Support Through Studies Policy and Procedures

Ownership Details and Review Schedule of Policy

Institution name	SIRM College
Effective from	16th January 2026
Review cycle	Every year
Next Review Due Date	16th January 2027
Policy owners and Approving Body	Head of Student Services Board of Governors
Lead Contact	Maheen Javed m.javed@sirm.ac.uk
Applicable to	Registered students on or who have completed a course of study with SIRM; applicants holding an offer of a place to study with SIRM.
Relevant/Applicable OfS Conditions of Registration/requirements	B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, C3, E2, E6
Other relevant / applicable legislation/requirements	UK Quality Code for Higher Education; OIA Good Practice Framework (Fitness to Study / Practise); Equality Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998; Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Mental Health Act 1983 (as amended); Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR; Relevant safeguarding guidance

NB this document is comprised of two parts: the first part is the SIRM Support Through Studies Policy (Part A, Sections 1-4). The second part is the Support Through Studies Procedures (Part B, Sections 5-8). For any queries on this policy, please contact the Head of Student Services in the first instance.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Date	Review & Revision	Owner	Version
16 Jan 26	New Policy to replace Fitness to Study	M Javed	1

Support Through Studies Policy and Procedures

Issue: 1

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A) Support Through Studies Policy

1. Purpose and Aim

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to support students whose academic performance, engagement, or well-being is impacted by health, personal circumstances, or behaviour. This process ensures students receive the necessary support while maintaining a fair, transparent, and proportionate response to challenges. A key underpinning basis of SIRM College's approach to Support Through Studies is to work collaboratively with students as far as possible in its procedures, and to assist them to recognise when they might need additional support of any kind, or an interruption or a break from study.

1.2 The aim of this Policy and its procedures is to sustain the progress of such students in a supportive environment whilst ensuring the safety and well-being of other members of the institutional community. The policy provides and the framework within which SIRM College can promote a positive, sensitive and co-ordinated approach to the management of this. The procedures which are underpinned by this policy are designed to achieve this, by being flexible, supportive and proportionate.

1.3 This Policy may also be used for any student whose ability to engage with their studies and/or the support on offer at SIRM College is compromised as a result of their health, well-being, disability, needs or other circumstances. This Policy will be implemented in accordance with the Equality Act (2010). Students are encouraged to actively engage with the processes and procedures under this Policy, which will often include taking appropriate steps to manage their own health and wellbeing in order to fulfil their academic potential.

2. Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to:

- All registered students (whether currently enrolled or not) on a course of higher education at SIRM College;
- applicants who have accepted and have had an offer of a place confirmed on a course of higher education with SIRM College.

2.2 This policy may also be triggered as a result of information or concerns arising from a student's involvement in, or engagement with, other institutional policies and procedures. Where relevant issues affecting a student's health, well-being, or engagement are identified through alternative processes — such as academic progress reviews, disciplinary procedures, or Safeguarding/Prevent protocols — the Support Through Studies Policy can be implemented if it is deemed appropriate. This ensures that students receive coordinated support in response to emerging needs, regardless of the initial context in which those needs are identified.

Where Support Through Studies formal stages may be applicable:

2.3 This Policy applies to SIRM College students and their course activities whether or not these are based on SIRM College premise or elsewhere (eg placements).

2.4 This Policy also applies to applicants holding a confirmed accepted offer of a place to study at SIRM College. Whilst the College will normally manage Support Through Studies for applicants via the informal procedure, formal stages may apply in exceptional circumstances to ensure that SIRM College is acting in the best interests of the applicant and that the appropriate level of consideration and support is given.

2.5 SIRM College's approach to Support Through Studies is to apply it informally (the Informal Stage) in a holistic manner throughout a student's registration with the SIRM College, beginning before they arrive. Each application of the Policy will be based on individual student circumstances, and most students will remain in the Support Through Studies Informal Stage. Listed below are examples of situations when the Policy may be applied which may likely (but not necessarily) necessitate referral into one of the Formal Stages (please see Part B of this Policy for information on all the Support Through Studies Stages). This list should not be considered exhaustive – where SIRM College deems it appropriate, a student may be referred into any stage of Support Through Studies (including the informal stage) to address and manage any needs, and to support them to succeed on their course:

a) The student discloses difficulties relating to substance misuse, alcohol or drug problems or other personal circumstances and may need additional support;

b) A student has disclosed a disability, and reasonable adjustments and appropriate support are accordingly in place but the student continues to experience difficulties in meeting the requirements of the course;

c) A third party such as another student, staff member, or healthcare professional reports concerns about a student's health or personal circumstances which are having a negative impact on their ability to engage with their studies;

d) Multiple complaints are received about the student from other students and/or staff for which the underlying reasons indicate concerns which might most appropriately be addressed under this Policy;

e) The student is in serious and continued breach of the attendance policy as a result of health/other circumstances preventing them from engaging properly with their studies;

f) The student behaves in a way that would usually be considered a disciplinary matter but there is reason to believe this may be due to underlying cause(s) which should be considered under this Policy;

g) The student continuously makes applications for extenuating circumstances or other adjustments stating health issues, or what is thought could be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem, which give cause for concern and/or indicate they may need support under this Policy.

Other/Allied INSTITUTION Policies and Procedures

2.3 The Support Through Studies Policy often integrates with or works alongside other SIRM College policies and procedures, but should be distinguished from other SIRM College policies such as those listed below:

- **Attendance and Engagement Policy:** support and interventions under this Policy will not normally take precedence over legal and statutory requirements in the Attendance and Engagement Policy. The Attendance and Engagement Policy may be applied in conjunction with this Policy, but is distinct from it.

- **Emergency Student Exclusion & Suspension Policy**: when, in an emergency situation and with belief that there is good reason to do so, the College Principal (or their nominee) may suspend or exclude a student. The Emergency Student Exclusion & Suspension Policy may be applied in conjunction with this Policy, but is distinct from it.

- **Interruption of Studies Policy**: when a student requests temporary interruption to their studies on the course owing to ill health or personal circumstances. There may be crossover with this Policy, and a student may decide to use the Interruption of Studies Policy as a result of Support Through Studies support, discussions or meetings.

- **Extenuating Circumstances Policy**: when a student is unable to participate in any specific assessment(s), or has sat an assessment and feels their performance was affected, and applies for an extension/deferral owing to health or other personal circumstances affecting their academic performance. An application for Extenuating Circumstances will normally involve a Support Through Studies consideration and, where necessary, referral into informal/formal stage.

- **Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures:** when a student may have formal sanctions applied to them owing to conduct which falls within the definitions of misconduct in that policy, and/or a contravention of the published Student Code of Conduct. Support Through Studies should not be used in lieu of the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy, however misconduct cases where a student falls within the scope of Support Through Studies Stage Three may be dealt with under Stage Three of Support Through Studies where appropriate, following a risk assessment. The Non-Academic Misconduct Preliminary Enquiry Stage would normally be followed prior to any Support Through Studies implementation.

- **Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Unacceptable Behaviours:** this policy underpins SIRM College's approach and procedures for handling cases of sexual misconduct, harassment of any kind and related unacceptable behaviours. Referral into Support Through Studies may be an outcome arising from the Stage 1 Disclosure Procedure under that policy, if appropriate.

- **Safeguarding Policy:** SIRM College has a Safeguarding Policy that, if triggered, may result in referral into, or escalation of Support Through Studies by a student. However, the processes under the Safeguarding Policy should be followed in the first instance.

- **Prevent Policy:** SIRM College also has a Prevent Policy which takes a Safeguarding approach. A student falling within the scope of the Prevent Policy may where necessary be referred into a formal Support Through Studies Stage

(or escalated where appropriate). However, the processes under the Prevent Policy should be followed in the first instance.

3. Key Principles of SIRM College's Support Through Studies

3.1 The following principles are enshrined in our institutional concept, application and operation of Support Through Studies:

a. The SIRM College Support Through Studies Policy and its procedures is designed to help students not only remain on their courses but also achieve their potential and thrive, wherever possible. It provides a structured framework to allow a collaborative approach with students to this as far as possible, whilst recognising the College's obligations to both individual students and its whole community.

b. Support Through Studies and its processes are not punitive and focus on student wellbeing and academic success. The Support Through Studies procedures are designed to support students to complete their course by assisting them in a supportive, collaborative and flexible manner, and should not be used as an alternative to other procedures such as Non-Academic Misconduct Procedures.

c. Where a student falls under Stage 3 (Serious, Critical or Persistent Significant Concerns – Case Conference) of the Support Through Studies procedures, the student's interests and longer-term likelihood of success are at the forefront of all decision-making.

d. These procedures can be entered into at any stage, as deemed appropriate by the student's Personal Tutor, Programme Leader, Head of Academic Department, or any member of Student Support Staff with the agreement of a member of the senior management team where necessary. Members of SIRMs Senior Leadership Team may also recommend that a student is referred into Support Through Studies.

e. Where other staff not listed above have concerns and believe there may be a need to refer a student into Support Through Studies, they should contact the student's Personal Tutor or a member of Student Support staff in the first instance for a confidential discussion.

f. Decisions made under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of these procedures should be made with the agreement of the student.

g. Where there is failure to agree, the case may be escalated to a further Stage of the Support Through Studies procedures.

h. A student referred into any formal stage of the procedures may, as deemed appropriate, have their case escalated/de-escalated as appropriate into another stage of the procedures, including de-escalation back into the Informal Stage.

i. SIRM College will apply a risk-based approach to these procedures and may complete risk assessments to support decision-making, including decisions about what stage of the procedures a student should be referred into, escalated or de-escalated from.

4. Procedural Integrity and Fairness

4.1 SIRM College recognises that there may be times when the involvement of one or more individuals who are external to our institution and independent of any involvement with our students may be of substantial benefit to students in supporting us in these procedures. They can provide assurances against prejudice and bias, bring relevant expertise, and give independent oversight of our procedures and processes, helping to ensure fairness, proportionality and reasonableness.

4.2 In operating any of the processes or procedures under this Policy, we may therefore involve appropriate individuals (referred to as 'External Officers') to support those processes and/or for procedural advice and guidance.

4.2 In order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest (e.g. where procedural independence may be compromised) and/or where specific expertise is required, External Officers as defined above may also operate procedures on behalf of SIRM College, where normally the policy indicates this will be a member of SIRM College staff. No proceedings under this Policy shall therefore be invalidated by virtue of the involvement of an External Officer.

B) Support Through Studies Procedures

5. Overview of Support Through Studies Procedures

5.1 In order to best facilitate the level of support students may need, the formal procedures may be entered at any stage to allow the most flexibility, timeliness and appropriate intervention. However, where formal procedures are entered into, it is expected that the majority of cases will be entered and resolved at Stage One with no need for progression to either Stage Two or Stage Three of the procedure.

Mediation

5.2 SIRM College recognises that students who undergo Support Through Studies procedures will do so for a variety of reasons, and that working relationships may at times suffer some strain as a result. Where appropriate, the SIRM College may determine that mediation outside of the Support Through Studies process is appropriate and feasible, and mediation to resolve differences can be entered into at any point during any of the Support Through Studies procedures.

5.3 Mediation cannot however be used to replace a formal Stage Three Case Conference decision or Support Through Studies Appeal Panel decision.

6. The Support Through Studies Stages

5.3 The Support Through Studies Stages are:

- **Informal stage**
- **Stage One:** Emerging or Initial Concerns
- **Stage Two:** Continuing and/or Significant Concerns
- **Stage Three:** Serious, Critical and/or Persistent Significant Concerns (Case Conference)

Informal Stage of Support Through Studies

5.4 The informal stage of Support Through Studies is in place from the point that an applicant has an accepted offer of a place to study at SIRM accepted. All registered students (and applicants holding a confirmed offer) are essentially in

Support Through Studies from the outset – all academic tutoring and pastoral/welfare/disability support, is conducted through the framework of Support Through Studies.

5.5 Therefore, all academic and non-academic meetings held with students constitute 'the informal stage' of Support Through Studies unless it is clearly indicated that such meetings are being held under one of the formal STS stages. Such meetings may result in informal actions being agreed, email correspondence summarising any discussions/agreements, or referring the student to specific/other sources of support.

5.6 All applicants holding a confirmed offer will be offered an informal Support through Studies meeting prior to commencing their studies, to identify any specific needs or support requirements (eg reasonable adjustments). Where appropriate, such meetings may identify a need to refer the applicant into one of the formal stages of Support Through Studies to ensure a formalised, managed approach to the applicant's support needs and requirements as a student.

Formal Stages of the Process

5.7 **Stage One: Emerging or Initial Concerns**

- The Lead Contact will be identified and a relatively informal meeting will be arranged by the Lead Contact.
- This will be held with the student to identify issues and agree on a short-term action plan that sets out both agreed actions for the student and for SIRM College so all parties know what to expect, including any agreed support arrangements.
- There is normally no need to take minutes or notes unless the Stage One Meeting results in No Further Action, in which case a written outcome should be sent to the student via email confirming this. The Action Plan arising out of the meeting will normally stand as the record of the meeting. However, where sensitive information is disclosed in a Stage One meeting, a confidential record of the meeting should be kept and should be shared with the student. This can record sensitive information without the need for it to be shared more widely.
- Students may be referred to support services (e.g., counselling or academic advice). If support is internal, the Action Plan should be forwarded to the relevant Support Service or – where there are

sensitive matters referred to on the Action Plan, key Student Support Staff discussed with the student before sharing occurs.

- Where there is sensitive information or circumstances involved, the Lead Contact should consider what information is necessary to include on the Action Plan and should not include anything the student is uncomfortable with.
- Action Plans and Support Plans must have clear deadlines for actions to be completed and for SIRM College follow-up.
- Lead Contact is responsible for producing the agreed Action Plan and ensuring it is circulated to the student and relevant staff, normally no later than 2 working days following the meeting.

5.8 **Stage Two: Continuing and/or Significant Concerns**

- Formal meeting with the Lead Contact and senior staff to review progress and create an enhanced Action Plan which if applicable, may as necessary either integrate, or be attached to, a detailed Enhanced Support Plan.
- Action Plans and Support Plans must have clear deadlines for actions to be completed and for SIRM College follow-up.
- Lead Contact is responsible for producing the agreed Action Plan and ensuring it is circulated to the student and relevant staff, normally no later than 2 working days following the meeting.
- There may be several outcomes arising from a Stage Two meeting. Possible outcomes include:
    - Enhanced Action Plan with agreed actions for the student (setting out any agreed actions by SIRM College as well)
    - Referral to any support services (internal and/or external)
    - temporary agreed interruption of studies
    - referral to external services.

5.9 **Stage Three: Serious, Critical and/or Persistent Significant Concerns (Case Conference)**

- A Case Conference Panel will be convened to review the student's case, focused on the best interests of the student and the long-term likelihood of the student succeeding on the course, on the balance of probabilities.
- Possible outcomes include:
  - Referral back to Stage 1 or Stage 2 for the respective procedures at either stage to be invoked;
  - An Emergency Action Plan that has clear targets and deadlines, with a specified review date;
  - An enhanced Action Plan that has clear targets and deadlines, with a specified review date;
  - Required Interruption of Studies for a specified period, with a specified review date, where appropriate including an Action Plan with required remedial actions/targets;
  - Required exclusion from certain aspects of the course or areas of the SIRM College;
  - Required suspension from the course for a specified period with a specified review date, with conditions set which, if not met, will normally result in a withdrawal of student status;
  - Withdrawal of student status on the basis of a finding on the balance of probabilities, that the student will not succeed with their studies for one or more reasons that fall within the scope of this policy.

Case Conference Panel Membership:

- Chair: Head of Student Services
- Lead Contact: Designated academic or support staff (e.g. Personal Tutor)
- Additional members as required (e.g. specialist advisers, student representatives).

7. Right to Complain/Appeal

Complaints

6.1 A student wishing to make a complaint about the Support Through Studies process should follow the Student Complaints Procedure. The Student

Complaints Procedure cannot, however, be used to contest or appeal a decision made under Stage Three (Case Conference) of these procedures.

Appeals against a Case Conference Panel Decision (Request for Review)

6.2 Students may request a review of decisions made by the Case Conference Panel under Stage Three via an appeals process as follows:

- Students will be notified of the Stage Three Case Conference decision in writing, and informed of their right to request a review of the decision;

- To request a review of the decision, the student should submit a request via email to Principal no later than 21 days of formal written notification of the decision of the Stage 3 Case Conference Panel, under one or more of the following grounds:

SUPPORT THROUGH STUDIES GROUNDS OF APPEAL	
a)	That there is evidence of significant administrative or procedural error in the Support Through Studies process which affected the Case Conference decision;
b)	That there is evidence of prejudice or bias in the Support Through Studies process, which warrants fresh consideration of the case;
c)	That there is relevant additional or new information which was for valid reasons unable to be considered at the relevant time the Case Conference Panel made its decision, and which warrants further consideration of the case;
d)	That the decision is unreasonable and/or will have a disproportionate negative impact on the student. The reasons why the decision is unreasonable and/or will have a disproportionate negative impact must be clearly articulated and supported with relevant satisfactory evidence, where applicable.

Appeal Procedure

- The Principal (or their nominee) shall consider whether the request for a review meets one or more of the above grounds and shall notify the student of the outcome of this consideration in writing, copying in the Lead Contact for the Support Through Studies case, normally within 21 days of receipt of the request.

- Where the Principal or nominee finds that the request for a review meets one or more of the grounds, they will review the Stage Three decision of the Case Conference Panel and will either:

    - Determine that the Case Conference Panel should reconvene to consider the request for review and to review its decision, or

    - That the decision of the Case Conference Panel should undergo an amendment, or

    - That the decision of the Case Conference Panel should be overturned and replaced with a new decision. In replacing this decision, the Principal may take into account the outcomes available to the Case Conference Panel as are set out in paragraph 5.9 of this Policy, or

    - That having reviewed the decision of the Case Conference Panel, the original decision should stand, or

    - That the original Case Conference decision should be quashed, and the student reinstated to their course (or, if appropriate, be offered a facilitated transfer to a different course of study in SIRM College). In this event, the Principal may determine any conditions to facilitate a successful return to the course (which may where necessary include a defined period and /or conditions to be met before the student may return).

Once they have determined that the request for review meets one or more of the grounds, the Principal may consult with staff or External Officers as necessary when reviewing the Stage Three decision of the Case Conference Panel, in order to reach their decision.

8. Completion of Procedures

8.1 The decision of Principal or their nominee will be final. The student will be notified in writing of the final decision and of their right to take their case to the OIA, and will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter accordingly.

9. Data Processing, Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

9.1 SIRM College will administer this policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Equality Act, ensuring student confidentiality and appropriate data handling.

9.2 Advice on invoking these procedures should, where possible, be sought without identifying the individual student to maintain confidentiality. Student Support staff may be consulted for guidance.