

Student Performance and Development

Policy and Procedure

Document control

Policy Version	Version 2
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Authorised by:	Student Development Committee – May 2024 Academic Board – June 2024
Authorisation date:	June 2024
Review date:	May 2026 (or sooner if there are material changes)

1. Purpose of this policy

1.1. The RVC recognises the demands of study upon students and that an individual student at a particular time may experience difficulties. This policy sets out how we will respond when a student is experiencing difficulty which may be related to health, personal, academic, professional or other challenges with the aim of providing support and advice to assist them in achieving their academic and professional goals.

1.2. Study at the RVC frequently involves exposure and access to animals, infection and drugs, research activity, work-based placements and for some courses professional body expectations. The RVC has a charter detailing the expectations of our students and staff, as well as policies on Fitness to Practise, Research Integrity and Misconduct (academic and other).

1.3. This policy is intended to help us address issues, including behaviour, giving cause for concern in a supportive manner and to find agreed ways for the student to continue their study, or to take a break from their studies until they are ready to return and to engage with student life and study. It is intended as far as possible for the RVC to work in partnership with the individual student.

1.4. This policy recognises the importance of seeking to balance the needs of the individual with the overall wellbeing of their colleagues and relevant professional and academic standards. It acknowledges that thresholds required by academic and professional standards cannot be compromised in any way.

1.5. This policy aims to

- Support students so that they have the best opportunity to meet the required learning outcomes and complete their course
- Encourage students to address their difficulties at the earliest possible stage
- Recognise varying expectations at differing stages of study and development
- Assist students to make informed choices and encourage active participation in the support process
- Consider the best interests of the student in relation to their personal situation, their health and wellbeing and / or any disability they experience
- Consider reasonable adjustments and where appropriate to implement them
- Ensure students receive a non-judgemental, consistent and sensitive approach to the management of their situation
- Provide a suitable and coordinated response from academic and professional service teams to deliver a consistent and fair process.
- Be suitable for all students on all types of programmes of study
- Be risk-based and compatible with tutorial policy and procedures.
- Ensure academic regulations are applied consistently, where necessary seeking advice from colleagues in Academic Registry for confirmation.

2. Application of this policy and associated procedure

2.1. This policy will apply to students experiencing difficulty which is interfering with progress on their chosen course. This may be due to health, personal, academic, professional or other challenges.

2.2. Intervention may be initiated by the student, academic staff or student support services. Other stakeholders (e.g., placement providers) or other students will not be permitted to initiate action themselves however their concerns may result in intervention being initiated by academic staff or student support services.

2.3. The procedure has three stages which represent the degree of concern and /or perceived seriousness of the situation to both the student and others

- Stage 1 – Straightforward concerns expressed or emerging about an individual student's personal circumstances, health, academic progress, performance on placements, behaviour, or other issue.
- Stage 2 – continuing/ongoing concerns not resolved at stage 1 or more serious concerns regarding a student's health, wellbeing, safety and/or ability to study and/or participate in placement.
- Stage 3 – Unresolved concerns from stage 2 or where concerns about the student's and/or others' safety exist or disruption caused by their behaviour is of such a serious nature that their fitness to study needs to be considered.

2.4. The procedure may be initiated at any stage, based on the nature of the concern.

2.5. For courses leading to / requiring professional registration these professional guidelines may be used in conjunction with the RVC's Fitness to Practice Procedures.

2.6. Where it is necessary to consult with external agencies we will comply with our statutory Data Protection (GDPR) and Equality and Diversity responsibilities.

2.7. Whilst student engagement with this process is actively encouraged we reserve the right to continue the process in their absence where a student will not engage with the SPD process. In such circumstances we will always seek to protect the interests of the student and balance these with the needs of other students and staff.

2.8. Guidance on application of the policy is broadly detailed below. Additional information on the SPD process is available via the Student and Staff Hubs on LEARN.

3. SPD stage 1 – Straightforward concerns expressed or emerging about an individual student's personal circumstances, health, academic progress, performance on placements, behaviour, or other issue.

3.1. Straightforward cases of infrequent illness requiring a short-term absence that does not affect any imminent assessments are not managed via this procedure and should be reported to the relevant administrative Programme Coordinator.

3.2. Straightforward cases of infrequent illness requiring a short-term absence that affects imminent assessments are not managed via this procedure and should be reported to the Course Director or Year Leader who can approve deferral of the assessments.

3.3. Initial or emerging concerns may be reported by the student themselves or received from academic staff, work-based placements, RVC professional and support services, the student's family, friends or peers.

3.4. Concerns should initially be reported to the students Tutor / Research Supervisor, Senior Tutor, Advice Centre who can offer support to the student to try and resolve the concerns

3.5. The above will decide if further dissemination is required to other RVC staff members so that any identified support can be implemented, e.g. Course Director, Examinations Office, Student Records, Registrar, Head of Graduate School, EMS (Extra Mural Studies) or AHEMS office, Accommodation Office, collaborative course provider, work-based placement provider, other relevant personnel.

3.6. If the above steps do not resolve the issues and concerns remain, the relevant Senior Tutor or Advisor / will liaise to decide the appropriate person(s) to contact and meet the student as an SPD stage 1 meeting. They may also consult with relevant colleagues to determine the full scope and nature of the concerns. The intention will be to discuss the specific issues and concerns with the student and to offer support, advice, and guidance.

3.7. The SPD stage 1 meeting will occur in a supportive and understanding manner. If the student wishes, a supportive member can accompany them in the meeting. For example, a family member, friend, SU officer, supervisor/tutor or Advice Centre member of staff.

3.8 The staff member meeting with the student will complete an SPD stage 1 meeting form which will act as a record of the meeting and include any agreed actions and, where relevant, a review period.

3.9. The SPD stage 1 meeting form will be sent to the SPD Administrator who will circulate any outcomes and actions to the student and any other relevant staff who need to know in order to implement the agreed actions. The full SPD stage 1 meeting form will be kept on file and can be available to the student on request.

3.10. If relevant, at the end of an agreed review period the Senior Tutor / Advisor or their nominee, will consult with relevant colleagues to determine whether there is any continuing concern. If the concerns have been resolved/addressed satisfactorily, this will be noted and no further action is needed.

3.11 Where concerns remain, a further meeting will be held with the student and an additional review period may be agreed, or the case will move to the next stage of the procedure.

3.12. It is hoped that in most cases concerns can be resolved at this level and that students will respond positively, co-operate fully with the process and take advantage of the support available.

3.13. Should the student be unable or unwilling to engage positively at this stage, then the Senior Tutor / Advisor / nominee in liaison with the relevant personnel will decide whether to progress to Stage 2.

4. SPD Stage 2 – continuing/ongoing concerns not resolved at stage 1 or more serious concerns regarding a student's health, wellbeing, safety and/or ability to study and/or participate in placement.

4.1. Stage 2 meetings are scheduled by the Student Performance and Development Administrator. Stage 2 meeting panels are ordinarily composed of at least one member of academic staff and a representative from the Advice Centre. The panel will be appropriate for the concerns presented and the student's programme of study. Additional advisors may be consulted / invited based on individual student scenarios and expertise required.

4.2. The student will be advised of the concern and asked to attend a Student Performance and Development meeting with at least 5 days' notice. In some cases, where an issue needs to be resolved more quickly, a meeting may be arranged with less than 5 days' notice if all necessary attendees, including the student, are available.

4.3 Where concerns are health related/ related to a student's physical or mental ability to meet the requirements of their programme of study a student may be referred for an Occupational Health assessment ahead of an SPD meeting. This assessment will help the SPD panel confirm a student's ability to meet the demands of the course and identify any adjustments that should be considered for them.

4.4. The meeting with the student will occur in a supportive and understanding manner. If the student wishes, a supporter can accompany them in the meeting e.g. a family member, friend, SU officer, supervisor/tutor or Advice Centre member of staff. The SPD Administrator will be present to take notes of the meeting including the nature of the concerns raised, any outcomes and actions agreed, and any agreed review period. The meeting may be recorded for administrative note-taking purposes only and will not be shared with any members of staff or the student. After the meeting report has been completed the recording will be deleted.

4.5. A record of the meeting will be sent to the student and staff attending the meeting and any other relevant staff who need to know in order to consider or implement any outcomes or actions.

4.6. If a review period has been set, the Student Performance and Development meeting chairperson, will consult with relevant colleagues to determine whether there is any continuing concern. If the concerns have been addressed satisfactorily, this will be noted, and no further action taken at this stage.

4.7 Where concerns remain, a further meeting will be held with the student and an additional review period may be agreed, or the case will move to the next stage of the procedure.

4.8. It is hoped that in most cases issues can be resolved at this level and that students will respond positively, co-operate fully with the process, and take advantage of the support and guidance available.

4.9. Should the student be unable or unwilling to engage positively at this stage, then the relevant Senior Tutor / Advisor / nominee, in liaison with relevant personnel, will decide whether to progress to Stage 3.

5. SPD Stage 3 – Unresolved concerns from stage 2 or where concerns about the student and others' safety exist, or disruption caused by their behaviour, is of such a serious nature that their fitness to study needs to be considered.

5.1. Stage 3 meetings are scheduled by the Student Performance and Development Administrator. The student will be given at least 5 days' notice of the meeting and informed of its purpose. In some cases, where an issue needs to be resolved more quickly, a meeting may be arranged with less than 5 days' notice if all necessary attendees are available.

5.2 The purpose of the Stage 3 meeting will be to ensure that:

- The student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns which have been raised.
- The student's views are heard and taken account of.
- Any additional evidence in relation to the concern is taken into account including medical evidence.
- An action plan is drawn up with a suitable review period.
- The student is informed of the possible outcomes if serious concerns remain.

5.3. The Stage 3 meeting will be chaired by a Senior Advisor and consist of the:

- Student;
- Relevant staff members from previous SPD meetings or staff who are familiar with the case if there have not been any previous SPD meetings.
- A representative from the Advice Centre

5.4. Other staff may be consulted / invited based on the individual student scenarios and expertise required.

5.5. The student may bring a friend, family member or other supporter to the meeting. This cannot be a lawyer or legal adviser but may include a representative from the Students' Union.

5.6. Before the meeting, the student may be required to seek a medical assessment and/or Occupational Health assessment to enable the RVC to address the student's difficulties in the most effective manner possible. Any cost incurred for this assessment will be met by the RVC.

5.7. The medical assessment may be used to determine:

- The nature and extent of any medical condition from which the student may be suffering including prognosis.
- The extent to which it may affect their ability to study and manage the demands of student life e.g. living independently, looking after themselves.
- Any associated risk to self or others.
- Whether any additional steps or reasonable adjustments should be implemented by the RVC, in light of the medical condition, to enable the student to study effectively.
- Whether the student will be receiving any on-going medical treatment or support.

5.8. The student will be asked to authorise full disclosure of the results of any assessment. The RVC recognises that any such information disclosed will constitute “sensitive data” and will be handled, processed, and stored in line with our data protection policies. Should the student decline to undertake a medical assessment, the RVC may either continue this procedure based on the information already in its possession or may refer the case for consideration under the Professional Requirements Procedure.

5.9. It should be made clear at Stage 3 that the intention is to provide a supportive alternative to the use of the misconduct procedure if the concerns are regarding a student’s behaviour and there are mitigating factors that might have affected them.

5.10. At the Stage 3 meeting, it is possible that that the student will be required to interrupt their studies, in order to enable them to recuperate or remediate, for a mutually agreed period of time.

5.11. Where the student is registered for a research degree (including MRes), the student may be referred to the appropriate Graduate School procedure where there are concerns regarding the student being able to complete their research or thesis within an appropriate period of time.

5.12. Where the student is undertaking study which leads to professional registration (e.g. with the RCVS) or if they are already registered with the RCVS (as an RVN or veterinary surgeon) the student will usually be referred to the Fitness to Practice procedure, in place of a Stage 3 panel SPD meeting.

5.13. The SPD Administrator will send a record of the meeting to the student and other staff in attendance within 7 working days from the date of the meeting, and a copy kept on the student’s file. The SPD Administrator will also send outcomes and actions to any other relevant staff who need to know in order to consider or implement them.

The meeting may be recorded for administrative note-taking purposes only and will not be shared with any members of staff or the student. After the meeting report has been completed the recording will be deleted.

6. Suspension

6.1. The RVC may need to consider suspending a student as a precautionary measure where there are serious concerns about the safety and wellbeing of either the student, of those around them, or serious disruption to RVC or placement business. Any such suspension will be undertaken in accordance with section 12 of the [General Regulations for Study and Awards](#).

7. Interruption

7.1 Students may opt to interrupt their studies to manage significant life events such as parenthood, illness or for other personal reasons.

7.2 The SPD panel may also recommend that a student interrupt their studies to access appropriate support to remediate the difficulties/concerns that have been raised.

7.3 Students whose studies are interrupted will be encouraged to talk to the Advice Centre and other relevant staff to discuss any financial, support and academic

implications. The student will also be informed of the 'Return to Study' process and an agreement made about contact with the student during their absence.

7.4 Periods of interruption will ordinarily be for one year. Any requests for longer periods of interruption will be managed as outlined in the [General Regulations for Study and Awards](#).

7.5 Students who have interrupted their studies for non-health related reasons are able to complete EMS during their period of interruption. Up to 4 weeks of EMS undertaken whilst interrupted can be accredited towards the students RCVS requirements – the remainder being undertaken for personal growth and development.

7.6 Students who interrupt for health-related reasons will only be allowed to complete EMS (including up to 4 weeks of accredited EMS) with approval from the SPD panel. It may be necessary for students to attend an Occupational Health assessment before they can complete EMS and this will be stipulated by the SPD panel.

7.7 Where there are ongoing or significant concerns about a student's wellbeing, and subsequent fitness to study/practice, they will be advised that they will not be permitted to complete EMS during their period of interruption.

8. Return to Study

8.1. It is hoped that after a period of interruption, the student will feel ready to return and engage with their studies and university life.

8.2. Each case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context out of which concern arose but, in all cases, return to study will be dependent upon a) satisfactory medical evidence of fitness to study (if appropriate) and b) a return to study meeting to determine what support would be necessary or of benefit, and whether this can be reasonably provided. Students may, in cases where the interruption was on health grounds, be referred for an Occupational Health assessment to consider their fitness to return to studies and identify any other reasonable adjustments that should be made for them.

8.3 Supporting medical evidence should be from a recognised health professional who has sufficient knowledge of the nature and extent of the student's medical situation and the concerns that led to interruption/suspension, to be able to make an informed statement of the student's fitness to study at university level and in a professional community.

8.4. In cases where there are continuing concerns about a student's fitness to study, a second medical opinion may be required. In this case a student may be asked to submit themselves for medical examinations by doctors/specialists nominated by the RVC (at our expense). Students will only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical advice, the RVC is satisfied that the individual is fit to study and able to comply with the RVC Charter, Regulations and Procedures for students and relevant Professional Body Requirements.

8.5. The decision to permit return to study will be made by the SPD Panel.

8.6. In any case where a student returns to study following implementation of this procedure, the RVC may decide that there should be regular review meetings with

the student that can be used to support and monitor a return to study plan and ongoing support. If so, the student must provide their continued co-operation in this respect and such review meetings may continue for part or all their remaining time at the RVC.

9. Appeals and Complaints

9.1. A student who cannot continue with their studies as a result of any stage of this procedure shall have a right of appeal as described in the RVC Student Appeals Procedure.

9.2. A student who believes the decisions made about their progress under this procedure are unfair or unreasonable should use the RVC's Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure.

9.3. Full disclosure of Student Development and Performance (SPD) meeting notes will be shared and used in Fitness to Practice, Appeal, Complaint or Conduct proceedings where the following circumstances are identified by the Student Resolution and Compliance (SRC) Team:

9.3.1 The SPD meeting notes disclose mitigating or aggravating factors which are directly related to the student's extenuating circumstances or grounds to qualify for a SRC process or procedure.

9.3.2. The SPD meeting notes disclose substantiated evidence directly related to a concern(s) raised by the RVC.

9.3.3 The SPD notes show that the student has been offered guidance, support, or other avenues for remediation with which they have not engaged

9.3.4 Any parts of the student's notes which are identified as being non-related disclosures will be appropriately redacted.

10. Reporting

10.1 The number of cases considered at each stage will be reported to the Student Development Committee annually. Anonymised data will be used to explore any themes or trends that can inform how we can best support our students.

11. Records Retention

11.1. Records will be kept in line with RVC data protection policies.