Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

Contents

Note:
This policy is intended to be applied flexibly, in recognition that the external environment is subject to change, and a variety of unforeseen circumstances may arise. The Chair of Education Committee and Deputy Chair of Senate are authorised to make reasonable and proportionate amendments in implementation as required.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 In ensuring that its students are presented with the best opportunities to succeed on their programmes of study, the University expects full attendance/engagement with scheduled sessions and activities. Evidence indicates that interaction with scheduled sessions and activities is fundamentally connected to student outcomes and allows students to work effectively alongside their tutors and peers.

1.2 The University recognises that there are circumstances when a student may legitimately be unable to attend and engage when required and here effective communication with the tutors concerned is fundamental to allow support measures to be put into place as appropriate.

1.3 This document sets out the University's expectations in relation to the recording and monitoring of student attendance, engagement and absence, and the actions to be followed when attendance drops below a set threshold.

1.4 The policy also outlines measures which may be taken in the event of student lateness, with the recognition that punctual attendance at scheduled sessions prevents unnecessary disruption to learning and is a matter of courtesy to the tutor and peers.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This document applies to all students studying on a University taught programme of study and those undertaking a postgraduate research programme, including those who are sponsored under the UKVI Student Visa Route. Supplementary requirements for this group of international students are highlighted within.

2.2 It is recognised that there may be programmes with additional attendance requirements, such as those accredited by a professional body and apprenticeships. Where such additional requirements apply, the University will expect students to comply with these requirements.

2.3 Students studying at partner institutions may be subject to a local attendance policy, set by the partner. That policy should meet the minimum expectations outlined in this framework. If the policy is different to the University's policy, it will be communicated to students by the partner institution.

TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

3. ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT ON TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

3.1 Recording of Interactions

3.1.1 The University expects full attendance and engagement with scheduled sessions and activities. These may include face-to-face or online lectures, seminars, workshops, work-related learning, project supervision, tutorials and other set interactions which are set out in Module Guides and on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

3.1.2   Module Tutors are responsible for recording attendance and maintaining registers in a timely manner through the CELCAT Self-Service Portal.

3.1.3   If, for good reasons, students are unable to attend a scheduled session, they are expected to notify the Module Tutor and engage with session tasks set on the VLE, or otherwise communicated.

3.2   Notification of Absence for Non-attendance or Non-engagement

3.2.1   Students who for valid reasons are unable to attend or engage satisfactorily with a session or sessions within a week may request a "notified absence" be recorded on the register. Please note that normal work demands on the part of an employer and holidays will **not** normally be viewed as valid reasons for absence.

3.2.2   Students may request a "notified absence" from their studies by contacting the Programme Leader[1] by email, copying in their Personal Academic Tutor. The student should explain why they are requesting the absence. The Programme Leader and Personal Academic Tutor may, if they deem it appropriate, ask students to provide documentary evidence[2] of the reason for their notified absence.

3.2.3   Where a student is unable to attend and engage in module activities and complete assessments before the end of a module, a request for Mitigating Circumstances should be submitted together with documentary evidence.

3.2.3   It may also be deemed appropriate for a student to pause (suspend) their studies until such time that they can re-engage.

3.3   Absence Procedure

3.2.4   Regardless of whether absence is notified or unauthorised, the University regards absence from study as a concern for a student's progression and achievement, as a substantial amount of delivery may have been missed. The University therefore has a prescribed Absence Monitoring Procedure which is set out in Annex A and outlined in this section.

3.3.2   Early Intervention: Communication between Personal Academic Tutors and students is essential where problems with attendance come to light. Where registers show any short periods of absence or emerging patterns, the Personal Academic Tutor will discuss reasons for these as part of a routine one-to-one tutorial. Early referral to other support services, where appropriate, is paramount. The importance of attendance and engagement should be clarified by the Personal Academic Tutor and strategies to improve these discussed with the student.

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[1] In large cohorts of students this may be the Cohort Leader.
[2] Examples of documentary evidence for notified absence include scans of official letters, e.g. from a medical professional, a legal professional, your employer; medical or death certificates and official reports.

3.3.3 **Stage 1: Absence Concern Email:** Where a student's attendance (notified or unauthorised) falls below the 80%* threshold in any given month without legitimate reason, they will be sent an Absence Concern email, from their Personal Academic Tutor, which highlights the implications of unsatisfactory attendance.

3.3.4 **Stage 2: Initial Absence Concern Meeting:** Where a student's attendance (notified or unauthorised) is below 80%* in the 2 weeks following the sending of the Absence Concern Email, they will be invited to an Absence Concern Meeting with their Personal Academic Tutor and Programme Leader. This may be conducted face-to-face or via a video call as appropriate.

- At the meeting, the Personal Academic Tutor (or a nominee) will consider the stated reasons for absence and whether absences were unauthorised or notified, together with any evidence provided by the student to explain their absences. Where it is identified that students require additional support, they may be referred to an Enhanced Personal Academic Tutor or other University Services, and/or be given a Supported Study Plan. If appropriate, options for pausing studies (suspension) will be explored with the student.

- If the lack of attendance and engagement is not explained adequately, a *Formal Absence Warning* may be issued, and an *Attendance and Engagement Plan* drawn up with timescales included. Students will be asked to agree to a statement which states that they will comply with the requirements set out in the plan.

- Where a student does not attend the meeting without a valid explanation, this will take place in their absence, and a *Formal Absence Warning* may be issued, alongside an *Attendance and Engagement Plan.*

3.3.5 **Stage 3: Final Absence Concern Meeting/ Notification of Intention to Withdraw:** Where a student's attendance (notified or unauthorised) is below 80%[3] in the 2 weeks following the First Absence Concern Meeting, they will be invited to a second (Final) Absence Concern Meeting with their Personal Academic Tutor and the Academic Co-ordinator for Recruitment and Retention (or a nominee). This may be conducted face-to-face or via a video call as appropriate.

- At the meeting, the stated reasons for continued absence/lack of engagement and evidence provided by the student to explain their absences will be considered. Where there are valid reasons for continued absence, options for further referral and/or pausing studies (suspension) will be explored.
- If the lack of attendance/engagement is not explained adequately *A Notification of Intention to Withdraw* will be issued (following approval by the Head of School).
- Where a student does not attend the meeting without a valid explanation, this will take place in their absence and *A Notification of Intention to Withdraw* may also be issued

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[3]Attendance thresholds may differ for specific programmes as identified in individual Programme Handbooks.

3.3.6   *A Notification of Intention to Withdraw* can also be issued if after 8 weeks from the start of a programme an enrolled student has never attended or engaged with the University, they may, following investigation by their assigned Personal Academic Tutor and authorisation by the Head of School, if there is no legitimate reason for their absence.

3.4   Additional Requirements for International Students Sponsored under UKVI Student Visa Route.

3.4.1   International students sponsored under Tier 4 or the Student Visa Route who request a notified absence which exceeds one week <u>must</u> be referred to the UKVI Compliance Team (ukvicompliance@bolton.ac.uk) by the Programme Leader.

3.4.2   Where an international student is sponsored under the UKVI Student Visa Route, <u>they may be referred to one of the International Student Support Officers in the Initial</u> Absence Concern Meeting. <u>A member of the UKVI Compliance Team should be invited to attend the Final Absence Concern Meeting.</u>

3.4.3   In addition to withdrawal of sponsorship due to unsuccessful outcomes of Absence Concern Meetings (see 3.3.6), the University is required to withdraw sponsorship of any international student on a programme at HE6 or above who does not attend and engage for a period of 60 consecutive days.

3.4.4   International students on taught programmes with Level 3, HE4 or HE5 awards who are sponsored under the Student Visa Route will be withdrawn if their attendance falls below 80%[4] for three consecutive months, unless there are exceptional and evidenced reasons for the non-attendance (e.g. illness).

3.4.5   Any international student who is sponsored by the University under the Student Visa Route seeking to suspend studies must first be referred to the UKVI Compliance Team before doing so.

3.4.6   For information regarding leave of absence for sponsored international students including vacation periods, illness, maternity leave, and other authorised leave please contact the International Student Support Team or UKVI Compliance Team.

3.5   Recording Meetings and Communications

It is essential that contact and interventions to support students, as well as absence concern meetings and their outcomes, are logged as Personal Tutor Interactions on the Pulse record system by the Personal Academic Tutor in a timely manner.

4.   ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT BOARD DECISIONS

Where a student has not satisfactorily attended and engaged with a module or number of modules and has been unsuccessful, an Assessment Board may decide it is appropriate for them to repeat a period of study (if applicable) or be withdrawn

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[4] Attendance thresholds may differ for specific programmes as identified in individual Programme Handbooks.

(made fail and finish), as outlined in the Assessment Regulations.

5.   REVIEWS AND APPEALS AGAINST WITHDRAWAL FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

5.1   Students who have been sent a *Notification of Intention to Withdraw* may send a request for a review of the decision to the Head of School within two weeks of the notification being sent providing a rationale, including any evidence of a valid reason for absence. At the discretion of the Head of School and Academic Director the student may, if appropriate, be offered re-admission to the University on the condition that they sign and comply with an *Attendance and Engagement Plan*.

5.2   Students who do not request a review or who have an unsuccessful review outcome may appeal the withdrawal decision using the Academic Appeals procedures detailed on the Student Policy Zone. A successful appeal outcome may also include re-admission to the University on the condition that they sign and comply with an *Attendance and Engagement Plan.*

6.   PUNCTUALITY

6.1   The University expects punctual attendance at all scheduled sessions. These may include face-to-face or online lectures, seminars, workshops, placements, tutorials, supervisor meetings, and other set interactions which are set out at module level in Module Guides and on the VLE and elsewhere.

6.2   Students should plan to arrive in good time for all scheduled sessions and remain for the duration of these. Late arrival at, as well as early departure from, scheduled sessions can be perceived as discourteous, unprofessional, and disruptive to other class members and tutors. The tutor has the discretion to reasonably refuse admission to students who arrive late.

6.3   Students who know in advance that they may be late to a scheduled session or who need to leave early should notify their Module Leader as soon as is practicably possible.

6.4   It should be noted that students who "check in" later than 10 minutes after the start of the class and/or who are recorded by their Module Tutor as attending later than 10 minutes after the start of the class, will have a late mark automatically shown on the register.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES[5]

7. ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

7.1 Attendance and Engagement Expectations

7.1.1   It is expected that all Postgraduate Research students meet with their Director of Studies/supervisor on at least a monthly basis up to the completion of their research, whilst taking account of the needs and wishes of both parties, the stage of the research project, and subject conventions.

7.1.2   It is the joint responsibility of the student and Director of Studies to ensure that these meetings are scheduled and for the Director of Studies to follow-up any engagement points missed by the student.

7.1.3   Ideally, there should be a minimum of two in-person meetings per semester where both parties agree it is feasible and assuming that the student is not registered as studying by distance learning. The remaining meetings may take place either in-person or via video calling.

7.1.4   Students are required to complete a Research Attendance form via Sharepoint either during or directly following the meeting with their supervisor.

7.2 Notified absence

If a postgraduate research student is unable to attend and/or engage for a period of time, for example due to illness, maternity, or other authorised absence, they should seek approval for a notified absence from both their Director of Studies and, in the case of international students, the UKVI Compliance Team. Please note that normally any approved absence must not exceed 60 days in duration and any international student must still be able to complete their studies within the time granted on their visa. Documents must be provided to the UKVI Compliance Team to be retained as evidence.

7.3 Non-attendance/engagement

7.3.1   Postgraduate research students who fail to submit a Research Student Attendance form during any month will be deemed to be absent from their research studies. They will be contacted by the Director of Studies by email and asked to explain the reason for non-attendance.

7.3.2   If a postgraduate research student fails to submit a Research Student Attendance form for two consecutive months, they will be invited to a meeting with their Director of Studies, and a member of the Research and Doctoral College to discuss

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[5] The specific attendance and engagement responsibilities assigned to Research Students and Directors of Studies are elaborated upon as part of their broader sets of responsibilities within the *Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors* and the *Research Degree Regulations*, available at: https://www.bolton.ac.uk/join-us/research-programmes/research-policies-and-documents/research-documents.

any concerns. In the case of international students, this meeting may also include a member of the International Student Support Team and UKVI Compliance Team. If a student fails to engage for 60 days the University will consider termination of registration and UKVI sponsorship withdrawal (if applicable), using the usual procedures for postgraduate research students.

7.4   **Remote Study Outside the UK – International Students**
International postgraduate research students sponsored under the Student Route who wish to undertake their research studies for a period of time outside the UK must receive approval from both the UKVI Compliance Team and their Director of Studies. Engagement and attendance expectations as set out above will apply.

ANNEX A: ABSENCE MONITORING PROCEDURE FOR TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

Stage	Action	Responsibility
Routine: Standard monitoring at module level	Module Tutors monitor attendance and engagement and report any absence concerns to Personal Academic Tutor.	Module Tutor
Informal: Short periods of absence or emerging patterns/concerns	Early intervention via routine meeting with Personal Academic Tutor. Personal Academic Tutor invites student to meet and discuss reasons for absence and offer support options.	Personal Academic Tutor
Stage 1: Attendance below 80%* threshold *over one month* *Threshold may differ for specific programmes	Absence Concern Email Report generated at the start of each month to identify students whose attendance falls below threshold. Email sent via SITs to Personal Academic Tutor. Personal Academic Tutor sends absence concern email to relevant students detailing implications for absence and range of support on offer.	Automated monthly report generated by SDM. Academic Support Services generate SITs letters to Personal Academic Tutors. Personal Academic Tutors send Absence Concern Emails to relevant students.
Stage 2: Attendance below 80%* threshold *over 2 weeks after* Absence Concern Email sent. *Threshold may differ for specific programmes.	First Absence Concern Meeting convened by Personal Academic Tutor (recorded on PULSE) Meeting takes place on agreed date/time*. Student asked to provide evidence of reason for absence. Formal Absence Warning issued, and Attendance Action Plan drawn up if no valid reason for absence. *Where a student does not attend the meeting without a valid explanation, the meeting will take place in their absence.	Personal Academic Tutor, Programme Leader *International Students* referred to International Student Support Team if required
Stage 3: Attendance below 80%* threshold *over 2 weeks*	Final Absence Concern Meeting convened by Personal Academic Tutor (recorded on PULSE).	Personal Academic Tutor, Academic Co-

after Initial Absence Concern Meeting. *Threshold may differ for specific programmes.	Meeting takes place on agreed date/time. Student asked to provide evidence of reason for continued absence. Where no attendance or valid explanation for absence, following approval by the Head of School Notification of Intention to Withdraw email sent by Academic Co-ordinator- R and R (Head of School and Personal Academic Tutor copied in - recorded on PULSE). Note: Following 60 days of non-attendance and having completed two absence concern meetings, UKVI sponsorship must be withdrawn.	ordinator – R and R *In the case of International Students* Also invite a member of the UKVI Compliance team.

ANNEX B: RESPONSIBILITIES

1. <u>Students on Taught Programmes are responsible for:</u>
   a. Punctual attendance at scheduled learning and teaching sessions associated with their programme of study and/or engaging with the online activities;
   b. Notifying their Module Tutors in advance that they are unable to attend scheduled classes or meetings and will be engaging on the VLE;
   c. Obtaining approval from their Programme Leader and Personal Academic Tutor for notified periods of absence;
   d. Notifying their Module Tutors if their attendance has been incorrectly recorded.

2. <u>Module Tutors are responsible for:</u>
   a. Reminding students of the importance of regular attendance and engagement.
   b. Verifying student attendance of scheduled sessions;
   c. Recording student attendance/absences on the registers in a timely manner (maximum of two weeks after the session);
   d. Keeping alert on student progress;
   e. Flagging up a period of absence or pattern of absence to the Programme Leader and Personal Academic Tutor.
   f. Flagging the absence of an apprentice to the School Apprenticeship Lead within the time period specified

3. <u>Personal Academic Tutors are responsible for:</u>
   a. Introducing themselves to their tutees and clarifying their role in relation to support, retention, and management of attendance/engagement;
   b. Checking their tutees' attendance records if absence issues have been identified;
   c. Carrying out scheduled tutorials with tutees which include discussion of any absence issues;
   d. Referring international students sponsored under Tier 4 or the Student Visa Route to the International Student Advisor if necessary;
   e. Referring tutees to other sources of support that may be available to them e.g. Student Liaison Officers, Disability Service, Counselling Service, Financial Advisor;
   f. Setting up and facilitating Absence Concern Meetings and inviting relevant staff (See Annex A);
   g. Drawing up *Attendance and Engagement Plans* for tutees;
   h. Issuing *Attendance and Engagement Warnings;*
   i. Keeping alert on the tutee's progress once the student is attending again;
   j. Referring the tutee to the Academic Co-ordinator for Recruitment and Retention if the tutee continues to fail to attend.

4. <u>Programme Leaders[6] are responsible for</u>:
   a. Ensuring that all teaching staff are maintaining accurate records of student attendance;
   b. Ensuring that students are informed of the importance of regular attendance at, and

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[6] Where taught programmes have large cohorts, this may be the role of the Cohort Leader.

engagement with, scheduled sessions - through programme induction (new and continuing students), and by referring to this policy and information in Programme Guides, Module Guides, and other programme documentation;

    c.   Authorising notified absences.

5.   <u>Postgraduate research students[7] are responsible for</u>

    a.   Scheduling and/or attending monthly research engagement meetings with their Director of Studies/supervisor ;

    b.   Completing the Research Attendance Form on Sharepoint;

    c.   Notifying their Director of Studies/supervisor of any meeting absences.

6.   <u>Directors of Studies[8] are responsible, *inter alia*, for:</u>

    a.   Ensuring that postgraduate research students understand their responsibilities with regards to attendance/engagement;

    b.   Contacting postgraduate research students if they fail to arrange as agreed, or attend, any scheduled engagement meetings;

    c.   Scheduling attendance concern meetings in line with paragraph 7.3 above;

    d.   Referring international postgraduate research students sponsored under the Student Visa Route to the UKVI Compliance Team and Research and Doctoral College where necessary;

    e.   Referring postgraduate research students to other student services and support that may be available to them.

7.   <u>Academic Co-ordinators for Recruitment and Retention are responsible for:</u>

    a.   Following up on attendance concerns identified by Personal Academic Tutors;

    b.   Together with Personal Academic Tutors attending the Final Absence Concern Meeting with students to discuss their attendance;

    c.   Liaising with the International Student Compliance Manager over international student attendance issues;

    d.   Issuing *Attendance and Engagement Plans and Warnings*;

    e.   Advising Heads of Schools of students who need to be withdrawn.

8.   <u>Heads of School and/or Research Coordinators are responsible for:</u>

    a.   Authorising the withdrawal of students who have failed to attend[9];

    b.   Ensuring teaching staff are aware of the Attendance and Engagement Policy and are promoting it to students and implementing it appropriately.

    c.   Ensuring that Directors of Studies are monitoring postgraduate research students' engagement in line with (4).

9.   <u>The Students' Union General Manager is responsible for:</u>

    a.   Monitoring the attendance of any sabbatical officer of the Students' Union who is

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[8] The specific attendance and engagement responsibilities assigned to Research Students and Directors of Studies are elaborated upon as part of their broader sets of responsibilities within the *Code of Practice for Research Students and Supervisors* and the *Research Degree Regulations*, available at: https://www.bolton.ac.uk/join-us/research-programmes/research-policies-and-documents/research-documents.

[9] In the case of postgraduate research students, final approval of student withdrawal is the responsibility of the Board of Studies for Research Degrees.

sponsored under Tier 4 or the Student Visa Route and notifying the International Student Compliance Manager of any absence concerns.

10. <u>The UKVI Compliance Team is responsible for:</u>
    a. Noting and attending Final Absence Concern meetings;
    b. Advising academic colleagues (Personal Academic Tutors, Programme Leaders, Directors of Studies, Heads of School) of UKVI procedure in relation to attendance and engagement and periods of absence
    c. Notifying the UKVI of withdrawn students in accordance with Home Office regulations at the time of withdrawal.

11. <u>The International Student Support Team is responsible for:</u>
    a. Providing support to International Students to help them improve their attendance; Attending the first absence concern meeting with the student and Personal Academic Tutor or Director of Studies

12. <u>The Research and Doctoral College is responsible for:</u>
    a. Monitoring reports which flag any missed monthly engagement meetings and flagging engagement concerns to the Director of Studies;
    b. Ensuring, as part of research induction, that research students are aware of their responsibility to engage;
    c. Ensuring that Directors of Studies are trained in handling engagement concerns and understand when to escalate to the Research and Doctoral College and UKVI Compliance Team.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY	
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