PROCEDURE NUMBER 011
FITNESS TO STUDY

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Procedure 011: FITNESS TO STUDY

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This procedure describes how the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) ensures that there is a consistent and supportive approach when assessing an individual's capacity to satisfactorily participate and fully engage as an ACM student.

1.2 This procedure may apply to all current and prospective students including students that have interrupted and/or deferred their studies (herein referred to as 'the student') and refers to their time as an ACM student.

1.3 Fitness to study will be assessed in a timely manner ensuring that students are treated in a fair and equitable manner, with discretion and consideration of individual needs.

2. Procedure

2.1 ACM and its wider staff are committed to supporting student wellbeing and achievement amongst all students. Intervention should only take place where there is a level of need, and should take place discreetly and at the earliest opportunity. ACM recognises that a positive approach to the management of student needs is crucial to student learning and academic achievement.

2.2 A unified and non-judgmental approach to physical and mental health, and any arrangements that may affect a student or prospective student's ability to exercise suitable fitness to study should be exercised and demonstrated at all stages of consideration of a student's fitness to study.

Informal Stage (Standard Interventions)

Stakeholders: Programme Admins, Registry Manager, Student Services, Tutors, Pathway Leads and Personal Tutors.

2.3 It is recognised that studying at Higher Education level comes with a series of natural stresses such as working to meet multiple deadlines, potentially experiencing financial stresses, as well as dealing with difficult personal circumstances. As such, a student receiving support with their studies would not necessarily be put through the FTS process as a first step.

2.4 Students who come to the attention of ACM where a need for support is identified, whether that be through referrals made by staff or the student themselves, will be referred to the appropriate team to receive support relevant to the difficulties they are facing. The support implemented can include, but is not limited to:

- Wellbeing support;
- Tutorials with a tutor/Pathway Lead;

- Advice to apply for EC's;
- Advice and support with applying for DSA (where relevant);
- Hardship loans (pending approval);
- Consultation with Registry and/or Programme Administrator on their academic standing and support in constructing a plan of action.

2.5 The interventions administered at this stage would not be logged as part of a formal FTS process, but would be logged to show the attempts made by ACM to support the student at that time.

2.6 If concerns persist over the student's engagement or wellbeing, the decision would be made to refer the student to a Stage 1 Fitness to Study.

Stage 1 Fitness to Study

Stakeholders: Designated Programme Administrators and DSL relevant to student's campus.

2.7 When referred to a Stage 1 FTS, the student will be sent a letter at least **7 working days** before the proposed date to notify and invite them to the panel. If the student is unable to attend the proposed date then it is expected of them to inform the FTS panel in the first instance in order for a new date to be arranged.

2.8 The purpose of a Stage 1 FTS panel will be to discuss with the student the support that has already been implemented, what reasons there may be for this support not being effective, and the concerns that ACM now has regarding the continuation of their studies. Following this discussion, the panel and the student will explore what the most appropriate next steps will be to ensure the student's wellbeing is treated as the priority. The two possible outcomes at this stage will be a choice of the following:

- Continuation of study with the implementation of further support and an Individual Learner Arrangement;
- A request made by the student for a change of circumstance, i.e., an interruption or withdrawal.

2.9 Should the student wish to continue with their studies, it will be permitted based on the student being administered an Individual Learner Arrangement (ILA). Under this arrangement the student will receive further interventions of support from ACM, which can include but will not be limited to:

- Continued wellbeing sessions;

- Referrals for a series of set counselling sessions;
  Bespoke tutorials with tutor/pathway lead;
- The application of EC's for upcoming assessments where appropriate based on the provision of necessary supporting documentation.

2.10 The conditions set for the ILA will be that the student must engage with their upcoming assessments following the Stage 1 FTS panel in order to show that they have engaged with the support set and that it has been effective in helping them re-engage with their studies.

2.11 As part of the ILA, the student will undergo a period of monitoring by their personal tutor and the Programme Administrator Team as outlined in the Individual Learner Arrangement Policy. The student will continue to be expected to inform their personal tutor and the relevant support staff of any issues that are continuing to pose prohibitive to the student's engagement to ensure that support can be adjusted where necessary.

2.12 If following the given assessment period the conditions of the ILA are met, the student will be signed off as a Fitness to Study and following a short period of academic monitoring, no further action will be taken.

2.13 In the event that the terms of the ILA are not met, the result will be a progression to a Stage 2 FTS panel and would be notified accordingly.

2.14 Where a mutually agreed outcome is reached the matter will not be escalated further. All agreed arrangements should be documented and the student may still be subject to a period of academic monitoring at the discretion of the panel.

Stage 2

Stakeholders: Registry Manager, Group Lead on Student Experience, and Designated Safeguarding Lead

2.15 Following the decision to proceed to a Stage 2 FTS, the student will be sent a letter at least **7 working days** before the proposed date to notify and invite them to the panel. If the student is unable to attend the proposed date then it is expected of them to inform the FTS panel in the first instance in order for a new date to be arranged.

2.16 Prior to the panel taking place, a pre-stage 2 consultation will take place between the members of the Stage 1 panel and the Stage 2 panel to discuss the student's journey throughout this process in order to provide context for the Stage 2 panel to deliberate the most appropriate outcome. The potential outcomes are as follows:

(a) Interruption - If the continuation of the student's studies are not feasible at this time, but given a period of respite there could be scope for the student to return, the panel will conclude that the student will be put on an interruption for a maximum period of up to 12 months. The conditions of the student's return and the most appropriate date of return will also be set and shared with the student.

(b) De-registration - if the Panel concludes, taking into account the individual circumstances of the case and any supporting medical evidence, that there is no reasonable prospect of the student re-engaging with their programme or that doing so would pose a significant risk or disadvantage to a student's mental or physical well being, a decision will be made that the student is terminated from their programme of studies. This decision should only be made in the most serious cases, and where all avenues of recourse, support mechanisms or arrangements have been exhausted or are deemed inappropriate.

(c) Any other action considered to be appropriate and proportionate.

2.17 The Stage 2 FTS panel will consist of members of staff who have had limited to no involvement in the student's situation in order to remain impartial in their decision making.

2.18 The student will normally be required to attend the panel to discuss their case. If the student does attend, they will have the right to bring a friend or student representative to the meeting for support.

2.19 The student may be permitted to be accompanied by a support worker, for example in cases of visual or hearing impairment, where this is appropriate to their needs.

2.20 When the panel takes place, the student will take part in the discussion surrounding their circumstances, what may have lead to all previous interventions not being effective and will then be informed of the outcome that has been reached by the panel.

2.21 In the event that the student in question is under the age of 18, a parent, guardian or nominated adult with responsibility for the student will be required to attend proceedings with the student

2.22 Any individuals who attend the hearing in support of the student, will not be included to influence or act as an intervention to any decisions or proceedings arising from the hearing. Students are advised that individuals who attend hearings will not be considered representative of the student in a formal or legal capacity.

2.23 Following the conclusion of the panel, the student will be informed of what the next steps are depending on the outcome reached and any relevant changes of circumstance will be actioned with immediate effect.

Emergency FTS Panel

Stakeholders: Registry Manager, Group Lead on Student Experience, and Designated Safeguarding Lead

2.24 Referrals for an Emergency Fitness to Study can only be made by a Designated Safeguarding Lead. If there are concerns held by a member of staff wherein they feel an Emergency FTS is appropriate, they must disclose these concerns to their campus DSL in the first instance.

2.25 In the event where a disclosure is made that - in line with the Fitness to Study policy - leads to an Emergency FTS, the panel will sit within 48-working hours of the disclosure being made.

2.26 The student concerned will be invited to attend the panel and will be notified by letter of the time and date in the first instance. However due to the serious nature of this stage, the panel will sit without the student's attendance if it comes to it.

2.27 The Emergency FTS Panel will consist primarily of the Stage 2 panel with potential attendance from additional staff who have provided relevant support to the student.

2.28 An outcome will be reached based on the circumstances disclosed prior to the panel. Once this outcome has been decided all relevant changes of circumstances, should there be any, will be processed with immediate effect.

Actioning CoC's prior to Stage 2 or Emergency FTS

2.29 Making the decision to interrupt a student on their behalf is usually reserved for Stage 2 and Emergency FTS Panels. However, ACM reserves the right for an interruption to be implemented for a student at Stage 1 if there are immediate and substantial concerns where the student's wellbeing & safety are clearly seen to be at risk.

2.30 The decision to action a change of circumstance (CoC) prior to Stage 2 or an Emergency FTS can only be actioned by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Registry Manager, or Group Lead on Student Experience at their discretion.

Return to Study

Stakeholders: Registry Manager, Group Lead on Student Engagement, and Designated Safeguarding Lead

2.31 Following the end of the student's interruption, a reintegration meeting will be set prior to the student's expected date of return to discuss the student's eligibility to return. An outcome is not reached in this panel but will be concluded once the panel has sat.

2.32 The student will be welcome to have a friend, parent or guardian, or support worker be in attendance to provide support in a personal capacity.

2.33 The conditions set prior to the interruption will be reviewed and the student will be expected to provide authoritative documentation that evidences these conditions being met.

2.34 Following the reintegration meeting, all information shared and supporting documentation provided will be reviewed and considered with a decision being made as to whether or not the student will be permitted to return to study. This outcome will be shared with the student and their re-enrolment will be processed in the first instance.

2.35 If in the event that the panel concludes the student is not fit to return to study, they will make a decision on an outcome that can include, but will not be limited to:

(a) A request for further/updated supporting documentation that pertains to evidencing the student's fitness to return. A follow up reintegration meeting would be arranged to give the student adequate time to source the requested documentation.

(b) An extension of the student's interruption might be actioned if the panel concludes that a return to study at the original date set will not be conducive to the student's wellbeing.

2.36 The outcome of all FTS panels and reintegration meetings will be communicated to the student within 48-working hours of the panel being held to ensure that they are aware of what the next steps will be. A post-Emergency FTS consultation can also be arranged to discuss the outcome with the student if they couldn't attend the panel itself.

2.37 All FTS panels and reintegration meetings will be recorded and minuted in order for an accurate record to be kept. Should the student request a copy of either they will be welcome to do so. Any informal discussions and undertakings made by the staff that are managing this process will be held on file for a period of 6 years.

Right of Appeal

2.38 If the student does not agree with the outcome(s) and wishes to contest or appeal any or all of the decisions made in the FTS panel(s) or the Reintegration meeting, they may refer to and utilize the Appeals Policy.

Applicants who are refused a place at ACM

2.39 Prospective students and applicants should follow ACM's Admissions Complaints Policy and Procedure if they wish to make a complaint.

3. Responsible Parties

3.1 The Procedure lead is responsible for the cyclical monitoring and review of the policy and procedure in liaison with the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager. The Fitness to Study Procedure lead is:

- Registry Manager

3.2 Decisions and appropriate actions in support of the implementation of the Policy will be authorized by the following designated staff:

- Academic Registrar
- Group Lead on Student Experience
- Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)
- Additional Needs & Disabilities Coordinator
- Pathway Lead(s)
- Head of Education
- Programme Administrator(s)
- Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)

4. Related Documentation

- Fitness to Study Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Student Disciplinary Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Finance Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Extenuating Circumstances Policy
- Interruption of Studies Form

5. Date of Approval and Next Review

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