



**POLICY AND PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT
AND DETERMINE A STUDENT'S FITNESS
TO CONTINUE IN STUDY**

Document Information

1. Document Details

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Important Note: If the 'Status' of this document reads 'Draft', it has not been finalised and should not be relied upon.

2. Revision History

Version Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes tracked?
1.0		First Draft by IOC	N
1.1	21/11/16	Changes made by Barry Coughlan	N
1.2	28/4/17	Changes made by Registrar following general consultation	
1.3	23/5/17	Changes made by Barry Coughlan	N

3. Relevant Existing/Related Documents

Title	Status	Relevance to this Document
		Staff Discipline Procedure
		Code of Conduct for Employees
		Code of Conduct for Members of Governing Body

4. Consultation History

This document has been prepared in consultation with the following bodies:

Name	Date	Details of consultation

5. Approvals

This document requires following approvals (in order where applicable):

Name	Date	Details of Approval Required
Academic Council	05/05/17	Approved subject to Legal Advice
Academic Council	16/06/17	Version 1.3 Approved
Governing Body	06/07/17	Version 1.3 Approved

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 Cork Institute of Technology (“CIT”) has a duty of care to support students during their studies. The vast majority of students will complete their studies with little or no need for particular support. On occasion however it may be necessary for CIT to intervene to support a student experiencing difficulties.
- 1.2 This Policy and Procedure (‘Policy’) is expressly intended to be supportive of individual students who may be in distress or difficulty, whilst also recognising the right of the wider CIT community to study, work and live free of undue interference caused by others.
- 1.3 There are long established policies and procedures in place in CIT to deal with students who are not achieving academically or whose behaviour breaches CIT Student Regulations. This Policy is intended for circumstances not covered by CIT’s existing academic Marks and Standards or its Student Regulations, including its Student Disciplinary Procedure. If it is considered that an issue being dealt with under such procedures might be more properly dealt with under this Policy, then this Policy should be invoked in relation to that issue and the other procedures may be paused or otherwise determined depending on the progress of the matter under this Policy.
- 1.4 If a matter arises that may also concern issues under CIT’s Fitness to Practice Policy, or some other CIT policy, CIT’s Registrar and Vice President for Academic Affairs will determine which policy will be applied. It is possible that more than one policy/procedure could be invoked in relation to the same issue, either concurrently or consecutively, as the Registrar may deem appropriate.
- 1.5 In matters relating to a student’s fitness to continue in study, CIT is guided by relevant legislation as may be amended from time to time. In this regard, the Institute remains particularly mindful of its obligations under relevant equality legislation.

2. SCOPE & AIMS OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 All registered students of CIT are subject to this Policy.

2.2 The Policy is designed to:

- Identify and support students (a) whose behaviour, well-being and/or welfare are of concern to themselves or others, **OR** (b) whose behaviour or actions are impacting adversely on the learning, working or living experiences of others, to such an extent as to give rise to concerns as to their fitness to continue in study,

and

- Provide supportive formal procedures (a) to enable students to withdraw/take leave of absence voluntarily on grounds of fitness **OR** (b) to determine if and how a student is to be required to take leave of absence on grounds of fitness.

2.1 All matters dealt with under this Policy will be treated confidentially in so far as possible. CIT will not disclose matters being dealt with under this Policy unless required to do so by law or having regard to its duty of care to its students and staff, in which case CIT may have to involve third parties such as the Gardai or external medical professionals without the consent of any individual involved.

2.2 If a person who raises a concern about a student under this Policy wishes to have their identity kept confidential from the student then this should be made clear at the outset. CIT will then endeavour to progress the matter on that basis. If however the circumstances of the case necessitate the disclosure of a person's identity to protect the health and safety of any other individual then CIT may have to make that person's identity known to relevant parties, but will do so on a strict need-to-know basis only.

3. BEHAVIOUR THAT MAY GIVE CAUSE FOR CONCERN ABOUT A STUDENT

3.1 This list is not exhaustive. Each case should be considered on its own merits:

- Social-withdrawal and/or apparent changes to wellbeing, appearance, mood, physical health or welfare;
- Unexplained deterioration in academic performance;
- Behaviour which is unusual or bizarre;
- Behaviour putting the student themselves or anyone else or property at risk;
- Behaviour which is distressing to others;

- Behaviour which is impacting on the learning, working or living experience of others.
- 3.2 Behaviour in this context includes behaviour which is face-to-face, verbal, written, and on-line communications in print or video or any other form.
- 3.3 CIT recognises the rights of individuals to be different and embraces and supports diversity. The lived-experiences of one person are different than those of another. The customs and practices of the many diverse groups in our increasingly international educational community may vary and require a degree of mutual understanding and mutual respect. It is important that these differences be recognised and accepted, within the boundaries of the law. Occasionally, what may at first sight be interpreted as bizarre and/or unusual behavior by one person might be better understood and accepted in the spirit of tolerating difference and accepting diversity. Accordingly, it is important to keep an open mind when considering behavior in the context of this Policy.

4. ACTIONS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

- 4.1 The appropriate course of action to be taken under this Policy will depend on the circumstances of a particular case and the apparent urgency of the situation. The course of action may also need to be reviewed depending on relevant developments. Situations can be classified as non-urgent/non-emergency, or urgent/emergency, depending on any perceived risk to the health and wellbeing of the student or any other individual or to property.
- 4.1 If there is any perception of an imminent threat or risk to life or serious injury to any individual then appropriate emergency services should be contacted immediately. This Policy may then be invoked at the appropriate level if this is also deemed necessary in the circumstances.
- 4.2 Situations which appear as non-urgent/non-emergency may be invoked at least at Level 1, and possibly Level 2 of this Policy (see below). Urgent/emergency situations may be invoked at least at Level 2 and possibly Level 3 of the Policy. Ultimately however, a matter may be invoked directly at any stage of this Policy depending on circumstances of the case.
- 4.3 At the outset of a particular case, or at any subsequent time during it, the behaviour and actions of a student may be of such a cause for concern to necessitate the temporary removal of the student from CIT property, pending further action under this Policy. Where it appears in the opinion of the Registrar and Vice President for Academic Affairs that there are grounds for such concern, then he/she, having sought such advice as he/she deems

appropriate, shall be entitled to remove the student on a temporary basis on such conditions as he/she deems appropriate in the circumstances. This should not be construed as a disciplinary or other form of sanction. It is merely a temporary administrative measure to protect the student and others at CIT pending the progression of the case under this Policy.

- 4.4 See attached at Appendix B illustrated flowchart highlighting possible actions.

5. REFERRAL TO HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL & OTHER SUPPORT

- 5.1 A student may be referred at any stage of this Policy to a relevant healthcare professional, including but not limited to an occupational physician, psychiatrist, or other medical specialist. The student shall be obliged to attend any appointment made for them and shall cooperate with the relevant healthcare professional in the provision of a medical report to CIT. Failure to attend or a failure, in the opinion of the relevant healthcare professional, to cooperate shall be deemed to be a failure to cooperate with CIT procedures and may necessitate further action in that regard.

- 5.2 Students will be provided with as much support as possible and necessary in the circumstances throughout any matter being dealt with under this Policy, including counselling and support from CIT's Student Union. CIT will endeavour to have someone accompany a student to any appointment with a relevant healthcare professional if this is requested by the student or otherwise deemed necessary in the circumstances.

6. INFORMAL ACTION

- 6.1 Prior to initiating a formal stage of this Policy (Levels 1-3), consideration may be given to informally supporting a student with a view to resolving any perceived issue. Informal attempts at intervention may include informal advice to the student or offering support through appropriate CIT services such as counselling or through CIT's Medical Centre. However, if a particular case appears to be of sufficient seriousness as to be classified as urgent and/or an emergency, an informal approach will not be appropriate. Otherwise, a matter that is dealt with informally may be progressed formally if an issue persists.

7. LEVEL 1

- 7.1 Level 1 is intended for concerns about a student which appear to be of a non-urgent/non-emergency nature:

- A person with a concern about a student should submit a Note of Concern to the student's Head of Department using the form **attached** at Appendix A;
- The Head of Department should arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the concern, providing them with a copy of the Note of Concern if deemed appropriate or necessary. The person who raised the concern may also be requested to attend this meeting or a separate meeting with the Head of Department if this is deemed necessary;
- On foot of any meeting(s), the Head of Department should decide on and record an action plan based on the Note of Concern, then arrange for any appropriate support he/she deems necessary in the circumstances, which may include one or more of (a) Academic Mentors/Supports (b) referral to CIT Student Support Services (c) referral to a relevant healthcare professional. The matter should continue to be closely monitored to ensure that the student is engaged with the action plan and is cooperating with CIT in that regard. If a student refuses to cooperate with an action plan at Level 1, then the matter may be escalated to Level 2 or 3 as deemed necessary in the circumstances;
- If the Head of Department determines that no action is necessary on foot of a meeting with the student then the matter may be closed and this should be recorded on the Note of Concern;
- Alternatively, the Head of Department may immediately escalate the matter to Level 2 or 3, or do so on foot of subsequent developments or any advice or feedback received pursuant to action taken at Level 1.

8. LEVEL 2

8.1 Level 2 is intended for circumstances where there are either (a) continuing and on-going concerns persisting and unresolved from a Level 1 intervention or (b) significant first concerns about a potentially urgent and/or emergency situation involving a student:

- Depending on the circumstances either (a) proceed using a Note of Concern initially used at Level 1 or (b) complete a Note of Concern, highlighting that the matter is considered appropriate for invoking directly at Level 2. In either case the Note of Concern should be submitted to the student's Head of Faculty;

- The Head of Faculty should arrange an initial meeting with CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager and the student's Head of Department to discuss the issue;
- The Head of Faculty and CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager should then arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the concern, providing them with a copy of the Note of Concern if this is deemed appropriate or necessary. The student's Head of Department may also be requested to attend this meeting if deemed necessary. The person who raised the concern may also be requested to attend this meeting or a separate meeting with the Head of Faculty and CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager if this is deemed necessary;
- On foot of any meeting(s) the Head of Faculty and CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager should decide and record an action plan on the Note of Concern, then arrange for any appropriate support or intervention deemed necessary in the circumstances which may include one or more of (a) Academic Mentors/Supports (b) referral to CIT Student Support Services (c) referral to relevant healthcare professional (d) voluntary leave of absence (indefinite or definite as agreed) from studies (**Note:** It is intended that all voluntary periods of absence should have been considered under Level 2 of this Policy at a minimum);
- If the Head of Faculty and CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager determine that no action is necessary on foot of a meeting with the student, then the matter may be closed and this should be recorded on the Note of Concern;
- Alternatively, the matter should continue to be closely monitored to ensure that the student is engaged with the action plan and is cooperating with CIT in that regard. The matter may also be immediately escalated to Level 3 if the student is not so engaging and cooperating, or this may be done on foot of subsequent developments or any advice or feedback received pursuant to action taken at Level 2.

9. LEVEL 3

- 9.1 Level 3 is intended for circumstances where there are either (a) continuing and on-going concerns persisting and unresolved from a Level 1 or Level 2

intervention or (b) significant first concerns of a clear and present nature about a potentially urgent and/or emergency situation involving a student:

- Depending on the circumstances either (a) proceed using a Note of Concern initially used at Level 1 and/ Level 2 or (b) complete a Note of Concern, highlighting that the matter is considered appropriate for invoking directly at Level 3. In either case the Note of Concern should be submitted to CIT's Registrar and Vice President for Academic Affairs ("Registrar);
- The Registrar should arrange an initial meeting to discuss the issue with CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager and, if deemed necessary, the student's Head of Faculty and/or Head of Department;
- The Registrar should then arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the concern, providing them with a copy of the Note of Concern if this is deemed appropriate or necessary. The Registrar may also require other relevant individuals to attend this meeting including CIT's Academic Administration & Student Affairs Manager, another member of the Registrar's Office, the student's Head of Faculty and/or Head of Department, as well as the person who first raised the concern in relation to the student;
- On foot of any meeting(s) the Registrar should decide upon and record an action plan based on the Note of Concern, then arrange for any appropriate support or intervention deemed necessary in the circumstances which may include one or more of (a) Academic Mentors/Supports (b) referral to CIT Student Support Services (c) referral to relevant healthcare professional (d) voluntary leave of absence from studies (e) mandatory leave of absence for an indefinite or definite period of time (as ultimately determined by the Registrar). This should not be construed as a disciplinary or other form of sanction. Instead, it is a necessary administrative measure to protect the student and others at CIT;
- If the Registrar determines that no action is necessary on foot of a meeting with the student, then the matter may be closed and this should be recorded on the Note of Concern;
- Alternatively, the matter should continue to be closely monitored to ensure that the student is engaged with the action plan and is

cooperating with CIT in that regard. Failure to engage and cooperate may necessitate further action as deemed necessary in the circumstances by the Registrar including imposing a mandatory leave of absence (if this has not already been done);

9.2 PROCEDURE FOR APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENT

A student has the right to appeal to the President of CIT any decision by the Registrar and Vice President for Academic Affairs to require the student to take a mandatory leave of absence from study.

To initiate an appeal, a student must write to the President, setting out the grounds of appeal in detail, within 10 working days of the date of notification of the result which is being appealed.

The President will convene a President's Appeal Board chaired by a member of the Institute's Executive Board (other than the President or the Registrar) and also including the President's nominee and the Registrar's nominee.

The President's Appeal Board may invite submissions from the student and any other persons it deems necessary, and may meet with them or determine the matter on the basis of written submissions alone (if this is deemed appropriate in the circumstances).

The President's Appeal Board may confirm the decision or permit the student to return to study subject to such conditions as it determines appropriate in the circumstances.

The President's Appeal Board shall normally communicate its decision in writing within 15 working days of the meeting.

10. RETURN TO STUDY FOLLOWING PERIOD OF ABSENCE

- 10.1 A student who withdraws/takes a leave of absence voluntarily or is required to take a mandatory leave of absence under this Policy shall be entitled to apply to re-register to re-commence their studies at the end of that period of absence. In such circumstances, the conditions of return to study will be determined by the relevant Faculty, subject to the rules and regulations governing the relevant Programme. If the module or course is not running or is otherwise unavailable at the time of the student's scheduled return, the relevant Faculty will provide guidance about possible alternatives.

11. RECORDS

- 11.1 It is good practice for staff to keep brief notes of any interactions with students under this Policy.
- 11.2 All records generated in relation to a matter under this Policy, including any Note of Concern forms, should be dated and written as soon as possible after relevant meetings.
- 11.3 Records should be kept safely in departments for a minimum period of five years and then destroyed. Confidentiality and security of notes should be maintained in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Acts 1988 - 2003 as amended.

12. CONTACT DETAILS

- 12.1 Contact details for appropriate offices mentioned in this policy are listed in Appendix C.

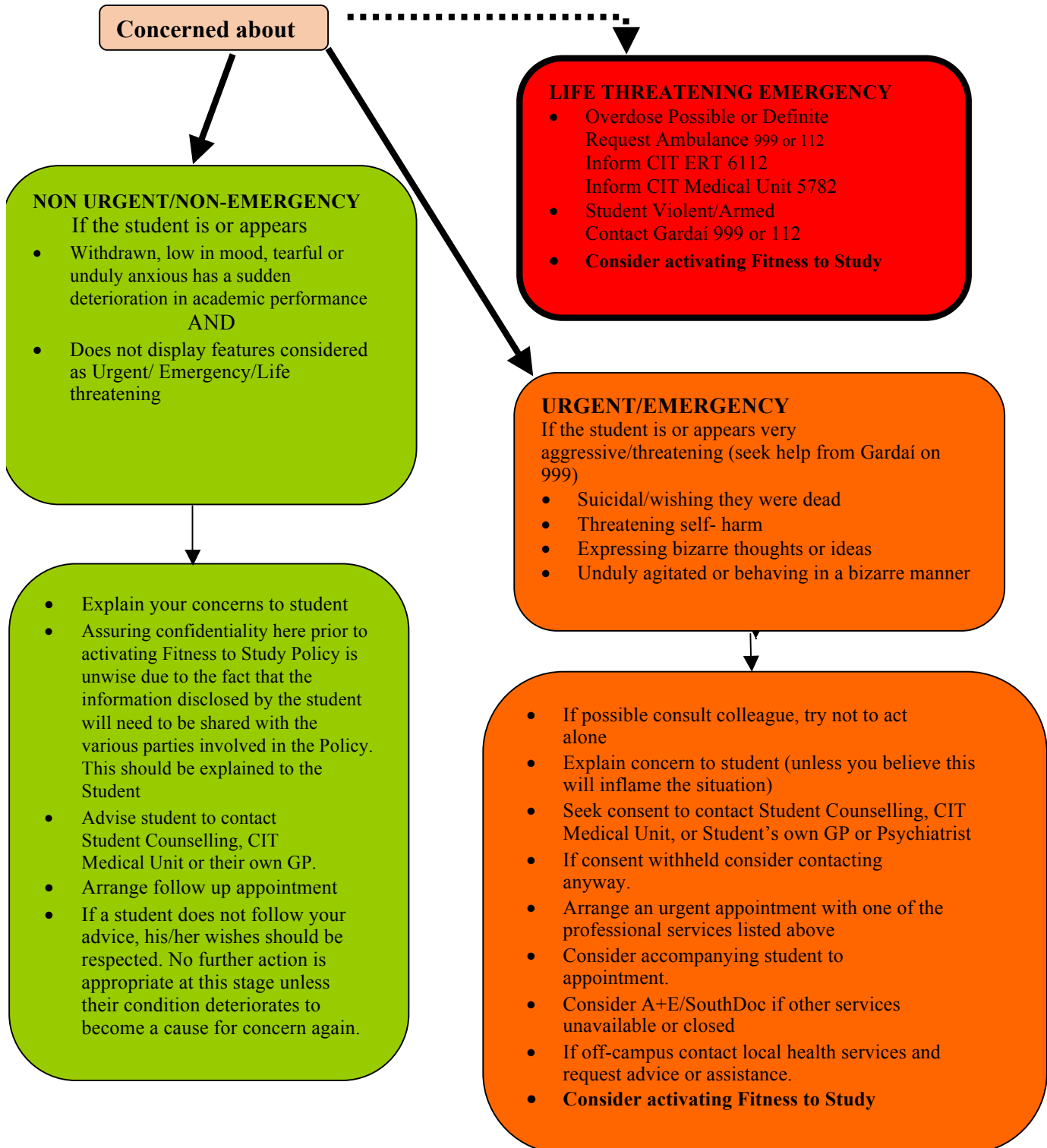
APPENDIX A

NOTE OF CONCERN

CIT's POLICY AND PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT AND DETERMINE A STUDENT'S FITNESS TO CONTINUE IN STUDY	
NOTE OF CONCERN	
Name of Student Subject of Concern:	
Student No.	
Name (and CIT staff role if applicable) of Person Raising Concern	
Date of Raising Concern	
Level of Concern as Per Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level 1• Level 2• Level 3	
Brief Summary of Concern	
Person Concern Submitted to	
Date Concern Received by the above	
Date of Meeting with Student	
Student Comments	
Action Plan	
Further Action under subsequent levels (if applicable) (use a separate note for each level if required)	
Date Matter Closed	

APPENDIX B

ACTIONS ADVISED IN HELPING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS OR CRISIS



APPENDIX C

CONTACT DETAILS

OFFICE	CONTACT NUMBER	E-MAIL
CIT COUNSELLING SERVICE	021 - 4335772	counselling.admin@cit.ie
CIT MEDICAL CENTRE	021 – 4335780	medical.centre@cit.ie
STUDENT OMBUDSMAN	021 4335880 / 087 2296699	student.ombudsman@cit.ie
STUDENTS UNION	021- 4335270	su@cit.ie
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR & VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS	021 – 4335389	registrar@cit.ie
ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION & STUDENT AFFAIRS MANAGER	021 – 4335775	dan.collins@cit.ie
PRESIDENT’S OFFICE	021 – 4335380	president@cit.ie