Queen Mary
University of London

Senate

Paper Title	QM Student Support Operational Guide for Schools
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to **consider** the processes in the Operational Guide and **approve** for consultation.

Points for Senate members to note and further information	• This document augments the Student Support strategy document with detailed;
	  ○ Requirements for School based student support
	  ○ Training requirements of academic and student support staff
	  ○ Processes for proactive monitoring and early intervention of students at risk of disengagement
	  ○ Processes for reactive student support designed to encourage re-engagement
	
	• This document has been derived from detailed discussion with Faculty representatives, the Pastoral Care Group, the Retention Task and Finish Group, the Heads of Professional Central Support Services and the DTPAG.
	
	• Following comments from Senate and further iterations these processes will be implemented across Schools in academic year 2013-14.
	
	• There will be a review to evaluate the impact on retention progression 2014-15.

Questions for Senate to consider	Are members able to provide comments on these support structures to improve the student experience within QM and increase retention and student engagement?
Regulatory/statutory reference points and links to College strategy	The prioritisation of student experience and support is recognised within the QM strategic and operational objectives exemplified by: • JA2.2a being in the top decile with respect to NSS • JA 2.2b top in London with respect to NSS
Strategy and risk	The Strategic Plan aims to provide the finest possible education to our undergraduate students. Lack of consistency in student support procedures is leading to a poorer quality of experience for students in many Schools. Without adequate support many students disengage leading to a loss of student revenue that has significant financial repercussions for QM.

Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	N/A
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QM

Student Support Operational Guide for Schools

Draft for Comment

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1/14/2013

Contents

Student Support Guidance for Schools

1. Executive Summary

This Operational Guide has been devised to support the QM Undergraduate Student Support Policy 2014.

These recommendations incorporate best practise currently established in Schools across Queen Mary. They were formed with input from Faculty representatives, the Pastoral Care Group, the Retention Task and Finish Group and the Heads of Professional Central Support Services. The guidance in this document includes suggested support structures and gives examples of good practice. The terminology and structure indicated is not prescriptive but is designed to stimulate Schools to consider the most efficient way to meet the student requirements. These support proposals are intended to ensure that all students receive the help they need whilst recognising that a minority of students will have greater and more specific support requirements.

As a minimum standard;

- All academic and administrative staff within the School should be familiar with the School Support team.

- All academic staff should be trained[1] to conduct a diagnostic interview[2] with students.

- All Schools should provide a support team which is able to meet the needs of the majority of their students.

- Students with specialised needs should be referred to the School Support team and/or QM central support services.

- School staff should be provided with adequate training[3] that will enable them to deliver a minimum level of support standardised across QM.

- The student support contribution of academic and professional services staff should be reviewed and recognised as an integral component of appraisal and progression.

- Schools should encourage active feedback from students on the support provided.

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[1] This training is being developed and will be rolled out from January 2014 as part of the retention strategy.
[2] "Diagnostic interviews" are meetings that will enable staff to empathise with the student's experience of University life including academic challenges, paid work, accommodation, emotional issues, specific learning difficulties, challenges with coursework and challenges with learning styles. At the end of a diagnostic interview the staff member should be able to ascertain whether an underperforming student is doing so because they need academic support or whether other issues are impacting on the student's ability to study and they may benefit from additional support available within or external to the University, and advise the student accordingly.
[3] In depth training for student support will be conducted with School support teams as part of the retention strategy from 2014 onwards.

- The University should co-ordinate School support structures with student led support initiatives from the QMSU.

2. Introduction

This guidance has been commissioned by the QM Task and Finish Group for Undergraduate Retention. This document is additionally aligned with the QM KPIs;

- JA2.2a being in the top decile with respect to NSS
- JA 2.2b top in London with respect to NSS

It addresses the recommendations from the QM Student Support Survey, 2012 conducted by Professor Mike Roberts (see Appendices 1 and 2 taken from the report). Its key role is to assist Schools in providing a comprehensive undergraduate student support structure and team which is equipped to develop student potential and specifically aids students with pastoral and academic difficulties, at risk of withdrawal from studies.

These guidelines are, however, not restricted to students that are disposed to withdrawal from QM. They recognise the need to provide support to the wider student body including a larger number of students who encounter low level difficulties at different stages in their programme. Additionally they support the majority of students who will not encounter serious adverse pastoral issues whilst at QM, but may seek to maximise their academic achievements and student experience through receiving academic and mentoring support from staff and peers.

This guidance seeks to provide best practise in the areas of School support structures and staff resource and training. The guidance is not prescriptive and Schools may wish to incorporate the key recommendations from this report into existing structures. It is recommended however that there is agreement across Schools within Faculties to standardise structures and processes in order to reduce confusion and inequality of experience that is a serious concern to current students.

Evidence is drawn from; a survey of all the existing student support teams operating at QM; a report from Science and Engineering detailing the underlying reasons for disengagement in a sample of students who have withdrawn (Jethwa, 2012), the expert opinion of staff from QM Advice and Counselling Service and the Disability and Dyslexia Service and from student representatives from each of the three Faculties.

What is Student Support?

For the purposes of this document "student support" encompasses all aspects of student wellbeing whilst at university. Frequently academic failure is an indicator of underlying issues including physical or mental health, emotional, financial and/or legal problems. Similarly course related stress can compound pastoral issues in students' lives. It is therefore envisaged that the student support structure will be designed to find the appropriate support for students with any issue they encounter. For students who do not have an identifiable underlying "pastoral problem" there will be a continued need to provide academic and mentoring support to promote both academic achievement and the best possible student experience

3. School Level Support Structure

Governing principles:

- Personal Tutors[4] are responsible for engaging with and supporting their tutees.
- A senior academic should be responsible for School student support.
- The size of the School student support team should be adequate for the student numbers in that School.
- The support team should consist of both academics and professional services staff.
- Schools should develop appropriate operating procedures for matters relating to student support.
- The School should have a mechanism of ensuring that academic and pastoral issues are considered together at exam boards.
- The role of student support should be recognised in both workload allocation and in career progression.
- Appropriate training[5] should be available to staff.
- Staff should be aware of the services offered by QM central support and the Student Union and the indications for referral.
- The School student support team should be proactively seeking students with challenges and intervening at an early stage.
- All interactions with students should be documented electronically and be available to students.
- Each School should have representation at QM academic and professional service student support meetings to assist in standardising approaches to support issues.
- The School student support structure together with details of contacts and relevant staff should be widely accessible to all students.
- Student feedback on support services should be actively sought

QM Standards:

- A Personal Tutor should have no more than 10 students allocated per year group to a maximum of 30 for a 3 year programme[6] and have 2 hours per week during term time scheduled for developing their student support capabilities, responding to student queries

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[4] The term 'Personal Tutor' is suggested as the contact person who will provide academic and pastoral support for each student. This term would replace that of 'academic adviser', 'student adviser' or 'personal adviser' or 'mentor' as currently variably used across Schools. This is in order to reduce confusion and to emphasise both the personal relationship between student and academic and the role which includes both academic and personal advice and mentoring.

[5] [5] This training is being developed and will be rolled out from January 2014 as part of the retention strategy.
[6] The maximum can be increased exceptional circumstances (such as where students are on four year programmes and retain the same personal tutor) but only where good relations and effective support can still be maintained and where evidence for this is provided by student feedback.

and meeting with their tutees. A Senior Tutor and Student Support Officer overseeing 500 students might require 8 and 24 hours per week respectively timetabled.

- The School support team should be readily available during normal academic hours and cover should be available during vacation and sabbatical periods.
- The availability of School based student support should be repeatedly advertised to students.

4. Individual Student Support Roles

Most staff within a School will have some role in student support. It is envisaged that within a School a Senior Tutor supported by a Student Support Manager will oversee the pastoral and academic support responsibilities of other staff within the School.

Details of roles and responsibilities are provided in the table below

School Centred Support Role Summaries

Who	Main Role	Pastoral Role	Skill Level	Training	Limitations
Lecturer/Module Co-ordinator	to create an engaging module that is clear for students to follow. to provide timely feedback to students so they can improve their performance	to support students with any concerns they have about the module or how to improve their academic performance on their programme. to ensure that student's concerns about their programme are not masking a pastoral issue.	knowledge of their subject and how to teach this subject	as Personal Tutor	students with pastoral issues should be directed to their Personal Tutors, Student Support Officers or Senior Tutors
Personal Tutor	to give academic support but also available for pastoral support issues specifically where these affect academic performance.	to support student with issues that affect academic performance and to act as a point of liaison between the student and the School for issues of this kind. to provide sympathetic support for minor issues. to sign-post the student to the Student Support Officer and/or Senior Tutor for major pastoral issues and if necessary support services within/outside QM.	knowledge of appropriate processes particularly where the pastoral issue affects academic performance e.g. extenuating circumstances course work or examinations. knowledge of the pastoral support systems and how to access them.	half day course offered by CAPD being developed as part of the retention strategy. email update provided annually. refresher course every 3 years to include options to increase skill set by attending QM central courses.	Personal Tutors should not advise or support students with issues that are outside their area of expertise. If in doubt they should contact student support for direction as to who would be best placed to support the student.
Student Support Officer	*For students looking for support* within QM (reactive student support) to provide a consistent/visible point where students may go to access support within their schools during normal working hours if the student chooses not to see their Personal Tutor or Senior Tutor. *For students at risk of disengagement to follow (proactive student support) processes-* *For all students* to maintain an electronic record of support issues and to map these where appropriate to academic and or attendance/disciplinary issues within the	to be able to provide advice on accessing support structures within the School and within QM. To be able to provide 'first response' support individually to a student.	to have in depth knowledge of appropriate pastoral processes. to have excellent administrative skills but also be approachable with good interpersonal skills.	half day course offered by CAPD being developed as part of the retention strategy. email update provided annually. refresher course every 3 years to include options to increase skill set by attending QM central courses. Additional training in how to contact students through a variety of means whilst maintaining confidentiality, QM central support training courses. To maintain knowledge by attendance at annual refresher	to direct academic issues to lecturers/module co-ordinators or Personal Tutors. to direct all serious health or mental health problems to QM central support. they should be aware of the support that can be offered by central services including learning development, residential services, careers and who would be best placed to support

Who	Main Role	Pastoral Role	Skill Level	Training	Limitations
	school (e.g. extenuating circumstances). Where necessary to liaise with the appropriate QM central services on behalf of students. To help students create a re-engagement strategy to remain at QM and monitor this strategy. To ensure co-ordination of the information between those responsible to providing student support and the student. To have an open door policy towards all students.			from QM central support.	the student.
Senior Tutor	To provide School leadership for student support.	to provide support to Personal Tutors on pastoral issues or in complex academic with pastoral interactions. to provide individual support to students with pastoral issues when required. to advise students on other relevant support networks. to provide a second opinion or to act as the arbiter in matters pastoral where a student is dissatisfied with the advice or support received. to provide the senior School link between pastoral and academic issues. to co-ordinate the advising scheme, ensuring all advisees have appropriate training	to have an in depth knowledge of appropriate pastoral and academic processes. to have personal skills suitable to the role of student support and to provide personal support and advice to students.	half day course offered by CAPD being developed as part of the retention strategy. email update provided annually. refresher course every 3 years to include options to increase skill set by attending QM central courses. Additional training in how to contact students through a variety of means whilst maintaining confidentiality, QM central support training courses. To maintain knowledge by attendance at annual refresher from QM central support.	they should direct all serious health or mental health problems to QM central support

School/University/QMSU joint initiatives

Who	Main Role	Pastoral Role	Skill Level	Training	Limitations
Student mentor (mums and dads scheme) (optional role that may operate in some	to provide social support and advice on the transitional period from school/home/overseas	to act as a 'friend' and colleague	Able to listen to concerns and worries of junior students. To maintain confidentiality. To	half day course offered by QMSU. Annual refresher and feedback/debrief session for	Complex issues should be directed to School support

Who	Main Role	Pastoral Role	Skill Level	Training	Limitations
Schools only) Role more effective if offered in conjunction with subject based societies	residence to first year university life.		be aware of the available support systems and to advise on access to these.	students offering a two year service.	team or QM Central Support
Student mentor PASS scheme (optional role that may operate in some Schools only)	to provide basic teaching when required and to advise on where to access support structures	peer assisted academic support with pastoral elements	able to facilitate teaching sessions. Good interpersonal skills.	half day course offered by IL for this role (not the Personal Tutor role). Annual refresher and feedback/debrief session for students offering a two year service. Short teacher training	Complex issues should be directed to School support team or QM Central Support

5. Specialist Support from QM and External Agencies

QM maintains centrally funded professional support services with knowledge and expertise in issues that impact students including the Advice and Counselling Service, the Disability and Dyslexia Service, and Student Health whilst financial support is also offered by QM for those who qualify via means testing. There are also a number of external agencies accessible to students including the NHS, social services and third sector organisations. QM Students Union is also very active in providing general welfare support through officers and student led initiatives. The role of the central services is to provide professional expertise when needed and confidentiality when required. The students union provides an alternative support structure for students who are more comfortable with receiving peer support. None of these organisations however has a role which obviates the need for student support at a School level. School level support provides a link between the academic and pastoral issues that affect student progression and facilitates a co-ordinate approach to student support. Students both require and expect support from academic and professional services staff within their School, who know them and their situations from a service which is available during their core academic hours. Providing such a service enables the School to engage actively with students, working with them to uncover difficulties and overcome them to the advantage of both parties.

QM Central support services

The link below is an A-Z guide of all central QM support services;

http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/documents/leaflets/A%20to%20Z%20of%20Support%20Services/52744.pdf

It is recommended that each School operates a student support structure that links to Central Support Services and which is able to cross School boundaries to support students with joint courses.

External support services

The link below provides a comprehensive list of available services appropriate for students with specific and specialised needs;

http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/support/supportoutside/index.html

6. Student Support Needs

6.1. Students need to be able to confidently seek the academic support that will enable them to reach their full potential.

Lecturer and module co-ordinators will answer any course-related queries within five working days. If needed, these individuals will meet with the student to discuss issues.
Where students do not feel confident approaching an academic, Student Support Officers or Personal Tutors can facilitate these meetings.

Best Practise
Work conducted in small groups with an academic e.g. with personal tutors in the first year will enable tutors to advise students on ways to improve their performance (See Appendix 4 for an example of a module that embeds the development of a relationship between personal tutors and tutees within the curriculum and Appendix 5 for an example of a structured tutorial programme).

6.2. Students need support to get the most out of their university experience to enhance their employability

Students will be encouraged to reflect (with their personal tutors) at the start of their programme on the skills and experience they are hoping to gain through their time at university and review these goals at regular intervals.

6.3. Students need to form a connection with at least one member of staff in their department

Each student will be allocated a Personal Tutor.

Personal Tutors should be allocated a number of students such that, consistent with their other responsibilities, during term time they can;
  o Respond to emails from students in a timely manner.
  o Accommodate meeting requests in a timely manner.
  o Keep registers of attendance for all meetings and tutorials that may be accessed by student support.
  o Conduct a diagnostic interview[7] with students presenting with problems where underlying issues are explored.
  o Be able to write a personalised reference for that student

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[7] "Diagnostic interviews" are interviews that will enable staff to empathise with the student's experience of University life including academic challenges, paid work, accommodation, emotional issues, learning disorders, challenges with coursework and challenges with learning styles. At the end of a diagnostic interview the staff member should be able to ascertain whether an underperforming student is doing so because they need academic support or whether other issues are impacting on the student's ability to study and they may benefit from additional support available within or external to the University, and advise the student accordingly.

Best Practise

It is helpful if opportunities are created in the first semester for Personal Tutors to have "meaningful contact" with their advisee group as a whole or as individuals to allow a relationship to build. These meetings should be structured. "Meaningful contact" should allow the adviser to support the student in their transition to university by finding out who they are as individuals and which skills they will need to develop to enhance their experience.

"Meaningful contact" should take place over multiple sessions in the first semester. Robins as cited in Thomas (2013) demonstrated that structured group tutorials can be an effective way of encouraging engagement between students and their Personal Tutors. For more detailed examples of structured contact currently being employed in the Schools within QM see Appendices 4, 5 and 6

By the end of the first year Personal Tutors should have spent a minimum of six hours in tutor group tutorials

6.4. Students need to know what to do when their primary contact is unavailable.

Personal tutors should set an out of office e-mail when they are not available and should confirm that whoever they have directed the student to will be available and be able to respond to queries.
It should be promoted to students that they can approach any person in the School with whom they feel they have formed a relationship or the support team directly (see the Reactive Student Support Process).
The support team should also ensure they set out of office e-mails with appropriate contact details when they are unavailable.

6.5. Students need to receive current and accurate information about support available to them.

It is recommended that each School support team regularly review and update their knowledge.

6.6. ***Students, that approach the School with issues, need support and encouragement to engage with the help that is available and continue with their programme of study***

Reactive Student Support

(see Figure 1.0 for the full flow)

Reactive Student Support is a process by which students can approach the School to discuss any issue that may impact on their ability to engage with their course.

It is important to note that where students are looking for support here will be no "wrong door". Students can approach any academic within the School that they feel comfortable approaching or the support team directly. If the student approaches administrative staff they will be directed to the Student Support Officer or Senior Tutor.

Figure 1.0

Reactive Student Support

Whoever is approached	Student + Support team	Student + Student Support Officer

Initial Contact

- Student with issues
- **Either/Or**
  - QM Central Support Service
  - Student Support team
  - Personal tutor
  - Other members of academic staff

A. Conduct an diagnostic interview* with the student → Minor Issue – listen and resolve

B. Serious issue — Is the student able to continue this year** with support? — Yes → If applicable encourage student to complete appropriate paperwork and/or help student identify immediate central sources of support within QM e.g. A&C, DDS, Student Health Service. Arrange a follow up meeting

Within days

C. Liaise with Senior Tutor RE: student issues and missed work → Student in conjunction with Student Support create an Action Plan;
- Plan milestones of re-engagement
- Devise strategy to make up any missed work
- Set a review date

No → **E.** Student Support helps student complete the necessary paperwork → Student meets with the Senior Tutor to discuss the impact of decision to interrupt(ROA)***/leave. Reasons noted for compilation.

Within 2 weeks – 1 month

Help student access the appropriate help – sources include A&C and Careers

D. Student support monitors effectiveness of strategy → Student meeting targets?
- Revise strategy ← No — Student meeting targets? — Yes
- Is student still able to continue with course this year? ← No — Has strategy worked?
- Yes → Cease monitoring student

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*"Diagnostic interviews" see footnote 7 pg 13

** "this year" refers to this academic year September – September (for more advice on students with extenuating circumstances during the May exam period please see Action Plans on page 19)

*** For more information on interruption/resitting out of attendance see pages 23-25.

Diagnostic Interview (see Figure 1.1 below (Process A in figure 1.0))

Academics or the Student Support Officer will conduct a diagnostic interview with the student to ascertain whether their issue is;

- academic or pastoral or both
- a minor issue, where the student requires low level support which can be provided by that member of staff
- a more complex problem that requires specialist support from the School or central QM support team
- a serious urgent situation for which the student needs immediate intervention from the School or central QM support team or an outside agency

From this interview it should be apparent whether the student is able to continue with their programme at this time.

Figure 1.1
A. Diagnostic Interview
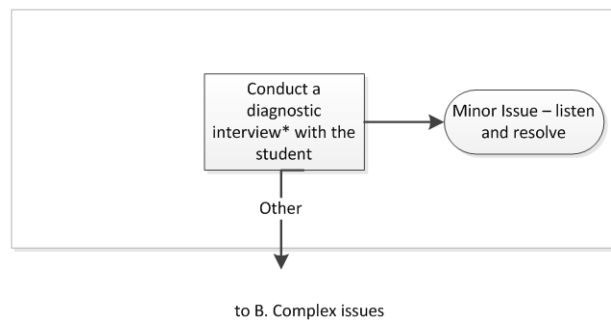
Complex issues (see Figure 1.2 below (Process B in Figure 1.0))

Where the issue is complex e.g. the student has missed significant amounts of coursework and/or external issues are ongoing, the interviewer needs to ascertain with the student whether or not they are able to proceed with their course at the present time.

If the student is able to proceed but has missed a number of items of coursework or summative course assessments they will need to complete paperwork to ensure that these omissions have been captured and to apply for extensions.
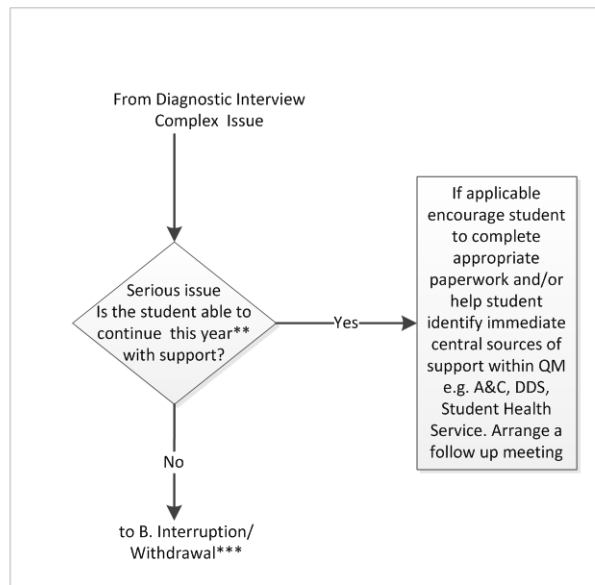
Additionally they should be made aware of any School or Central support services that they may benefit from.

If the student feels unable to continue with their course in this academic year they will need to apply for an interruption. If they feel they no longer wish to continue with their course they will need to apply to withdraw.

Disabled Students (including specific learning disorders such as dyslexia and diagnosed mental health illnesses)

Under the Equality Act if a disabled student discloses their disability to anyone employed by QM, the university as a whole is deemed to know of the student's disability. It is essential that students with disabilities are recommended to see the QM Disability and Dyslexia Service so that they can access all of the support which they are entitled to including Disabled Students Allowance. This may be discussed with the student in the interview but following the interview, this recommendation should be recorded. Ways to record this include an e-mail to the student noting this recommendation or documenting the recommendation in their notes provided they have access to them. This should happen even when a student is adamant that they do not want anyone other than the interviewer to know about their disability.

Figure 1.2
B. Complex issues

From Diagnostic Interview
Complex Issue

Serious issue
Is the student able to
continue this year** ———Yes———▶ If applicable encourage student to complete appropriate paperwork and/or help student identify immediate central sources of support within QM e.g. A&C, DDS, Student Health Service. Arrange a follow up meeting
with support?

No

to B. Interruption/
Withdrawal***

** "this year" refers to this academic year September – September (for more advice on students with extenuating circumstances during the May exam period please see Action Plans on page 19)

*** For more information on interruption/resitting out of attendance see pages 23-25.

Action Plans (see Figure 1.3 below (Process C in Figure 1.0))

Where the student can proceed with their programme student support and the Senior Tutor should be informed of the issues that the student is having so that together with the student they can construct an Action Plan to help the student overcome these issues and make up any missed work.

The Action Plan will contain

- Milestones of re-engagement
- A strategy for any missed work
- Actions that it has been agreed the student will undertake, with timeframes[8]
- Actions that it has been agreed the School will undertake, with timeframes
- A clear agreement for how the student and School will communicate to follow up issues and actions with each other
- Details of any referrals to central professional services that have been discussed
- A review date

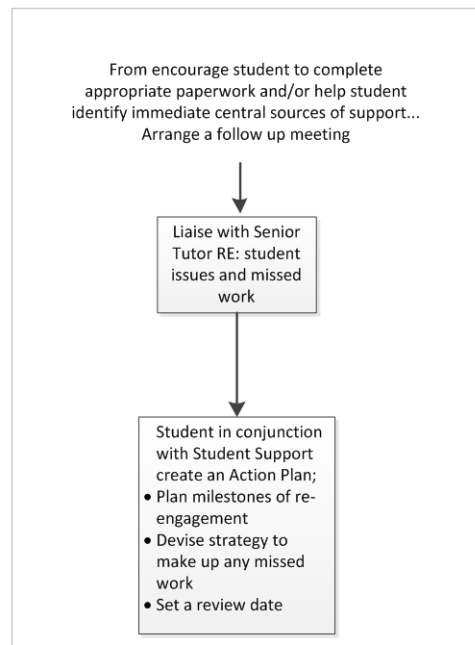**Extenuating Circumstances during the May Examination Period**

For students with specific extenuating circumstances during the exam period who cannot take first sits in May, student support should also create a simplified Action Plan. As a minimum this should include a date when student support will speak to the student again to discuss whether they feel able to proceed with exams in August.
During this follow up discussion the student support can advise the student of revision support available during the summer period to help with their August examinations.

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[8] Examples of these are below

1. Ensure arrival at all lectures at the correct time, if lateness is caused by issues outside of the students control, such as travel, the School Office should be informed via e-mail. Meet again with the Student Support Officer on X date to discuss their progress.
2. Engage with the support services offered by the university. A meeting with Advice and Counselling would be beneficial. X recognises that engagement with this service cannot be monitored by the School so it is their responsibility to seek this help. Meet again with the Student Support Officer to discuss their progress on X date
3. Make an appointment with learning support to discuss issues highlighted by the failed homeworks in X module. Engage with PASS to boost understanding of requirements for X module. Meet again with the Student Support Officer to discuss their progress on X date.

Figure 1.3
C. Action Planning

From encourage student to complete
appropriate paperwork and/or help student
identify immediate central sources of support...
Arrange a follow up meeting

Liaise with Senior
Tutor RE: student
issues and missed
work

Student in conjunction
with Student Support
create an Action Plan;
• Plan milestones of re-
  engagement
• Devise strategy to
  make up any missed
  work
• Set a review date

**Monitoring re-engagement (see Figure 1.4 below (Process D in Figure 1.0))**

It is the role of student support to monitor the effectiveness of the Action Plan devised in Process C.

At an agreed time-period following on from the Action Plan (2 weeks-1month) the Student Support Officer will arrange a follow up meeting with the student to assess the impact of support offered.
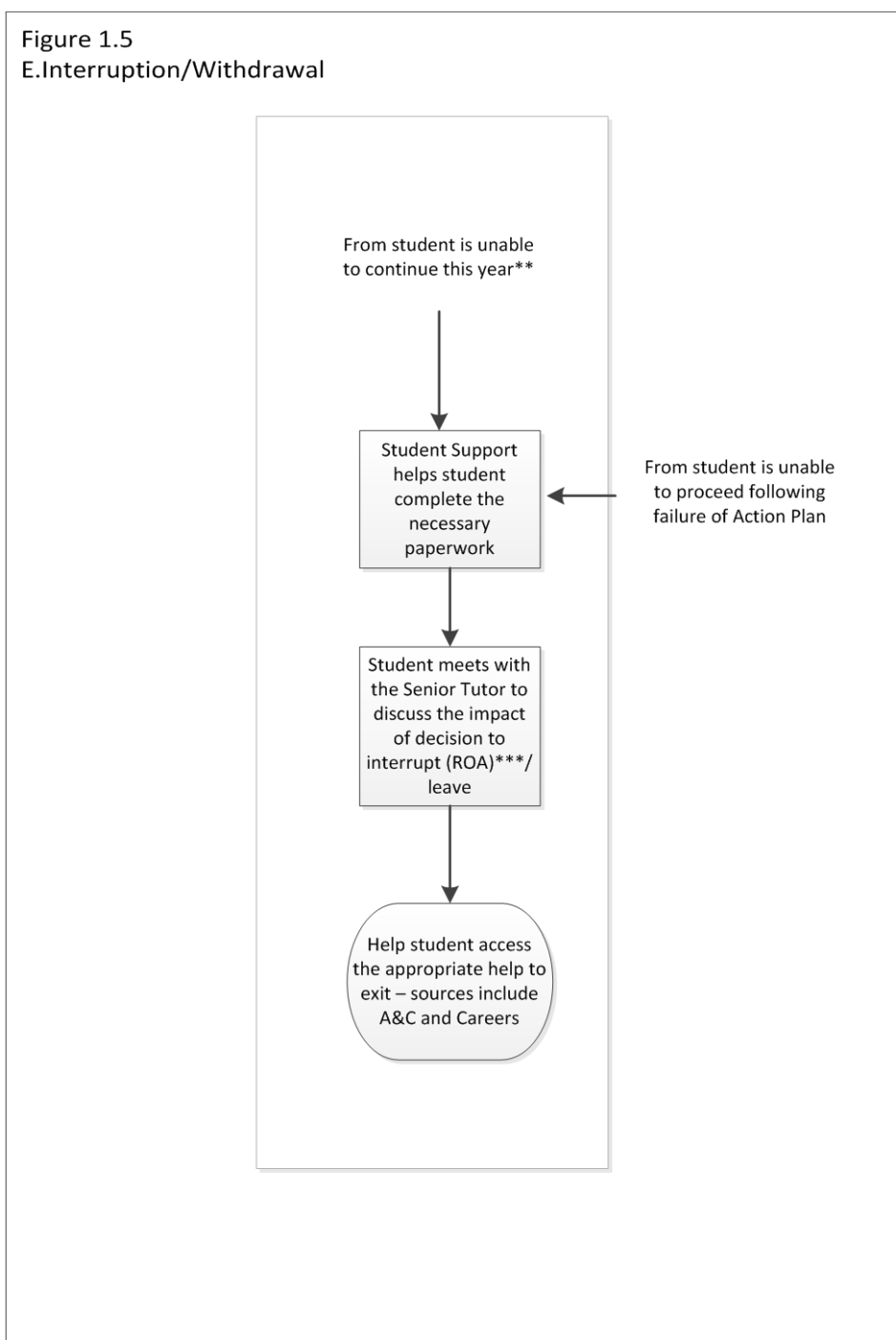
It should be apparent from this meeting;

- If the student is meeting the targets set and using available support
- If the student's engagement has improved
- If engagement has improved to such an extent they no longer need to be monitored
- If the student is still able to proceed but needs further support – possibly to revise their Action Plan
- If the student is now unable to continue with their programme

Figure 1.4
D. Re-engagement strategy
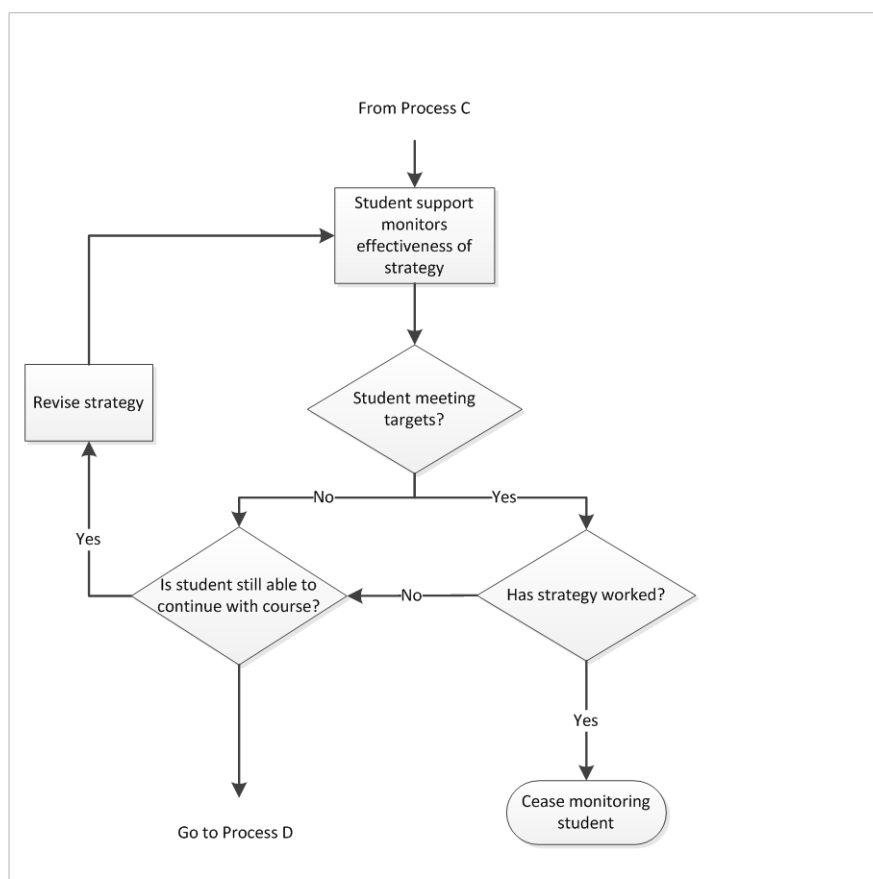
Interruption/ Withdrawal (see Figure 1.5 below (Process E in Figure 1.0))

Figure 1.5
E.Interruption/Withdrawal

From student is unable
to continue this year**

Student Support
helps student
complete the
necessary
paperwork

From student is unable
to proceed following
failure of Action Plan

Student meets with
the Senior Tutor to
discuss the impact
of decision to
interrupt (ROA)***/
leave

Help student access
the appropriate help to
exit – sources include
A&C and Careers

Where the student can no longer proceed with their programme in this academic year
(September – September) **;
- Student Support should help the student to complete the necessary paperwork.
  The student should then meet with the Senior Tutor to discuss the impact of their
  decision to interrupt/leave. Decisions to interrupt/leave can impact on any financing
  for future courses and their future CVs.
Additionally students that interrupt or need to resit out of attendance*** are at high risk of
dropping out of their programme altogether. If the student is interrupting or resitting out of
attendance their discussion with their Senior Tutor should highlight the academic support

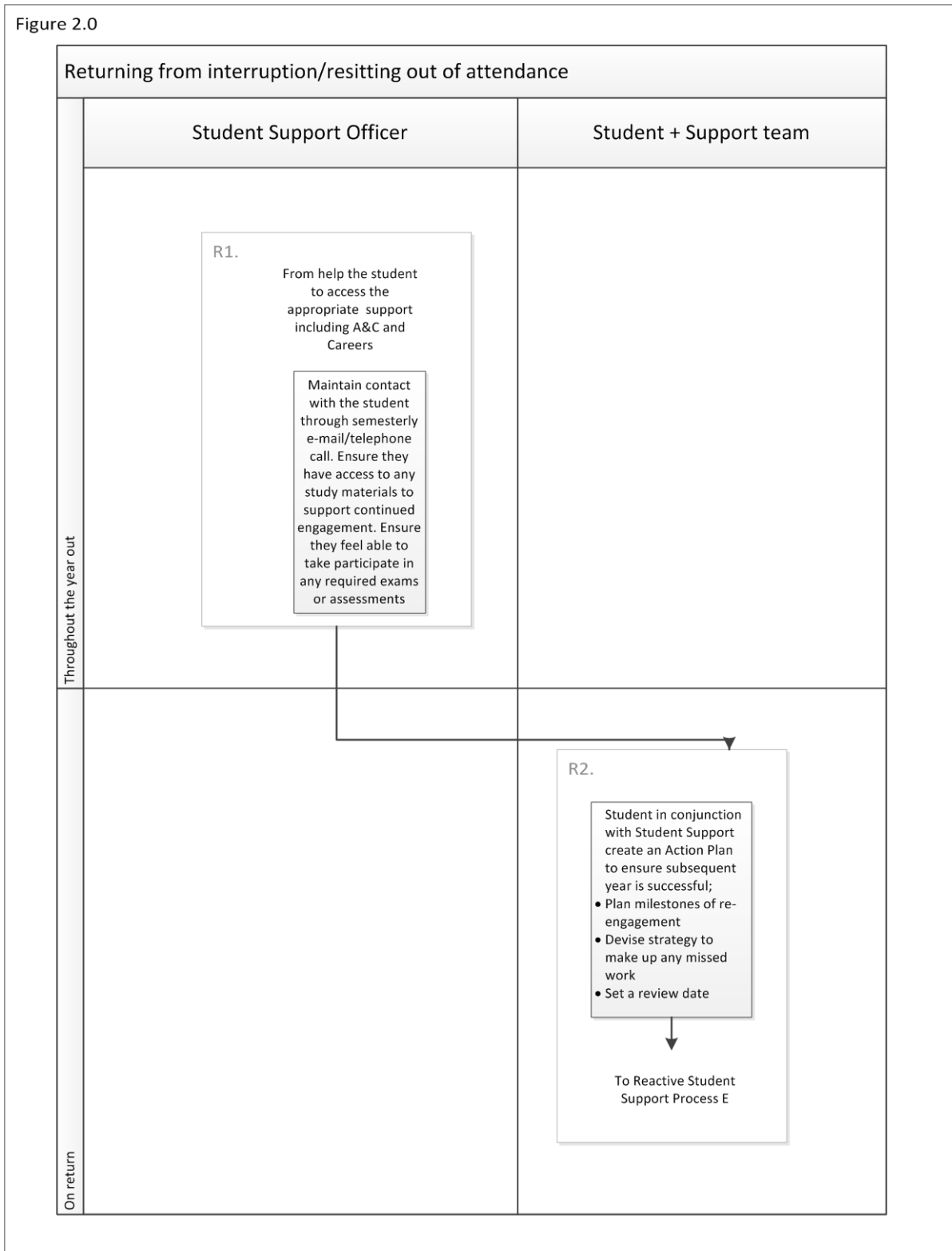that will be available to them in their year out and may keep them engaged with their programme of study.

If the student is adamant they wish to leave they should be encouraged to seek support within QM including accessing Advice and Counselling (http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk)and QM Careers and Enterprise Service on 020 7882 8533 or email: careers@qmul.ac.uk.

Returning from Interruption/Resitting Out of Attendance (see Figure 2.0 below (Process R1 and R2))

Amongst students interrupting/resitting out of attendance there is a high likelihood of disengagement both in their year away from QM and when they return to university. To help prevent this as shown in Figure 2 R1, Student Support Officers should maintain contact with the student in the year in which they are absent. At a minimum this contact should be semesterly to ensure they have all they need to study/maintain engagement with their programme.
When students return from interruption/resitting out of attendance, Student Support Officers should help these students construct an Action Plan to ensure they remain on their programme. This plan should be monitored with the students as any other Action Plan would be (see process D in Reactive Student Support).

Figure 2.0

Returning from interruption/resitting out of attendance

	Student Support Officer	Student + Support team
Throughout the year out	**R1.** From help the student to access the appropriate support including A&C and Careers Maintain contact with the student through semesterly e-mail/telephone call. Ensure they have access to any study materials to support continued engagement. Ensure they feel able to take participate in any required exams or assessments	
On return		**R2.** Student in conjunction with Student Support create an Action Plan to ensure subsequent year is successful; • Plan milestones of re-engagement • Devise strategy to make up any missed work • Set a review date To Reactive Student Support Process E

6.7. Students that disengage with their School need to be offered support and given the opportunity to re-engage. 25

Proactive Student Support

(see Figure 3.0 for the full flow)

This process is essentially the same as reactive student support with two additional stages;
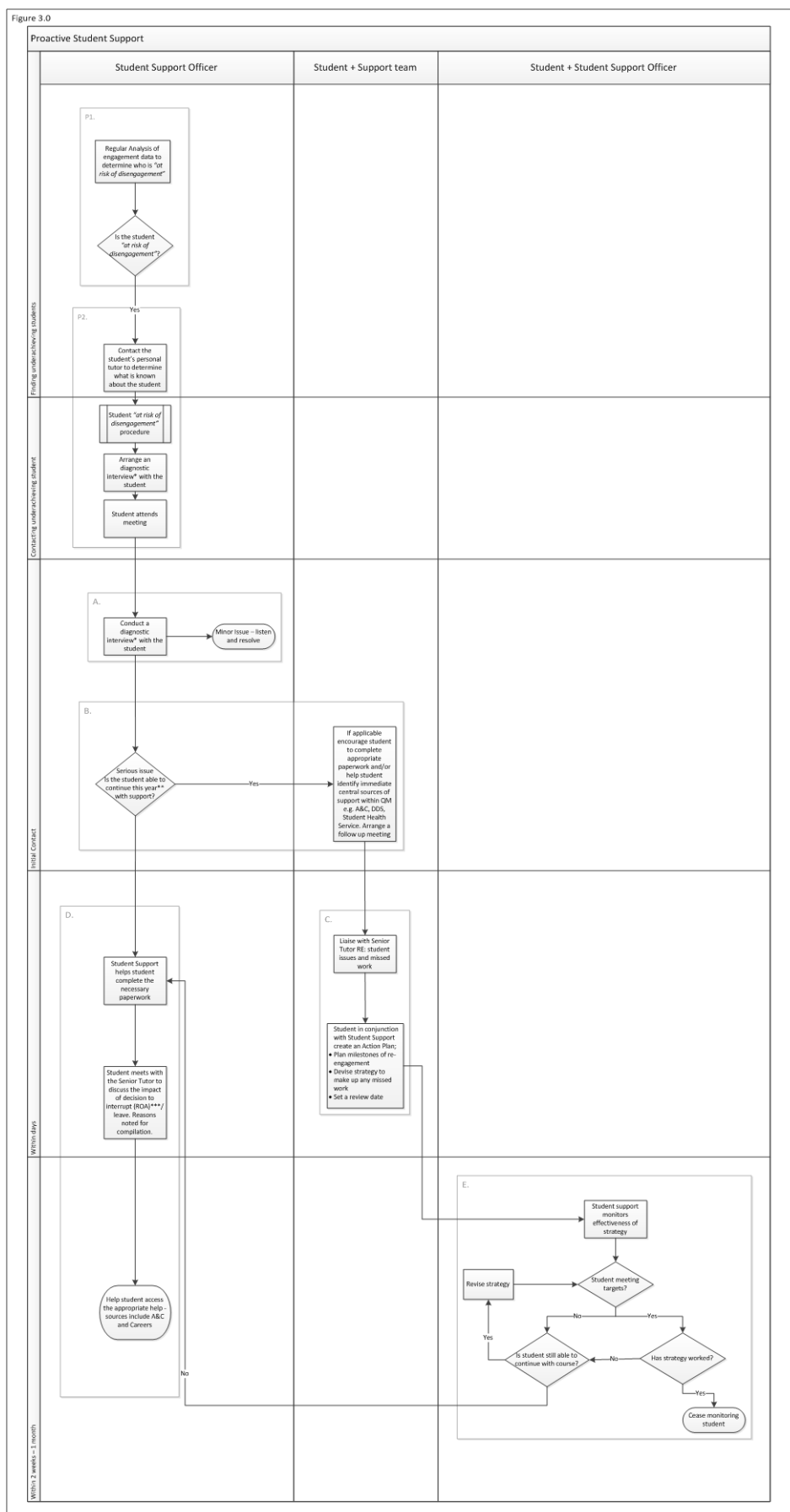
Figure 3.0 — Proactive Student Support

*"Diagnostic interviews" see footnote 7 pg 13

** "this year" refers to this academic year September – September (for more advice on students with extenuating circumstances during the May examination period please see Action Plans on page 19

*** For more information on interruption/resitting out of attendance see pages 23-25.

### Identifying a student at risk of disengagement (Figure 3.1)

This will involve regular analysis of engagement markers[9] for the individual School, taken from their engagement policy. This will determine students that are deemed *"at risk of disengagement".*

If a student is shown to have an active engagement marker (i.e. be not engaging by one of the measures above relevant their School) Student Support Officers will continue to monitor that student to confirm they have no other markers and ensure their continued engagement.

If a student meets the students "*at risk of disengagement* criteria"[10] for that School, Student Support will investigate the reasons behind this.

Figure 3.1
P1. Identifying students at risk of disengagement

Regular Analysis of engagement data to determine is *"at risk of disengagement"*

Is the student *" at risk of disengagement"*?

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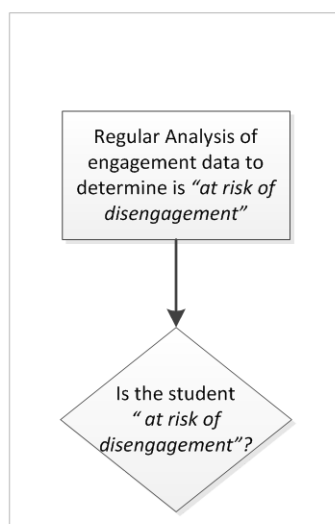
[9] Engagement markers can include attendance, participation in assessments, academic performance, a significant fall in academic achievement, observations of the student**.** It is legitimate to use this data to examine whether students are engaging. **Minimum Standard** markers will be checked fortnightly.
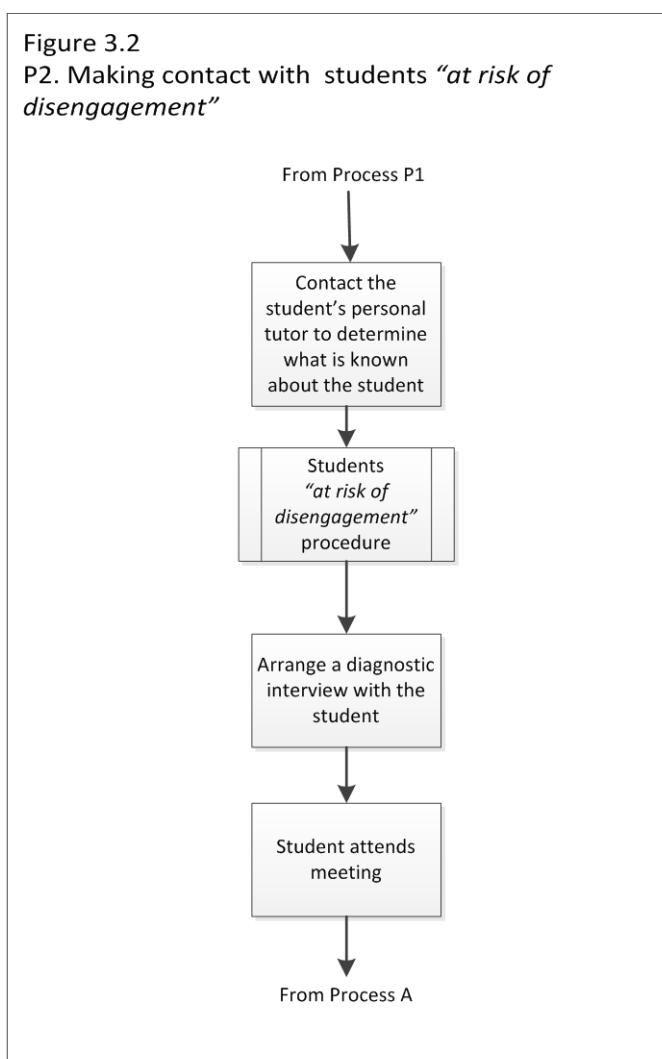
[10] The "students at risk of disengagement criteria" is dependent on the engagement markers of the particular School and how these are combined to highlight a student that is at risk of disengagement.

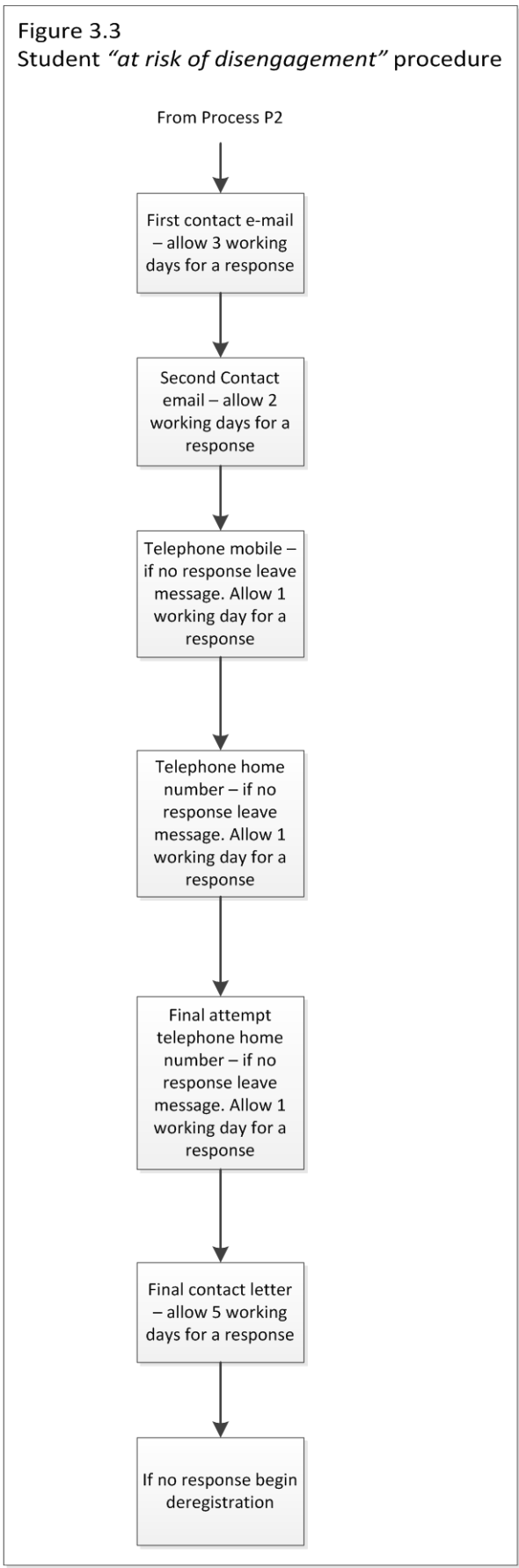**Making contact with a student at risk of disengagement (Figure 3.2)**

When students are identified as "*at risk of disengagement*" there may be many reasons for this. It is important that their School makes contact with the student to ascertain whether they are aware of and may benefit from support.

The first stage of the process will be to contact their personal tutor to find out if this student has disclosed any issues to them.

In instances where the student is not known to their tutor, Student Support will attempt to contact the student following the "*student at risk of disengagement procedure*".

Figure 3.2
P2. Making contact with students *"at risk of disengagement"*

From Process P1

↓

Contact the student's personal tutor to determine what is known about the student

↓

Students *"at risk of disengagement"* procedure

↓

Arrange a diagnostic interview with the student

↓

Student attends meeting

↓

From Process A

Student at risk of disengagement procedure (see Figure 3.3)

Figure 3.3
Student *"at risk of disengagement"* procedure

From Process P2

First contact e-mail
– allow 3 working
days for a response

Second Contact
email – allow 2
working days for a
response

Telephone mobile –
if no response leave
message. Allow 1
working day for a
response

Telephone home
number – if no
response leave
message. Allow 1
working day for a
response

Final attempt
telephone home
number – if no
response leave
message. Allow 1
working day for a
response

Final contact letter
– allow 5 working
days for a response

If no response begin
deregistration

This procedure is a standardised escalation process for finding students that are not engaging with their programmes and encouraging them to come to their Schools for a diagnostic interview with their personal tutor or the support team. This process has rapid timescales because it is envisaged that identifying a student via the student at risk of disengagement procedure will take two weeks. It is important the students are contacted and given the opportunity to re-engage before they have fallen too far behind to be able to do so. This process is terminated by student arriving for a diagnostic interview.

The first stage in this procedure should be an e-mail to their QM e-mail address to encourage the student to come forward with any issues. Bearing in mind that students receive many e-mails to their University e-mail address the e-mail should be short, personalised and encourage them to make contact with their School as soon as possible with a deadline to allow the Support Team to move on to the next stage in the procedure if the e-mail is unsuccessful. An example of effective wording is below;

First contact e-mail to student's QM e-mail address:

Subject: IMPORTANT – Please read

Dear $student_firstname

We are concerned that you may be having some difficulties with your studies, and wish to talk to you. Staff in your School, are trained to help you access the most appropriate forms of support both within the university and externally to ensure you are able to get the most out of your University experience.

What to do now:

- Please can you call your personal tutor on 020 7882 XXXX or Dominique Jethwa (Student Support Officer) on 020 7882 XXXX
- Book an appointment with them by allow 3 working days

It is important that you make contact with us so that we can help you with any problems, academic or personal, that you may be experiencing.

We look forward to hearing from you by xxx (date).

Best wishes

Name

Second Contact e-mail to the student's QM and personal e-mail address:

Subject: IMPORTANT – please read

Dear $student_firstname

We have tried to contact you via your QM e-mail address but have been unsuccessful so far.

We are now very concerned about your engagement in this degree programme and wish to talk to you immediately.

Support available to you:

- There are a range of professional and confidential support services available in Queen Mary that can assist you with a variety of academic issues including time-management, writing at university level and specific tutoring for particular subjects.
- Additionally Queen Mary has a range of professional and confidential support services including the **Advice and Counselling Service** (http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk), the **Disability and Dyslexia Service** (http://www.dds.qmul.ac.uk) and the **Student Health Service** (www.studenthealth.qmul.ac.uk).

Please be confident that when you approach the school or QM's support services you will be offered confidential support to help with any problems you may be dealing with.

What to do now:

- Please contact and see your personal tutor on 020 7882 XXXX or your Student Support Officer xxxx on 020 7882 XXXX by within the next two working days.
- If you are not able to meet with either of these individuals for any reason, please ensure you contact and arrange to meet with the senior tutor, xxxx on 020 7882 xxxx this week.

Attendance and engagement in all aspects of your degree programme are requirements for remaining on your degree programme, and should you not come to discuss these emails with us, we will have to discuss your deregistration – the process of leaving your course and QM.

We look forward to hearing from you by xxx (date).

Best wishes

Name

At this stage the School will have attempted to contact the student twice over the period of one working week. If the student does not respond to these e-mails student support should telephone the student.

Telephone Conversations

On Student enrolement pages student must tick a statement confirming that QM may contact them by post or other means such as telephone, texting or e-mail. Additionally the ARCS student handbook template states "Schools may contact students in a variety of ways". It is therefore legitimate to telephone a student that has been identified as "underachieving", particularly where their attendance is an issue, if there has been no response to the first and second contact e-mails.

The aim of these telephone conversations should be to encourage the student to come to the School and discuss any support that may assist them. It is important that for confidentiality reasons Student Support do not discuss student's attendance or performance over the telephone as it will not be clear whether they are actually speaking to the student.

An appropriate script for a telephone conversation could be as follows;

> "Hi, I'm Dominique Jethwa, Student Support Officer within School Name. I am calling you regarding the support available for Students within QM . I would like the opportunity to discuss this with you in person. Are you available to meet on...

Ideally students will be called on their mobile numbers but if there is no response from their mobile after two attempts it is reasonable to telephone to student's home. In this instance it is especially important that no information is given to anyone other than the student. An appropriate script

> "Hi, I'm Dominique Jethwa, I am calling from QM. I would like to talk to X. Are they available?
>
> I cannot discuss this with anyone but X directly, so I need arrange meet with X in person. Could you pass on my details and ask them to contact me by allow 2 working days.

Where the student has not responded to telephone calls or messages and has failed to meet with their personal tutor or the support team a final letter should be sent to their home address. An example of appropriate wording for this letter is below;

Where students do not turn up for meetings

Where student do not turn up for a meeting, without notifying the School, student support should telephone the student to ascertain why. If there is no response to the telephone call within 2 working days a final contact letter should be sent.

Final contact letter:

Dear $student_firstname

It appears to us that you are no longer actively participating in your programme. At Queen Mary we understand that there are a number of reasons why students may struggle with the demands of undergraduate study and outside commitments and we have a range of academic and pastoral support available. We have tried to contact you to discuss how best to support you via e-mail on XXX and XXX. We have additionally tried to telephone you on dates.

Your next steps:

It is important that you consider your next steps carefully.

1. If you would like to remain a student of QM but are concerned about work you have missed one option is to apply for an interruption of study this year. You will need to discuss this with the senior tutor.
2. If you do not make contact with your School by the next 5 working days, we will be forced to begin deregistration procedures – the process of leaving your course and QM.
3. **It is imperative that if you feel we are mistaken, and you do still wish to be on this degree programme, you telephone the senior tutor XXXX on 020 7882 XXXX by within the next 5 working days, to discuss if this may be possible.**

There is support available if you make the decision to interrupt your studies or leave your course:

1. You may find it helpful to get advice about the practical and financial consequences of interruption and deregistration. For example, if de-registered from this course, there can be consequences to your entitlement to funding for future studies and, if you are an international student, you are likely to need to leave the UK. **QM's Advice and Counselling Service** (http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk) can offer you advice about what to do next.
2. Whatever your decision regarding your course, whilst you are still registered as one of our students you have the opportunity to access the **QM's Careers and Enterprise Service** (http://www.careers.qmul.ac.uk/) on 020 7882 8533 or email: careers@qmul.ac.uk. They can help you to explore your options and look at the impact of your decisions on your future CV.

We hope you will take this opportunity to consider your options and make use of the support available in here your School and throughout QM.

Best wishes

Name

Deregistering students

It is not advisable to threaten to deregister students from a module or programme unless the School is prepared to do so.

To deregister a student from a programme for lack of engagement they would need to be issues with one or more of the following;

- Absenteeism,
- Failure to participate,
- Failure to submit assessments by the relevant deadlines without good reason,
- Failure to meet the Schools published requirements.

In 2012-13 there were 94 deregistrations from modules and 30 total deregistrations from entire programmes. If students are deregistered from more than two modules they will effectively be deregistered from their programme as they will not be able to progress[11].

Students are entitled to appeal deregistration and there are a number of appeals upheld every year so it is important that the process is followed correctly.

Where it is clear that a student is not engaging with their programme the Head of Department or their nominee should send an email to **Tessa Cornell** t.l.cornell@qmul.ac.uk stating that they wish to deregister the student. It is important that the School can provide evidence of having given the student a formal written warning which includes a specified period in which to improve on one or more of attendance, participation and submission of assessment before deregistering them (the final letter to students (student at risk of disengagement procedure)) would be a good example of this. .

When a student is deregistered from a module or a programme ARCS will notify;

- (where applicable) UK Border Agency within 10 days
- Student Loans Company
- Local Education Authorities
- Sponsors (with the consent of the student)
- Transport for London

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[11] QM's requirements for award are currently under review, together with progression requirements. These changes are likely to impact on deregistration procedures which will be revised in the light of final approved arrangements

6.8. Through the course of their degree students need to develop the confidence to manage issues that arise independently.

All students should be made aware of the support structures in their School including academic support from module advisers, module co-ordinators and academic and pastoral support from Personal Tutors and the Student Support Officer and Senior Tutor. This should be presented to students during Welcome week, and be highlighted in the student handbook and on the front page of the School web site, in QM plus and other university communications e.g. QM Student, monthly student e-newsletter. It is good practice to advertise this policy and the support services using posters displayed in areas where students may congregate and at points of access to the School and School administration.

However, ultimately the responsibility for student's conduct is with the student. Students at QM are made aware of the Student Charter;

 http://www.qmul.ac.uk/ourcommunity/.

This states that academics can expect students to be actively engaged in learning.

The processes described in this document are designed to support students with managing their challenges and improving their university experience, not to resolve their issues.

Systems needed to support students

- An electronic student management system should be in place which provides in a single repository for relevant data covering both academic and pastoral issues relevant to each student. This system should be time-saving for the support teams.
  - This system should combine data on student engagement from sources available in QM and highlight student at risk of disengagement according to the School's criteria.
  - The system should manage the student at risk of disengagement procedure, allowing the Student Support Officer to readily determine;
    - what has been done to contact the student?
    - what remains to be done to contact the student?
    - how responsive the student has been to attempts at contact?
  - Privacy
    - This system should have a hierarchy of access that provides confidentiality to the student.
    - The student should have the right to agree staff access to sensitive pastoral information.
    - The access rights should be clearly defined on the opening page of the system.
    - The student should have access to all data recorded on the system.
  - Data to be stored
    - The system should generate and store automatic e-mails/letters but these should not be automatically sent.
    - The system should store details of any staff-student interactions including e-mails and meetings in one file.
    - The system should capture extenuating circumstances.
    - The system should capture any information discussed with the student relating to central support services or notifications from central support services (e.g. Disability and Dyslexia) relating to the student.
    - The system should capture any information discussed with the student relating to pastoral care or welfare issues.
  - The system should be linked to an electronic system to capture student re-engagement strategies and monitor their success.
  - The system should be linked across Schools so issues with joint honours students can be addressed.
  - Presentation of data
    - The system should contain a summary screen per student with all information about one student on one screen
    - The system should contain a separate screen listing all students at risk of disengagement within a School and summary information about courses of action for each.
    - The system should contain a search ID function to easily identify all students within a School with particular issues e.g. specific learning disorders

- Personal tutors would benefit from an automated system to identify their tutees. The system should be able to record attendance in tutorials. This should be linked to the electronic student management system.
- The electronic student management system should be able to report on issues arising within Schools so commonalities in the issues can be recorded and Senior Tutors can be briefed on these.
- The software should capture total numbers of students withdrawing in a year and resitting out of attendance for the School's records.

References

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