

Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

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1 Introduction

Poor attendance and engagement can put students at risk academically. The College monitors attendance and engagement in order to ensure students are successfully progressing, and to be supportive and anticipatory in its approach to carrying out its duty of care to all students. The College aims to ensure that students receive information, advice and guidance at the earliest opportunity to support their efforts in overcoming barriers to study and reduce the chance of issues escalating.

1.1 Underpinning Principles

- a. students need to attend and engage in order to progress in their field of study, and a range of services are available to support students in this;
- b. good attendance and engagement are essential to a good student experience;
- c. students are active participants in ensuring their own success;
- d. identifying poor attendance and engagement early, and intervening early, are key to helping students progress;
- e. students need to be aware that the opportunities to draw down **student finance are limited** they, and we, need to demonstrate *active pursuit of study* to funding bodies. Where a student fails to demonstrate this either/or by absence of non-submission of academic work this policy will apply.

1.2 Requirements of External Bodies

Good student attendance and engagement is also a requirement of external bodies such as Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and funders (e.g. Student Loan Company). The College is able to deliver courses, administer loans and scholarships to students, by fulfilling its responsibilities in relation to these bodies. Any sanctions for poor attendance and engagement for students benefitting from arrangements with these bodies could mean withdrawal of sponsorship or funding.

1.3 Attendance and engagement requirements

Students are expected to attend the College or engage as is necessary to progress in their studies and complete their course, **this is as an absolute minimum 90% of timetabled sessions.**

All staff are expected to familiarise themselves with this document, and are expected to provide students with information to support their attendance and engagement.

1.4 Attendance and engagement records - definitions

1. Attendance and engagement are described as meaningful contacts and should be sufficient for the student to engage well and be able to progress in their discipline. These contacts comprise attending formal academic classes but also pastoral support activities.

A list of activities that could be considered as monitored contact points is provided below:

- i. a lesson, lecture, tutorial, laboratory session, workshop or seminar;

- ii. an assessment session as required in the unit handbook;
 - iii. an interaction with a supervisor, tutor or adviser (this can be for academic or pastoral advice related to progressing with studies);
 - iv. a research-method or research-panel meeting, writing-up seminars or workshops;
 - v. an oral examination (viva);
 - vi. assessed **or unassessed** coursework including in-class participation in simulated activities;
 - vii. an interim dissertation, coursework or report;
 - viii. registration (for enrolment or matriculation);
 - ix. a meeting related to appeal or disciplinary.
2. Departments must be able to produce reports showing the frequency of student attendance/engagement at monitored contact points.
 3. Attendance/engagement recording is still required when students are at a different location in the following circumstances:
 - i. on work placements: learning logs record engagement and departments will have their own nominated personnel in place to ensure monitoring.
 - ii. on field work or field trips: departments will have their own defined procedures and nominated personnel in place to ensure monitoring.

1.5 Identifying Poor Attendance and Engagement

Departments should identify students who have missed more than two consecutive days without authorisation. Some departments may check more frequently where students are expected to make a high number of monitored contacts in any given week. A student may be identified in the following ways:

- When their attendance and engagement gives cause for concern (e.g. is below expected levels)
- If the conditions and responsibilities of a learning agreement are not met (e.g. when students are on a repeat year)

The course leader or course leader holds overall responsibility for the attendance of students within their suite of courses.

1.6 Contact, Reporting and Withdrawal

In the first instance the unit tutor for those sessions that are missed should contact students whose attendance or engagement is considered unsatisfactory; the outcome of this contact should be recorded on Pro-monitor. Thereafter, departments should contact students in

stages as described below, these stages should be executed promptly and at all points the students should be aware that they are jeopardising their place on the course:

Stage 1

Department administrative staff will contact the student to notify them that there is a concern and remind them of attendance and engagement requirements. If the student has missed a high number of 'taught' sessions (but less than 5) they will be referred to their course leader to discuss their attendance and engagement, or to the to discuss any non-academic issues. (to be executed within two weeks of first absence within the time series)

Stage 2

Where a student does not improve their attendance and engagement following Stage 1, they will be contacted by the or the Head of Department expressing the College's increased concern. Where a student's attendance or engagement is very low they will usually invite the student to a department progress meeting (this can be remote by telephone or skype) where they can:

- agree targets for the student and regular further meetings to review progress;
- discuss other routes of referral for non-academic support.

Students need to attend this meeting within one week of invitation. This stage is to be executed within two weeks of the agreement at stage one.

Stage 3

If no action is taken or improvement seen on the part of the student after Stage 1 and/or Stage 2, students should be sent/mailed a letter signed by the Curriculum Director advising that their continued registration has been referred to the Student Education Committee seeking recommendation for course termination, subject to Board of Examiners ratification. Students will be signposted to student support services.

This stage should be executed within one week of the progress meeting at stage two. It is very important that disengaged students are removed from the college systems without undue delay.

2 Authorised Absences

Departments must provide clear information to students on how they can report an absence and students should be encouraged to get in touch if they are unable to attend and engage with their course.

There is a maximum of six days absences that may be considered 'authorised'.

Students who are (or were) unable to attend or engage for more than 6 days due to illness, incapacity, emergency or other valid reason, should inform the course leader or other appropriate channel e.g. student liaison officer and a medical certificate, or suitable alternative evidence, must be obtained and sent to the registrar. In these circumstances the Course leader may:

- a. authorise the absence, and the student and course leader should agree future engagement expectations or a return to study plan if required, to ensure that the student can continue on their current course of study. If a medical certificate is not provided, or the course leader is not satisfied with the evidence provided, the absence may not be authorised;
- b. Liaise with the Curriculum Director or their deputy, to consider if the College's **Fitness to Study Policy** should be implemented.

In circumstances where a student's absence is expected to prevent them from progressing on their current course, the Student Education Committee consider temporarily or permanently withdrawing the student.

3 The role of Student Education Committees (SEC)

The Student Education Committee is chaired by the Director of Quality and Standards (HE) and has overall responsibility for monitoring engagement within the departments.

The withdrawal of students processes are detailed in the Academic Regulations as they relate to the Awarding Body. The following is additional to this formal guidance, and is intended to act as a framework for good practice to complement this attendance, monitoring and engagement policy.

3.1 Which student cases should SEC consider?

The Committee should consider all students who have been flagged to have poor attendance and engagement in line with the guidance in this policy, as well as monitoring students who have a learning agreement or return to study plan, to ensure that they are adhering to this. The SEC should provide a report for the Academic Planning and Quality Committee on all permanently and temporarily withdrawn students including those students who have requested permanent withdrawal or temporary interruption of studies themselves. Reports should include data on the student profile to allow analysis across the College.

These students will be noted at the next Assessment Board which has the authority to grant exit awards where applicable. In addition, SEC cannot agree a return to study date when confirming temporary withdrawal for a candidate or for a candidate who has voluntarily withdrawn.

3.2 What outcomes are available to the SEC?

SEC has a number of options available to them when considering individual student cases. The Committee could:

- recommend to the Assessment Board that the student to permanently withdrawn;
- recommend the student to temporarily withdraw with or without conditions on return (in line with standard withdrawal deadlines);
- allow continued registration with conditions;
- allow continued registration without conditions where the student's attendance and engagement has already improved significantly and the student has provided an acceptable explanation for serious past absences/poor engagement

Where a student is temporarily withdrawn, or conditions are imposed, the student and their course leader should always agree a return to study plan or learning agreement to help the student resume their studies. The standard learning agreement template for students on a repeat of their first year should be used. Conditions could also include the following:

- a specified attendance requirement;
- referral to and engagement with other College support services as appropriate;
- referral to and engagement with workshops such as study skills or time management.

3.3 How are the outcomes of the SEC is communicated?

Outcomes of the SEC should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and reported to the Student Systems and Records Office and the Student Funding Team. Where a student has been allowed to continue on a course, departments must write to the student (via email and hard copy letter) to confirm the outcome of the meeting. Where a decision has been taken to temporarily or permanently withdraw a student, SEC will then inform the student in writing of the decision, and advise them of the appeal period. SEC will also write to confirm the return to study date and advise them of the appeal period in relation to this decision.

3.4 Can students attend the SEC?

In reviewing students that have been flagged to have poor attendance and/or engagement it may be necessary to invite individual students to the SEC to enable them to present their case. A student who is invited to attend should be given at least two weeks' notice. They can attend the meeting in person to present their evidence and are entitled to be accompanied but not to be represented. If the student is unable to attend the meeting they can submit evidence for consideration in their absence.

3.5 Appealing a decision of the SEC

A student required by the SEC to withdraw from the College shall have the right to appeal. Details about the appeals process can be found on the Academic Appeals web pages.