



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



Attendance and Engagement Policy



Contents

Purpose.....	3
Applicability and Scope	3
Policy.....	3
Responsibilities.....	6
Table of Definitions	8
Appendix I: Equality Impact Assessment.....	9
Appendix II: Attendance and Engagement Process.....	13

Approved by: Senate

Date first published: Jan-2022

Owner: Academic Registrar

Date updated: Dec-2025

Review Date: Dec-2026

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Purpose

- 1 The purpose of attendance and engagement monitoring is to ensure the University provides the best possible support for all learners so they are successful in their learning.
- 2 The University recognises that there is a strong link between learner attendance / engagement and academic success, and therefore actively supports and encourages learners to participate in scheduled learning sessions and to engage with all learning activities. In order to do this, the University monitors levels of attendance and engagement:
 - Learners are encouraged and supported to engage fully with their studies so that they acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed
 - Monitoring engagement and attendance can identify learners 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 learners, enhances retention and wellbeing.
- 4 The University has a duty to monitor the attendance and engagement of its learners to fulfil its statutory obligations to inform relevant external agencies of their enrolment status.

Applicability and Scope

- 5 This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught learners including apprentices, whether studying at any University campus or Partner institution, or by distance learning.
- 6 The policy also sets out how the University monitors sponsored learners under the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Student Route in accordance with its responsibilities as a Sponsor.
- 7 This policy **does not** apply to postgraduate research (MPhil/PhD), or Professional Doctorate learners who should refer instead to their appropriate *Code of Practice*.

Policy

Expectations

- 8 The University expects learners and apprentices to:
 - Engage in **all** scheduled learning and teaching activities forming part of their programme of study including scheduled online activities, run by the University or Partner institution and those run by external professionals/trainers, and/or in conjunction with employers (for apprentices this also includes tripartite reviews);
 - Attend punctually and for the full duration of all such activities – any learners arriving more than 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of the session will be marked as late; any learners arriving more than 30 minutes after the scheduled start time of the session will be marked as absent;
 - Make full use of the available resources to support their learning;

- Complete and submit both formative and summative assessment tasks within agreed timeframes.
 - Notify all relevant parties in advance of the scheduled activity when they are unable to attend.
- 9 Where a learner has reasonable adjustments, the above will be considered in respect of those adaptations.
- 10 Learners 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.
- 11 The University will treat any deliberate attempt by a learner to circumvent this policy - e.g. by asking another learner to register attendance on their behalf - extremely seriously. Any such attempt may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Monitoring

- 12 The University will ensure learners and apprentices are monitored in order to identify those whose attendance and engagement raises concerns and indicates that they may be experiencing difficulties. Attendance of Student Route students is subject to additional monitoring to meet the requirements of UKVI (see 24-29 below).
- Attendance records are monitored on a weekly basis. Where attendance and / or engagement levels (including at scheduled online activities) raise concerns, the University will take appropriate steps to provide support. The initial focus will be on support and wellbeing for the learner, encouraging re-engagement. This policy is used alongside the Fitness to Study Policy which supports learners in their studies.
 - Communications which are designed to encourage learners to re-engage with their studies and to warn learners of the consequences of non-attendance, will be sent where learners fail to attend for two weeks. Where there are acceptable extenuating circumstances, the University will take these into account.
 - Following all interventions and non-engagement with support services, learners whose unauthorised non-engagement persists beyond six weeks will normally 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.
 - Sustained lack of attendance or engagement where learners have received **four** communications from Academic Registry, **and** their overall attendance is 30% or below, will be issued with a recommendation of withdrawal notification from their course.
 - Where the pattern of successive weeks of non-attendance straddles University vacations, the attendance record will not be reset at the start of the following term or semester. The attendance record will only be reset at the start of the next level/academic year.
 - Apprentices' employers will be notified of any unauthorised absences or punctuality issues. Apprentices who miss 4 weeks or more (including because of illness) of their apprenticeship will be interrupted from their studies and EFSA funding paused. Attendance is monitored in line with ESFA and Ofsted requirements where applicable.
 - Triggers may vary for apprenticeship courses delivered by block weeks. Your course team and/or the Apprenticeship Hub will confirm any course-specific attendance monitoring requirements.

- 13 All decisions taken under this policy will ensure that learners are offered support according to their needs.

Appealing the withdrawal decision

- 14 Learners have the right to appeal against a recommendation to withdraw them from their studies under this policy. All Learners who wish to appeal the decision must do so in writing to the Academic Registrar (or nominee) within 10 University working days of formal notification of the decision.
- 15 The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will review the case to ensure proper procedure (as outlined above) was followed. Documented extenuating circumstances may be considered where these are genuinely beyond a learner's control or ability to foresee, and which seriously impair their ability to engage with/attend their teaching and learning.
- 16 The Academic Registrar's decision is final and not subject to review by any other University body.
- 17 All learners should note that being suspended, or placed on debt hold or debt exclusion are not grounds for seeking to appeal a decision to terminate registration on the grounds of non-attendance/engagement.

Authorised Absence

- 18 Personal Tutors/Course Leaders have the authority to grant short periods of absence to learners for personal or compassionate reasons. Wherever possible, such absences should be requested in advance and at the earliest available opportunity.
- 19 Learners should not normally be absent from scheduled teaching sessions for more than 5 working days and must contact tutors where they are unable to attend, e.g. due to a short-term illness. Where sudden illness affects assessment, learners should apply for mitigating circumstances to be taken into consideration. <https://www.bucks.ac.uk/current-students/registry-helpdesk-and-academic-advice/exceptional-circumstances>
- 20 Requests for absences of more than 5 working days will be considered as exceptional due to the potential impact on a learner's studies. Such requests must be made in writing and will only be granted where the Personal Tutor/Course Leader (and employer where applicable) agrees with the proposal, and the learner understands their responsibility for completing any outstanding academic work. (For UKVI students see 24 below)
- 21 Requests for authorised absence may be refused where the pattern of attendance and engagement already gives cause for concern. Where relevant, learners may be advised to follow the Interruption of Studies procedure.

Apprenticeship absence reporting

- 22 Apprentices' attendance at university scheduled sessions (in person or via remote delivery) is part of their off-the-job training completed within their contractual hours of employment. Attending university is therefore considered an extension of their workplace responsibilities. Apprentices should not attend university sessions if they are off sick or on annual leave.

- 23 Apprentices must report all short-term unplanned absences to both the Apprenticeship Hub (apprenticeships@bnu.ac.uk or by phone 01296 744202) and their employer.

UKVI Student Route Sponsored students (UKVI students)

- 24 Under the duties of the UKVI Student Route Sponsorship, the University is required to continually monitor all sponsored learners, to keep attendance and engagement records and report non-attendance and withdrawal of sponsorship.
- 25 Sponsored learners must enrol with the University within two weeks of the start date of their programme. Failure to enrol on time will result in the UKVI being informed and the learner's sponsorship withdrawn.
- 26 UKVI learners should not normally be absent from scheduled teaching sessions for more than 5 working days and must contact tutors where they are unable to attend, e.g. due to a short-term illness. Expected absences for more than 5 working days during scheduled teaching weeks must be authorised by the International Compliance team, and for exceptional reasons only.
- 27 UKVI learners are expected to attend all scheduled teaching sessions, and their attendance records are monitored on a weekly basis. Communications warning UKVI learners of the consequences of non-attendance will be sent where learners fail to attend for two weeks, with further communications regarding withdrawal of registration to be sent where the non-attendance continues.
- 28 Learners whose unauthorised non-engagement persists beyond six weeks will normally have their sponsorship withdrawn and the UKVI will be informed. Where there are acceptable extenuating circumstances, the University will take these into account.
- 29 Where UKVI learners are undertaking work placements, research programmes or undertaking the dissertation element of their programme and there are no scheduled teaching sessions, engagement is monitored through tutorial sessions with the respective Course Teams. Course Teams are required to maintain records of tutorial/supervisions sessions and provide evidence of these on request.

Responsibilities

- 30 Learners are expected to be proactive in engaging with attendance recording mechanisms and must communicate with their course team if they experience difficulties engaging with their studies.
- 31 Teaching staff, both at University campuses and at Partner Institutions, are responsible for ensuring learner attendance is recorded.
- 32 The Academic Registry is responsible for contacting learners whose engagement causes concern. Academic Registry is also responsible for processing recommendations for withdrawal of learners, including those following recommendations from Partner institutions, and for informing relevant internal departments and external agencies, except where a Partner institution has a direct relationship with an external agency and a legal obligation itself to make such a report itself.
- 33 For learners studying at BNU campuses, the Directorate for Student Success (DfSS) will communicate with learners identified as being of concern due to their patterns of attendance

and engagement and offer support to re-engage them with their studies. Where learners do not respond to such communications, or fail to re-engage with their studies, they may be recommended for withdrawal.

- 34 Partner institutions are responsible for identifying learners whose attendance gives cause for concern, for supporting learners to re-engage, and for informing Academic Registry of those being recommended for withdrawal.
- 35 International Compliance is responsible for informing UKVI of sponsored learner non-attendance and withdrawal via the Sponsor Management System.

Table of Definitions

Attendance	The presence of the learner during the scheduled teaching or learning activity for the entire session (including remote attendance for live online sessions).
Engagement	Active participation by the learner with their studies (attendance or distance-based) and use of resources to support their learning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
Scheduled teaching and learning sessions/ activities	These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Attendance and Engagement Records	The University will monitor learners' attendance and engagement and may draw upon the following records to inform an overall profile: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Learner ID card to gain access to University premises; • An apprentice's engagement with the Aptem Apprentice platform to log 'off the job' activity.

Appendix I: Equality Impact Assessment

As a University, we are committed to enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We have a legal (Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty 2011) and ethical obligation to ensure our policies, systems and processes are fair, inclusive and ensure every member of the BNU community can thrive.

Whilst we all have protected characteristics, we know there are certain characteristics and communities that are marginalised and underrepresented in Higher Education and the workplace. These are: different ethnicities (including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) Disabled individuals; neurodiverse individuals; pregnancy (including maternity and paternity impact); the LGBT+ community; carers; people of different faiths; people impacted by menopause and individuals from a range of backgrounds including: socio-economic disadvantage, homelessness, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers. We also know individuals have multiple intersectional experiences and different points in their lives and careers.

The Attendance and Engagement Policy at BNU is well-aligned with the Equality Strategy priorities. It promotes an inclusive and supportive environment, empowers learners by involving them in their educational process, and takes proactive steps to address and reduce inequalities. Continuous monitoring and support mechanisms ensure that all learners, regardless of background, have the opportunity to succeed and be themselves within the university community.

1. With reference to the protected characteristics enshrined in the Equality Act 2010, in what ways does this policy enhance equality and the access of opportunity at BNU?

The policy enhances equality and access to opportunity at BNU in the following ways, considering the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

1. Reasonable Adjustments

The policy explicitly acknowledges the need for reasonable adjustments for learners with disabilities (Section 9), ensuring that these learners are not disadvantaged and can fully participate in their studies.

2. Early Identification and Support

By monitoring attendance and engagement, the University can identify learners at risk of underperformance or withdrawal early (Sections 2, 3, 12). This proactive approach allows for timely interventions and support, which can be particularly beneficial for learners from marginalized or under-represented groups who may face additional barriers.

3. Appeal Process

The inclusion of an appeal process (Sections 14-17) provides a fair mechanism for learners to contest decisions that may affect their academic standing. This ensures that decisions are transparent and can be reviewed, protecting learners from potential bias or unfair treatment.

4. Support Mechanisms

The policy emphasizes support and well-being (Sections 12, 13), showing a commitment to creating an inclusive environment where all learners, regardless of their background, can thrive academically.

2. In what ways does the process adversely impact individuals from marginalised and underrepresented communities?

Despite its positive aspects, the policy may have adverse impacts on individuals from marginalized and underrepresented communities:

1. Strict Attendance Rules

The strict rules around punctuality and attendance (Section 8) might disproportionately affect learners who face challenges such as childcare responsibilities, health issues, or financial constraints. These challenges are more prevalent among certain marginalized groups.

2. Reporting Requirements

The requirements for UKVI-sponsored learners (Sections 24-29) may add pressure and stress, particularly for international learners who already face significant cultural and logistical challenges. This could impact their mental health and overall well-being.

3. Limited Absence Flexibility

The policy allows only short periods of absence without prior authorization (Sections 18-21), which might not accommodate the needs of learners dealing with complex personal issues, such as those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

3. How does this process work towards achieving the BNU Equality Objectives as outlined in the [Equality Strategy 2023-2028](#)? Please signpost objectives and actions in the BNU Equality Strategy.

The three priorities of the Equality Strategy are addressed below.

Priority 1: Involve and Empower Our Community

The policy supports this priority through:

1. Proactive Engagement

By monitoring attendance and engagement (Sections 2, 3, 12), the policy identifies learners at risk and encourages them to engage fully with their studies. This ensures that all learners are given opportunities to succeed, thus empowering them in their academic journey.

2. Support and Well-being

The emphasis on providing support and encouraging re-engagement (Sections 12, 13) involves the university community in creating a supportive learning environment. This fosters a sense of belonging and encourages learners to take an active role in their education.

3. Appeal Process

The right to appeal decisions (Sections 14-17) empowers learners by giving them a voice in the decision-making process, ensuring they are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Priority 2: Take Action to Tackle Inequalities

1. Early Identification and Intervention

Monitoring erratic patterns of attendance and engagement (Section 3) helps identify learners who may be struggling, allowing the university to intervene early and provide necessary support. This can help mitigate the effects of any socio-economic or personal disadvantages.

2. Reasonable Adjustments

By considering reasonable adjustments for learners with disabilities (Section 9), the policy ensures that these learners are not disadvantaged.

3. Targeted Support for At-risk Learners

The policy's provision for identifying and supporting learners who are at risk of withdrawal or failure (Sections 2, 12) ensures that marginalized and under-represented groups receive the help they need to succeed.

Priority 3: Build a University Community Where People Can Be Themselves

1. Inclusive environment

The support mechanisms (Sections 12, 13) and the consideration of reasonable adjustments (Section 9) create an inclusive environment where learners feel valued and supported, allowing them to be themselves.

2. Appeal process

The appeal process (Sections 14-17) and the clear guidelines for attendance and engagement (Sections 8, 10) ensure that all learners are treated fairly and with respect. This transparency helps build trust within the university community.

Appendix 2: Attendance and engagement process

I-7 for all learners at BNU campuses

8 for UKVI Student Route international students only

Action	Responsibility	Process with Purpose/Aim
1. Completion of Electronic Register.	Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue the Unique Session Code to learners at the start of the class. The code can be obtained from the Attendance Monitoring System 48 hours before the scheduled start time of the session. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the Electronic Register at start of session where numbers allow <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a paper register and update Electronic Register within the 72 hours following the session. Paper registers can be accessed via the Attendance Monitoring System. <p>NB: it remains the academics' responsibility to open the register and check it via the Attendance Monitoring System. Learners who do not appear on the register i.e. have not completed enrolment, can be added to a register manually, but they should be reminded to speak to their Registry Officer to ensure they are added to the timetable going forward.</p> <p>See User Guide available on BEN for full details and instructions for using the system.</p>
2. Completion of Electronic Register.	Learner	<p>All learners should 'self-register' their attendance via the MyBNU app using the Unique Session Code provided to them at the start of the class, unless instructed otherwise (i.e. if the academic wishes to take the register themselves). This should be done within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time of the session.</p> <p>(NB: Once learners are Withdrawn, their record stops going to Timetabling and AMS but their existing register stays on AMS for reporting purposes.)</p>

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<p>3. Managing Unplanned Absences.</p>	<p>Academic</p>	<p>Unplanned absences should be checked and managed in the Attendance Monitoring System, either marked as unauthorised, or one of the approved reasons applied.</p> <p>See User Guide available on BEN for full details and instructions.</p>
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<p>4. Contacting learners with unauthorised absences.</p>	<p>Academic Registry</p>	<p>The Academic Registry runs the Attendance Report on a weekly basis to identify any learners with zero attendance and engagement (including those with persistent authorised absence).</p> <p>Learners with two weeks of successive zero attendance are issued with the T1 template communication.</p> <p>See Attendance Process Timeframe page below regarding specific requirements.</p> <p>The Academic Registry will record all contact made with learners and all responses from learners.</p> <p>Refer to flowchart and timeframe table below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If learner responds, the Academic Registry must record the learner’s response and take the appropriate actions to support learner, i.e. referring learner to support services, offering one-to-one to catch up on academic work, contacting safeguarding@bnu.ac.uk if a safeguarding concern is raised by learner. • If the learner does not respond to communication or does not re-engage with lessons over the next two weeks as specified in the ‘Attendance Process Timeframe’ table below, the Academic Registry must record this and issue the T2 communication. • If the learner does not respond to the communication or does not re-engage with lessons over the next two weeks (as specified in the Attendance Process Timeframe table below), the Academic Registry must record this and issue the T3
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		<p>withdrawal warning notification.</p> <p>Engagement indicators include submissions, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), deadlines, personal tutoring sessions, Support Services (all services in DfSS), responding to emails, phone calls and letters.</p>
5.	Academic Registry (SCA & SRDF)	<p>Before sending the T3 template, Registry Officer checks with DfSS to identify if the learner is engaging with any support services. This will then inform next steps – either issuing the T3 withdrawal letter or pausing the withdrawal pending the success of the DfSS re-engagement interventions.</p> <p>Attendance Monitoring team sends T3 template saying that the learner’s withdrawal is being recommended unless they get in touch within 10 working days and provide evidence of documented extenuating circumstances or process errors to explain their non-attendance. Copy to Personal Tutor and Course Leader and compliance-admin@bnu.ac.uk if UKVI learner.</p>
6.	Academic Registry (SCA & SRDF)	<p>Response received:</p> <p>Action taken as appropriate with the College or the learner may be referred to the Fitness to Study procedure in DfSS so that a re-engagement plan can be put in place where appropriate. If decision to withdraw is reversed, they will remain on the learners of concern list monitored by the Retention Panel.</p>
7.	Academic Registry (SCA & SRDF) and Dean of College	<p>No response after 10 working days:</p> <p>Registry Officer completes Withdrawal form for learner, attaches copy of communications and arranges for Dean of College (DoC) to consider.</p> <p>If withdrawal form is signed-off by DoC, Registry Officer sends withdrawal form to SRDF who will notify the relevant funding bodies.</p> <p>Registry Officer sends Template 4 Withdrawal Confirmation to the learner confirming withdrawal has taken place.</p> <p>If withdrawal form is not signed-off, the Dean of College contacts the Retention Team and the</p>

		<p>learner's Course Leader/Personal Tutor to plan actions to be taken, contacts learner and updates Registry Officer.</p> <p>Registry Officer notifies Attendance Monitoring Team to update their tracker.</p>
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8. Enrolled UKVI learners: Weekly check of attendance monitoring reports	Academic Registry & International Compliance	<p>UKVI learner attendance on the UKVI Tracker is reviewed weekly.</p> <p>Learners taken through the attendance monitoring process and the withdrawal process as outlined above. UKVI informed and International Compliance sends sponsorship withdrawal notification to learner and reports any concerns or implications in terms of Basic Compliance Assessment metrics to the University's Authorising Officer.</p>
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Specific arrangements for learners who don't enrol

9. Non-arrival of learner for enrolment within 2 weeks of course start date	Academic Registry - SRDF / International Compliance	<p>New learners: 2 weeks after the start of the course, SRDF identifies learners who have not arrived/enrolled and cancels their registration. International Compliance cancels their sponsorship with UKVI.</p> <p>Any exceptions (e.g. learners with specific reasons for late arrival) to be considered by the UKVI Authorising Officer.</p>
	Academic Registry - SRDF	<p>Returning learners: 2 weeks after the start of the course, Academic Registry (SRDF) identifies those who have not re-enrolled (including those who have not been permitted to re-enrol due to outstanding tuition fees debts from their previous academic year) and confirms withdrawal based on the last date of engagement.</p>

	<p>International Compliance</p>	<p>International Compliance contacts learners with warning of imminent withdrawal. Where relevant, International Compliance cancels their sponsorship with UKVI.</p> <p>Learners who inform the University of specific circumstances which have delayed their return are considered by the UKVI Authorising Officer. Academic Registry are notified of learners to be withdrawn and follow the existing withdrawal process.</p>
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	Number of Consecutive absences missed that trigger the Attendance Process	Communication T1	Timeframe in between contact points	Communication T2	Timeframe in between contact points	Communication T3	Learner appeal	Communication T4	Total Timeframe missed attendance to withdrawal
All years including C23 and Foundation Year / All taught learners	2 weeks	Learner issued with template T1 after not attending classes for 2 weeks	2 weeks	If no response or improved attendance within 2 further weeks, learner is issued with template T2	2 weeks	<p>If no response or improved attendance within 2 further weeks, Academic Registry will confirm withdrawal decision with Dean of College and issue the learner with template T3.</p> <p>Learners who have received four T communication templates and their overall attendance is 30% or below will be issued with template T3.</p>	Learner must appeal to the Academic Registrar within 10 working days of receiving the T3.	Confirm dismissal	8 weeks
In between these touch points, CMS & AMS should be updated by the academic team to maintain attendance records and to see if the learner is engaging with support services such as IDD, Counselling or Safeguarding. Please see flow chart for further information.									



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