

**BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY
Document Administration**

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BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY
Professional Suitability Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bishop Grosseteste University has established a Professional Suitability Policy which is intended to ensure concerns about a student's professional suitability are acted upon promptly in order to provide support to the student, and as early intervention may prevent matters from becoming more serious.
- 1.2 This Policy applies to students throughout their period of registration with the University, both on and off campus, and at all times. It is not limited to term time or placement or work-based learning.
- 1.3 In implementing this Policy, the University will remain mindful of its duty of care and of its obligations to students under the Equality Act 2010, including cases where reasonable adjustments are appropriate. It will also remain mindful of the often confidential and sensitive nature of professional suitability matters and of its obligations under the Data Protection legislation.
- 1.4 The standard of proof applied at every stage of this Policy is the balance of probabilities.

2. Scope and Purpose

- 2.1 The University provides a number of programmes of study where students' professional suitability to register for and undertake the programmes require assessment and monitoring by the University.
- 2.2 These programmes of study are ones which usually lead to professional registration and/or a license to practice in a professional context. They are characterised as being practice-centred and are normally directed towards the achievement of professional competence and/ or professional registration. In addition, most of these programmes are accredited and/or regulated by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs). In particular, PSRBs, together with other professional advisory bodies (PABs) are concerned with seeking to ensure that students comply with professional codes of conduct and demonstrate developing standards of professionalism.
- 2.3 The programmes of study to which this Policy normally applies are listed in Appendix 1. The University also reserves the right to use this Policy in relation to students who are qualified professionals on its postgraduate or continuing professional development (CPD) programmes and in situations where a student is following an academic programme but where an allegation or complaint is made that calls into question their suitability for their expected future profession. The Programme Leader and Head of School will agree when the use of the *Professional Suitability Policy* is appropriate in these circumstances.
- 2.4 The University needs to be satisfied that students admitted, registering for, and



undertaking such programmes are professionally suitable to do so, with reference to the standards of the particular profession and/or the requirements of any relevant PSRBs and/or PABs.

2.5 The University's *Code of Practice for DBS Checks for Applicants and Students* sets out the arrangements for the admission of students with police warnings, reprimands, cautions and convictions. Once students are registered at the University they are subject to this *Professional Suitability Policy* in the event that professional suitability concerns are raised.

2.6 Students undertaking such programmes will be required at all times to:

- demonstrate acceptable standards of conduct;
- demonstrate relevant values and attitudes;
- satisfy relevant criminal record requirements; and
- satisfy relevant health requirements.

3. Principles and protocols

3.1 This Policy is not intended to deal with issues of assessing practice competencies which are managed under the University's Academic Regulations and Procedures. This Policy sets out how the University will normally respond to instances where a concern is raised regarding a student's professional suitability and the type of action that the University may take to deal with the concern and to support the student. In appropriately serious cases, the University has the right to suspend and/or terminate a student's registration on the programme.

4. Examples of behaviour which may give rise to professional suitability concerns

4.1 Examples of where professional suitability concerns may arise include (but are not limited to) instances where a student has, or is suspected of having:

- health, mental health, emotional or inter-personal problems, which indicate a lack of insight and appropriate management thereof, and which give rise to concerns about possible risk to self or others;
- failed to comply with PSRB and/or PAB requirements in relation to professional suitability at any point in time;
- failed to act within any statutory frameworks which set out students' professional duties and responsibilities;
- breached standards of acceptable conduct including those set out in the University's Student Conduct Policy or by a relevant PSRB and/or PAB, for example in connection with (but not limited to):
 - abuse or harassment, including through the use of social media;
 - violent, aggressive or threatening behaviour (physical, verbal or other);
 - sexual misconduct;
 - failure to treat others with dignity or respect, or to practise in a non-discriminatory way;
 - dishonesty or untrustworthiness (such as the misrepresentation of



- qualifications or professional experience, or the forgery of documents or signatures, or theft or making false expenses claims);
- repeat or serious assessment offences;
 - activities which constitute a criminal offence;
 - the commission or suspected commission of a criminal offence;
 - alcohol or substance abuse problems or addiction;
 - anti-social behaviour which adversely affects the proper operation of placement/work- based settings;
 - the failure to demonstrate an attitude, demeanour or communication appropriate for individuals working in the profession concerned;
 - breach of confidentiality;
 - lack of motivation or interest and/or failure to engage in learning activities;
 - lack of communication and engagement with the programme team, including failure to respond to communications;
 - inconsistent, unreliable or inappropriate behaviour in learning, study or placement/work-based learning settings;

and where, due to the nature of the programme, the University is concerned that the student's professional suitability may be, or may become, impaired in light of a reasonable suspicion that as a result:

- a risk is posed to the student's own health, safety or wellbeing and/or that of others;
- the proper operation of the profession is or may be adversely affected;
- a relevant placement or work based setting is or may be adversely affected; and/or
- trust in the profession or the University may be undermined or the profession or University is brought into disrepute.

4.2 Whilst the University anticipates that most matters involving professional suitability concerns will be dealt with under this Policy, matters may arise where it is appropriate for the University to implement other University processes (such as its *Code of Practice for Academic Misconduct*, *Student Disciplinary Procedure* and/or *Support for Study Policy*) as an alternative or in addition, and the University is not prevented from doing so at any time.

5. Concerns about a student's health and wellbeing

5.1 There may be occasions when a student's physical or mental health means that they pose a risk to themselves, or to others, which may include service users in placement settings. For students following professional programmes, such health concerns will usually be managed through this policy, especially where the student's presentation gives rise to professional suitability concerns arising from a failure to disclose a health issue, a lack of insight into their condition and/or its impact upon others and/or their professional practice. In all cases, the process will be conducted in as supportive a way as possible and with specialist expertise from the internal support services. In some cases, it might

be deemed appropriate to manage health concerns through the *Support for Study Policy*. The decision on the appropriate policy framework will be made jointly between the Programme Leader, Head of School and Head of Student Advice, with advice and guidance from the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager.

6. Professional Suitability Procedure for students

6.1 Concerns about a student's professional suitability will normally be dealt with under our three stage procedure, based upon the perceived level of risk to compliance with professional standards:

- **Stage 1:** Initial, emerging or minor concerns
- **Stage 2:** Formal Intervention
- **Stage 3:** Serious or persistent concerns.

6.2 The Policy may be entered at any Stage without any requirement for an earlier Stage to have been commenced or exhausted, although it is anticipated that most situations can be managed by action taken at Stages 1 and/or 2. At which Stage the Policy is implemented will depend on factors such as the nature of the professional suitability concern, the seriousness of any risk posed and the student's response to any steps taken so far by the University to manage the situation.

6.3 Students dealt with under this Policy will be entitled at any stage to be accompanied and/or represented by one member of staff, friend, relative, or representative of the Students' Union. This is in addition to any health professional or support worker who may usually accompany the student. The role of this individual is to provide support to the student. It is not to advocate or represent the student.

6.4 Should a student without good cause be unwilling or unable to participate at any stage of this Procedure or attend a meeting/ hearing, the process should continue with concerns raised and action taken as appropriate.

6.5 Should a student chose to interrupt their studies, the Professional Suitability investigation will continue if and when the student decides to return to study.

6.6 Where in this Procedure reference is made to any named University officer, such reference is to be read as including reference to any appointed nominee.

6.7 Where a student decides to withdraw from the programme, or is withdrawn on academic or competency grounds, and there is an outstanding professional suitability concern, the professional suitability process will normally continue until completed so that a formal judgement may be reached, whether or not the student chooses to engage with the process.

7. Reporting a concern

7.1 The University recognises that concerns regarding students' professional suitability may arise



in a variety of ways (e.g. as result of a disclosure made by the student on an annual statement of good health and character, or from the circumstances of a student's practice, academic performance or conduct, or from issues raised by University staff, other students, health professionals, placement providers or service users). The University will consider and address concerns regarding students' professional suitability howsoever they arise and will endeavour to take action to deal with concerns promptly and fairly.

- 7.2 Staff to whom disclosures are made or concerns are raised are encouraged to consult, in the first instance with Programme Leader of the student about whom the concerns have been raised. The University recognises that dealing with matters in this way is critical, not only to ensure consistency of process and that relevant professional standards are attained and maintained, but also to support student learning and academic achievement and to the furtherance of a positive student experience.
- 7.3 If a student wishes to raise a concern about another student, then they should raise this with a member of staff within the University who they feel comfortable with. The student is not expected to deal with the matter themselves. The member of staff to whom the concern is raised will make the appropriate referral to the Programme Leader of the student about whom the concerns have been raised. If the student contacts a member of the Students' Union, then they will make the appropriate referral to the Programme Leader of the student about whom concerns have been raised.
- 7.4 When dealing with students under this Policy, University staff will consider what support and guidance may be offered to students. Students will be reminded of the support services provided by the University through Student Advice and the Students' Union and will be encouraged where appropriate to seek support from relevant external sources (e.g. local GPs or mental health services) as well as from sources internal to the University.
- 7.5 Students should be aware that, in the course of dealing with professional suitability concerns, the University may consider it appropriate to discuss and/or refer matters and/or their outcomes to third parties such as PSRBs or placement providers and agencies such as Social Services, the Police or the Disclosure and Barring Service. The University will normally notify the student when doing so, but may do so on occasion without notification to the student in situations deemed to be of risk. Conduct which may also be a criminal offence
- 7.6 If a student's conduct may be in breach of the criminal law, the University will normally report any suspected criminal offences to the Police unless the victim of an alleged offence committed by the student requests otherwise. In such cases this would normally be for the discretion of the Head of School. However the University reserves the right to report any offences to the Police, even if the victim of the alleged crime requests the University not to do so.
- 7.7 In addition, the University may at its discretion suspend or delay taking action under this Policy pending the outcome of any Police inquiry and/or criminal investigation/prosecution. In such cases, the student will be notified of this deferral in writing.

7.8 Consideration of misconduct following a sentence from a criminal court will be undertaken under the University's disciplinary procedures, normally once any fitness to study issues have been considered and at the discretion of the Head of School.

8. Representation and attendance at meetings and hearings

8.1 The University's Students' Union may, upon the request of the student, provide advocacy for the student. In such circumstances, the student should inform the University in advance if they will be accompanied to a meeting as per the provisions in Stage 2 or 3 as per paragraph 42. Student Advice is also able to offer advice to students and the Head of Student Support is able to assist members of staff within the University on general strategies to address fitness to study queries and issues. Care should be taken to ensure that there is no conflict of interest for the student and the University. Separate advisers from within Student Advice should liaise with each individual party.

9. Stage 1 – Initial, Emerging or Minor Concerns

9.1 Once the student's Programme Leader (or equivalent academic management role holder) has been informed of the possible concern, or if they have a concern of their own, they should then inform the Head of School that they are minded to have a discussion with the student under this Policy. The Programme Leader, with support from the Governance and Compliance Office, will undertake an investigation as is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. The purpose of the investigation will be to inform the University of the nature of the professional suitability concern, to recommend to the Head of School the Stage at which it should be dealt with (if any), and to prepare a report to be presented at the relevant Stage (if appropriate). The Programme Leader and Head of School will consider the concerns and decide whether or not there is sufficient cause to proceed under the *Professional Suitability Policy*. Where appropriate, the Programme Leader and Head of School may discuss the invocation of other University policy and procedures. The Head of School will consult the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager for advice.

9.2 The Programme Leader will inform the student that there is a concern about their professional suitability and the nature of the concern and that the matter is to be dealt with under Stage 1. The student will be provided with a copy of this policy. The Programme Leader will arrange a meeting with the student, at least 2 working days in advance, to discuss the concern. At this point the student is welcome to contact the Students' Union or Student Advice if they have any concerns or questions regarding the process.

9.3 At the initial meeting with the student, the staff member will talk with the student in an understanding manner, indicating that there are concerns about the student's professional suitability, registered by the use of this policy. The nature of the concerns should be clearly outlined and the student should be encouraged to discuss the issues, including potential impact on themselves, on other, their studies, and/or progression following completion of their studies.

9.4 Following the meeting, the Programme Leader will determine whether or not the



student's professional suitability is impaired or may become impaired and any actions to be taken. The 'Record of Concern for a Student's Professional Suitability' form (Appendix 2) should be used to record key points and, where appropriate, the actions to be taken. Such actions may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following:

- no further action to be taken;
- the matter be referred to another Stage;
- issue a warning;
- support arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments be put in place for the student;
- an action plan be drawn up; and
- the matter be referred for consideration under another University process.

9.5 The 'Record of Concern for a Student's Health or Wellbeing' form (Appendix 2) should be used to record the key points and agreements from the initial discussion with the student and a copy should be sent to the student within 5 working days. A further copy should also be kept on the student's file for a period of time agreed with the student. The student should be reassured that the purpose of keeping the form on file is to ensure the University is providing all necessary support and to ensure that the student remains fit to study. The Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager should also be informed that an initial meeting has taken place though it is not necessary to provide any further detail regarding the specific concerns.

9.6 If the Programme Leader has determined that support arrangements or an action plan be put in place, the Programme Leader and student should agree a date to meet, normally within one month of the initial meeting, to review the situation (Stage 1 Review Meeting) and to discuss progress against any identified actions. The Programme Leader should fill out the Review Form (Appendix 3) with the student, which will be recorded in the same manner as paragraph 11.3 of this policy.

9.7 If the Programme Leader feels that they are unable to address the concerns at Stage 1 then they should contact the Head of School to discuss moving onto Stage 2 of the policy. If the student progresses onto Stage 2 then they will be notified of this by the Programme Leader. The Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager should be notified that the issue is being progressed to the next stage.

9.8 If the concerns escalate and lead the Programme Leader to believe that the concerns are of a critical and/or persistent nature and pose a significant risk to the student's professional suitability then they should raise this with the Head of School who may consider moving directly to Stage 3 of the policy. The Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager should be notified that the issue is being progressed to Stage 3.

10. Stage 2 – Formal Intervention

10.1 Stage 2 of the procedure should be used when intervention at Stage 1 has been unsuccessful such that the concerns are continuing or the concerns over the student's professional suitability are sufficiently serious to indicate that further intervention is required. This stage is



normally undertaken by the Programme Leader or nominee at the request of the Head of School. The Head of School should contact the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager for advice on procedural matters and may also contact the Head of Student Support for general guidance on strategies for support.

- 10.2 The Programme Leader will inform the student in writing that there is a concern about their professional suitability and the nature of the concern and that the matter is to be dealt with under Stage 2. The student will be provided with a copy of this Policy.
- 10.3 The student will be invited to a formal meeting by the Programme Leader or nominee which should ideally be within 5 working days of the concern being raised within Stage 2. Reasonable notice of around 48 hours will normally be given within the electronic or hard copy letter, which informs the student of the purpose of the meeting, includes relevant documentation supporting the concerns and requests any further documentation to be provided by the student. The requirement for notice before the formal meeting does not preclude any communication with the student at the time of the specific incident.
- 10.4 The meeting will normally include the Programme Leader or nominee as Chair and the student's personal tutor or another suitable member of academic staff and a member of administrative staff to minute the meeting.
- 10.5 The Student may be accompanied at the meeting by one person of their choosing; this could be a friend, member of the Students' Union, member of Student Advice or parent. The role of the member of Student Advice will be to provide impartial advice regarding specific help which may be offered to student, along with suggestions regarding any reasonable adjustments which could be made.
- 10.6 The meeting will normally proceed regardless of whether the student wishes to engage with the process.
- 10.7 During the meeting, the student (if present) will be informed of the concerns about their professional suitability. The student will be given a full opportunity to respond to the concern and ask questions. The meeting will help to establish the student's own perception of their conduct.
- 10.8 The meeting will seek to determine whether or not the student's professional suitability is impaired or may become impaired and any actions to be taken. Such actions may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following outcomes:
- no further action is required;
 - support arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments be put in place for the student;
 - an action plan be drawn up;
 - issue a warning;
 - the student be withdrawn temporarily from placement, other work-based setting or related learning activity;
 - the matter be referred to another stage; and/or

- the matter be referred for consideration under another University process.

10.9 A report of the meeting and its outcome will be provided to the Programme Leader within 48 hours of the meeting who will then approve the report and forward the record along with any action plan devised to the student, normally within 5 working days of the meeting.

10.10 A copy of the decision letter and any associated documentation will be retained on the Student Record and a copy kept by the Programme Leader.

10.11 If the student cannot agree to any actions proposed by the Programme Leader or nominee then they will be advised that action will be taken under Stage 3 of this policy.

11. Stage 3 - Serious or persistent concerns

11.1 Serious and/or persistent concerns about a student's professional suitability will normally be dealt with under Stage 3 in the following way.

11.2 The Head of School or nominee will instruct the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager to call a Professional Suitability Panel to discuss the situation. The Panel will normally consist of 3-5 people including:

- Head of School or nominee (as Chair of Panel);
- senior members of academic staff from the School; and
- an independent member of staff who has not been involved in the previous stages.

The Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager will also be in attendance to instruct on policy and take notes.

Such other members may be asked to provide evidence either in attendance at the Panel or as a written submission:

- a representative from Student Advice (at the student's request);
- the Student's GP or other relevant representative (provided the student gives consent); and /or
- a member of a University Support Service such as Estates, Accommodation Services, or Registry if appropriate.

11.3 The student will be informed in writing that there is a concern about their professional suitability and of the nature of the concern and that the matter is to be dealt with under Level 3. The student will be provided with a copy of this Policy.

11.4 The student will be invited to a hearing before a Professional Suitability Panel. At least 5 working days in advance of the hearing the student will normally be given in writing:

- notice of the date, time and place of the hearing



- details of the professional suitability concern
- a copy of the investigation report
- a reminder of the right to be accompanied and/or represented at the hearing as detailed under paragraph 10.5.

11.5 The student may submit to the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager, at least 2 working days in advance of the hearing date, a written statement in response to the concern which is to be considered at the hearing.

11.6 Notice of any witnesses to be called by the student and/or the Programme Lead at the hearing must be given in writing to the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager at least 2 working days in advance of the date of the hearing together with a written statement of the contribution that each witness will make. The Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager will provide a copy of each party's witness notice and statements to the other party.

11.7 Whilst the order and procedure to be followed at a hearing before a Professional Suitability Panel will be at the discretion of the Chair and will comply with the principles of natural justice, including the right to a fair hearing, the following will normally occur:

- The Programme Leader or nominee will outline the professional suitability concern and the evidence in support of the concern.
- The student may respond at this stage.
- The Programme Leader or nominee may call and question witnesses.
- The student may question these witnesses.
- The student will present their case.
- The student may call and question witnesses.
- The Programme Leader or nominee may question these witnesses.
- The Programme Leader or nominee will sum up.
- The student may reply.
- The members of the Professional Suitability Panel may question any witness at any time during the hearing and may recall the parties or witnesses at any time.
- The Chair may adjourn or postpone the hearing where it is reasonable to do so.

The Professional Suitability Panel may ask for specific enquiries to be undertaken, additional witnesses to be called and/or additional information to be presented. Minutes will be taken of the proceedings.

11.8 The Professional Suitability Panel will retire in private to deliberate. The Governance, Compliance and Operation Manager may retire with the Panel in order to provide procedural advice but will play no part in the Panel's decision-making. Matters will be determined by the Professional Suitability Panel on the balance of probabilities. If a consensus of decision is not achieved, the Chair will have the casting vote.

11.9 The Professional Suitability Panel will determine whether or not the student's professional suitability is impaired, or may become impaired, and any actions to be taken.



Such actions may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following outcomes:

- no action be taken;
- support arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments be put in place for the student;
- to implement or amend a previously agreed action plan;
- the matter be referred to an earlier Stage;
- the matter be referred for consideration under another University process;
- a written warning be given to the student;
- the student be withdrawn from placement or other work-based activity or related learning activity;
- the student be transferred to a non-professional programme;
- a recommendation be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) that a professional award is withheld or withdrawn;
- a recommendation be made to the Award Board that an alternative non-professional award be awarded;
- a recommendation be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) that the student be suspended from the programme for a specified period of time (with or without conditions);
- a recommendation be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) that the student be expelled from the University; and/or
- a recommendation be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) that the student's studies be terminated and the student not be permitted readmission on a professional programme in the future.

11.10 A record of the Panel meeting signed by the Chair will normally be sent to the student within 5 working days of the panel meeting and if an Action Plan was agreed as the outcome then this will accompany the record. A copy of this documentation will also be held on the student's personal file.

11.11 If an Action Plan is agreed, it will normally include specific actions (desirable behaviour and expectations), support mechanisms and dates for review (See Appendix 4). The Action Plan may include a request for the student to provide evidence that they are professionally suitable and details of consequences should the student not choose to engage with the plan. If an Action Plan is the agreed outcome of the Panel meeting then it would normally be necessary to convene one or more review meetings which will normally include at least two members of the original (Stage 3) Professional Suitability Panel.

11.12 At the Review meetings, the Panel will consider progress and will normally revisit the options previously considered at the Panel meeting and decide whether an alternative outcome is appropriate; this may include a decision that no further action is required, or that it is necessary to revisit alternatives to address any continuing or additional concerns. The student will normally be in attendance at the Review meetings and will have the opportunity to be accompanied by one person of their choosing. If the Action Plan has proved unsuccessful and the Review Panel decides that it is necessary to revisit an alternative decision, then Stage 3 of the procedure may be invoked again.

11.13 Where it has been decided to interrupt, suspend or terminate a student's studies at the University, then the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager will ensure that this is recorded appropriately within the School, Student Administration, Planning and on the student's file.

12. Request for Review

12.1 Should the student wish to invoke their right to appeal a decision at Stage 3 of the Professional Suitability Policy, then a request for review should be made in writing to the University Registrar within 21 days of the decision being communicated to the student. If a request is submitted after this date then the Registrar may decide whether or not the appeal should be allowed.

12.2 The student should use the form provided in Appendix 5 to this procedure to submit their request. The appeal for a Review of the Professional Suitability outcome should include brief details of the case and the grounds for the appeal and should be accompanied by any other supporting documentation.

12.3 A Case for Review may only be considered on the following grounds:

- there was a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the disciplinary procedures;
- new evidence is now available which was not available upon reasonable enquiry or application at the time of the original meeting (students will be required to outline the reasons the new evidence could not have been presented previously); or
- that the decision reached was of such nature that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.

12.4 The Registrar will decide whether there is a *prima facie* case for review and if there is, then they may ask an Executive Dean, where appropriate, to convene a new Stage 3 Fitness to Study Panel. Where possible, the new Panel will not normally include any members of a panel previously involved in the case.

12.5 Following completion of this panel, the student will have exhausted the University's procedures and there will be no further grounds for appeal. The student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter by the Governance, Compliance and Operations Manager which will provide details of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), whose role it is to independently review the application by the University of its own procedures. (www.oiahe.org.uk)

Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57-75 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AB

13. Supplementary Provisions

Recording

13.1 The audio or video recording of meetings or hearings under this procedure is normally prohibited, although this clause may be revisited in an individual case subject to such a reasonable adjustment as may be agreed by the University under the Equality Act 2010.

Medical or other evidence

13.2 If, under the procedures, a student is encouraged to provide medical or other evidence of their professional suitability, a student may decline this request.

13.3 The University respects medical or other evidence provided regarding a student's professional suitability but will not necessarily be bound by it. It is for the University to decide whether or not it accepts a statement provided by a medical certificate of the student's fitness to study, taking into account the context, conduct and communications of the student.

13.4 It is normally expected that no costs will be incurred in providing additional evidence. However, if costs are incurred, they will generally be borne by the student. The University may however fund the cost of obtaining additional evidence if the University requests that the student complete an independent assessment to supplement evidence already provided by the student. If an independent assessment is required at the request of the University, then the University will make the arrangements and may also request that specific questions are addressed.

Suspension from studies and intercalation

13.5 This section refers to the use of a temporary suspension of a student from their placement, work-based learning setting, related learning activities and/or programme, or temporary exclusion from University premises as a means of mitigating risk, not to their use as a penalty. Any temporary suspension or exclusion made under this section is a neutral act and is not a determination regarding any professional suitability concerns raised.

13.6 Where the relevant Programme Leader and Head of School agree that a student about whom professional suitability concerns have been raised poses a serious risk to:

- their own health, safety and/or wellbeing and/or that of others;
- the professional activities of a placement provider or other professional organisation or to a practice situation;
- the property of the University and/or others; and/or
- the reputation of the University or a placement provider or other professional organisation, and/or its proper functioning and/or its activities;



and immediate action in the form of temporary suspension and/or exclusion is reasonably required to remove or reduce the risk, the Programme Leader will make a recommendation to the Head of School that the student be temporarily suspended and/or excluded.

13.7 The Head of School will consider the recommendation and may:

- suspend the student from their placement or work-based learning setting and/or related learning activities for a specified period of time;
- suspend the student from their programme for a specified period of time; and/or
- exclude the student from University premises for a specified period of time;

pending steps being taken under this Policy and Procedure and/or any police inquiry and/or criminal investigation/prosecution.

13.8 The student will be notified in writing of the Head of School's decision, with reasons, normally within 3 working days of the date of the decision.

13.9 The Programme Lead and Head of Student Advice will consider whether specific arrangements can reasonably be put in place for the student in order to minimise the impact on their studies, and will liaise with the student's Head of Department to make these arrangements as appropriate.

13.10 Any student whose studies are suspended or terminated by the University under the Fitness to Study Procedure shall not be entitled to a refund of fees and where necessary, it is the student's responsibility to inform the Student Loans Company (www.slc.co.uk) of their suspension/termination. The same also applies to an intercalation. The student may seek advice from Student Advice regarding this.

13.11 Whilst a student is suspended or intercalated, they will not be permitted to engage with the University. They may continue to receive ongoing therapeutic support through Student Advice as an exception.

Return to studies

13.12 Intercalation or suspension should not normally be for a period longer than one year in total. If intercalation/suspension period exceeds one year then the student's studies should normally be terminated and the student would be required to reapply should they wish to return at a later date.

13.13 Following a formal decision to intercalate/suspend a student from studies at Stage 2 or 3 of the procedure, a Return to Study Review will be conducted within a 4 week period of the expected return to study.

13.14 Students will usually only be permitted to return to studies following suitable medical or other evidence stating that the student is professionally suitable to return to study. A Return to Study Plan will normally be agreed 4 weeks prior to the student's expected return where possible and will be agreed by the student, the student's Programme Leader and the Head of



School. The plan will include specific support measures following consultation regarding reasonable adjustments with Student Advice, and will also include any other support deemed reasonable and necessary to allow the student to return to study. The student will be required to comply with all the agreed actions in order to remain at the University.

- 13.15 Following the student's return to study, they will be required to attend regular Review meetings with the authorised member of staff in their academic unit (i.e. an academic staff from the School, agreed by the Programme Leader). If appropriate, the meetings may also be attended by members of staff from Professional Services.
- 13.16 The Review meetings may normally cease after an agreed period but if it is deemed appropriate, these meetings may continue for the full duration of the student's study at the University.

Employment references

- 13.17 The University regularly provides student-related references to third parties (such as educational institutions and potential employers).
- 13.18 When providing a reference in a professional context (for example, in connection with potential employment in a profession or admission on to a professional programme of study at another institution) for a student who has been subject to this Policy at Level 3, the University will refer to the professional suitability concern raised against the student, the associated circumstances, and the decision and outcome of the Stage 3 proceedings. Students will be actively encouraged to contact the employing organisation and discuss full details of the case with the prospective employer.
- 13.19 The University will not normally refer to issues arising in connection with professional suitability proceedings under Stages 1 and 2 when providing references requested in a professional context, but reserves the right to do so when it considers it appropriate to do so (for example, in a matter involving issues of safeguarding and/or client/service-user safety).
- 13.20 The University will not normally refer to issues arising in professional suitability proceedings under Stages 1, 2 or 3 when providing references for students in non-professional contexts unless there are legitimate and serious concerns about possible risk to others.

APPENDIX 1 – Programmes normally applicable to the Professional Suitability Policy

To note: The Policy may be invoked for other programmes where it is deemed appropriate to do so

School of Teacher Development

All Initial Teacher Training Programmes

Full list to be confirmed by Heads of School via Quality