BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY
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ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Note: Hyperlinks have been provided. For other University documents (shown in italics) please see the Policies page of the main University website (http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies) or visit the Academic Advice webpages (http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice).

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Principles

1 The University recognises that there is a strong link between student attendance/engagement and student success, and therefore actively supports and encourages students to participate in learning sessions and to engage with learning activities. In order to do this, the University monitors levels of attendance and engagement:

- Students are encouraged and supported to fully engage with their studies so that they acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed
- Monitoring engagement and attendance can identify students at risk of withdrawing from, or failing, their course, and enable support mechanisms to be put in place

2 An erratic pattern of attendance/engagement can be an early indication of problems that may lead to underachievement, failure to progress, or withdrawal. Early identification of, and timely intervention with such students, enhances retention and wellbeing.

3 The University has a duty to monitor the attendance and engagement of its students to fulfil its legal obligation to inform relevant external agencies of their registration status.[1]

Applicability and Scope

4 This policy applies to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, whether studying at any University campus or by distance learning.

5 This policy **does not** apply to postgraduate research (MPhil/PhD), or Professional Doctorate students who should refer instead to their appropriate *Code of practice*.

6 This policy supports the following University policies and procedures:

- *Learning Partnership Agreement*
- *International Student Policy*
- *Attendance Monitoring and Reporting (International Students) Procedure*

Responsibilities

7 Ownership of this policy lies with the Academic Registry.

Definitions

8 **Attendance**: The presence of the student during the scheduled teaching or learning activity for the entire session (including remote attendance for online, live sessions);

9 **Engagement**: Active participation by the student with their studies (attendance or distance-based) and use of resources to support their learning, including:

[1] This includes students in receipt of financial support and, for international students, the University's compliance with the requirements of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) as a Tier 4 licence holder.

- Attendance of scheduled learning and teaching sessions and activities;
- Active contribution to personal and group tutorials, lectures and seminars;
- Use of library facilities and other learning resources;
- Engagement with and submission of assessment tasks set;
- Attendance at examinations or time-constrained assessment activities;
- Responding in a timely manner to formal communications from the University, such as letters, emails, text messages and telephone calls.

10 **Scheduled teaching and learning activities** include:

- Lectures, seminars and tutorials
- Pre-sessional English language or programme preparation courses where these are a condition of entry
- Project and dissertation supervision meetings
- Practical classes, demonstrations and workshops
- Presentations and performances
- External visits
- Study abroad and distance learning activities
- Clinical, work experience and work-based placement sessions

Policy

11 The University expects students to:

- Attend and/or engage in **all** scheduled learning and teaching activities forming part of their programme of study, including those run by external professionals/trainers;
- Attend punctually and for the full duration of all such activities;
- Make full use of the available resources to support their learning;
- Complete both formative and summative assessment tasks at the first opportunity.

12 Students are expected to participate in their learning, to take responsibility for their own development and through such engagement to demonstrate a positive attitude to their studies.

13 The University will monitor students in order to identify those whose attendance and engagement raises concerns that they may be experiencing difficulties. Attendance of Tier 4 students is subject to additional monitoring to meet the requirements of the UKVI. (See Attendance Monitoring and Reporting (International Students) Procedure)

- Where attendance and / or engagement levels raise concerns, the University will take appropriate steps to provide support. The initial focus will be on support and wellbeing for the student.
- Continued attendance and / or engagement issues will trigger communications designed to encourage students to re-engage with their studies.
- Following all interventions, where students are deemed to be no longer attending, their registration may be withdrawn and they will be reported, as applicable, to the Student Loans Company (SLC), the UKVI, their employer or sponsor, and/or their Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) to meet the University's statutory reporting duty.

14 Personal Tutors have the authority to grant short periods of absence to students for personal or religious reasons. The University reserves the right to refuse any request for authorised absence where the pattern of attendance and engagement already gives cause for concern.

15 Requests for authorised absence will be assessed on an individual basis, and where relevant, students may be advised to follow the mitigating circumstances or interruption of studies procedures.

16 All decisions taken under this policy will be made on a case by case basis to ensure that students are offered support according to their needs (e.g. learning disability or other protected characteristic).

17 Students will have the right to respond to a recommendation to withdraw them from their studies under this policy. Responses should be submitted in writing to the Academic Registry within five working days of the notification to the student and should be accompanied by appropriate evidence. The final decision resides with the Head of School or nominee.

18 The University will treat any deliberate attempt by a student to circumvent this policy - e.g. by asking another student to register on their behalf - extremely seriously. Any such attempt may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Operational Guidance

19 These Guidelines support the University's Attendance and Engagement Policy.

Monitoring and recording

20 The University will monitor student attendance and engagement and may draw upon the following records to inform an overall profile for a student:

- Submission of assessment tasks as recorded on the University's Student Records System;
- Engagement with the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), e.g. accessing of materials and participation in discussion board activities on Blackboard;
- Student registers taken during lectures, seminars and similar activities, or during formal examinations;
- Usage of the University Library and other learning resources, e.g. borrowing of books, and accessing e-books or journal articles;
- Swiping of the Student ID card to gain access to University premises.

21 All data will be held and processed in accordance with the University's *Data Protection Policy*.

22 Where attendance and/or engagement levels raise concern, the University will intervene in accordance with the process for unauthorised absence outlined below, which triggers communications with the students concerned.

Communicating with students

23 All communications will be by email to the student's University email account in the first instance.

24 Where hardcopy correspondence is required, it will be sent to the student's registered term-time and/or home address as recorded on the University's Student Records System, normally at the point of withdrawal.

Unauthorised absence[2]

25 The University monitors student attendance and engagement in order to take action in cases where records indicate that students may be experiencing difficulties.

a The initial focus is on support and wellbeing for the student. Where a student has been absent without authorisation normally for 5 or more consecutive teaching incidences/points of contact on a module, the Module Tutor will contact the student to ascertain any underlying reason, and to encourage them to resume their studies. Where necessary students will be signposted to the appropriate student service for advice, support and guidance.

[2] Some courses may have additional requirements around attendance. These will normally be a validation requirement from a PSRB responsible for accrediting the programme and will be specified in the relevant Programme Handbook provided at registration. For the avoidance of doubt, individual programme requirements will supersede this policy.

b After an initial communication has been made, and records show a continued cause for concern, eg unauthorised absence of normally 10 consecutive teaching incidences/points of contact on a module, the Module Tutor will raise concerns about the student with Academic Registry. At this point a formal communication with the student will be made, reiterating the University's concern and encouraging re-engagement with the programme, while also providing notification of the potential consequences of non-attendance/engagement. Students will be instructed to make contact with their Personal Tutor (or named academic) to arrange a meeting to discuss their attendance and engagement on their programme and to plan any catch-up work required.[3]

26 A student who has been absent without authorisation for 20 or more consecutive working days and/or has no evidence of engagement with their learning activities, and/or has failed to respond satisfactorily to University attendance communications, will be informed by Academic Registry that a recommendation for their withdrawal is being made. The student will be held responsible for any fees or other charges that may arise from this decision.

27 A student who is being recommended for withdrawal under this process will have 5 working days to respond in writing to the Academic Registry. All responses must be supported by evidence which may include:

- Evidence of their attendance and engagement with their studies;
- Acknowledged intention to engage with their studies;
- Evidence of exceptional circumstances as a reason for their lack of attendance or engagement.

The Head of School or nominee will assess responses received. Where a response is accepted, the student's withdrawal status will be set aside and they will be informed in writing. Where the response/evidence is not deemed satisfactory, the Head of School or nominee may take the decision to either withdraw the student or to contact the student's Personal Tutor to put an action plan in place, with the student informed accordingly.

28 If a response is not received, the recommendation to terminate the student's registration will be discussed with the Head of School or nominee, and agreed action to withdraw the student put into effect.

29 Students whose registration is withdrawn for non-attendance will be reported, as appropriate, to the Student Loans Company (SLC), the UKVI, their employer or sponsor, and/or their Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) as applicable.

Authorised absence

30 Students may request authorisation for short periods of absence for personal or religious reasons in writing from their Personal Tutor. Wherever possible such absences should be requested in advance and at the earliest available opportunity.

31 Requests for absences of more than five working days will be considered as exceptional due to the potential impact on a student's studies. Such requests must be

[3] Where a student's health or wellbeing causes the University concern regarding their fitness to study on a course, the student may also be referred under the *Fitness to study procedure*.

made in writing, and will only be granted if the Personal Tutor agrees with the proposal, and the student concerned recognises their responsibility for completing any outstanding academic work.

32 Requests for authorised absence will be assessed on an individual basis, and where relevant, students may be advised to follow the Mitigating Circumstances or Interruption of Studies procedures.

33 Authorised absence for Tier 4 students is subject to the *Attendance Monitoring and Reporting (International Students) Procedure*.

34 For cases of extreme absence students should seek advice from the appropriate support services within the University and consider interrupting their studies (See: http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/changing-direction).

35 Personal Tutors (Occasionally Course Leaders. See: *Personal Tutoring Policy*) are responsible for approving all requests for authorised absence and for informing relevant teaching and administrative colleagues.

36 The University reserves the right to refuse any request for authorised absence where the student's pattern of attendance and engagement already gives cause for concern; reasons for the decision will be given.

Illness

37 Short-term absence due to illness (1-2 days) does not need to be authorised, but the student should contact their Personal Tutor to inform them if they are not able to attend a scheduled activity together with the likely date of their return. For longer periods of illness (3-5 days) students should submit a self-certification form.

38 Where sudden illness affects assessment (e.g. deadlines not being met) students should apply for mitigating circumstances to be taken into consideration (see: http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/assessment-and-examination/exceptional-circumstances).

Raising awareness

39 Students should be made aware of the policy via the following means:

- The Terms and Conditions of Admission to which students sign up on acceptance to the programme and renew annually on re-enrolment (see: http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/managing-your-studies/terms-and-conditions-of-acceptance);
- During Induction;
- The Academic Advice section of the University website (see: http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice);
- Informal communications and updates.