



Oakswood College

Empowering Through Education



Support Through Studies

Policy

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE • ENSURING COMPLIANCE
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



GOVERNANCE



QUALITY



COMPLIANCE



EXCELLENCE



(Trading name of Oakwood Group Ltd)

Support Through Studies Policy & Procedures

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1. Aims and Purpose

The purpose of the Support Through Studies Policy and its procedures is to ensure that students experiencing health, wellbeing, or personal challenges are supported to engage with their studies in a safe, inclusive, and successful manner. This Policy and its procedures are designed to:

- Promote a positive and inclusive learning environment that enables students to feel safe, supported, and empowered to achieve academic and personal success.
- Enable early identification and timely intervention when a student's ability to engage with their studies is impacted by health, wellbeing, disability, or personal circumstances (links to Personal Tutoring & Intervention Policy).
- Ensure that decisions regarding student support are made collaboratively, involving students, academic staff, support services, and, where appropriate, external professionals.
- Provide a non-punitive, flexible, and proportionate risk-based approach focused on student welfare, retention, and the safety/wellbeing of the wider community.

2. Scope

- This policy applies to all registered students and applicants with confirmed offers.
- It may be triggered independently or alongside other institutional processes, such as academic progression reviews, student conduct procedures, safeguarding protocols, or engagement with support services like counselling, disability, or pastoral care.

3. Referral into Support Through Studies and Allied Policies

Common reasons for a student or applicant with a confirmed offer to be referred into Support Through Studies include, but are not limited to:

- the College identifies a barrier, challenge or circumstance that may impact a student's ability to engage positively and fully with their course of study and to fulfil the expectations of the training and course;
- a student requires additional academic and/or pastoral support, including requested/ongoing reasonable adjustments;
- a student's health, wellbeing, personal circumstances and/or behaviour is, or appears to be potentially at risk of, having a detrimental impact upon their studies and/or ability to cope with student life;
- a student's health, wellbeing, and/or behaviour poses a wider risk to other students and/or has or could have a detrimental impact on other members of the Oakwood College community;

- a student's ability to meet the attendance and engagement requirements appears to be, or may likely be compromised;

The aim of this policy is to sustain the progress of such students in a supportive environment whilst ensuring the safety and well-being of other members of the College community. The policy provides and the framework within which the College can promote a positive, sensitive and co-ordinated approach to the management of this, joining up academic and pastoral support and providing a tailored approach that speaks to individual student circumstances and needs. The procedures which are underpinned by this policy are designed to achieve this, by being flexible, supportive and proportionate, and ideally fully collaborative with the student.

Below is a list of relevant policies that may receive a referral under Support Through Studies, or alternatively under which a student may be referred into Support Through Studies:

- **Personal Tutoring Policy:** Where a student is supported through personal tutoring and intervention strategies. This policy has a direct correlation with the Student Support framework at Oakwood.
- **Prevent & Safeguarding Policy:** In cases where the student may be at risk of harm to themselves or others, or where protective action is required.
- **Interruption of Studies or Withdrawal Policy:** If a student is considering or advised to take a break from their studies due to personal or health-related reasons.
- **Student Complaints Procedure; Academic Appeals Procedure:** Where a student raises concerns that reveal underlying wellbeing issues requiring coordinated support.
- **Student Code of Conduct; Non-Academic Misconduct Policy:** If a student's behaviour raises concerns that may be linked to underlying wellbeing or mental health issues.
- **Student Emergency Exclusion & Suspension Policy; Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment & Unacceptable Behaviours:** Where there are concerns about a student's capacity to participate safely and effectively in university life due to health or behavioural factors.

The above list is not exhaustive, and there may be other Oakwood policies that result the referral of a student into Support Through Studies, or conversely that a student is referred into via Support Through Studies.

Additionally, a student may be referred into informal or formal Support Through Studies procedures if additional potential support needs are identified at any point by a member of staff. Where a staff member believes that a student may require referral into Support Through

Studies, they should contact the Head of Academic Affairs for a conversation in the first instance. A risk assessment (see Appendix A) may be completed to support decision-making.

This policy may be applied independently or in conjunction with other institutional procedures. Where academic, conduct, safeguarding, or support processes are ongoing, this policy provides a complementary framework to ensure student wellbeing is considered and supported throughout.

4. Key Principles

- Enable students to remain in, and succeed at, their studies wherever possible.
- Procedures are supportive, risk-based, and prioritise fairness, transparency, and collaborative agreement with the student.
- Articulate who staff should contact if they have concerns a student may need to be in Support Through Studies
- Escalation or de-escalation between stages is flexible according to changing needs and circumstances.
- The process is not an alternative to disciplinary or misconduct procedures but can run alongside or as a result of these.

5. Procedural Integrity and Fairness

To uphold transparency, consistency, and student trust, the College must ensure that the Support Through Studies Policy is applied fairly and with appropriate safeguards. This includes:

1. **External or independent officers may be involved to ensure objectivity and expertise.** In complex or sensitive cases, individuals who are not directly involved with the student or their academic programme may be invited to participate in decision-making. This helps ensure impartiality and brings in specialist knowledge where appropriate and pertinent.

What to consider:

- Identify roles within or outside the institution that can offer **neutral oversight**, such as:
 - Mental health advisors
 - Disability support officers
 - Safeguarding leads
 - Legal or governance representatives

- Define **when and how** these individuals are involved (e.g. during review panels, risk assessments, or appeals).
 - Ensure they have **appropriate training** and access to relevant information while maintaining confidentiality.
- 2. Risk assessments and reasonable adjustments must be considered throughout any Support to Studies procedures (whether formal or informal).** The College should continuously assess any risks to the student or others and make adjustments to support the student's safe and effective engagement with their studies.

APPENDIX A TO THIS POLICY PROVIDES A RISK ASSESSMENT THAT CAN BE USED TO SUPPORT RISK-BASED DECISION-MAKING. This can be found at the end of this document.

What to consider:

- In completing the risk assessment process, evaluate in particular:
 - The student's ability to participate safely
 - Potential impact on peers, staff, or the learning environment
 - Any Safeguarding/Prevent concerns
- Ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 by identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities or health conditions.
- Embed these considerations at every stage of the process, from initial concern to return-to-study planning.

6. Support Through Studies Procedures

There are 4 stages of Support Through Studies Procedures: an informal stage, plus 3 formal stages.

A) Informal Stage:

- Ongoing tutorial, pastoral, and welfare support for all students/applicants, with actions or referrals agreed informally.
- All students/applicants enter at this stage by default. Applicants may be offered a Support Through Studies Meeting under this stage prior to enrolment, to identify needs and any reasonable adjustments/smooth transition with proactive steps to put relevant support in place prior to arrival. Agreed reasonable adjustments and any other bespoke arrangements will normally be recorded on a Support Through Studies Action Plan or Learning Agreement. This helps to socialise Support Through Studies and embed it at the earliest opportunity, to best support student success.

B) Formal Stages (any formal stage can be entered at any point if appropriate):

Formal stages in the Support Through Studies process are typically triggered when a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour raises sufficient concern that informal support is no longer adequate. These triggers are often defined by institutional policies and escalate based on severity, risk, or impact.

Common triggers for the formal stages of a Support Through Studies process include persistent concerns about a student's health, wellbeing, or behaviour that affect their ability to engage with their studies. These may arise from missed academic milestones, safeguarding risks, disruptive conduct, or failure to engage with informal support. Formal intervention is typically initiated when the situation requires coordinated action, risk assessment, or specialist input to ensure the student's safety and academic continuity.

Support Through Studies is tailored and bespoke to each student. As such, the procedures under this Policy are very flexible and should be used according to the needs of the student and level of concern. A student's case may be escalated up or down through the Support Through Studies procedures as deemed appropriate by the College, on a risk-assessed basis. For example, a student can be referred into Stage 2 or Stage 3 without having been referred into any stage that precedes it. It is possible to escalate a case from Stage 1 or the informal stage straight to Stage 3 if necessary and appropriate. It is also possible to refer a case into Stage 2 and then determine that the informal stage is subsequently appropriate to manage the case. A case can be referred into any stage, at any time, regardless of any previous action, involvement, or lack of involvement of the Support Through Studies procedures.

The Formal Stages of the procedures (Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3) are set out below:

(a) Stage 1: Emerging/Initial Concerns

This stage is for when it is deemed necessary to address emerging or initial concerns with a student and the College deems that the student would benefit from a more structured approach than would be available under the Informal Stage. A Stage 1 Meeting involves:

- **Relaxed meeting to identify issues and set a short-term support plan.** A supportive conversation between the student and relevant staff (e.g. tutor, wellbeing advisor) to explore concerns and agree on immediate actions.
- **Agreement with student sought.** The student is encouraged to actively participate in the process and consent to the support plan.

- **Documentation of concerns and agreed actions.** A brief written record (e.g. Support Through Studies meeting notes, Learning Agreement or Action Plan) should be kept ensuring clarity and continuity. Where a Support Through Studies Learning Agreement or Action Plan is put in place, this should clearly indicate the length of time it is in place for before a review is due.
- **Referral to internal support services if appropriate.** This may include counselling, disability support, academic skills, or pastoral care.
- **Monitoring period agreed.** A short timeframe (e.g. 2–4 weeks) during which progress is reviewed and further support considered.
- **Clarification of next steps if concerns persist.** The student is informed that if issues continue or escalate, the process may move to Stage 2 (formal review).

(b) Stage 2: Continuing/Significant Concerns

This stage is triggered when initial support measures (Stage 1) have not resolved the concerns, or when the situation escalates in complexity or risk. It should also be used for considering Interruption of Studies requests, in line with the College's Interruption of Studies Policy, to ensure that holistic consideration via a supported dialogue can be given in managing the request. The Stage 2 Meeting involves:

- **Formal meeting convened** with senior academic staff, the student's lead contact (e.g. personal tutor or wellbeing advisor), and relevant support services (e.g. disability, counselling, safeguarding).
- **Student participation strongly encouraged**, with the option to bring a support person or advocate.
- **Comprehensive review** of the student's situation, including academic engagement, health and wellbeing, behavioural concerns, and any previous support plans.
- **Creation of a detailed support plan**, outlining:
 - Specific actions and adjustments
 - Timeframes for review
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Clear expectations, actions and outcomes on the part of the student
 - Clear expectations, actions and outcomes on the part of the College

At this stage, the following options may be considered, such as:

- **Interruption of studies** to allow time for recovery or treatment
- **Referral to external services**, such as NHS mental health teams, social care, or crisis support
- **Enhanced academic or pastoral support** within the institution
- **Risk assessment conducted**, evaluating safety for the student and the wider community.

- **Clear communication of next steps**, including escalation to Stage 3 if concerns persist or risks increase.

This list is indicative and non-exhaustive – where the College determines that other appropriate actions proportionate to the level of concerns are reasonable and the student agrees, these may be implemented.

Where the student fails to reach agreement with the College about any actions proposed at a Stage 2 Support Through Studies Meeting:

- the College will determine whether the case requires escalation to Stage 3, can/should remain at Stage 2, or can be de-escalated to Stage 1, in the circumstances.
- Decisions to escalate/remain/de-escalate should be proportionate to the case and supported by clear reasoning, so that they remain fair and faithful to the spirit of this Policy, and so that the student can properly understand them.

(c) Stage 3: Serious/Persistent/Critical Concerns (Case Conference)

This stage is reserved for cases where there is a serious risk to the student or others, persistent non-engagement, or failure of previous interventions.

At Stage 3, a Case Conference Panel will be convened, typically including:

- Chair: Senior academic and professional services staff
- Personal Tutor/senior support staff
- Safeguarding lead or legal advisor (if relevant)
- External professionals (e.g. clinicians) where appropriate

The Panel will be supported by a secretary where appropriate, who will ensure that due notice of the Panel meeting and Panel documentation is issued to all parties (including the student). A reasonable timeframe will be given between the initial notification of the date of a Panel meeting and the meeting taking place, normally of not less than 5 working days.

The student will be invited to attend, accompanied for support if desired, with the option to submit written representations for consideration by the Panel, and/or be represented at the Panel meeting.

If at any point in the student's registration (including around the time of the Case Conference Panel meeting) it is determined that the student needs to be excluded or suspended under the Emergency Exclusion or Suspension Policy:

- such exclusion or suspension is without prejudice and the fact that the student has been subject to this emergency action will not be considered as material or relevant to the matter;
- such exclusion or suspension should not prevent the student from being invited to attend the Panel meeting, which they can attend remotely if necessary and if they wish.

The Case Conference Panel will undertake a thorough review of the case, including:

- The student's engagement and attendance record on the programme
- History of concerns and interventions
- Risk assessments
- Input from internal and external support services
- Academic profile and attainment
- Any reasonable adjustments in place, or that might be necessary
- The support needs of the student

Determination of appropriate outcomes, which may include:

- Enhanced support or action plan with close monitoring
- Interruption of studies with a structured return-to-study plan
- Exclusion or suspension, if the student poses a serious risk or cannot safely continue
- Withdrawal from studies, either voluntary or as a final institutional decision

Documentation and communication of decisions

The Case Conference Panel Chair is responsible for producing the Case Conference Panel Outcome Letter. All decisions made and findings reached should be set out in the letter with clear rationales, and next steps (including right of appeal if applicable).

Return-to-study planning will be initiated if interruption or suspension is agreed.

7. Appeals and Complaints

(d) Complaints

Students may submit complaints about procedural or other matters regarding the Support to Studies Policy using the Student Complaints Procedure but cannot use it to contest Stage 3 Case Conference decisions (there is an appeal process for that).

(e) Appeals (Requests for Review of Case Conference decision)

A student may submit an appeal against a Case Conference Panel decision and/or finding on one or more of the following grounds:

- **Significant procedural error:** That there was a failure to follow the correct process that may have materially affected the outcome (e.g. not being given the opportunity to respond or not being informed of the meeting to allow attendance and/or representation).
- **Evidence of bias or prejudice:** Reasonable belief that the decision was influenced by personal bias, conflict of interest, or discriminatory attitudes.
- **New relevant information:** Substantial evidence that was not available at the time of the Case Conference and could have influenced the decision (e.g. medical documentation, professional assessments).

- **Outcome unreasonable or disproportionate:** The decision made was not supported by the evidence or was excessively severe in relation to the concerns raised.

The appeal will be reviewed by the 'Appeal Reviewer' who will be a senior staff member unconnected with the case or their nominee (who may be a member of the Board of Governors or an External Officer). The Case Conference Appeal Outcome Letter will set out whether the Appeal Reviewer finds that one or more grounds have been established, and will include a clear outcome arising from the review, including amendment, reconvening, overturning, or upholding the decision (see section 'Appeal Outcomes', further on in this Policy). Where appropriate, the College may engage an External Officer to support the review collaboratively with the Appeal Reviewer, providing independence and external oversight.

(f) Submitting an Appeal

- Appeals must be submitted in **writing** within a specified timeframe (e.g. 10 working days) from the date the Case Conference outcome was communicated.
- The appeal should clearly state the **grounds** being relied upon and include any supporting evidence.

(g) Review Process

- The appeal will be reviewed by a **senior staff member** (e.g. Head of Academic Affairs, Head of Student Services) or their **nominated representative** who was not involved in the original decision.
- The reviewer will consider:
 - The original case documentation
 - The student's appeal submission
 - Any new or additional evidence

(h) Possible Appeal Outcomes

Once the review is concluded, one of the outcomes below will follow:

- **Uphold the original decision** If the appeal is not supported by sufficient grounds or evidence.
- **Amend the outcome** Adjust the Support Plan or any element of the Panel Decision to better reflect the student's circumstances and/or needs.
- **Reconvene the Case Conference** If procedural flaws or new evidence warrant a fresh review by the original or a new Panel.

- **Overtake the decision** If the appeal reveals a serious error or injustice, the original outcome may be withdrawn entirely.

8. Completion of Procedures

The outcome of an appeal is final; the student will be issued a Completion of Procedures Letter accordingly within 28 days of the date of the letter to the student informing them of the College's final decision on the matter. The Completion of Procedures Letter will inform the student of their right to escalate their case externally to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

9. Data Processing, Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- Administration of this Policy and its procedures will comply with UK GDPR, the Equality Act, and ensure confidentiality.
- Advice on implementing procedures should, where possible, be sought anonymously; Student Support staff should be consulted as needed.
- Information disclosure is limited to those who need to know, including necessary internal and approved external parties, in line with data protection requirements.
- Confidential student information may be shared externally only via formal agreements to maintain fairness and procedural integrity.
- Records will be kept for at least 15 months and no more than 6 years after final case action, in line with legal and OIA requirements.

10. Monitoring and Review

(i) Regular Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed at least every two years by the Head of Student Services, with approval by Academic Board. Reviews will consider legal updates, sector guidance, and feedback from staff and students.

(j) Case Monitoring and Reporting

All formal cases (Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3) will be logged and monitored to identify trends, outcomes, and areas for improvement. Anonymised data may be used to inform service development and training needs.

11. Appendix

Appendix A: Support Through Studies Risk Assessment



Appendix A: Support through Studies Risk Assessment

CONFIDENTIAL

This form is to be used where a Student Services staff member and/or member of the College's Senior Management Team deems it necessary to undertake a risk assessment, either as part of the Support Through Studies procedures, or to identify the appropriate stage of formal Support Through Studies procedures into which a case may be referred. At least 2 members of staff should normally complete this Risk Assessment together to support robust decision-making.

A) Student Details

Student Name	
Student Number	
Programme of Study	
Year of Study	
Date of Risk Assessment	

B) Risk Assessment Score System

Score	Likelihood <i>This score indicates how likely the risk is to occur, in the view of the assessor(s).</i>	Impact <i>This score indicates, in the view of the assessor(s), how serious/extreme the impact would be.</i>
1	Highly Unlikely	Negligible
2	Unlikely	Minor
3	Possible	Moderate
4	Likely/Probable	Major

5	Highly Likely	Extreme
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Overall Score This score is calculated by multiplying the likelihood and impact score together for each 'element', to give an overall score for each element.

Score	Risk Category
1-8	LOW
9-15	MEDIUM
16-25	HIGH

C) Likelihood Score

	Likelihood				
Element	1	2	3	4	5
	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely / Probable	Highly Likely
Risk to self					
Risk to other students					
Risk to staff					
Risk to public					
Risk to successful completion					
Risk to placement					
Risk to College property					
Risk to College reputation					

D) Impact score

	Likelihood				
Element	1	2	3	4	5
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Risk to self					



Risk to other students					
Risk to staff					
Risk to public					
Risk to successful completion					
Risk to placement					
Risk to College property					
Risk to College reputation					

E) Overall Risk Assessment

Element	Likelihood Score	Impact Score	Overall Score (Likelihood x Impact Score)	Comments
Risk to self				
Risk to other students				
Risk to staff				
Risk to public				
Risk to successful completion				
Risk to placement				
Risk to College property				
Risk to College reputation				

• ACTION IS REQUIRED WHEN:
 o There are three or more MEDIUM RISK categories indicated
 o There is one or more HIGH RISK category indicated
(see section B, Table 2 for reference)

Notes regarding overall risk / other risk(s) / pertinent information / additional comments



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Is Emergency Student Exclusion or Suspension required? Clarify Y/N with rationale

F) Completion of the Risk Assessment

(Where more than one member of staff has completed, or assisted in completing, the risk assessment, all such staff should complete and sign the box below)

Name(s) of person(s) who completed the risk assessment	Role / Job Title	Signed	Date