

Policy to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study

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Purpose To provide a framework by which the Institute states its commitment to support students in completing their studies and can effectively respond to situations in which a Student's fitness to continue in study is in question	Policy to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study
Commencement Date	December 2015
Date of Next Review	June 2017 As the first Policy approved on this, a short review time is set to allow for any early feedback on implementation.
Who needs to know about this document	Governing Body, Academic Council, All Staff, Student Union, Students, Collaborative Partners
Revision History	
Policy Author	Registrar's Working Group on Fitness to Continue in Study
Policy Owner	Registrar

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POLICY STATEMENT

TO SUPPORT AND DETERMINE A STUDENT'S FITNESS TO CONTINUE IN STUDY

1. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT) is committed to supporting students to successfully complete their studies. For many students, progression to completion of their studies is uneventful, with little or no need for added or specialised support. This is not always the case however. In certain circumstances there is a need for a formalised co-ordinated response to support a student experiencing difficulties, which can be of a diverse nature. Occasionally, even with added support, the behaviour, welfare or wellbeing of an individual student is so adversely affected as to make continuation in study difficult or impossible, and/or their continuation in studies is likely to interfere with the learning, working or living experiences of others to such an extent as to be deemed unreasonable and unsustainable. The procedures associated with this document will "assist in assessing risks, and taking appropriate action, in situations where the health or other personal circumstances of a student give rise to serious concern"¹.

2. TOLERANCE OF DIFFERENCE: EMBRACING AND SUPPORTING DIVERSITY

The Institute has a long commitment to recognising and celebrating the rights of individuals to be different and embraces and supports diversity. The lived-experiences of one person are often very different than those of another. It is important that these differences be recognised and accepted, within the boundaries of legislation and within the standards set by IADT's Learner Charter. Occasionally what may be at first sight interpreted as inappropriate and unusual behaviour, subsequently can be better understood and accepted in the spirit of understanding and appreciating difference and accepting diversity. IADT strives to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme and associated modules.

3. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

IADT supports individual students who may be in distress or difficulty whilst also recognising the right of the wider Institute community to study, work and live free from undue duress/distress caused by others. The purpose of this document is to set out a framework in

¹Universities UK *Student mental wellbeing in higher education | Good practice guide*, p.22

which specialised and tailored supports can be put in place to assist a student in completing their studies where possible.

Specifically in this *Policy to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study* the Institute acknowledges that there are students

- a) whose behaviour, well-being or welfare are of concern to themselves or others,

OR

- b) whose behaviour or actions, are impacting adversely on the learning, working or living experiences of others,

to such an extent as to give rise to concerns as to their fitness to continue in study.

Accordingly the Institute provides supportive formal procedures:

- a) To enable students to withdraw/suspend their studies voluntarily on grounds of fitness to study

OR

- b) To determine if and how a student is to be required to take leave of absence on grounds of fitness to study
- c) To enable students to return to study where appropriate

IADT is further committed to

- flexibility in the implementation of all procedures in order to permit more pro-active intervention where necessary²
- retention of clear, complete and concise records of any intervention, with due regard for confidentiality, data protection and with cognisance of freedom of information legislation. A complete file in relation to a fitness to study case is retained by the Office of the Registrar only.

In matters relating to a student's fitness to continue in study, IADT is guided by relevant legislation as may be amended from time to time. In this regard, the Institute remains particularly mindful of its obligations under the Equal Status Act (2000) as amended.

Established IADT policies and procedures in place in IADT which impact on students who are not achieving academically, or whose behaviour breaches student regulations. These include Marks and Standards, Deferral Policy, Student Discipline Procedure and the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure. **This** Policy and its associated

² *Ibid*

Procedure is intended for circumstances **not** covered by the Institute's existing academic Marks and Standards or other student regulations.

4. OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

The development, implementation and on-going review of this *Policy* is the responsibility of the Office the Registrar, and will be undertaken in consultation with the academic and learning support community.

5. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

All registered students of IADT are subject to this Policy, including any student visiting IADT for a period of study or research under the Erasmus + Programme, Science Without Borders, Junior Year Abroad Schemes or other similar programme involving placement in IADT of a student from another domestic or international institution.

All students subject to this Policy are required to accept the *Policy to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study* requirements at registration and annually at re-registration. IADT students who are visiting another Higher Education Institution (HEI) for a period of study or research shall be subject to the host institution's rules and policies and procedures for the period of their visit. IADT will endeavour to support its students whilst registered at another HEI as part of their IADT programme, in association with the host HEI, where possible and practicable.

6. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INSTITUTE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Procedures associated with this Policy generally shall not be invoked for circumstances already being considered under the following specific Institute policies or procedures; *Marks and Standards*; *Learner Charter*; *Mutual Respect Policy*. However, in exceptional circumstances where an Institute Disciplinary Committee is of the view that a serious fitness to continue in study issue arises, the outcome of the disciplinary procedure may be referred back to the Head of Department (HoD) or the Registrar for consideration, who in turn may decide to invoke the *Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study* in relation to the matter.

Operation of this policy shall be consistent with the requirements of *IADT Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults*, which defines a child as someone under 18 years of age (excluding a person who is or has been married) and regard should be had to the provisions of that policy when dealing with persons under the

Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study. Where such a case arises, the Registrar shall specify any particular additional actions required.

7. EXAMPLES OF CIRCUMSTANCES OF CONCERN AS TO A STUDENT'S FITNESS TO STUDY

There is a very strong tradition of support for students in IADT. Many students facing difficult and distressing circumstances will overcome adversity and develop and grow from these experiences with the help of support provided by friends, family, academic staff, and the administrative and professional support services in the Institute. It is very much in the interest of students and the Institute that this tradition of support continues. This *Policy* is intended to build on that supportive tradition, and to enhance it, by identifying steps to be taken when it is considered that the circumstances are such as to be unlikely to be resolved through the use of existing supports. The following are examples of such circumstances where there may be concern as to a student's support needs and fitness to continue in study. This list is not exhaustive. Each circumstance is considered on its own merits.

- The student recognises that there is an issue of concern and discloses this to a member of the Institute staff.
- 3rd party reports of concern are disclosed. For example these 3rd parties may be family members, classmates, flatmates, student support services staff, lecturers or other Institute staff, work or research placement supervisors or even on occasions, members of the public.
- The concerns may be around a student's
 - Wellbeing, appearance, social-withdrawal, mood, physical health or welfare
 - Unexplained deterioration in academic performance
 - Behaviour which is very unusual or inappropriate
 - Behaviour putting themselves or anyone else clearly at risk
 - Behaviour which is significantly distressing to others
 - Behaviour which is impacting significantly on the learning, working or living experience of others

The word 'behaviour' is intended to include behaviour which is face-to-face and in public as well as behaviour expressed through written or on-line communications. Communications includes those in print or via social media, in text messages or in other electronic means. All behaviours which appear to be a breach of the good conduct may be considered as a disciplinary matter.

8. ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

In supporting a student who is a cause of real concern and who may be significantly distressed, staff should act in accordance with the professional advice or information available from sources such as the Student Health Centre and the Student Counselling Service.

The appropriate course of action to be undertaken will often depend on the urgency of the situation. The course of action may also need to be reviewed if the situation alters. Actions taken should depend on the urgency of the situation and on an assessment of the risk to the safety of individuals. When a student is significantly distressed, it may be appropriate to consider activating the *Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study*.

Occasionally actions will need to be taken before there is time to formally invoke this *Policy*. Situations classified as **non-urgent/non-emergency** should prompt consideration of invoking at least level 1, and possibly level 2 of the associated *Procedure*.

Urgent/Emergency situations should prompt consideration of invoking at least level 2 and possibly level 3 of the *Procedure*.

9. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION ON GROUNDS OF CONCERN FOR FITNESS TO STUDY

The behaviour and actions of a student may be a cause of concern for the safety of the student and/or the safety of others, prompting consideration of the need to suspend the student from the Institute temporarily, pending further investigation and/or management of the situation. Where it appears, in the opinion of the Registrar, that there are such grounds for concern, the Registrar having sought any advice as he/she deems appropriate, shall be entitled to suspend a student. This is on the basis that the suspension is temporary and necessary to protect the Institute community and may also be to the benefit of the suspended student.

10. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

The safety of individuals is paramount. Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of a student can put themselves or others in proximate danger. It is important that appropriate, timely actions are taken in response. The recommended steps are illustrated in the flow chart provided in the Procedure document.

In **urgent/emergency** situations these actions may need to be taken before there is time to invoke the *Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study*. The fact that the Institute may invoke other policies and procedures shall not prejudice its right to invoke the *Procedure to Support and Determine a Student's Fitness to Continue in Study*.

REMEMBER: If there is an immediate concern for the safety of any person, this should be reported to the Emergency Services on 112. IADT's Emergency Tel. Contact Number is 10 239 4999.