Regent's Park College

Support to Study and Fitness to Study Policy

Section A: The Purpose of this Policy

A1. The intention of the College's Support to Study and Fitness to Study Policy is to provide a collaborative structure in which students are treated with compassion and supported to a successful completion of their degrees. Students are strongly encouraged to view this procedure as supportive and inclusive.

A2. This Policy sets out the steps that will be taken by the College when there is concern that a student's behaviour or health is having an adverse impact upon their welfare or academic progress, or that of other students within the collegiate University community, or has the potential to do so.

A3. This policy applies to all matriculated and non-matriculated students at the College other than matriculated postgraduates. It particularly applies to undergraduates, Astrophoria Foundation Year students, registered visiting undergraduate and postgraduate students, and students on the ministerial and theological courses the College offers.

A4. All students should be encouraged to engage fully with their studies. Students should be informed how they can access relevant support for academic skills, welfare and pastoral needs. College and University life means that students work and live in close proximity to one other. This Support to Study and Fitness to Study Policy is intended to help students to live and work with others, to learn effectively and to meet the usual expectation that they will complete their course successfully and on time.

A5. This Policy also enables the College to make suitable provision for those cases when students are in medical or other difficulties, or whose behaviour is having an adverse effect on the welfare or academic progress of other members of the collegiate University, which require the student to take a temporary break from their studies, such that they will not be able to complete those studies according to the originally anticipated schedule.

A6. The College can initiate the stages set out in this Policy when there are concerns about a student. This may include, but is not limited to, concerns about a student's current ability to engage with their studies, a student's welfare or health, or the effects of a student's behaviour on other members of the collegiate University. The process outlined in this Policy will allow issues to be identified as early as possible and then engaged with in a structured way.

A7. Throughout this policy, fitness to study is understood as

(a) a student's fitness:

- to continue with their current course of academic study; or
- to return to their current or another course of academic study; and

(b) a student's ability to meet:

- the reasonable academic requirements of the course or programme; and
- the reasonable social and behavioural requirements of a student (whether resident in College or not), without their physical, mental, emotional or psychological health or state having an unacceptably deleterious impact upon the health, safety and/or welfare of the student and/or other students and/or University or college staff (not withstanding reasonable adjustments required by law).

A8. The person at Regent's Park College responsible for the operation of the Support to Study and Fitness to Study procedures is the Senior Tutor, under the oversight of the Principal.

Section B: The Structure of this Policy

B1. This Policy has three stages, the use of which relates to:

- the severity of the issue;
- the student's engagement with efforts to respond to the issue and the perceived level of risk; and
- if the case is considered urgent, then the first and/or second stages may be bypassed, at the College's discretion.

B2. The three stages are:

(a) Stage 1: Support to Study. Informal College action: regular discussions with the student and encouragement to seek support.

(b) Stage 2: Support/Fitness to Study Case Review. Formal action: including structured and minuted meetings with a group of academic, welfare and support staff, laying out action plans with associated deadlines. At the discretion of the Senior Tutor, for some cases there might be direct referral to Stage 2.

(c) Stage 3: Fitness to Study Decision-Making Panel. A formal panel to make a final decision upon a student's Fitness to Study, or Fitness to Return to Study. This marks the completion of the College's procedures concerning Fitness to Study. At the discretion of the Senior Tutor, for some cases there might be direct referral to Stage 3.

B3. A wide range of situations may lead to the initiation of Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 of this policy. These include (but are not restricted to) the following:

- the student has a Student Support Plan in place but is struggling to manage their studies or other elements of their course;
- the student is not attending classes or tutorials, submitting work and/or repeatedly not responding to emails promptly;
- the student has complex personal circumstances (for example, health or family issues) that appear to be having an adverse impact on their University experience;
- the student's health, wellbeing or behaviour is causing concern to others, which may or may not be having a negative impact on the student's academic work and progress;
- the student's behaviour is having an impact on the health and safety of others, or results in unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students;
- the relationship between the student and the College has encountered difficulties.

B4. Any meeting or hearing held under Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 of this policy may take place either in person or online.

Section C: Stage 1 Support to Study Process

C1. The Senior Tutor, after consultation with other colleagues, may decide to initiate Stage 1 of this process after receiving concerns that a student's support needs are not being met, or after receiving concerns about a student's fitness to study or academic progress.

C2. The Senior Tutor, the Fellow for Welfare and the Welfare Lead may make appropriate discreet inquiries about the student's behaviour and academic performance.

C3. The student's situation and the student's engagement with efforts so far to respond to it will determine whether Stage 1 of this policy is invoked in the first instance. If preliminary action in terms of support and guidance has been unsuccessful, then the Senior Tutor may

decide to commence the Stage 1 Support to Study Process. In some cases, it may be determined that proceeding to Stage 2 or Stage 3 immediately may be appropriate.

C4. If the Stage 1 Support to Study Process is invoked, the Senior Tutor will designate a member (or several members) of College staff to approach the student and explain, in a supportive and understanding manner, the concerns that have emerged.

C5. The designated member(s) of College staff may normally include one or more of the Senior Tutor, the student's Director of Studies, the student's Personal Tutor, the Fellow for Welfare, and the Welfare Lead.

C6. The student will be made aware of the precise nature and causes of the concerns by the designated member(s) of College staff. The student should be given the opportunity to respond to the concerns and explain their views to the designated member(s) of College staff. The designated member(s) of College staff should encourage the student to think about using one or more of the support services offered by the College and University.

C7. Within seven days of the designated member(s) of College staff notifying the student that the Stage 1 Support to Study Process has been invoked, the student should be sent written notification from the Senior Tutor explaining:

- that the Stage 1 Support to Study Process has been initiated,
- which member(s) of staff have been delegated to lead this process and the agreed review period.

A copy of this Policy should be attached, and a copy of this letter should be retained in the student's personal file in the Academic Office.

C8. The designated member(s) of College staff will meet regularly with the student and may formulate objectives, with appropriate deadlines, that the student will be encouraged to meet.

C9. Examples of these objectives include, but are not limited to:

- attending tutorials;
- submitting work; or
- engaging with medical professionals, the University Disability Advisory Service, or counselling.

C10. It may be appropriate to investigate the possibility of making reasonable adjustments to academic arrangements or support to enable the student to study effectively. Clear, observable and measurable goals for change should be set. This review period will allow the student to seek advice and support from any appropriate services.

C11. At the end of this period a meeting should be held between the designated member(s) of College staff and the student to discuss any steps taken by the student to address the concerns.

C12. If the concerns have been addressed satisfactorily, the designated member(s) of College should send a recommendation to the Senior Tutor for the Stage 1 Support to Study Process

to come to an end. The Senior Tutor may accept the recommendation, in which case the student will be notified and this will be noted in the student's personal file in the Academic Office, with no further action taken. The Senior Tutor may also decide to extend the Stage 1 Support to Study Process review period or move the case to Stage 2 of this policy.

C13. If, however, the concerns have not been addressed, the Senior Tutor may extend the Stage 1 Support to Study Process review period, or the designated member(s) of college staff may recommend to the Senior Tutor that the case should move to Stage 2 of this policy.

C14. It is hoped that in most cases issues can be resolved at this level, and that the student will respond positively, co-operating fully with the process and taking advantage of the support available. It may be necessary to obtain independent corroboration as to whether support offered is being taken up.

C15. The informal discussions, advice and any undertakings made by the College and/or the student should be informally noted down by the designated College staff member(s). After each subsequent meeting, an email setting out what has been agreed, including any action plan and the length of the review period, should be sent to the student by one of the designated member(s) of College staff, with the Senior Tutor and Academic Office copied in.

C16. If a student is unable or unwilling to co-operate with the above process, or modify their behaviour, they should be informed that more formal action under Stage 2 of this procedure will be considered appropriate.

Section D: Stage 2 Support/Fitness to Study Case Review

D1. If the support actions taken under Stage 1 have not been successful, or if the Senior Tutor decides that it is inappropriate for the case is to be dealt with informally, Stage 2 of the procedure can be invoked by the Senior Tutor.

D2. A meeting of a Case Review Group shall be convened and chaired by the Senior Tutor, or a deputy nominated by them, and may include the student's Director of Studies, their Personal Tutor and at least one of the Fellow for Welfare or the Welfare Lead.

D3. At the discretion of the Chair, the Case Review Group may include, if appropriate, the Director of the Visiting Student Programme, the Tutor for Pastoral Studies and the Tutor for Graduates.

D4. A note-taker (normally from the Academic Office) will attend to take notes and write the minutes. Minutes should normally be typed up and, once approved by the Chair, circulated to the student and all members of the Case Review Group within five working days of a Case Review meeting.

D5. A representative from the Disability Advice Service, or the College's designated link to the University's Counselling Service, may also be invited for information and advice if felt appropriate by the Chair of the Case Review Group.

D6. Throughout the Stage 2 procedure the Academic Office should be the main point of contact with the student and with all other agencies and individuals.

D7. The Academic Office should keep records of the whole process in the student's personal file and should ensure that the Chair of the Case Review Group is kept informed of all communications.

D8. The student will normally be given at least five working days' written notice of the meeting of a Case Review Group in a letter from the Senior Tutor. This period may be shortened in an urgent situation. This letter should state that Stage 2 Support/Fitness to Study Case Review has been initiated, it should inform the student of the purpose of the meeting and of the composition of the Panel, and the student should be sent a copy of this policy. A copy of this letter should be retained in the student's personal file in the Academic Office.

D9. At the discretion of the Chair of the Case Review Group, the student may be accompanied at the meeting by:

- a student representative (JCR, MCR or OUSU), or a fellow student;
- another supporter or adviser, as appropriate, including those able to support students with a disability.

D10. A student's parents, guardians or legal representative may not normally attend the meeting, except at the discretion of the Chair of the Case Review Group. The student should notify the Academic Office (who will keep the chair of the Case Review Group informed) at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting if they are to be accompanied and, if so, by whom.

D11. The purpose of the meeting will be to ensure that:

(a) the student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns that have been raised;
(b) the student's views are heard and taken into account;
(c) an action plan is agreed by the Case Review Group;
(d) the student is fully aware of the possible next stages if difficulties remain.

D12. The Case Review Group will order its proceedings at its own discretion and may seek advice and institute enquiries to assist the discussions, and may decide to call witnesses, including any relevant College staff working with the student.

D13. The Case Review Group will encourage the student to co-operate with its requests to seek further evidence, such as a letter from a medical professional. However, if such information is not available at the time of a meeting, the Case Review Group may continue this procedure and come to a decision based on information it already has in its possession.

D14. If a student chooses to disclose the full results of any medical assessment to the College, then that 'sensitive data' will be handled, processed and stored according to General Data Protection Regulation legislation.

D15. The Case Review Group will use the evidence it has obtained to:

- assess the extent to which the student's medical condition may affect their University experience, and their ability to manage the academic and other demands of student life;

- consider reasonable adjustments to enable the student to study effectively and continue with their studies;
- formulate and agree an action plan;
- assess potential risks to the student themselves, other students, the College, staff and Fellows, and other members of the collegiate University.

D16. The Case Review Group may decide that:

- no further action is required; or
- the matter should be dealt with under the Stage 1 Support to Study Process section of this Policy; or
- there are no concerns about a student's fitness to study in terms of physical, mental or emotional health, or the impact of their behaviour on other students, staff and members of the collegiate University, and any issues about a student's failure to meet basic academic expectations should be referred to an Academic Disciplinary Panel meeting under the Academic Engagement Concerns Policy; or
- the Case Review Group should continue formally to monitor the student's progress for a specified period of time, in which case an action plan will be agreed, outlining any steps which the student will need to take, and/or any support to be provided to the student, to address the concerns identified; or
- to recommend to the Senior Tutor that the student's studies should be suspended.

D17. If an action plan is agreed, regular review meetings with the student will be arranged with a nominated member of College staff, or the full Case Review Group, to ensure that the action plan is being appropriately followed, and/or that reasonable support and adjustments are being provided which will enable the student to study effectively.

D18. The student will be informed of the consequences of any breaches of the action plan, which will normally involve their fitness to study being considered by a Stage 3 Fitness to Study Decision-Making Panel or, with the consent of the Senior Tutor, it may be agreed that their studies be suspended for a period of time, with an appropriate application made by the College to the relevant University authority.

D19. The Case Review Group will agree the conditions that need to be fulfilled for the student to return to their studies at the College, and the deadline by which these need to be met by.

D20. After the student applies to resume their studies, the Case Review Group will normally meet to decide whether those conditions have been fulfilled before the student is allowed to resume their course.

D21. The Academic Office will ensure that any decision made by the Case Review Group or Action Plan agreed at the meeting, together with the minutes of the meeting, will normally be sent to the student within five working days from the date of the meeting, and a copy kept on the student's personal file in the Academic Office. A copy of this documentation should be also sent to members of the Case Review Group.

D22. The Chair of the Case Review Group will ensure that the details of any Action Plan agreed are communicated with the Academic Office, the Director of Studies (and any other relevant tutors), the Welfare team and any other relevant members of the College staff, for example, Director of Operations or Librarian, as appropriate and necessary.

Section E: Stage 3 Fitness to Study Decision-Making Panel

E1. This stage of the Policy will be implemented for the following reasons:

(a) referral from a Stage 2 Case Review Group; or

(b) if other normal procedures have been exhausted or are inappropriate; or

(c) if the Senior Tutor (having consulted as appropriate) considers that the seriousness of the concerns raised makes referral to the Fitness to Study Decision-Making Panel (the Decision-Making Panel) appropriate without going through the two earlier stages of the procedures. This includes (but is not limited to) occasions when it is considered that an immediate suspension is necessary. For example, if a student's behaviour poses a potential threat to their own health, safety and welfare, or that of others, or to the efficient working of the College; or

(d) if a suspension has been proposed under Stage 1 or 2, and the student does not agree; or

(e) if a student wishes to appeal against a decision made by a Stage 2 Case Review Group. If a student wishes to make an appeal in this situation, they must write to Principal within seven working days of the relevant Stage 2 Case Review Group meeting, stating the grounds on which they wish to appeal. The Principal, in these cases, will decide whether the appeal should be dismissed or whether the appeal should be heard by a Stage 3 Fitness to Study Decision-Making Panel.

E2. It will normally only be appropriate for the case to be referred to the Principal (or a deputy nominated by them), to be considered under Stage 3 of this Policy, in the most serious of cases, for example where evidence of a serious risk to either the health and safety of the student or others has been identified, and it is thought that suspension (without the consent of the student), exclusion or expulsion of the student may be the appropriate course of action, or where a particular course of action has been recommended but the student does not agree, or where a student has refused to fully engage fully with the support processes in Stages 1 and 2 of this Policy.

E3. If a serious risk of harm to the student or others has been identified, the Senior Tutor can take action immediately at any stage of this process, including involuntary suspension, subject to appeal to a Decision-Making Panel. While the appeal is considered, any measures imposed by the Senior Tutor remain in place unless a Decision-Making Panel decides to explicitly remove the measures.

E4. Throughout the Stage 3 procedure the Academic Office should be the point of contact with the student and with all other agencies and individuals.

E5. The Academic Office should keep records of the whole process in the student's personal file and should ensure that the Senior Tutor and Chair of any previous Case Review Group is kept informed of all communications.

E6. The purpose of the Decision-Making Panel will be to consider the evidence available, including the student's perception of the concerns identified, in order to:

(a) determine whether the student has met the objectives set in action plans agreed under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of this process (if applicable);

(b) assess the student's present and future fitness to study; and

(c) to determine a course of action moving forward.

E7. The Decision-Making Panel shall comprise the Principal (or a deputy nominated by them), who shall normally be the Chair, and two additional members who will be drawn from the Fellows and Stipendiary Lecturers of the College, as appropriate. Decision-Making Panel members should have had no previous involvement with the student's case, nor be otherwise conflicted. The Academic Office shall provide a secretary to the Decision-Making Panel to take minutes.

E8. Documentation relating to Stages 1 and 2, where these have taken place, and any other relevant documentation will be made available to the Decision-Making Panel.

E9. The Senior Tutor (or their deputy), and/or the Director of Studies, and/or any of those who have advised orally or in writing at formal or informal meetings may be required to attend a meeting of the Decision-Making Panel. Any person called to attend the meeting in this capacity may be asked to withdraw at such time(s) as the Decision-Making Panel needs to reach its decision. The Decision-Making Panel may seek further advice from the Senior Tutor (or their deputy) in formulating an action plan.

E0. In considering a case, the Decision-Making Panel may employ or draw upon suitably qualified advice, including, but not limited to, expert medical, psychiatric and legal advice and the Decision-Making Panel shall act in accordance with equality legislation, in particular the need to make reasonable adjustments.

E1. The student will normally be given five working days' notice of the meeting of the Decision-Making Panel, though in urgent cases less notice may be given.

E2. The student shall be informed in writing in advance of the purpose of the hearing, and be invited at the hearing to discuss the concerns identified and other relevant issues.

E3. The student may submit to the Decision-Making Panel (via the Academic Office) any documents they wish to be considered at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

E4. The student shall be provided by the Academic Office with any documents to be considered at the meeting at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

E5. The student may be accompanied to the meeting by:

- a student representative (JCR, MCR or OUSU), a fellow student, or other adviser; or
- another supporter or adviser, as appropriate, including those who are able to support students with disabilities.

E16. A student's parents, guardians or legal representative may not normally attend the meeting, except at the discretion of the Chair of the Decision-Making Panel.

E17. Legal representation will not normally be permitted, though reasoned requests for such representation may be made, and will be considered by the Chair of the Decision-Making Panel.

E18. The student should notify the Chair of the Decision-Making Panel at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting if they are to be accompanied and by whom.

E19. The student and any accompanying person may normally be present for the duration of the hearing until such time(s) as they are asked to withdraw to enable the Decision-Making Panel to come to its decision.

E20. The Decision-Making Panel's decision may include (but not be limited to) one or more of the following:

(a) suspension of status for a specified period of time, with clear conditions that the student shall meet before they can resume their status and return to their studies;
(b) the student can continue their studies with further formal monitoring of their progress under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of this process for a specified time, with an agreed action plan, to include: desired outcomes, regular reviews with a nominated member(s) of staff, support to be provided, and the consequences of any breaches of the action plan;
(c) to recommend that the College exercises its statutory power to exclude or expel the student;
(d) any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

E21. The decision of the Decision-Making Panel is final and marks the completion of the College's procedure concerning fitness to study. The student will receive written notification of the Decision-Making Panel's decision from the Chair within seven working days of the meeting. The reasons for the Decision-Making Panel's decision will be clearly set out. This notification will include a Completion of Procedures statement, which will be required should the student decide to take this decision to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Section F: Return to Study

F1. When a student is suspended either voluntarily or involuntarily under Stages 2 or 3 of this Policy, conditions will be set that will need to be met for a student to be allowed to resume their studies.

F2. After a voluntary suspension of studies, or a suspension of studies under Stages 2 or 3 of this Policy, the student may make a request to the College for permission to return to the course.

F3. If suspension took place under Stages 2 or 3 of this Policy, a meeting convened under the same stage will normally decide whether a student should be allowed to resume their studies, or whether a further period of suspension of studies is justified, with further conditions imposed for the student's return to study to be take place.

F4. If a student suspended voluntarily, the Senior Tutor, after consultation with colleagues, shall determine which stage of this policy the request for return to studies shall be handled by.

F5. The student will only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical or other specialist advice about the likely impact of the student's condition on their fitness to study, the College is satisfied that the individual is fit to study and able to comply with any conditions imposed on their return.

F6. In cases where the College has any continuing concerns about the individual's fitness to study, it may require a second medical or specialist opinion. In this case a student may be asked to submit themselves for medical examinations by doctors / specialists, including the

College doctors, or a consultant nominated by the College at the College's expense, to allow the situation to be properly evaluated.

F7. Any return to study meeting convened under Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 of this policy may decide that there should be regular review meetings with the student that can be used to monitor and support a return to study plan. If so, the student must provide their continued cooperation in this respect and such review meetings may continue for part or all of their remaining time at the College.

F8. The Academic Office should produce a written record of what is agreed for the return to study plan and a copy given to the student, normally within five working days of the meeting. The Senior Tutor should make arrangements for monitoring that the support plan is being delivered.

Section G: General Matters

G1.The College will take account of relevant legislation such as General Data Protection Regulation legislation, the Mental Health Act, the Human Rights Act, the Equality Act 2010, and the general rights and expectations of a student of confidentiality. In cases where Stages 2 or 3 of the Fitness to Study Procedure have been invoked, the Chair of the Case Review Group or Decision-Making Panel will make a decision about whether the student's emergency contact should be informed and discuss with the student whether any statutory services should be contacted.

G2.The College acknowledges that as a result of implementing this Policy it will receive personal sensitive data and data of a confidential nature pertaining to the student and other third parties, and shall ensure that all such data is handled, processed and stored accordingly.