ROBINSON COLLEGE

SUPPORT AND ASSESS CAPABILITY TO STUDY PROCEDURE

This Support and Assess Capability to Study Procedure was approved by the College Council pursuant to Statute IV.4(iii) of the College Statutes on 21 September 2026.

This procedure sets out the steps which will be taken by the College and University when there is concern that a student's behaviour or health has the potential to disrupt or threaten the welfare or academic progress of the student, or of others in the academic community. It applies to all matriculated students, inclusive of both undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as to exchange students, students while on their year abroad and/or out of residence for any other reason. It should be stressed that the Support and Assess Capability to Study procedure is part of the provision of pastoral care within the College and University and is not a form of disciplinary process.

1. College Statement

1.1. This College procedure can be applied if there is any question as to the capability of students to proceed with their studies. There are a variety of circumstances when the procedure may be activated (see further Section 3, below). Sometimes capability will be a matter of physical state (for instance some protracted or severe illness). It could be the mental or social state of the student, or it might relate to circumstances arising in the student's family or surroundings that could have a significant impact on a student's ability to study effectively. Cases may be raised directly by a student, by that student's friends, by a supervisor, Director of Studies or Tutor or be relayed from elsewhere in the University. The Senior Tutor may consider that the identity of the individual or individuals raising the concern may need to be withheld or protected at any stage in the procedure. Anonymous referrals shall only be acted upon in exceptional circumstances as the Senior Tutor sees fit, having regard to the seriousness of the issues raised and the fairness to any individuals mentioned in the referral.

1.2. The College understands students with mental health and/or disability related conditions are often highly aware of their difficulties and needs, that they act responsibly in seeking help, and that doing so is right. Support services for students exist within the College and University precisely for this purpose (namely, the College Wellbeing Team, the Tutorial system and the University's Student Services). Asking for help would not ordinarily engage this more formal process of assessment. Occasionally a situation that would normally have been considered cause for a disciplinary hearing of

some sort will be judged to call for pastoral rather than punitive action and will be fed into this scheme.

1.3. Capability to study' as used in this document relates to the entire student experience, and not just a student's ability to engage with their academic studies. The College and University expect students to be able to live and work in harmony with others, and not to conduct themselves in a way which has an adverse impact on themselves or those around them. This procedure is not designed to address academic performance issues (which will be dealt with under the normal academic assessment and monitoring procedures) or disciplinary issues (which will be dealt with under normal disciplinary procedures) except where they clearly result from a capability to study issue where the normal procedures may not be appropriate.

1.4. A student's capability to study may be called into question if illness, mental health or disability related difficulties are seriously disrupting the student's own studies or the studies of others or if they result in unreasonable demands being placed on staff or other students.

1.5. Unless the student is still legally a child (that is not yet 18 years old), parents/guardians will only be informed that the Support and Assess Capability to Study procedure has been invoked with the express consent of the student. Such consent should be communicated to the Senior Tutor. The exception to this situation would be if there is reasonable concern for the student's safety, or the safety of others, as outlined in the Students in Crisis Procedure and the Precautionary Measures Regulations.

1.6. The overriding aim of Robinson's procedure is to find a balance so that proper support is put in place for students to enable them to fulfil their potential while not allowing possible disruption or distraction to go untreated. Students should be given a clear understanding of the routes open to them to enable them to fulfil their potential and the procedures that the College and University will apply when dealing with them. To this end the scheme is described in terms of three stages.

Stages of the Procedure

1.7. The following bullet points in Section 1 are intended to explain the progression between stages of the procedure. Full descriptions of each stage can be found in Section 2.

1.8. Stage 1 normally commences when a potential cause for concern is raised, often by others. In extreme or urgent cases, it is possible to escalate instantly to Stages 2 or 3. Stage 1 attempts to maintain as informal a style as possible: students will, under this stage, meet with their Tutors, Directors of Studies, and/or the Senior Tutor. A member of the Wellbeing Team may also be present. At this meeting, the student will have an opportunity to discuss why issues of capability to study have been raised. In some cases, at the end of such a meeting all will end up reassured and no further action will be needed, but more often some follow-up will be established to confirm that whatever gave rise to concern has been resolved. If all parties are satisfied this may complete the proceedings,

but if there is disagreement, or for issues that prove difficult to resolve at Stage 1, either the student or the College can escalate the case to Stage 2.

1.9. Stage 2 is similar in intent to Stage 1, and happens entirely within the College, but involves a small panel who can take views directly from the student and collect reports from others who may be involved. Its discussions will be recorded and the object of the exercise is to bring in some independent but experienced voices and seek ways in which whatever might have been disrupting or appearing to disrupt the student's progress or ability to function fully in the College environment are resolved so as to allow the student to proceed through the course of study and graduate successfully.

1.10. Stage 3 is a formal process conducted under the University's Procedure to Support and Assess Capability to Study Procedure, a copy of which is set out in the University's Statutes and Ordinances (see here).

2. Introduction to the Procedure

2.1. Where a student's behaviour or health has the potential to disrupt or threaten the welfare or academic progress of the student, or of others in the academic community, it may not be appropriate for that student to be subject to normal disciplinary proceedings, but the problems may be such in their impact on the student or others that there is no option but to suspend or terminate the student's other studies under Stage 3.

2.2. Decisions made concerning a student's capability to study are made through a collective supportive process, after appropriate consultation and after consideration of the student's ability to study, learn effectively and complete the course successfully.

2.3. The Support and Assess Capability to Study procedure is in three stages:

2.3.1. Stage 1: Informal College action (discussion with the student resulting in agreed next steps)

2.3.2. Stage 2: College Case Review Group (more structured meeting with action plan)

2.3.3. Stage 3: Formal consideration, conducted under the University's Support and Assess Capability to Study procedure (as here, which includes powers for the student to be suspended pending consideration of the student's case)

2.4. Stages 1 and 2 are managed by the College regardless of whether the concerns are raised by members of this College, another College, or the student's Faculty or Department. Stage 3 involves committee members appointed by the University as set out here. These committee members are empowered to take decisions on behalf of the University, and to make recommendations to the College.

2.5. The procedure allows for temporary suspension by the University in cases causing very serious concern.

2.6. The procedure is separate from disciplinary and academic progress procedures; and from Fitness to Practise procedures (see here).

3. Circumstances under which this procedure may be implemented

3.1. A student's capability to study may be brought into question as a result of a wide range of circumstances. These include (but are not restricted to) the following:

3.1.1. Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party which indicate that there is a need to address the student's capability to study.

3.1.2. A member of the College has been told of a problem by the student and/or the College has been provided with information which indicates that there is a need to address the student's capability to study.

3.1.3. The student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying problem because that student's behaviour is causing serious problems for themselves or others.

3.1.4. Behaviour that would otherwise be dealt with as a disciplinary matter but is considered the possible result of an underlying physical or mental health problem.

3.1.5. The student's academic performance or ongoing behaviour is not acceptable, and this is thought to be the result of an underlying problem which may mean that the student is not fit to study.

3.2. If staff within the College, or the student's Faculty or Department, have concerns regarding a student's capability to study they should discuss them with the Senior Tutor. The Senior Tutor will then investigate and consider whether it is appropriate to initiate the Support and Assess Capability to Study procedure.

3.3. The severity of the problem and the student's engagement with efforts to respond to it will determine which stage of the procedure is invoked.

4. Stage 1 - Informal Action by the College

4.1. If the Senior Tutor determines that concerns about a student's capability to study warrant initiation of the procedure, a member of College staff designated by the Senior Tutor to handle the case at Stage 1 should approach the student and explain to that student that concerns about capability to study have emerged. The designated person would usually be the student's College Tutor but might be the College nurse or another member of the Wellbeing or pastoral support team. Should the Tutor or other member of staff require advice or guidance on how to approach the matter, they should contact the Senior Tutor.

4.2. The designated member of College staff should make the student aware of the precise nature of the behaviour that has caused the concerns about the student's capability to study to be raised. The designated member of staff, involving others as appropriate will attempt to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the student. Opportunity to explain the student's own views on the matter should be given, and the student should be encouraged to think about using one or more of the support services offered by the University or the College. It may also be necessary to consider whether all 'reasonable adjustments' to the academic arrangements and support have been put in place to enable the student to study effectively.

4.3. In most cases issues can be resolved at this level, and the student will respond positively. It may be necessary to obtain independent corroboration as to whether support offered is being taken up.

4.4. A review period should be determined by agreement between the designated member of the College and the student. At the end of this period a meeting should be held to discuss steps taken by the student to address the concerns about capability to study. If the concerns have been addressed satisfactorily, this will be noted. Further meetings may be scheduled to continue to monitor the situation.

4.5. If, however, the concerns have not been addressed to the satisfaction of the designated member of College staff, a further review period may be agreed, or the case will move to Stage 2 of the procedure.

4.6. The informal discussions, advice and any undertakings made by the College and/or the student should be documented and should be kept confidential to the designated person, the Senior Tutor and the student. A letter setting out what has been agreed should be given to the student. If the concern was raised by a member of the student's Faculty or Department, the Senior Tutor will inform them that a discussion has taken place, and that action has been agreed to address the concerns that have arisen.

4.7. If a student is unable or unwilling to co-operate, they should be informed that more formal action under Stage 2 of this procedure may be considered appropriate.

5. Stage 2 - College Case Review Group

5.1. If the action taken under Stage 1 has not been successful, or it is felt that the case is too serious to be dealt with informally, Stage 2 of the procedure will be invoked. The student's Faculty or Department will be informed on a "need to know basis" both that Stage 2 of the procedure has been invoked, and the reasons for this. The student's Head of Faculty or Department or other nominated person, who might for example be the student's supervisor in the case of a research student, will be invited to provide a written report on any concerns that the student has that might relate to the case review.

5.2. A meeting of a College Case Review Group will be convened by the Senior Tutor. The Group will be made up of the student's Tutor and the Senior Tutor and may include others as deemed appropriate by the Senior Tutor, including the College Director of Studies, or Faculty/Departmental representatives. The student may be accompanied to this meeting by a nominated supporter (see 5.9 below).

5.3. The Senior Tutor shall designate a member of the College as the point of contact with the student. The designated person will normally be the student's Tutor, who should ensure that the Senior Tutor is kept informed of all communications. The Senior Tutor should be the main point of contact with all other agencies and individuals and should keep records of the whole process. The Senior Tutor should appoint a deputy if unavailable to act at any stage.

5.4. Before the meeting, an assessment may be sought from a qualified practitioner familiar with the HE environment and the spectrum of student difficulties, or from the University Occupational Health Service, the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC), the University Counselling Service (UCS), the Mental Health Advice Service (MHA) or another expert, as required. The student will be informed of this process and asked for consent. In some instances, assessment may be sought without student consent if necessary, see points 5.6 & 5.7.

5.5. The assessment will form part of the material used to determine the following matters:

5.5.1. the nature and extent of any condition from which the student may be suffering;

5.5.2. the student’s prognosis;

5.5.3. the extent to which it may affect the student’s capability to study and manage the demands of student life;

5.5.4. any impact it may have or risk it may pose to others;

5.5.5. whether any additional steps could reasonably be taken by the College, in light of any medical condition, to enable the student to study effectively; and

5.5.6. whether the student will be receiving any ongoing medical treatment or support.

5.6. The student will be asked to authorise full disclosure to the College Case Review Group of the results of any medical examination or other evidence related to their case. The College recognises that any such information disclosed will constitute "sensitive data" for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 2018 and will be handled, processed and stored accordingly.

5.7. Should the student refuse to undertake an assessment, or to disclose its results, the College may continue this procedure based on the information already in its possession. In these circumstances—i.e. where the student refuses to undertake an assessment, or to disclose its results—the College may infer an increased level of risk to the student.

5.8. The student will be given at least 14 days' notice of the convening of a College Case Review Group and informed of the purpose of the meeting. This period may be shortened in an emergency on the decision of the Senior Tutor. The student will also be provided with any documents that will be considered by the Group and asked to provide any documentation the student may wish the Group to consider at the meeting.

5.9. The student may be accompanied at the meeting by a Cambridge Students' Union representative, a family member, a fellow student, or other representative. A support worker may also accompany disabled students. The student should notify the Senior Tutor at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting if the student is to be accompanied and by whom.

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

5.10.1. the student is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns that have been raised;

5.10.2. the student's views are heard and taken account of; and

5.10.3. the student is fully aware of the possible outcomes if difficulties remain.

5.11. The Case Review Group will order its proceedings at its own discretion. If the student declines to attend the meeting of the Case Review Group it may still proceed, and outcomes will be communicated to the student in writing by the Senior Tutor.

5.12. The Case Review Group may decide:

5.12.1. that no further action is required; or

5.12.2. that one or more of the following actions should be taken:

5.12.2.1. formally to monitor the student's progress for a specified period of time; and/or

5.12.2.2. to recommend that special academic arrangements or support are put in place; and/or

5.12.2.3. with the student's consent, to agree that the student's studies be suspended for a period of time with appropriate application to the relevant University authority. Return to College would also be conditional on medical approval particularly from the College's psychiatric nurse;

or

5.12.3. to refer the case to the University's Support and Assess Capability to Study committee, for consideration under Stage 3 of this procedure; or

5.12.4. in the case of a medical or veterinary student, refer the case for consideration under the University's Fitness to Practise procedures.

5.13. The Senior Tutor, as convenor, will record the decisions of the College Case Review Group and will communicate them to the student, and will ensure that any follow up action is taken.

5.14. If the student's progress is to be monitored under (b)(i), an action plan will be agreed with the student, outlining any steps which the student will be required to take, and/or any support to be provided to the student. Regular review meetings with the student will be arranged with a nominated member of College staff, to ensure that the action plan is being appropriately followed and/or that reasonable support to enable the student to study effectively is being provided.

5.15. The student will also be informed of the consequences of any breaches of the action plan, which will normally involve that student's capability to study being considered at Stage 3.

5.16. If it is recommended that special academic arrangements or support are put in place under (b)(ii), the details should be agreed with the student's Faculty or Department (and in the case of a research postgraduate student with the appropriate Research Supervisor) and by the student, and approved by the relevant University authority.

5.17. The student will be informed that unless these arrangements remedy the concerns to the College's satisfaction, and the satisfaction of the relevant Faculty or Department if appropriate, the student's capability to study may be considered at Stage 3 of these procedures.

5.18. The case will only be referred for consideration under Stage 3 of this procedure in the most serious of cases where, for example, 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, 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.

5.19. The decision of the Case Review Group, together with a record of the meeting, will be sent to the student by the Senior Tutor within 14 days from the date of the meeting, and a copy kept on the student's personal file. A copy of this documentation will also be sent to the student's Faculty or Department on a 'need to know' basis and, in the case of a PhD student, to the student's Supervisor.

6. Stage 3 - Formal consideration, conducted under the University's Procedure to Support and Assess Capability to Study

6.1. This stage of the procedure may be implemented as a result of a wide range of circumstances. These include, but are not restricted to, the following:

6.1.1. a written referral from a Stage 2 Case Review Group; or

6.1.2. if, after consultation with those involved in the case, in the opinion of the Senior Tutor or Head of Faculty or Department, initial concerns are raised in writing which are sufficiently serious as to warrant the consideration of the student's suspension, exclusion or expulsion; or

6.1.3. following a written referral from College or University disciplinary proceedings in the light of concerns about a student's capability to study; or

6.1.4. where the student has refused or failed to co-operate with the procedures under Stage 2 and the Case Review Group consider that a referral to Stage 3 is appropriate; or

6.1.5. the student's academic performance or persistent behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and this is thought to be the result of an underlying problem which may mean the student is not fit to study; or

6.1.6. serious concerns arise about the student's capability to sit examinations or other assessment.

6.2. Under Stage 3, the matter is referred to the University and the procedure that will be followed to determine capability to study will be that as set out in the University's Statutes and Ordinances (here).

7. Return to Study

7.1. After a break in study as a result of capability to study proceedings at Stages 2 or 3, the student may make a request to the University and the College for permission to return to the course. If the request is made after temporary exclusion by the University's Procedure at Stage 3, the request to return will be considered in accordance to the procedures recommended by the committee, as set out here, under 'Return to study' (see here). The student is responsible for accessing the support available to help them reintegrate back into College and their studies.

7.2. If the request is made as a result of proceedings at Stage 2, the student will only be permitted to return if, after receiving medical advice, the College and/or relevant University authority is satisfied that the individual is fit to study and able to comply with any conditions imposed for the student's return.

7.3. In cases where the College has any continuing concerns about the student's capability to study, it may require a second medical opinion. In this case a student may be asked to undergo a medical assessment, at the College's expense, by doctors/specialists, including the University Mental Health Advisor, nominated by the College, to allow the situation to be properly evaluated. Where the College has continuing concerns regarding the student's capability to study, it may refer the case for further consideration to the College Case Review Group.

7.4. In any case where a student returns to study following the implementation of the Support and Assess Capability to Study procedure, the College should hold a preliminary meeting with the student to discuss what support measures need to be put in place for the student's return and establish a return to study plan. This initial meeting should include the student's Tutor, the Senior Tutor and the Director of Studies.

7.5. At this meeting it is recommended that a schedule of regular review meetings with the student be agreed, to monitor and support a return to study plan.

7.6. If so, the student must provide their continued cooperation in this respect and such review meetings may continue for part or all the remainder of the course and residency in College.

7.7. There should be a written record of what is agreed for the return to study plan and a copy given to the student.

7.8. The Senior Tutor should ensure that, where appropriate, a copy of the plan is sent to any support agencies who have agreed to help implement the plan, and that any necessary support from agencies external to the College is put in place.

7.9. The Senior Tutor should make arrangements for monitoring the delivery and acceptance of the support plan. If the student does not engage with the return to study plan, then it is likely that a Case Review Group will be required to assess the student's capability to study.

7.10. In the event that a student's request to return to study is declined by the relevant University authority, the student will have a right of review under the review procedures for the decisions by that authority. Details of how to review a decision made under Stage 3 can be found here.

7.11. If the College declines the student's request to return in circumstances where the University does not object to that request, the student may seek a review of that decision by a new Case Review Committee consisting of four Fellows with tutorial experience and who have had no previous involvement in the case, under the chairmanship of the Warden. The procedure to be followed by this Case Review Committee will be that applicable to a Stage 2 review but the decision of this Committee will be final and is not subject to any further review.

7.12. In the event that the request is declined and the relevant University or College (as the case may be) procedures have been exhausted, a Completion of Proceedings letter will be issued at the conclusion of the proceedings, and the student may seek to have the case reviewed by the OIA.

8. General Matter

8.1. The College acknowledges that, as a result of implementing this procedure, 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. The student is responsible for maintaining communication with key persons as identified.

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