

# **Academic support and progress policy**

**2021**

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## **1. Purpose**

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:

- a. Fitness to Study Policy
- b. Academic Support Procedure

## **2. Scope**

Woodhouse College is committed to providing its students with effective academic and pastoral support. The aim is to ensure that students have access to a framework of support that builds on best practice, meets the needs of students, and is of a quality and consistency appropriate to our college which has a strong reputational standing. The framework is designed to provide consistent quality of provision, while also helping students to monitor their progress and performance more systematically and relate these to their longer-term aspirations. It blends a clear set of college-wide requirements, well-understood by all students and staff, with scope for tutors to tailor provision to reflect differences.

Within Woodhouse, the tutorial (pastoral) system is a key element of academic and pastoral support our students. The tutor is a key role and every student has a tutor who provides a readily accessible, primary point of contact for academic guidance and pastoral support (signposting to student support services), to help tutees reflect on their academic progress and get the most out of their studies. They will help their Tutees to take an active partnership approach to learning.

### **3. Causes of underachievement**

We have identified three main reasons for underachievement:

- a. students are hindered by health and well-being challenges;
- b. students struggle with the academic challenge of the course;
- c. 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.

### **4. 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:

#### **4.1 Academic support**

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

- Access to additional resources and material
- Upper sixth mentoring
- One to one help from teachers
- Small group 'booster' sessions for struggling students

#### **4.2 Additional support**

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.
- Referral to Barnet Mentoring scheme with more holistic support needed
- Other referral and signposting to wider student services term for additional pastoral support if appropriate

## **5. The process**

### **Intervention**

When teachers are concerned that a student is underachieving they will put an intervention in place, 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.

### **Stage 1**

When a student makes less progress than expected and then other students or is performing two grades or more below their MEG. They could also be placed on the stage for incomplete work and /or missing assessment. A meeting will be held between teacher and student to clearly outline issue and put in any necessary support for students to meet the targets set.

### **Stage 2**

If the student continues to underachieve, the teacher will close the Stage 1 Learning Contract and the Head of Department (HOD) will create a Stage 2 Learning Contract. At Stage 2 the HOD will ensure there is further support provided as outlined in 4.1 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.

In addition to failing to make progress whilst on a Stage 1 contract, students may also be placed directly onto a Stage 2 contract if they are failing key assessment in one subject. This would be a supportive measure to ensure appropriate interventions are put in place.

### **Stage 3**

If underachievement likely and progression is jeopardized, a student is put on this stage by their Head of Year. This includes students who do not meet their Stage 2 targets, have poor ATL/CW in two or more subject in reports, and students who are failing key assessment in two or more subjects. This usually entails eight hours of directed study but the Head of Year (HOY) 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, as well as continuing to receive additional support from the subject departments.

Where a student has not met their Stage 3 targets despite continued supportive intervention, they will meet with their Head of Year and the Head of Student Progress and Tutoring (HSPT) for a review meeting. At this stage new targets may set and students will be given two weeks to demonstrate engagement and progress. The HSPT will explain to the student that the consequence of failing the contract is a temporary exclusion, 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 3 and fail their targets they will be permanently excluded.

Where a student is on Stage 2 and likely to end up on stage 3, or on stage 3 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, or where students are unable to access the academic content of the course despite support and best efforts (more detail on this to follow below).

## **6. Changing course**

In some cases students find it so hard to access the academic content of their chosen course that they cannot make progress, 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 *Initial diagnostic tests*.

## **7. Alternatives if 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 may 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 with additional mitigating circumstances)
- Dropping the subject and focusing on the other two subjects
- Dropping the subject and doing one of:
  - Extended Project Qualification (if this fit in with the EPQ cycle and mentor can be found)
  - 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.

## **8. Approach to changing learning behaviours in students who 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, Attendance and Punctuality and Behaviour Disciplinary processes to ensure these students are challenged and supported to change their learning behaviours.

## **9. 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, 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 2 and 3 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 HOY or HSPT to arrange a meeting.

*Please see the 'Academic Support Procedure' document for more detail on procedures at each stage.*

## **10. 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, HODs, HOYs and Senior Leaders will make decisions about the academic support and challenge required for underachieving students. These assessments and reporting points are detailed in the section below.

## **11. Initial diagnostic assessments and Early Intervention Alerts**

Every lower sixth student takes diagnostic assessments 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 assessments are carefully designed to assess the ability of the student to learn A level content. Where student performance in these tests causes a significant concern that they are likely to struggle to succeed in this subject, an Early Intervention Alert (EIA) will be created. In certain subjects, particularly Maths and the sciences, our data shows that significant underperformance in diagnostic assessments 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 fail or gain a low grade in, we ensure they change to a more suitable course. This is the process we follow if an EIA is raised:

- i. The HOD or HOY (if a student has an EIA in two or more subjects it will be a HOY) meets with the student and parent/carer to discuss changing to different subject. If it is not possible for the parent to come in for a meeting it will be discussed on the phone/ virtually. If we cannot get hold of a parent we will still proceed with student.
- ii. If the student does not want to change subjects, they will be placed on an academic support contract as part of our academic support procedure, with their progress being monitored closely.
- iii. Students continuing with subjects on contracts will then work their way through the process, as described in sections 5-7 above.

## **12. Year group interventions and actions**

### **12.1 Lower Sixth (L6)**

Throughout year 1 the interventions and support detailed in this policy will take place as appropriate for underachieving students. After report cycles teachers, HODs and HOYs will place students with poor Attitude to Learning and Completing Work grades on academic contracts, as well as those failing key assessments.

### **12.2 L6 January exams and end of Spring term review**

Students who get an E or U grade in one subject in the January exams will be placed on a Stage 2 academic contracts by that department and supported as detailed above. If they were already on Stage 2 and 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 HOY. 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 contract with HSPT.

Student progress will be reviewed against these targets by the end of the Spring term. Students who have not made expected progress towards their targets, be they academic or attendance, will move up to the next stage of our system.

### **12.3 L6 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 upper sixth (U6) 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.

### **12.4 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 contract, or moved up to a Stage 3 contract if already on a Stage 2 with that department, and supported as detailed in sections above.

Students with more than one E or U grade will be placed on a Stage 3 contract by a HOY. If they were already on an academic support contract before these exams and a student gets multiple E/U grades they may be asked to withdraw.

The students now on Stage 3 will meet with their HOY (or HSPT if already on Stage 3) 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. HOYs 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 to try and ensure the best possible outcomes for them:

#### **12.5 Options that may 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 L6 again doing different subjects – *only applies in exceptional cases with additional mitigating circumstances*
- 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:
  - AS in a new subject
  - 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 L6 and U6 lessons to complete it in one year - *only applies in exceptional cases with additional mitigating circumstances, and where there is space in the desired subject.*

### **12.6 Summer exam resit**

If the student wants to continue with all three subjects they will have to do a large amount of work 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 before the summer holiday. 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.
- 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:
    - 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 - *only applies in exceptional cases with additional mitigating circumstances, 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 not met our attendance expectation, and/or not worked hard enough and engaged in support offered, we will refer them to a careers adviser who will help them apply elsewhere.

### **12.7 Upper Sixth (U6) Autumn term**

Throughout U6 the interventions and support detailed in policy will take place as appropriate for underachieving students. After report cycles teachers, HODs and HOYs will place students with poor Attitude to Learning and Completing Work grades on academic contracts, as well as those failing key assessments.

### **12.8 U6 November and February mocks**

Students who get an E or U grade in one subject in the November and February mock exams will be placed on a Stage 2 academic contracts by that department and supported as detailed above. If they were already on Stage 2 and 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 HOY. 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 contract with HSPT.

Students who get a U grade in a subject they got a U grade in during the L6 summer exams may be required to drop this subject.

### **12.9 Year 2 Final exam entries**

Between 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 3 contract and the student may be offered the opportunity to take AS qualifications instead of the full A level, subject permitting. Students who wish to sit their exams may choose to pay to enter their exams as an external candidate.