

APPENDIX A: NOTE OF CONCERN:

LEVEL 1 2 3 (CIRCLE APPROPRIATE)

Note of Concern as to a Student's Support needs and/or Fitness to Continue in Study

Student's Name:

ID Number:

Address:

Date of Birth:

Gender: Male Female

Telephone/Contact Details:

Mobile Phone:

Home Phone:

Email:

Concern raised by:

Brief outline of concern:

Brief factual description of the concern. Specific examples/observations are particularly helpful.

Comments/Observations of Academic/Admin/Support Staff/Others:

Record observations, with specific examples where available, of staff/others, other than the person who first reported concern. This can include observations/comments made by appropriate professional support services/academic mentors/welfare staff

Student's Comments/Observations:

The student should be invited to record his/her comments/observations on the concerns and the support plan/follow-up arrangements.

Agreed Action Plan:

This may include details of any supports recommended/arranged, as well as agreed outcomes that are desirable and limits of acceptable interactions/behaviour, where appropriate.

Review Date:

Important Note: (If Leave of Absence or Withdrawal is being considered)

It is important to consider all possible financial implications of a leave of absence or withdrawal from your degree programme. There may be financial implications for your registration/tuition fees or grant if or when you return to third level at a later date. Further detailed advice can be obtained from the Student Budgetary Advisor at studentbudgetingadvice@ucc.ie or on www.ucc.ie/en/studentbudget, and the Fees Office UCC

Declaration:

I understand the nature of the concern(s) raised by the university, as has been explained to me and outlined in this document and the possible impact/consequences that this/these concern(s) may have upon my own fitness to continue in study.

I also understand the impact that this/these concern(s) may have upon the community of fellow students and staff who are working and studying at the University and to which I belong.

I have agreed to work towards the action plan outlined above, which has been developed to support me.

I understand that if I am unable or unwilling to carry out the action plan, the university will need to consider taking appropriate or remedial actions, or referral as my situation will require.

I understand and consent to information surrounding my fitness to continue in study being shared with other relevant services within the University. A copy of this Action Plan will therefore be submitted to the Head of Academic Unit/Student Experience and *(insert other specific)* and other staff as deemed appropriate by the Head of Academic Unit/Head of Student Experience.

I am aware that this Note of Concern will be retained by the Head of Academic Unit/Student Experience.

Whilst I understand that the University has a duty of care to provide reasonable supports to me,

I am responsible for my own health, wellbeing and actions and it is my responsibility to be fit to continue in study

I agree to this case being reviewed *(insert x days/weeks or months time)*.

Signed: (Student)

Signed: (Head of Academic Unit/Head of Student Experience)

Dated:

APPENDIX B: LEVEL 2 RESPONSE: MULTIDISCIPLINARY CASE REVIEW

B1 Purpose

A multi-disciplinary case review meeting shall be convened by the Head of Student Experience (“Head of SE”) in consultation with the Head of Academic Unit (“Head of AU”) once a Level 2 Response is invoked under the Fitness to Continue in Study Policy:

- to consider the concerns noted
- to obtain the views of relevant parties including the student
- to formulate an agreed support and follow up plan
- to support a student who wishes to withdraw voluntarily/take leave of absence on grounds of fitness
- to provide information to allow the Head of SE determine if escalation to a Level 3 Response is required

B2 Attendees at/Submissions to the Multidisciplinary Case Review

The decision as to whom should attend or submit material to a multidisciplinary case review meeting will be made by the Head of SE, in consultation with the Head of AU, on a case by case basis.

Chair Head of Student Experience or Delegate

Attendees drawn from:-

- Head of AU or his/her nominee. **(Attendance Required)**
- The student. It is in the student’s interest to attend at least a portion of any case review meeting and attendance should be encouraged. A case review meeting can proceed without the student if the student is unwilling or unavailable to attend. **(Attendance Desirable).**
- The student may be accompanied by a friend/other to provide support. **(Attendance Desirable)**
- In circumstances where the student opts not to request a friend/other to attend, the student may opt to request that one of two named officers of the University (1 male, 1 female) provides advice and attends the meeting to assist and advise them. These officers to be nominated by the Head of SE. **(Attendance Desirable).**
- A student with a disability also has the right to be accompanied by a support worker as appropriate to their needs. **(Attendance Desirable).**
- Individual(s) who reported the concern, as per the Note of Concern. **(Attendance Desirable)**
- Members of UCC staff from other student services. e.g. Student Health Department, Student Counselling and Development, the Disability Support Service, International Education Office. **(Attendance Desirable)**
- Students’ Union Welfare Officer. **(Attendance Desirable)**

- Others. Occasionally external expertise or advice may be required. **(Attendance as needed)**
- Secretarial Support for the Case Review: Provided by the Student Experience Office

In circumstances where any of the named above as “Attendance Desirable” or “As Needed” are not in a position/willing to attend, the Case Review Meeting will invite, accept, and consider a written submission in-lieu of attendance. The Chair shall reserve the right to determine if any parts of the meeting or material submitted are reserved business, and to be considered only by those deemed as Attendance Required, above.

B3 Conducting a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Case Review

The student will normally be informed in writing at least 48 hours prior to the meeting of the date, time and place of the meeting and the nature of the concerns to be addressed. The student should also be furnished with any documents that will be referred to in the meeting to include the Note of Concern. The above may be posted to the Student’s last known place of address according to the records of the university. The multidisciplinary team case review meeting is an opportunity to develop a co-ordinated response that best meets the reasonable support needs of students. The convening of and attendance at a multidisciplinary case review panel can be a source of stress for staff and particularly so for the student involved. It is important that the language used and the tone of communications before, during and after the Multidisciplinary Case Review takes account of the possibility of this stress for all concerned. The outcomes possible from a Multidisciplinary Case Review are listed in Section 14 above. It is highly desirable that a plan to support and monitor the student is agreed with the student, and signed off as agreed by both the student and the Head of SE. A formal note of the case review meeting is taken and held by the Head of the SE. (See Appendix A: Note of Concern) This Note of Concern is to be shared with the Head of School and others as deemed appropriate by the Head of Student Experience. This Note of Concern is to be shared with the Head of AU and others as deemed appropriate by the Head of SE. The Note of Concern and a copy of the outcome should be furnished to the student as soon as reasonably practicable. The effectiveness of the measures taken are then reviewed at a follow-up Multi-disciplinary Case Review meeting, the time interval and date to be set by the Head of Student Experience. In the event that

- the student is unable or unwilling to commit to an agreed plan, **or**
- the student is unwilling to allow sharing of the agreed plan with the Head of AU, **or**
- there is a sufficient level of concern at the first Multi-disciplinary Case Review meeting, **or**
- the concerns persist/are not remitted sufficiently at a subsequent Multidisciplinary Case Review meeting

the Head of Student Experience shall invoke a Level 3 Response and convene a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel.

APPENDIX C: LEVEL 3 RESPONSE: FITNESS TO CONTINUE IN STUDY PANEL REVIEW

C1 Purpose

A Level 3 Response shall be invoked by the Head of SE in consultation with the Head of AU and result in the convening of a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review to determine a student's fitness to continue in study

C2 Membership of a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel

The Fitness to Continue in Study Panel shall be convened as and when necessary by the Head of SE. The panel shall be constituted as follows:

- The Registrar and Senior Vice-President Academic (Chair)
- The Head of Student Experience
- The Head of AU
- The SU President or Nominee.
- Other relevant individuals in relation to the particular case as agreed by the Registrar and the Head of Student Experience, in attendance

C3 Conducting a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review

The student will normally be informed in writing at least 48 hours prior to the meeting of the date, time and place of the meeting and the nature of the concerns to be addressed. The student should also be furnished with any documents that will be referred to in the meeting to include the Note of Concern or any existing active Notes of Concern. The above may be posted to the Student's last known place of address according to the records of the University. The convening of and attendance at a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review may be a source of stress for staff and particularly so for the student involved. It is important that the language used and the tone of communications before, during and after the Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review takes account of the possibility of this stress for all concerned. The Fitness to Continue in Study Panel shall consider existing active Notes of Concern, (or raise a New Note of Concern if none exists), and amend or record the Note raised to show it as a Level 3 Note of Concern. (See Appendix A)

It is in the student's interest to attend at least a portion of any Fitness to Study Panel Review and attendance should be strongly encouraged. The student may be accompanied by one other person to provide support. A student with a disability also has the right to be accompanied by a support worker as appropriate to their needs. A Fitness to Study Panel Review can proceed without the student if the student is unwilling or unavailable to attend.

The Fitness to Continue in Study Panel shall consider relevant submissions and records already existing from earlier Level 1 or Level 2 responses relating to the Student. It shall also consider

submissions from the student, when available. Expert, independent opinion shall be sought from suitably qualified professionals, who do not have a therapeutic conflict of interest. In most cases this opinion should be sought from a Consultant Occupational Health Physician or independent Consultant Psychiatrist of the universities' choosing. The Fitness to Continue in Study Panel is not obliged to accept the recommendations of external experts, and the final decision as to a student's fitness to continue in study is made by the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel. A simple majority applies in the event of non-unanimous opinion of members of the Panel. The outcomes possible following a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review are listed in 16 above. A copy of any outcome reached shall be sent to the student as soon as reasonably practicable.

APPENDIX D: TEMPORARY SUSPENSION

Where it appears in the opinion of the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic that there are grounds for concerns about a student's Fitness to Continue in Study, then he/she, having sought such advice as he/she deems appropriate, shall be entitled to suspend a student on the following basis:-

- D1 That suspension is temporary and necessary to protect the university community and that on balance, the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic is of a view that the duty of care owed to others is overriding in the particular circumstances.
- D2 A suspension may be verbal and to take effect as the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic deems appropriate and shall be confirmed in writing as soon as is practicable.
- D3 That any such suspension is reported to the next scheduled meeting of Academic Board by the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic and is reviewed by him/her, in consultation as may be appropriate, at least fortnightly thereafter. The Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic will update the Academic Board at scheduled meetings for the duration of the temporary suspension.
- D4 That suspension shall not be regarded as an indication as to whether or not the grounds for concern is proven.
- D5 That suspension may be limited to certain premises, placements or University activities or modules of studies.
- D6 That every reasonable effort is made to continue to support the student's academic studies so that, in so far as possible, the student is not disadvantaged academically. In the case of suspension due to mental health, continuation of support for the student's academic studies during the temporary suspension may not be possible.

- D7 That suspension shall be for no longer than the time necessary for a matter to have been considered and decided upon under this Fitness to Continue in Study policy or for an appeal to have been heard and decided upon.
- D8 In cases of suspension due to mental health issues, the suspension may be for a longer period and in such cases should be reviewed by the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic and reported to the Academic Board at each scheduled meeting of the Academic Board while the suspension remains in place.
- D9 That this power shall be exercised with caution and with due regard to natural justice and fair procedures.
- D10 That the Registrar and the Senior Vice President Academic shall be accountable to the Academic Council in respect of the exercise of his/her power of suspension.
- D11 Where the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic exercises the power of suspension, he/she shall, as soon as practicable, notify the Head of AU and/or the Head of SE and shall call a meeting of the Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review soon as practicable from the date of the suspension

APPENDIX E: APPEALS

- E1 A student may appeal the decision of the Registrar and Senior Vice President to require the student to take leave of absence from study for an agreed period, (as the outcome reached following a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review.)
- E2 Such appeals must in writing and lodged with the Chair of the Fitness to Continue in Study Appeals Committee within 5 working days from the date of the posting of a decision notification by the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel to the student. The appeal must state in sufficient detail the grounds of the appeal.
- E3 Where an Appeal is made in accordance with the above, then the decision which was made by the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel shall be deferred until the Appeal is determined. The student shall be permitted to continue in study pending outcome of the appeal and during this period of deferral. This provision for deferral does not apply in relation to a temporary suspension where in the opinion of the Registrar and Senior Vice-President Academic that suspension is, on balance, necessary, to protect the public and the duty of care owed to others is overriding in the particular circumstances.
- E4 On receipt of an Appeal, the Chair of the Appeals Committee shall as soon as practicable send notice of the Appeal to the Appeal Committee and to Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel and request the Panel furnish to the Appeal Committee an accurate summary of the evidence and any submission tendered at the Panel review, including Notes of Concern from preceding Level 1 or Level 2 responses, the findings of the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel and the outcomes imposed on the student. The Chairperson of the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel, or his or her nominee, shall furnish this to the Appeal Committee so far as is practicable within 10 days of being so requested to do so by the Chair of the Appeals Committee.
- E5 The Appeal Committee will, at its absolute discretion, consider the Appeal in such a manner it deems appropriate to the circumstances of the case, having regard to fairness and due process.
- E6 The Appeal Committee shall not be obliged to hear or accept further submissions from the student, whether written or oral, but if it decides to do so, the student must be notified in writing and that notification must specify the date, time and location for the making of any oral submission or the date for the delivery of written submissions which date, in either case, must not, except in exceptional circumstances, be earlier than 10 days or more than 30 days from the date of such notification, unless stated otherwise.
- E7 The Appeal Committee shall have the power, should it see fit, to hold a fresh hearing into the matter.

- E8 The Appeal Committee shall determine the Appeal, and make whatever decision it considers appropriate in the circumstances on the balance of probabilities. The Appeal Committee shall have power to revoke or amend the decision of the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel in full or part. The Appeal Committee may direct the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel to reconsider the position further.
- E9 The decision of the Appeal Committee shall be final and binding and shall be reported to the Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic as Secretary of Academic Council.
- E10 The constitution of the Appeals Committee is set out in Appendix F below.

APPENDIX F: CONSTITUTION OF APPEALS COMMITTEE

- F1 The Academic Council shall establish a Fitness to Continue in Study Appeals Committee to consider any appeals arising from a decision of a Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel
- F2 The Appeal Committee shall comprise of 5 members all of whom shall be members of the Academic Council.
- F3 The quorum of the Appeal Committee for any meeting or hearing shall be 3 members.
- F4 The Appeal Committee shall hold office for a period of 3 years.
- F5 No member of the Fitness to Continue in Study Review Panel shall be a member of the Fitness to Continue in Study Appeals Committee.

APPENDIX G: RETURN TO STUDY PROCEDURES

G1 Return to Study Procedures

No less than 2 months prior to the end of the agreed period of absence the student will be issued with a letter of re-engagement by the relevant Academic Unit and the Student Records Officer will be issued with a copy of this letter. This letter may include conditions of re-engagement as defined by the Academic Unit.

It is recommended that students returning after a leave of absence contact the Academic Unit as soon as possible upon receipt of the letter of re-engagement to discuss the implications of returning to study, and if necessary ensure that any support is in place before recommencing their studies.

Failure on the part of the student to respond may lead to termination of studies.

The Head of theAU and/or the Head of SE may require any returning students to attend for medical examination at a medical practitioner of the university's choosing and s/he will only be allowed to return on the production of a report from such designated medical practitioner that the student is fully fit to return. Students who were required to take leave of absence following a prior Level 3 response and a Fitness to Continue in Study Panel Review, are required to attend a Multi-disciplinary Case-Review meeting no later than 4 weeks following their re-registration on return to study. This Multi-disciplinary Case Review meeting shall be convened by the Head of SE as described under Level 2 Response (Appendix B).

Students who voluntarily withdrew/took leave of absence on grounds of fitness at a prior Level 2 Response, shall be encouraged to attend a face-to-face meeting with the Head of SE or his/her delegate to consider any on-going concerns, and on-going support needs.

APPENDIX H: USEFUL RESOURCES

UCC POLICIES PAGES:

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/current/policies/>

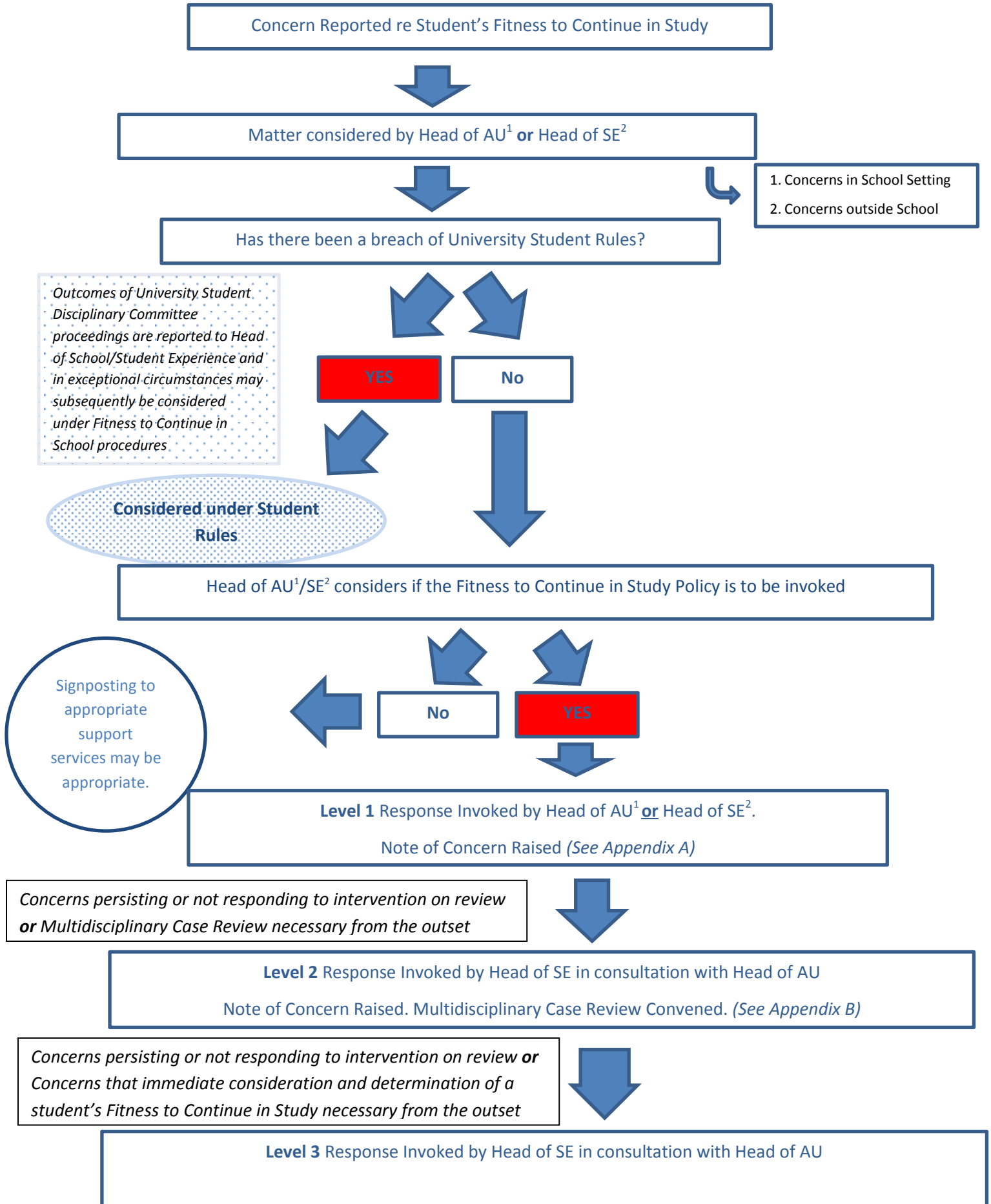
<http://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/policy/>

UCC MINDS DVDs: Available through the Student Counselling and Development Department.

They are also on sale in the UCC Visitor's centre and in An Siopa, in Áras na MacLéinn.

These very useful twin DVDs have been developed by the Student Counselling and Development Department in UCC and are designed to help third level institutions identify and respond to stressed and at risk students. They contain many useful examples of ways to communicate more effectively with distressed and at risk students.

APPENDIX I: FITNESS TO CONTINUE IN STUDY FLOW CHART



APPENDIX J:

MEMBERSHIP OF FITNESS TO CONTINUE IN STUDY WORKING GROUP

Name	Role/Representing
Dr. Michael Byrne	Chair
Mr. Dave Berry	Students' Union
Ms. Noirin Deady	Admissions Office
Dr. Samantha Dockray	College of ACSSS
Ms. Nora Geary	Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs
Dr. Birgit Grenier	College of Medicine and Health
Ms. Audrey Huggard	Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs
Mr. Paul Moriarty	Student Counselling and Development
Ms. Mary O'Grady	Disability Support Service
Dr. Aisling Parkes	College of Business and Law
Dr. Martina Scallan	College of SEFS

The Working Group wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Ms Chris O'Brien from the Student Health Department for her invaluable secretarial support.