Student-at-risk Protocol

1. **PREAMBLE**

The Student-At-Risk Protocol may be implemented after the Student Mental Health Emergencies Protocol (see Action Sheet for Helping a Student in Distress or Crisis, Appendix A) , or when information is received that indicates a student’s behaviours are causing significant concern.

The Student-At-Risk Protocol sets out a framework for senior Institute officials and health professionals to interact in a team setting in order to cohesively and effectively identify and coordinate responses to a student’s behaviour that:

***has been demonstrated, or has the potential to, physically, emotionally, or psychologically harm the student that is exhibiting the behaviour, and/or members of the larger campus community***

Overall leadership for the Student-At-Risk Protocol is the responsibility of the Registrar.

1. **SCOPE**

Types of actions or behaviours that are to be considered within the framework of the Student-At-Risk Protocol include, but are not limited to:

·         Students who disclose suicidal thoughts to one or more individuals, or who have demonstrated other signs of suicidality;

·         Students who carry out or threaten to carry out an act of self-harm;

·         Students who are exhibiting signs of a serious mental illness and whose behaviour is putting themselves or other members of the Institute community at risk, or whose behaviour has the potential or threatens to put themselves or other members of the Institute community at risk;

·         Students who make threats, or carry out actions that are perceived as threats, which if acted upon could seriously harm one or more members of the Institute community.

The Student-At-Risk Protocol is based on the current international best practices and research.

In addressing a student-at-risk, the Institute has the right and responsibility to make decisions to protect that student and/or other members of the Institute community from any of the behaviours described in this section.

1. **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Athlone Institute of Technology is committed to the success of all students, including those with significant mental health conditions.  Towards this end, the Institute will:

·         Acknowledge but not stigmatize mental health problems;

·         Make suicide prevention a priority;

·         Encourage students to seek help or treatment that they may need and provide appropriate support and referrals;

·         Allow students to continue their education as normally as possible by making reasonable accommodations;

·         Refrain from discrimination against students with mental illnesses, including punitive actions toward those in crisis.

1. **IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT**

**1.** **Reporting.** After the Student Mental Health Emergencies Protocol (see Appendix A) has been enacted, or information has come to Head of School/Head of Dept./Registrar/Student Resource Centre that gives reason to believe that a student may pose a threat to the health or safety of any member of the Institute community (including the student him/herself), that individual must report the matter to the Registrar or the Registrar’s nominee.

**2.** A **Student- At- Risk Evaluation** **meeting** should be convened. The make-up of the team should be as follows: Registrar (or nominee), Head of Counselling, Student Health Centre professional(GP or Nurse), relevant Head of Department and/or Head of School; and may also include the Director/staff from the International Office, Chaplain, Disability Service, Student Resource Centre Manager, and other staff members who have information relevant to the case.

The professionals qualified to interpret evidence regarding the health and safety risks if the student remains at the Institute normally are the Head of Counselling and/or Student Health Centre professional, who can or will have liaised with external professionals regarding probable risk e.g. HSE Mental Health Service.

Decisions will be based on observations of a student’s conduct, including communications, and not on any knowledge or belief that a student is an individual with a disability.

**3**. **Decision.** TheRegistrar will make the decision regarding: (1) whether the student will be withdrawn from the Institute, (2) whether the student will be withdrawn from the Institute and permitted to return to the Institute if certain conditions are met, and if so, what those conditions are, or (3) the student will be monitored and any escalation of behaviours will require a subsequent Student-at-Risk Evaluation meeting.

In the event that a “continued monitoring” decision (3) is made, the Registrar may impose certain conditions on the student’s continued attendance at the Institute.

**4.** **Notification of Involuntary Withdrawal**

(a) When appropriate, the Registrar (or nominee) will attempt to telephone the student’s next of kin at the telephone number on record at the Institute after the decision is made.

(b) The Registrar will prepare and send a letter to the student outlining the reason(s) for the student’s involuntary withdrawal from the Institute. If the student is permitted to return, the letter also will include the conditions for the student to return. The letter will include the name and contact information of the person designated to address the student’s questions and, if applicable, to coordinate the student’s return. The student bears the burden of demonstrating to the Registrar that he/she has fulfilled all of the conditions for returning to the Institute as per paragraph 7 below. This letter will be sent via mail and email (if both addresses are known) within two business days of the decision to remove the student from the Institute.

(c) The Registrar (or nominee) will invite the student for a meeting to discuss the decision to remove the student from the Institute. The student should be accompanied by a staff member known to them e.g. Student Counsellor/staff from International Office/Chaplain/Student Resource Centre Manager

**5.** Copies of the letter of withdrawal will be furnished to the relevant Head of School and/or Head of Department.

**6.** Where “continued monitoring” has been the decision, the Registrar will communicate this to the relevant Head of School and/or Head of Department, so that they may communicate this to relevant academic and administration staff in their school/department. Again, information provided should be based on observations of a student’s conduct, including communications, and not on any knowledge or belief that a student is an individual with a disability.

**7**. **Return, if Applicable**. The student bears the burden of demonstrating to the Registrar satisfaction that he/she has fulfilled all of the conditions for returning to the Institute that were outlined in the letter described in paragraph 4(b). Once satisfied, the Registrar will notify the student in writing that he/she can return to the Institute.

**8. Appealing the Involuntary Withdrawal Decision**

A student may appeal the Registrar’s decision described in paragraph 3. Specifically, a student may appeal: the decision to withdraw him/her from the institute; or the conditions for return or continuation at the institute.

The grounds for appeal are limited to: (1) information that a procedural error affected the decision; (2) information that a factual error affected the decision; or (3) additional information relevant to the assessment that was not available at the time of the initial investigation.

The appeal must be made to the President of the institute within 14 days from the date of the notification letter. During an appeal, the initial decision, as per paragraph 3, will remain in place.

**9. Disciplinary Policies**

The Student-at-risk Policy is not a student disciplinary policy. The same conduct or communications for which a student may be removed from the institute may also violate other institute policies and require separate action by the institute.