

## **Occupational Health Policy (Informal Referrals)**

### **1. Introduction**

- i. As well as academic obligations, many students at St. George's must also to meet health and other fitness to practise requirements. St George's University of London contracts Occupational Health services from St. George's Foundation Trust in order to ensure students can meet these requirements.
- ii. University and Occupational Health have a joint responsibility to ensure patient safety in clinical settings ('fitness to practise') and to ensure that being in study does not have a deleterious effect on students' own health and wellbeing ('support to study').
- iii. The university has an obligation to ensure that students are fit to study if concerns are raised. Students are therefore referred to occupational health to assess whether they are clinically fit to be in studies. Where this fitness cannot be positively demonstrated, the university may recommend an interruption of study.

### **2. Scope**

- i. This policy document relates to informal Occupational Health referrals by programmes of study or under the informal stages of supporting a student's fitness to study. These activities are described in Paragraph 2.1.3 of the Procedure for Consideration of Fitness to Study or Practise.
- ii. Formal Fitness to Study or Practise referrals are managed under the Procedure for Consideration of Fitness to Study or Practise
- iii. Occupational Health activity relating to students' initial health clearance at commencement of study is managed according to the relevant Admissions policies.

### **3. Status of Occupational Health Provider**

- i. The University accepts the clinical opinion of Occupational Health regarding a student's fitness to safely participate in academic, clinical or community activities, including recommendations with respect to what adjustments would be required to support the student where applicable. The University's primary source of information relating to a student's fitness shall be Occupational Health. Occupational Health opinions shall be informed by additional specialist assessments and clinical information provided by health professionals directly involved in students' care as required.
- ii. The University will be responsible for determining whether any recommendations for adjustments to a student's study made by Occupational Health are reasonable, as they relate to the requirements and demands of course curricula
- iii. The University are solely responsible for decisions about a student's enrolment, progression and academic attainment.

### **4. Referrals**

- i. The standard referral route for students under primary and secondary stage welfare processes shall be the relevant course director or their designate.
- ii. In exceptional circumstances, referrals may also be made by the Dean/Deputy Dean for Students in their capacity as chair of the University Welfare Group.
- iii. Students on courses outside the scope of the Occupational Health contract may also be referred as described above. In these cases, additional budgetary approval must be sought from the Head of Student Services.

### **5. Data Sharing and Confidentiality**

- i. In normal circumstances reports from Occupational Health will be returned to the referring officer or officers and be shared with key staff from the programme team supporting the student.

- ii. The contents of Occupational Health reports may be shared within the University as necessary for the purposes of providing 'education and training and support services' as described in the Student Privacy Notice.
- iii. Copies of Occupational Health Reports may additionally be requested by University Officers responsible for the oversight of Support for Study Procedures, including members of the Welfare Group

## **6. Student Consent**

- i. By agreeing to attend Occupational Health, the student also consents to provide any evidence required or comply with diagnostic tests as determined by OH. The student also consents for relevant findings to be reported to relevant staff within the university.
- ii. Students should also consent to findings of any assessment undertaken by Occupational Health to be shared with their GP or others directly involved in their care.
- iii. Should a student refuse consent for access to medical records, or to sharing key conclusions (which need not include full medical details) with the university team, this should be documented, and the University may make a determination of potential fitness based on information available and recommend an interruption of study and/or referral to formal fitness to practise procedures.

## **7. Interpretation of OH decisions**

- i. As SGUL programmes are full-time and often include integrated academic and clinical elements in the curriculum, students must normally be fit for all aspects of their programme.
- ii. Students who are not fit for a part of their programme (i.e., clinical placement) will be advised to undertake an interruption of study until fit to resume the whole of their programme. Students who decline to take an interruption will be given advice on the academic consequences of continuing study.
- iii. Students who are not fit for elements of study will not be permitted to attend those sessions. Their progression on the course will therefore be at risk.
- iv. Attendance and other academic criteria will continue to be assessed for missed sessions whilst the student remains enrolled on the programme.
- v. The student may apply for mitigating circumstances using the relevant procedures to defer missed study.
- vi. Where Occupational Health recommend adjustments to a student's programme of study, the student may apply for exceptional circumstances or additional arrangements following the relevant processes. In cases when it is not possible for the university to make the recommended adjustments, the student will be advised to take an interruption of study.

## **8. Appeal**

- i. A student may not normally appeal the clinical opinion of Occupational Health. The student may ask for reassessment of their fitness should further information become available or treatment for a health condition progresses.
- ii. As an informal and supportive process, students may not directly appeal the University's recommendation that they undertake an interruption of study. A student may refuse an interruption under this policy, in which case the matter will be escalated to the formal stage of the Procedure for Consideration of Fitness to Study or Practise.
- iii. Where University and Occupational Health disagree, disputes will be managed through the appropriate clause in the OH contract.