



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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QUALITY & TEACHING

[BNU.AC.UK](http://BNU.AC.UK)

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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 (<https://www.bucks.ac.uk/about-us/how-our-university-operates/policies-and-strategies>) or visit the Academic Advice webpages (<https://www.bucks.ac.uk/current-students/registry-helpdesk-and-academic-advice>).

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Registry.

## Principles

- 1 The purpose of attendance monitoring is to ensure the University provides the best possible support for all our learners so be successful in their learning. Learners are expected to be proactive with communicating with their course team if they experience difficulties engaging with their studies and to contact the Student Hub for any additional support required.
- 2 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
- 3 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.
- 4 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.<sup>1</sup>

## University Student Support

- 5 If you are experiencing any problems or concerns during your time at Buckinghamshire New University, we strongly encourage you to reach out for support so that we can help you to engage and participate with your studies. You are welcome to contact the Student Hub on [students@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:students@bucks.ac.uk) or 01494 603 020, we are located at N1.02 at High Wycombe and on level two at our Uxbridge and Aylesbury campuses if you would prefer to speak to us in person.

## Applicability and Scope

- 6 This policy applies to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students and apprentices, whether studying at any University campus or Partner institutions or by distance learning or as apprentices.
- 7 This policy **does not** apply to postgraduate research (MPhil/PhD), or Professional Doctorate students who should refer instead to their appropriate *Code of practice*.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- 8 This policy supports the following University policies and procedures:
- *Learning Partnership Agreement*
  - *International Student Policy*
  - *Attendance Monitoring and Reporting (International Students) Procedure*
  - *Fitness to Study*

## Responsibilities

- 9 Ownership of this policy lies with the Academic Registry.

## Definitions

- 10 **Attendance:** The presence of the student during the scheduled teaching or learning activity for the entire session (including remote attendance for online, live sessions);
- 11 **Engagement:** Active participation by the student with their studies (attendance or distance-based) and use of resources to support their learning, including:
- 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;
  - The use of the Aptem Apprentice platform to record 'off the job' training hours for apprenticeships.
- 12 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
  - Apprentice tripartite progress reviews

## Policy

- 13 The University expects students and apprentices to:
- Attend and/or engage in **all** scheduled learning and teaching activities forming part of their programme of study including scheduled online activities, run by the

- University and those run by external professionals/trainers, and/or in conjunction with employers;
- 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.
- 14 Students and apprentices 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.
- 15 The University will monitor students and apprentices in order to identify those whose attendance, and engagement, including scheduled online activities, 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, including scheduled online activities 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.
  - Apprentices' employers will be notified of any unauthorised absences or punctuality issues.
  - Attendance is monitored in line with ESFA and Ofsted requirements where applicable.
- 16 Personal Tutors have the authority to grant short periods of absence to students for personal or religious reasons.
- 17 The University reserves the right to refuse any request for authorised absence where the pattern of attendance and engagement already gives cause for concern.
- 18 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.
- 19 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).
- 20 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.

- 21 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

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

### Monitoring and recording

- 23 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;
  - Attendance patterns as recorded on Attendance Monitoring System, AMS and MyBNU;
  - 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;
  - An apprentice's engagement with the Aptem Apprentice platform to log 'off the job' activity.
- 24 All data will be held and processed in accordance with the University's *Data Protection Policy*.
- 25 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.
- 26 The intention is to re-engage students, offering support where required. This policy is used alongside the *Fitness to Study Policy*, which supports students in their studies.

### Communicating with students

- 27 All communications will be by email to the student's University email account in the first instance.
- 28 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.
- 29 The Apprenticeship Hub will communicate with the nominated employer contact by email.

### Unauthorised absence<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

- 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.
  - b After an initial communication has been made, and records show a continued cause for concern, e.g. 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.<sup>3</sup> This will be supported by email communication from the Student Hub to invite the student to engage with relevant support services.
- 31 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.
- 32 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.
- 33 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.

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<sup>3</sup> 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*.



- 34 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

- 35 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.
- 36 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 made in writing and will only be granted if the Personal Tutor and employer where applicable agrees with the proposal, and the student concerned recognises their responsibility for completing any outstanding academic work.
- 37 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.
- 38 Authorised absence for Tier 4 students is subject to the *Attendance Monitoring and Reporting (International Students) Procedure*.
- 39 For continued cases of absence students should seek and be encouraged to seek advice from the Student Hub who will signpost appropriate support within the University and consider interrupting their studies (<http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/changing-direction>).
- 40 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, including the Student Hub ([Students@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:Students@bucks.ac.uk)) and Apprenticeship Hub ([Apprenticeships@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:Apprenticeships@bucks.ac.uk)) where applicable.
- 41 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.
- 42 Any apprentice will miss 4 weeks or more of their apprenticeship will be interrupted and ESFA funding paused.

## Illness

- 43 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.
- 44 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>).
- 45 Where illness results/ will result in 4 weeks or more non-participation on an apprenticeship, the student will be interrupted, and apprenticeship funding paused.

## Raising awareness

- 46 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.

## University Student Support

- 45 If you are experiencing any problems or concerns during your time at Buckinghamshire New University, we strongly encourage you to reach out for support so that we can help you to engage and participate with your studies. You are welcome to contact the Student Hub on [students@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:students@bucks.ac.uk) or 01494 603 020, we are located at N1.02 at High Wycombe and on level two at our Uxbridge and Aylesbury campuses if you would prefer to speak to us in person.