STUDENT PROGRESS CONCERNS
FACULTY OFFICER INTERVIEWS

Background:

Progress concern procedures are used by academic departments when all attempts within the department to deal with a student’s poor academic engagement have failed. Academic departments may submit a Progress Concerns Report (PCR) to the Student Engagement and Progress (SEP) team in the Student Administration Service, under Regulation XIX of the General Regulations relating to the Progress of Students, providing background to the case and an indication of the action they would like Faculty to take.

Further information on Progress procedures may be found on the Student Administration Service web page on Progress of Students: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sss/sas/progress

Actions:

On receipt of a PCR, the SEP team will review the report, investigate the student record and decide on the most appropriate course of action in consultation with the academic department. The progress concern procedures have tiers of escalation. Usually:

1st PCR → Faculty Progress Letter*

2nd PCR → Faculty Officer Interview

3rd PCR → Referral to Faculty Student Review Committee (FSRC)

However, there is flexibility in the process and steps may be skipped or and/or repeated. For example, a student of serious concern but reported for the first time may, nevertheless, be invited to meet with a Faculty Officer; a student reported for a third time may not necessarily be reported to FSRC.

*Content and tone of the letter is tailored to each PCR. It may be:

- pastoral - signposting support and providing advice;
- strongly worded - outlining the consequences of continued failure to fully engage;
- in cases of students who are completely disengaged from their department and programme of study - very strong, instructing them to contact University or it will be assumed they have left and they will be deemed withdrawn.
Faculty Officer Interviews:

When

The majority of Faculty Officer interviews are set up in advance of each academic year. The SEP team will liaise with Faculty Officers to identify available dates for interviews around the expected peak periods. Details are then provided to academic departments in an annual timetable giving deadlines for submission of PCRs in cases where they would like the student to meet with a Faculty Officer. The timetable can also be viewed online.

Faculty Officer Interview timetable for the current academic session

It may be that not all of the interview dates will be required. Urgent cases that arrive outside the deadlines will be considered on an individual basis and so there is also a chance that there may be a few ad hoc additional meetings to be arranged. However, we hope that by pre-arranging these meetings, notifying academic departments of the dates and by booking interview rooms in advance, the SEP team and Faculty Officers will be ready and prepared for what we believe will be the peak periods for these interviews.

Where

The majority of Faculty Officer interviews take place in either the Level 6 Meetings Room or the Student Administration Service Office, both of which are on Level 6 of the Students’ Union.

Duration

We usually block out one or two half days over a 2 or 3 week period in preparation for peak periods (see the table above). We allot 20 minutes per student interview and allow a little time at the start of the morning/afternoon for preparation. As a general rule, we would try not to see any more than six students in one interview session.

Format

Students are seen by a Faculty Officer from outside their home department. 3-5 working days prior to the interviews, Faculty Officers will be emailed details of the students attending and the relevant papers. This is to enable Faculty Officers to review the cases and make notes prior to the interviews. These papers include:

- Progress Concerns Report
- CIES student record and student attendance data
- any supporting evidence/pertinent correspondence from the academic department
- if a second referral, a copy the previous Progress Concerns Report(s) and the outcome

A hard copy of these papers will also be provided to Faculty Officers at the meeting.
Students have also been sent a copy of the PCR and any evidence provided by the academic department with their interview notification letter.

A member of the SEP team will be in attendance at the interviews alongside the Faculty Officer in order to take notes and assist as appropriate. Faculty Officers should endeavour to arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the first interview to allow time for preparation.

The Interview

The interview will begin with:

- Introductions / making sure the student is comfortable
- Brief outline of the reasons for the interview (ie: taken from PCR - the reason(s) for referral and department’s case). Students are made aware that this is an opportunity for them to speak to somebody outside their own department and to raise any issues they may be experiencing.
- Asking if they have seen a copy of the PCR and if they agree with the content

The Discussion:
The student is asked to talk about what has been happening to bring about the PCR and a general discussion takes place to ascertain any reasons there may be for the unsatisfactory progress.

It is important to remember the remit of our role which is pastoral and advisory – we are there to provide advice, guidance, signposting to appropriate support and, at times, reassurance. The discussion is a means to identify if there are any issues that may be impacting on a student’s ability to engage fully with their programme of study. Whether relevant issues are raised or not, the Faculty Officer should consider each case and offer advice and recommendations to enable the student to identify the best way forward.

The advice and recommendations given might include:

- a reminder of the requirements of the General Regulations and the student’s responsibilities in terms of studying at the University.
- cautions about the possible consequences of continued concerns regarding progress (for example failure in examinations, the possibility of being denied credit for module/s in line with General Regulations, running out of time to complete, being withdrawn for failure or possible referral to the Faculty Student Review Committee with a view to exclusion from further study).
- options for the future might also be discussed (for example a possible application for a period of leave of absence)
- signposting to one of the central University services, such as Student Access to Mental Health (SAMHS), the Careers Service, Academic Skills at 301 or the Students’ Union Advice Centre. Leaflets will be available to give to students for many of these services as appropriate).

It is the student’s responsibility to act on any recommendations.
The Faculty Officer Interview Report (FOIR):
Whilst the discussion between the Faculty Officer and the student is taking place, a member of the Student Engagement and Progress team will be taking notes on a Faculty Officer Interview Report (FOIR). This report outlines the reasons for the PCR, the student’s response and future intentions, the Faculty Officers recommendations and details of any signposting that has been given.

At the end of the meeting, the SEP team member in attendance will explain to the student that a copy of the FOIR will be emailed to them for review. If they feel that the report accurately reflects the discussion that took place, then they need do nothing. If, however, they feel that the content is not accurate, they may contact the SEP team within 5 working days to discuss any appropriate amendments. After this, the FOIR will be copied to the student’s academic department and a copy will be uploaded onto their central student record.

This concludes the Faculty Officer Interview process.