

Academic support and progress policy

1. Introduction

The majority of Woodhouse students achieve very highly but we do have a minority of students who underachieve, and this policy seeks to explain how the college supports and challenges these students throughout their two years with us. The policy sets out the different approaches taken to working with students according to the causes of their underachievement. It also explains the processes in place for managing underachievement at different points in the two years. We have a particular focus on early intervention and helping students develop the independent learning skills which are so crucial to success at A level.

In this policy, 'course' and 'subject' are used interchangeably to mean a single A level studied over two years.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the following documents:

- Fitness to Study Policy
- Academic Support and Discipline Process

2. Causes of underachievement

We have identified three main reasons for underachievement:

- students are hindered by health and well-being challenges;
- students struggle with the academic challenge of the course;
- students have poor attendance and/or do not work hard enough.

Our approach is very different in these three different scenarios, and we tailor our support to individual circumstances in every case. Students with major health and well-being challenges who are severely underachieving are supported through the Fitness to Study Policy, though parts of this policy may apply at points in their Woodhouse journey.

3. Support for students who struggle with the academic challenge of the course

Linear A levels are extremely challenging and success at GCSE does not always mean students will make good progress at A level. When students are working very hard and still struggling to understand the content and develop the necessary skills, we put a significant amount of support in place:

3.1. Academic support

Academic support is provided beyond lessons in a myriad of ways within subject departments, including:

- Weekly subject tutorials – teachers run additional sessions to help students
- Upper sixth mentoring

- One to one help from teachers
- Small group 'booster' sessions for struggling students

Beyond subject departments, support is provided to students with identified Additional Learning Support (ALS) needs through the ALS department. Support is also provided by Student Progress Managers to students who need help with time management and study skills.

3.2. *Academic Concerns and Learning Contracts*

When teachers are concerned that a student is underachieving they will place the student on a 'stage 0 academic concern', setting the student targets and providing support to help them improve. If there is still no improvement after a few weeks, they will put the student on a 'stage 1 learning contract' with targets and support provided.

If the student continues to underachieve, the teacher will close the stage 1 Learning Contract and the Head of Department will create a stage 2 Learning Contract. At stage 2 the Head of Department will ensure there is further support provided as outlined in 3.1 above. Students will usually have four hours of directed study (silent supervised study) added to their timetable at stage 2, but if the student is very hardworking and doesn't need it the Head of Department may waive this.

Students who are hardworking but struggling to make progress will not be placed on a stage 4 contract. If they are underachieving in one subject they are unlikely to be moved beyond stage 2 and will be supported by the department. However, if they are underachieving in two or more subjects the senior tutor is likely to place them on a stage 3 contract. This usually entails eight hours of directed study but the senior tutor may adjust this as the student works hard already. At stage 3 they will meet with a Student Progress Manager for a short weekly course in time management and study skills.

Please see the 'Academic Support and Discipline Process' document for more detail on procedures at each stage.

3.3. *Changing course*

In some cases students find it so hard to access the academic content of their chosen course that they cannot make progress. In some subjects, particularly Science, Maths, Computing, Art, Languages and Theatre Studies, we know that these students will not be able to get the high grades they desire, no matter how much hard work they put in and how much support they are given. In these circumstances and if it is early enough in the first year, we take steps to ensure these students change onto a subject in which they can succeed. There is more detail on this process under 5.1. *Initial diagnostic tests*.

3.4. *Alternatives if it is too late to change course*

If it is too late to change course but it has become evident that the student cannot access the challenging content of the course, despite all their hard work and the support they have been given, we will look at alternative options so that they are still able to obtain a suitable set of qualifications. These include:

- Taking an AS in the subject instead of a full A level
- Starting the first year again with different subjects (only for first year students)
- Dropping the subject and focusing on the other two subjects
- Dropping the subject and doing one of:
 - Extended Project Qualification
 - AS in a new subject (if early enough in the year), home language or other self-teachable course
 - Starting a new subject in the second year and completing a third year for that subject, or attending lower and upper sixth lessons to complete it in one year. These are both only for exceptional cases and where there is space in the desired subject.

4. Approach to changing learning behaviours in students who have poor attendance and/or do not work hard enough

We have evidence from many years of data that students who do not work hard enough and/or have poor attendance/punctuality will underachieve. As we are trying to prepare our students for university and careers, we allow our students more freedoms than they have often been used to in schools, such as free periods and being allowed off site when they don't have a lesson. Most students transition well to this and we provide a huge amount of support to help students develop the required independent learning skills to succeed in this environment. However, some students do not make this transition well, and this usually manifests itself in students missing and being late for lessons, and not working hard enough. Because we want every student to achieve their potential, we do not tolerate this and use our Academic Support and Discipline Process to ensure these students are challenged and supported to change their learning behaviours.

4.1. Academic Support and Discipline Process

4.1.1. Students who are not working hard enough

If a student is not working hard enough and/or not completing work on time or with enough effort, teachers will place them on a Stage 0 Academic Concern with clear targets for improvement. If they do not meet these targets the teacher will place them on a Stage 1 Learning Contract with further targets. If the student still isn't working hard enough the Head of Department will create a Stage 2 Learning Contract and the student will spend four hours per week doing directed study. This is intended to help the student use their study periods effectively. Heads of Department will also expect students to attend subject tutorial and other support they provide as outlined in 3.1 above.

4.1.2. Students with poor attendance

If a student has poor attendance and/or punctuality they will be placed on an attendance contract, which also go from stage zero to stage 4. If a student's attendance drops below 90% and/or they have several 'Lates' in the register in a week, they will be placed on a Stage 0 Attendance Contract by their tutor or teacher. If after three weeks their attendance has not improved, they will be placed on a Stage 1 Attendance Contract and told to sign in with the attendance team at 8.45am for three weeks. If they don't and/or their attendance is below 95%, they will be placed on a Stage 2 Attendance Contract and will have four hours in the learning zone per week and to sign in at 8.45am. The early sign in is to help them get into lessons on time. In the majority of cases, students who are on attendance contracts are also on academic contracts because their progress will be affected by their poor attendance. Therefore, if a student fails a Stage 2 Attendance Contract they will usually be placed on a Stage 3 Academic Contract by the Senior Tutor which will include attendance targets.

4.1.3. Students on Stage 3 Academic Contracts

Where a student has not met their stage 2 targets they will be placed on a Stage 3 Academic Contract by their Senior Tutor. They may also be placed on a Stage 3 contract if they have significantly underachieved across multiple subjects in a major assessment such as the summer exams or January mocks, even if they hadn't previously been on a Stage 2 – this is so the Senior Tutor can ensure there is a joined-up approach to the intervention provided. At this point the student will have to spend all their eight study periods in directed study, and will meet regularly with a Student Progress Manager who will help coach them to develop more motivation and address the blockages to working harder and improving attendance.

4.1.4. Students on Stage 4 Academic Contracts

Where a student has not met their stage 3 targets despite being given many chances and a lot of support, they will be placed on a Stage 4 Academic Contract and given two weeks to meet their targets. The Assistant Principal, Student Progress will create this contract and explain to the student that the consequence of failing the contract is a temporary exclusion of a few days, followed by a meeting with the Principal and a parent/carer. During this meeting the student would need to convince the Principal that they deserved to continue at Woodhouse, and if they are allowed to continue it would be under very strict targets. If they are not allowed to continue they would be offered the option of withdrawal instead of permanent exclusion. Students cannot be temporarily excluded twice, so if they return to stage 4 and fail their targets they will be permanently excluded. If a student passes stage 4 twice and returns to stage 4 for a third time they will be permanently on stage 4.

4.1.5. Further consequences for students who continue to not do enough work and/or have poor attendance

Where a student is on stage 3 and likely to end up on stage 4, or on stage 4 and likely to fail, we may say that if they do not pass the targets we will not enter them for one or more of their exams and they will have to drop one of their subjects or change it

to an AS. This would be particularly where they lack the motivation to work hard enough on all three A levels.

4.1.6. Student involvement and parental contact

We want parents/carers to be aware when a student is receiving support, so every academic and attendance contract is emailed home within 24 hours.

Each time a student is placed on an academic contract at stages 0,1 and 2, the teacher will have a discussion with the student, and parents/carers will receive an email copy of the targets. Teachers will sometimes call home but parents/carers are welcome to email the teacher to find out more details or arrange a meeting.

At stages 3 and 4 we will always try to see the student before creating the contract, but if we are unable to get hold of them we will still create the contracts. We will try to speak to the parent/carer on the phone before or after creating the contract, and will usually arrange a meeting with them and the student. Parents/carers are welcome to email the senior tutor or Assistant Principal Student Progress to arrange a meeting.

Please see the 'Academic Support and Discipline Process' document for more detail on procedures at each stage.

5. Intervention points and actions over the two-year course period

Interventions and support are tailored to the individual student but also to how far through the two-year journey they are. While monitoring, support and intervention by teachers are continuous, there are some major assessment and reporting points when teachers, Heads of Department, Senior Tutors and Senior Leaders will make decisions about the academic support and challenge required for underachieving students. These assessment and reporting points are detailed below:

5.1. Initial diagnostic tests

Every lower sixth student takes a diagnostic test in all their subjects within the first few weeks of starting at Woodhouse. This is so that teachers can tailor lessons and differentiation to the needs of their class. The tests are carefully designed to assess the ability of the student to learn A level content. When students get a U grade in these tests it alerts us that they are likely to struggle to succeed in this subject. In certain subjects, particularly Maths and Science, our data shows that a U grade in the diagnostic test is closely correlated with an E or U grade in the final exams. As we do not want students to waste two years studying a course they are likely to gain a low grade in, we ensure they change to a more suitable course. This is the

process we follow after a student has got a U in their diagnostic test and the teacher thinks they will not be able to achieve a high grade:

- The Head of Department or Senior Tutor (if a student has U grades in two or more diagnostic tests it will be a Senior Tutor) meets with the student and parent/carer to discuss changing to different subjects. If it is not possible for the parent to come in for a meeting it will be discussed on the phone. If we cannot get hold of a parent we will still proceed.
- If the student does not want to change subjects they are given a date for a resit two weeks later. A formal letter will be sent home explaining that if they gain an E grade or higher they can continue with the course. If they get a U grade again they will have to change to a different subject.
- Where a student has a U grade in the resit exam, the senior tutor will meet with them and a parent/carer to agree which subjects they will change to. It is important this happens quickly so the student misses as little as possible of the new subject, so if a parent is unable to come in we will discuss it with them on the phone.

5.2. Year 1

Throughout year 1 the interventions and support detailed in sections 3 and 4 of this policy will take place as appropriate for underachieving students. After report cycles senior tutors will place students with poor Attitude to Learning and Completing Work grades on academic contracts.

5.3. Year 1 Summer exams

The summer exams are an excellent measure of how much of the year 1 content a student has understood. Students who get E or U grades in these exams are in a very precarious position to start the harder year 2 as they do not have the knowledge and skills to build upon. If it is clear from their results that a student is doing the wrong subjects or is not suited to academic study, it is a good time to accept this and make a change in their study programme and/or place of study to ensure they can progress and do not waste a year of their lives. We endeavour to do the right thing for the student and sometimes this means we have to help them make difficult choices.

5.3.1. Academic contracts for students with E/U grades

Students who get an E or U grade in one subject in the summer exams will be placed on a stage 2 academic contracts by that department and supported as detailed in section 3 and 4 above.

Students with more than one E or U grade will be placed on a stage 3 contract by a senior tutor. If they were already on a stage 3 contract and the grade is due to insufficient work and/or poor attendance they will be moved to stage 4. If a student was on a stage 4 academic contract before the summer exams and gets multiple E/U grades they will be asked to withdraw.

The students now on stage 3 will meet with their senior tutor (or AP Student Progress if now on stage 4) and discuss their options. Students with multiple E/U grades are made aware that our data shows that they are likely to get a low grade in the final exams. Senior tutors will explore the best options for them, and where they think the student is likely to end the year with multiple E/U grades will organise for them to see the careers adviser. At this point we offer students some options:

5.3.2. *Options offered to students with multiple E/U grades:*

- Withdraw and apply to a different college or school for different A levels, vocational qualifications or apprenticeships;
- Start year 12 again doing different subjects – *only applies if they have worked hard and had good attendance*
- Taking an AS in one of the subjects instead of a full A level
- Dropping one subject and focusing on the other two subjects
- Dropping one subject and doing one of:
 - Extended Project Qualification
 - AS in a new subject (if early enough in the year), home language or other self-teachable course
 - Starting a new subject in the second year and completing a third year for that subject, or attending lower and upper sixth lessons to complete it in one year. These are both only for exceptional cases and where there is space in the desired subject.

If the student wants to continue with all three subjects they will have to do a large amount of work over the summer holidays to show that they have the required knowledge and understanding to tackle the second-year content. They will take a resit exam in each of the subjects they got an E or U in during the first week of their return to college. If a student gets at least an E in each exam they can continue at Woodhouse. If they get any U grades the following will happen:

- If they pass two subjects (i.e. get a minimum of an E grade) but not the other, they will be allowed to continue at Woodhouse but will have to drop the subject they have not improved in after eight weeks of independent work over the summer. These will be their options:
 - Taking an AS in one of the subjects instead of a full A level
 - Dropping one subject and focusing on the other two subjects
 - Dropping one subject and doing one of:
 - Extended Project Qualification
 - AS in a new subject (if early enough in the year), home language or other self-teachable course
 - Starting a new subject in the second year and completing a third year for that subject, or attending lower and upper sixth lessons to complete it in one year. These are both only for exceptional cases and where there is space in the desired subject.

- If the student has U grades in two or three of their subjects they will be asked to withdraw as they have not got enough knowledge and understanding to be successful in their A level exams and they cannot continue at Woodhouse with one A level. If they have worked hard all year we will allow them to restart with us doing different subjects. If they have had poor attendance and/or not worked hard enough we will refer them to a careers adviser who will help them apply elsewhere.

5.4. Year 2 winter term

Throughout year 2 the interventions and support detailed in sections 3 and 4 of this policy will take place as appropriate for underachieving students. After report cycles senior tutors will place students with poor Attitude to Learning and Completing Work grades on academic contracts.

5.5. Year 2 January mocks

Students who get an E or U grade in one subject in the January mock exams will be placed on a stage 2 academic contracts by that department and supported as detailed in section 3 and 4 above. If they were already on stage 2 and their underachievement is due to lack of work and/or poor attendance they will be moved to stage 3.

Students with more than one E or U grade will be placed on a stage 3 contract by a senior tutor. If they were already on a stage 3 contract and the grade is due to insufficient work and/or poor attendance they will be moved to stage 4.

5.6. Year 2 Final exam entries

Between January mocks and study leave, if a student is continuing to not work hard enough and/or still has poor attendance despite all the intervention and support provided, we may decide not to enter them for an exam in one or more subject. This would happen as part of a stage 4 contract and the student would be offered the opportunity to take AS qualifications instead of the full A level.