

Fitness To Study Policy

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1.Introduction

Craven College is committed to supporting students with their physical and mental wellbeing. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any prospective student with a health concern is supported to apply for an appropriate course and current students' progress appropriately.

All efforts will be made to signpost to an alternative pathway if the original course selected is deemed unsafe for the applicant or the college community.

To so, it will:

- Encourage and support the whole college community to be positive in its approach to mental health and wellbeing
- Promote a culture which encourages and supports self-disclosure
- Provide a framework for responding appropriately to mental health concerns
- Take seriously its legal responsibilities in connection with the wellbeing of its students, including those relating to equality and non-discrimination, as outlined in the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.
- Work with students and staff continually to update knowledge, skills and experience of students and their mental health
- Promote understanding and awareness of both internal and external support services
- Recognise that staff with roles involving teaching and the support and welfare of students have additional responsibilities to be alert to indicators of mental health causing concern, and to take appropriate action when necessary
- Provide guidance and information to staff and students to help them to develop confidence in their approach to mental health wellbeing

2. Scope

- The procedure applies to all prospective and current students enrolled on a course at Craven College.
- The procedure ensures all applicants are asked to disclose if they have a health concern. Those that disclose a serious and enduring mental health problems will be asked to complete a disclosure form and provide us with permission to speak to their mental health worker. Any medical condition should be disclosed on the enrolment form at the time of enrolment, if the condition is known about at that time.
- For applicants with serious and enduring mental health problems a supportive panel consisting of representatives from Craven College and any appropriate external agency, ie CAMHs etc will convene to assess if the course chosen by the applicant will have any impact on their condition and the level of support that may be required.

3. Definition of Fitness to Study

3.1 Fitness to study refers to the ability of students to engage effectively in academic activities, including attending classes, completing assignments, and participating in assessments without compromising their own well-being of others.

4. Disclosure and Confidentiality

4.1 Students may disclose a mental or physical health difficulty during the application stage, enrolment, at Open Events or at any point during their time at the College.

4.2. Students making a disclosure need to feel confident that their mental health difficulties will remain confidential unless there is a specific need to inform anyone else, in which case this will be on a strictly need to know basis. Records will be kept of who has been informed of the mental health difficulties, with reasons why, this information will be shared with the applicant.

4.3 If the applicant has a mental health condition and it is not serious and ongoing, an appropriate member of the Safeguarding Team will discuss with the applicant their illness, symptoms and how they manage it. The Safeguarding Team will record this discussion and providing they feel that the condition is in control and the course applied for poses no threat to the applicant's condition, there will be no further action. The applicant will be offered support from the Student Mentors. If however, the Student Services Team has any concerns, they will ask for a further discussion with the applicant's mental health worker, for further advice.

4.4 Students should always be asked to give consent before information is shared. It is important that where consent is given by a student, it is informed consent. Therefore, it is necessary to tell the student concerned why there is a need to disclose information, who will have access to that information and the likely consequences of giving or withholding consent.

4.4 Once consent has been obtained; it is the responsibility of the person passing on the information to ensure that this is carried out only on the terms agreed with the student.

5. Students with an EHCP (Educational Health and Care Plan)

5.1 College will always involve a Local Authority representative when making decisions about fitness to study. The Local Authority will be informed at the earliest opportunity to highlight any concerns about a student's wellbeing or gaps in learning because of absence from study.

5.2 Tutors will raise concerns with the SEND Manager who will hold an interim EHCP review. The local authority will be invited to the interim review.

6. Interruption to Studies

6.1 The College will endeavour to respond flexibly to any request to suspend studies on the grounds of mental health to enable a period of rest and recovery.

6.2 An appropriate period of recovery may be negotiated after which the College may require evidence to confirm that the student is fit and able to return their studies.

6.3 If a student requires a suspension of their studies, they should firstly discuss this with an appropriate member of staff, such as their Tutor or Mentor. Any suspension of study must be agreed by Head of Department, Student Services Manager and a member or SLT.

7. Emergency or Crisis Situation

An emergency or crisis situation is one in which the usual methods of dealing with a situation breaks down, and where professional help is urgently needed. Whilst very rare, there will be instances where a student's behaviour gives cause for serious concern. Such instances vary from concern about self-harm or suicidal intentions, to incidents where the student or others

may be harmed or in immediate danger. In an event where there are immediate concerns about harm to the student or others, a member of the College Safeguarding team will be notified and/or the emergency services should be called by dialling 999. In the event of dialling 999, the person witnessing the student's behaviour should not leave the scene until they have been briefed by Emergency Services. The student's parent, carer or next of kin should be notified by a member of the College staff in the event of dialling the Emergency Services.

8. Fitness to Study

There may be times when the physical or mental health of a student is affected to the extent that academic progress is unable to be maintained. In rare situations where the support required is beyond what is reasonable, it is useful to bear in mind that;

- Whilst on a temporary basis it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible with attendance due to ill physical or mental health, prolonged periods of absence may not be sustainable.
- There may be times when the student returns from a period of ill health and it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible with attendance to promote a phased return and provide reasonable adjustments where applicable to ensure stress is mitigated during this return to study period.
- There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health requires support beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer.
- Occasionally ill health may also present a health and safety hazard and in this situation a risk assessment will be undertaken. Sometimes, however, risks cannot be managed at an appropriate level in the college environment.

Although the College will do everything in its power to support student success, there are occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our collective judgement that to continue at the College is no longer in the best interests of the student.

9. When to use this policy

The policy may be implemented by a member of staff when:

- There is concern raised that student's health or wellbeing are affecting their attendance or capacity to study to the extent that they are not able to participate in their study programme to a level which will enable them to complete successfully.
- Concerns about the student's fitness to study are raised by a third party i.e. a friend, relative, employer, member of the College staff or medical professional.
- The student has informed a member of staff that they have concerns about their own fitness to study.
- Behaviour that would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, may be known or suspected to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health difficulty.
- A student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the health, safety or wellbeing of others.
- A student's health difficulties are adversely affecting the learning progress or likelihood of success of other learners.

10. Right of Appeal

The student may appeal where the decision has been made to exclude. All appeals should be made in writing to the Principal within 5 working days of the decision.

The Principal's decision will be final.

11. Reporting

At least annually the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will prepare a safeguarding report to be presented at the Governors Quality and Curriculum Committee.