar will follow the [Student Confidentiality Statement](#) before approving the sharing of information.
56. If other students ask for information about the student, they should not be informed of any details under any circumstances.

## Return to Study

57. During Stage 1 of the procedure, where a student voluntarily agrees to undertake a [Break in Study](#) prior to being permitted to re-enrol, they will be required to provide medical evidence to SSD that they are fit to return to study. The Head of SSD or the Head of Academic Support will confirm to the Deputy Head of Registry (Records) whether the medical evidence provided is sufficient to conclude that they are fit to return to study. The Head of SSD may recommend that a Learning Support Plan be agreed as set out in the [Student Disability Policy](#) prior to the student's return.
58. Where a student has been required to take a Break in Study by an SSP, the SSP that made the decision regarding the required break, or as many members of the original panel as possible, will be consulted to consider whether the student is able to return to study.
  - 58.1. Further medical evidence, which considers the student's ability to fully engage with their studies and meet the requirements of the programme, will normally be requested from the student.

- 58.2. A student will only be permitted to return if, after receiving and considering the medical evidence, a meeting of the SSP is satisfied that the student is able to return. A member of SSD may be asked to advise the SSP to help inform its decision making.
- 58.3. The SSP will also consider any support that the student may require to enable a return to studies. The SSP may require that a Learning Support Plan is agreed as set out in the [Student Disability Policy](#) prior to the student's return.
59. Once return to study has been agreed by the relevant staff or the SSP, the student will be informed in writing by [Registry](#) of permission to return to study and their return date.
60. The general expectation is that upon their return to study the student will take personal responsibility for fully engaging with their studies and behaving appropriately as a member of the University community.
61. A student who does not engage with their studies, or where concerns about behaviour or welfare arise, may be referred back to the SSP for further consideration and the student may be withdrawn from the University.
62. A student who returns after a Break in Study will meet with a member of SSD and or a member of Academic Support. Further information about this meeting is available in the [Change in Circumstances Policy and Guidance](#).

## Appeals Procedure

63. The student may appeal against an outcome of the SSP. The appeal must be made, using the [Appeal Form for Students](#), to [Registry](#) within 14 calendar days of the written notification of the decision.
64. If no appeal against the decision is received within the timescale set out in the decision letter, the student will be notified that no appeal has been made and the procedure has been concluded.
65. The student may only appeal on one or more of the following grounds for appeal, which must be specified on the [Appeal Form for Students](#).
- 65.1. There has been a significant procedural flaw or irregularity that compromised the fairness of the process. It shall be for the Support to Study Appeal Board (SSAB) to determine whether any such irregularity or failure to observe the provision of the policy brings into question the decision of the original hearing.

- 65.2. New material evidence, which must be supported by a full explanation of why it could not have been obtained or submitted at an earlier stage.
  - 65.3. That there was bias or a reasonable perception of bias during the procedure.
  - 65.4. An outcome, decision and/or penalty, being unreasonable or disproportionate and beyond that which a reasonable person might find in all the circumstances.
- 66. Following submission of an appeal, the matter will be referred to the Dean of Northeastern University London (the Dean), or nominee, who will undertake a preliminary review of the appeal.
  - 67. Where the Dean considers that the appeal does not meet the accepted grounds for appeal, the appeal may be rejected at this point. The student shall be informed of the decision by email to their University account. Registry will notify the student that the internal procedures have been completed and of their right to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
  - 68. Where the Academic Dean of Northeastern University London considers that the grounds for appeal are valid, the appeal will be submitted to the SSAB.
  - 69. The SSAB is determined by the course or programme the student is registered on. For panel membership information, please see Annex A. The Academic Dean of Northeastern University London shall appoint a Chair and a Secretary. No person shall sit on the SSAB if they are directly associated with the student's studies or with the decision against which the appeal is made.
  - 70. The hearing will be limited to the grounds stated in the [Appeal Form for Students](#) and should not take the form of a rehearing. The SSAB will be provided with the minutes and documentation of the SSP.
  - 71. If the SSAB is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of substantive defect in procedures which might have resulted in a wrong finding, the student may be invited to a further hearing.
  - 72. The proceedings will be determined by the SSAB and will take such form as the SSAB determines appropriate to investigate the grounds for appeal.
  - 73. The SSAB may:
    - 73.1. Review the decision made by the SSP and either:
      - 73.1.1. Substitute such other decision as it considers appropriate.

73.1.2. Reject the appeal, in which case the original decision will stand.

74. The SSAB shall consider its decision and shall notify the student of the decision by email to their University email address within seven calendar days.
75. The decision of the SSAB shall be final and no further appeal to the University is permitted. Registry will notify the student that the internal appeals procedures have been completed and of their right to appeal to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).

## Office of the Independent Adjudicator

76. At the end of the University's procedures, the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. At this point if the student remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer the decision to the [OIA](#), within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter. Details are available [here](#).
77. The OIA is an independent body set up as a result of the Higher Education Act (2004) to run a student complaints scheme. Membership of the OIA is a requirement of the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) and the Office for Students.

## Review and Monitoring

78. The Head of Student Complaints, Appeals and Discipline will maintain a record of Support to Study Panel outcomes.
79. The Academic Registrar will report to Academic Board statistical information relating to Support to Study Panel outcomes on an annual basis.
80. Academic Board will monitor the data and make recommendations as appropriate.
81. Academic Board will review the policy and procedures for their effectiveness.

## Version History

<b>Title: Support to Study Policy and Procedure</b>				
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<b>Location: Academic Handbook/ Policies and Procedures/ General/ Student Welfare</b>				
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Proposed Next Review Date</b>
24.7.0	May 2024	May 2024	Head of Student Support and Development	May 2026
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5.0	July 2022	August 2022	Head of Student Support and Development	May 2024
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3.0	December 2020	December 2020	Registrar	May 2023
2.0	December 2019	December 2019	Registrar	December 2020
1.0	December 2018	December 2018	Student Wellbeing Coordinator	September 2020
(formerly the Fitness to Study Policy)				
Referenced documents	<a href="#">Undergraduate Student Attendance Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Student Disability Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Misuse of Substances Statement</a> ; <a href="#">Prevent Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Extenuating Circumstances Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Declaration of Criminal Convictions Risk Assessment</a> ; <a href="#">Student Welfare Policy</a> ; <a href="#">Appeal Form for Students</a> ; <a href="#">Change in Circumstances Policy and Guidance</a>			
External Reference Point(s)	<a href="#">UK Quality Code: Enabling Student Achievement</a> ; <a href="#">Learning and Teaching</a>			