

## **Student Academic Engagement Policy (revised)**

### Context for changes:

- External feedback related to clarity of international student compliance monitoring.
- Review of UK policies, particularly universities with high levels of international students.
- Recommendation to separate out international requirements from home students.
- Home should include apprenticeship, students on courses with PSRB requirements, students with significant placement elements, students with declared disability and agreed exemptions.
- Workshop feedback on what format should monitoring take and what should we monitor – 'how do we define poor and satisfactory engagement?'
- Feedback that escalation stages need to be clear, timeline should be mapped out, no attendance should be separated from poor attendance, factor in multiple offenders.
- Clear policies for ECs and fitness to study.

### Changes in revised version:

1. Changed the title to give a more positive view of the expectations of the policy.
2. Separated out expectations for international and home students.
3. The process for students to use the teaching space card readers has been moved to an appendix.
4. Added a section on approved absences and student responsibility to update mySRS – this section will need to align with the draft Absence Policy from compliance.
5. Points of engagement that will be monitored are more clearly identified.
6. Recognises the need to have a timely process which separates out no engagement from poor engagement; the Policy focusses on a 2-week cycle of contacting students with no engagement touch points.
7. Stage 3 letters will be sent from the Academic Registrar.
8. Flow chart of process added.

## Student Academic Engagement Policy

### 1.0 Context and purpose

- 1.1 There is clear evidence<sup>1</sup> that students who attend their timetabled sessions and engage with the learning resources available to them tend to achieve better results and therefore the University is committed to helping students engage and achieve the best possible outcomes from their studies.
- 1.2 The Student Academic Engagement policy is intended to highlight the processes and monitoring in place to enable attendance with scheduled learning sessions. Where there are barriers to attendance, this policy will assist, through tracking non-attendance and by identifying through engagement with students, the issues they are facing and working with them and staff to resolve these challenges.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Student Academic Engagement policy is to:
- articulate the University's expectations with respect to engagement with scheduled on-campus teaching.
  - outline expectations pertaining to student engagement with online resources.
  - explain the action that will be taken when attendance expectations are not met.
  - ensure that the University can meet the requirements of:
    - UKVI relating to sponsored students.
    - ESFA apprenticeships.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all students studying at one of the University's campuses in the UK or overseas. It does not apply to students studying for one of the University's awards at collaborative partner institutions in the UK or overseas, where the partner institution attendance policy applies.
- 1.5 Students will be expected to reside in a location that enables them to comply fully with the requirements of attendance and engagement of the course onto which they are enrolled.
- 1.6 If a student is studying on a course where carrying out placement activity is a mandatory part of the course (for example; nursing, midwifery, social work, teaching, and allied health professions) their attendance on the placement will be monitored in order to ensure the student meets the criteria of the course. For such courses there will be a set requirement as to the amount of placement activity that has to be undertaken as part of the course. Students should refer to their course handbook for further information on placement requirements and also how the placement attendance will be monitored.
- 1.7 For the purposes of this policy we use the term "working days". A "working day" is a day from Monday to Friday, not including any Public Holidays or days when the University is closed.

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<sup>1</sup> Bijsmana & Schakel (2018) The impact of attendance on first-year study success in problem-based learning. *High Educ* **76**, 865–881 [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0243-4>]; Lukkarienen et al (2016) Relationship between Class Attendance and Student Performance *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* **228**, 341-347 [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.07.051>].

## **2.0 Principles**

2.1 There are five principles that underpin the Student Academic Engagement policy:

- (i) The policy applies to all students, whether on undergraduate or postgraduate taught or postgraduate research courses, enrolled on a course at the University who are required to attend scheduled learning sessions at a BCU campus in the UK or overseas.
- (ii) The University expects students to attend scheduled learning sessions within their associated timetable with each module or course that they have elected to pursue. A session includes; lectures, supervisions, seminars, practical classes, workshops, laboratories, studios, tutorials, examinations.
- (iii) Some scheduled learning sessions (eg laboratory sessions, studio sessions, workshops) may be mandatory due to Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies' (PSRB) requirements. Students will be informed as part of the course handbook, if there are any enhanced attendance requirements.
- (iv) Attendance and engagement monitoring aims to be supportive. This means that the University will contact students about their attendance and engagement and offer to help and/or encourage them to attend if course attendance expectations have not been met.
- (v) Where supportive action does not lead to students meeting the attendance requirements of the policy, steps will be taken as set out below which may lead to the withdrawal of the student from their course.

## **3.0 How will the University monitor academic engagement?**

3.1 The University is keen to support students to maximise their potential, and by monitoring attendance and engagement the University is able to quickly spot patterns of attendance and work with students to help them overcome issues that may hinder their ability to be successful in their studies.

3.2 The University will monitor:

- attendance at scheduled sessions (timetable), dissertation supervisory sessions and rooms, via swipe card data from the "tap in" points.
- attendance on campus via card access data collected at entry gates.
- online engagement, by monitoring how often students access Moodle.
- supervision meeting logs (for PGR students only).

3.3 For international students who are student route visa holders, the University has legal requirements to monitor attendance. These requirements are detailed in section 4.0.

3.4 To enable this approach:

- a) The University will monitor these three forms of engagement from the first week of teaching and will undertake to contact students whose failure to participate without agreement or approval gives cause for concern.

- b) The monitoring process for all students is based on engagement records over a two-week interval.
- c) If over a period of Monday-Friday, a student has failed to attend any scheduled sessions over 5 consecutive working days, the student will be contacted via their University email address and asked to contact the University to discuss their attendance and to explore the reasons for non-attendance.
- d) Students will have 5 working days to contact the University via the contact noted in the email, to confirm their intention to continue studying. Students will be guided to seek support in re-engaging with their scheduled teaching. As part of this process the University may ask students to provide evidence of any circumstances that have affected their ability to attend (eg medical note, crime reference number).
- e) Students who do not contact the University and do not have an approved absence or exemption (section 3.4) will be escalated through the staged approach, as detailed in section 4.2.
- f) Dissertation students will be expected to attend a minimum of one dissertation supervision session per monitored period.

### 3.4 Students with approved absence or specific exemptions.

- 3.4.1 We recognise that some students will have exemptions in place, usually through personalised learning agreements or other formal arrangements, that take into account personal circumstances affecting their ability to attend scheduled learning on campus. Absences at such sessions on campus will be taken into account when monitoring attendance for these students. Please refer to Appendix 2 “Approved Absences” for further details.
- 3.4.2 It is the responsibility of the student to update MySRS if there is an agreed absence or exemption. For Student Route visa holders who require an absence of longer than 5 working days, an Authorised Absence Request Form needs to be submitted to the Faculty for approval.

### 3.5 Non-standard teaching periods

During teaching periods where alternative teaching and learning activities take place eg work placements, field trips, study abroad, students will be required to maintain engagement with the University on a monthly basis as minimum. This may be in person, via email, virtual meetings etc.

### 3.6 Apprenticeships

The University advises apprentice employers of any missed sessions by the Faculty team, as students are salaried employees on employer sourced training.

- 3.6.1 Attendance data is part of the tripartite review, expectations on attendance are set out from the employer, apprentice and BCU in the Training Plan signed prior to the apprentice training start date. Support is available to manage learning hours and provide flexibility as felt appropriate in consultation with university and employer and ESFA requirements. All individual apprentice, actual learning hours must be recorded and returned on APTEM - this is an ESFA requirement

for funding and audit purposes and supports timely completion of the apprenticeship.

#### **4.0 International sponsored - Student Route Visa holders**

4.1 International students who have a Student Route visa will be expected to follow the processes set out in section 5 below.

4.2 For international students who have a Student Route visa there may be the need to adhere to additional attendance requirements in order that the University can fulfil its obligations as Sponsor. As student attendance relates to the student's visa, the University may withdraw Visa-holding students who do not meet the required attendance thresholds.

4.2.1 International students who have been issued a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) and are engaging with their studies, but who may not yet have fully enrolled, will also have their attendance monitored according to the same three-stage approach outlined in 5.

4.2.2 The University reserves the right to issue a Stage Three notice to any student holding a Student Route Visa who does not meet the attendance threshold and who has a history of poor attendance or engagement (eg irregular access of online resources, failure to submit assessed work) resulting in action being taken during the same academic year.

#### **4.3 Courses below degree-level:**

Student Route Visa holders on courses below degree-level are required to attend a minimum of 15 hours of classroom-based study per week. Attendance will be monitored over a four-week interval. If over that four-week period a student has not met the monitoring threshold – 85% of scheduled activities – then that student will be contacted by email to discuss their attendance.

#### **4.4 Taught students - dissertation periods**

Engagement for students who are studying for a dissertation only, with no taught elements, will be based on the student's regular meetings with their dissertation supervisor which are expected to be recorded monthly as a minimum. For all other taught sessions students will be expected to attend all sessions.

#### **4.5 Postgraduate research requirements**

For Postgraduate Research students, attendance will be monitored routinely by the FRDEC (Faculty Research Degrees and Environment Committee). For Postgraduate Research students who have a student route visa the process identified above (4.2) will be followed.

#### **5.0 Monitoring process**

5.1 Students are expected to attend all their scheduled sessions on campus.

5.1.1 The University will monitor engagement at scheduled sessions from the first week of teaching and will undertake to contact students whose failure to participate without agreement or approval gives cause for concern.

5.1.2 All notifications to students required by this policy will be sent, in the first instance, to the student's official University e-mail address. Students will be provided with clear instructions as to how to contact the Faculty to discuss any issues which may affect attendance.

5.2 The monitoring process for all students will follow 3 Stages:

Stage 1 – ‘Early notification’ email.

Stage 2 – “Cause for Concern” sent from PVC Dean of Faculty.

Stage 3 – “Notice of Withdrawal” sent from Academic Registrar & Director of Service.

5.2.1 If a student has failed to engage with any of their scheduled activities, then that student will be contacted by email to confirm their intention to continue studying. Students will be advised to discuss their attendance record and seek support in re-engaging with their scheduled learning. Students may be asked to explore the reasons for non-attendance. This will constitute **Stage 1**.

- (i) The **Stage 1** email will require the student to contact the University within 5 days to confirm their intention to continue studying and to seek support in re-engaging with their scheduled teaching.
- (ii) If a student has not contacted the University after receiving a **Stage 1** email and there continues to be no record of attendance over 5 consecutive days, an email from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Executive Dean of the Faculty will be sent to the student – this is **Stage 2**. If no response is forthcoming, the University will consider withdrawing the student from their course.
- (iii) The University will take appropriate action with a student who does not engage with the escalation process and whose attendance does not improve. The Faculty will contact the student to discuss the issues affecting engagement and to provide necessary support and advice. In exceptional cases the University may withdraw a student from their course.
- (iv) The University will only move to withdraw a student if the supportive steps outlined above have not led to improved attendance such that UKVI attendance requirements are met.
- (v) The **Stage 3** notice includes an opportunity to appeal the intention to permanently withdraw. Appeals should be made to the Academic Registrar via the contact email in the notice within a period of 10 working days. The appeal will be reviewed, and a decision made 5 days after the appeal window ends.

## 6.0 Appeal process

- 6.1 The Stage 3 notice includes an opportunity to appeal the proposed decision to permanently withdraw within a period of 10 working days from date issued by following the instructions in the notice.

If the student does not appeal, or their request to review the intention to withdraw is unsuccessful, the student will be permanently withdrawn in the student record system.

- 6.2 If, after following the process set out in section 5.0, students wish to formally appeal the University's decision to withdraw following a Stage 3 outcome, the Student Complaints Procedure should be followed.

[Student Complaints Procedure 2019.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

For students subject to immigration control, the ability to appeal a decision is the same as in section 5.0 above, however, the University's UKVI Compliance Team will be notified and will report the withdrawal of Student Visa sponsorship to the Home Office.

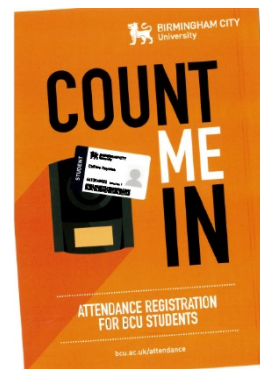
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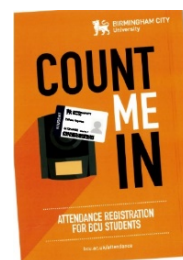
## Appendix 1

### Attendance monitoring process – students

- a) All students are expected to record their attendance by scanning their student card when they enter all scheduled learning sessions. Students can scan into a session 20 minutes before the session, and up to 20 minutes before the end of the session. Students will not be able to scan in after the session has ended.
- b) For scheduled learning sessions, a student will only be considered to have been in attendance if their card is scanned against, and recognised by, the readers located in each teaching room. Where sessions are in a room without a card reader, the lecturer will ensure attendance is captured in the system.
- c) Where MS Teams online sessions are scheduled, the attendance will be captured and uploaded into the attendance monitoring system.
- d) Engagement will also be monitored through data captured at campus gates and access to module Moodle sites.
- e) Attendance will only be considered when it is capable of being monitored. If, for example, a card reader is missing or not working, then this will not count against a student's attendance. Similarly, if extreme weather leads to the cancellation of an event, then attendance will not be monitored and will not count towards the student attendance record.
- f) A student is required to scan **using their own Student ID card only**. If a student scans using someone else's student card the actions of both the card holder and the student who scanned the card will be considered under the University's Disciplinary Procedure. Disciplinary action may be taken against students found to have fraudulently recorded their own or other students' attendance. Where a student is enrolled on a course leading directly (or partially) to a professional qualification or the right to practice a particular profession, they may also be referred under the University's Fitness to Practise procedures.
- g) If a student does not scan their card at a scheduled learning session, they will be recorded as not attending. Students must check their attendance record through MySRS regularly to ensure that their attendance is being accurately recorded.







Attendance monitoring card sent to all enrolled students when get ID card

Welcome webpage communications: BCU community and expectations of engagement with studies

Week 0 – welcome week: community building sessions with course leaders

Week 1 onwards – swipe card attendance, gate access and moodle engagement points monitored

Week 3: 2-weekly report on engagement: students with no 7-day consecutive engagement reported by Student Engagement team

School Office check with course leaders and personal tutors.

Course leader and personal tutor discuss a re-engagement plan with student

Student Engagement team cross check with School Office and mySRS (approved absence)

If no engagement identified a **Stage 1** email is initiated

Within 5 days, Student contacts University.

No contact by the student and no report of engagement through 2-weekly report

If no engagement identified a **Stage 3** Notice to Withdrawal letter is sent

## Appendix 2 – Approved Absence (Student Route Visa Holders)

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 As a Student Route visa holder at BCU, Student Route visa holders are sponsored by the University to study full time. This will support the student to achieve the best outcome from their studies but also to ensure they do not breach the terms of the Student Route visa.

1.2 Students are expected to be in attendance during term time- the term dates for taught programmes of study can be found [here](#). Postgraduate research students are considered to be in term time all year, but they are entitled to 40 days annual leave (including public holidays). (Further details: Postgraduate Research Students)

1.3 The University does recognise that there may be occasions when students need to be absent from the University and therefore an absence request may need to be submitted and authorised.

### 2.0 Short term absences (up to five working days):

2.1 Students may be absent for five working days - such as for short term illness, domestic emergencies, or circumstances beyond their control.

2.2 Students on taught programmes who miss a timetabled session are expected to inform the University via the My SRS portal.

2.3 Students on postgraduate research degrees should inform the Doctoral Research College.

2.4 A sponsored student who intends to travel overseas during this short-term absence must apply for an authorised absence, the absence will need to be approved for a letter to be issued that confirms the University has approved the request, the letter is to be used when travelling to avoid putting their visa at risk.

2.5 If a student has multiple short-term absences and their absence allowance approaches 20 working days then further action may be taken, the UKVI Compliance Team will need to review the reasoning further and determine whether sponsorship can be maintained.

### 3.0 Absences (longer than five working days)

3.1 Students who will be absent for more than 5 days of timetabled sessions must submit an authorised absence request along with supporting evidence (please see table attached for permitted reasons for an authorised absence and the suggested satisfactory evidence).

3.2 The University may additionally approve absences for up to 20 working days per academic year without withdrawal of sponsorship. Any requests for more than 20 working days (unless an exception applies) are likely to result in a temporary withdrawal (interruption) from studies and sponsorship will be withdrawn (Please see: exceptions).

3.3 Absence requests should be requested in advance of the absence being taken. The University will only approve the request where it is agreed that the absence will not negatively affect the student's studies, that the student is not absent from vital elements of the course (including examinations and submission dates) and that the student will complete their studies by the expected end date.

3.4 Where a student's absence will prevent them from completing their course of study during the registration period then the University may decline the request and hold that a temporary withdrawal is required.

3.5 Where a student is placed on interruption (temporary withdrawal), this will be reported to the Home Office. The Home Office will curtail the Student visa and the student will be expected to leave the UK. When the student intends to resume their studies then they will need to contact their faculty to start the process and they will be expected to apply for new entry clearance from their home country.

3.6 During term time the University will not approve non-urgent absences, and this will include holiday requests (unless PGR taken as annual leave).

## 4.0 Exceptions

4.1 If an absence request is for more than 20 working days per academic year then a formal interruption should be imposed, however in exceptional cases, we may continue sponsorship for up to 60 days.

4.2 Where a request is received for an absence of more than 20 working days and there are exceptional reasons (such as serious illness and injury) then we will require the following evidence:

- Evidence that the student will resume their studies after the authorised absence
- Evidence to support the extended absence
- Confirmation that the student will be able to complete their course within their current immigration permission.

4.3 The UKVI Compliance Team will consider the request for the extended absence and determine if sponsorship can be maintained.

## 5.0. Postgraduate Research Students:

5.1 Postgraduate Research students are entitled to 40 days annual leave (this includes public bank holidays). Any requests for leave should be discussed with the academic supervisor(s) and Doctoral Research College and must be recorded in line with their processes.

5.2 Postgraduate Research students may also request a period of authorised absence (as outlined in section 4), but the request will need to be approved by the Doctoral Research College and UKVI Compliance Team and the same processes apply. We must ensure that the absence does not negatively impact the student's studies and that the PhD can be completed during the registration period.

5.3 As part of their studies Postgraduate Research students may be permitted to conduct elements of their research overseas. While this will not be considered as an absence, it must be agreed by their supervisor and the UKVI Compliance Team as the change in study location must be reported to Home Office.

## 6.0. Students on placement: (in progress)

6.1 Students who are on placement will be required to submit an authorised absence request, along with supporting evidence (table below) and a letter from their placement provider confirming they are aware of and approve the absence.

6.2 The University will only approve the request where it is agreed that the absence will not negatively affect the student's placement and that the student will complete their studies and placement by the expected end date.

Reason for Absence	Description	Appropriate Evidence
Medical/ Health (including traumatic personal experience, severe and emotional stress)	To be used if you require an absence of more than five days on medical grounds. <b>Please note:</b> Depending on the length or severity of the situation, we may need to consider a temporary withdrawal from your studies.	Medical certificate/ Doctors note.
Bereavement or serious illness of a family member.	To be used if: a) a family member is unwell, and you will be visiting them b) a family member has passed away and you will be attending the funeral	Medical or death certificate.
Leave relating to Pregnancy	To be used if requesting leave due to pregnancy or related (such as paternity leave).	Letter from a registered medical practitioner
Overseas Fieldwork	To be used if you will be undertaking fieldwork as part of your research programme. Academic engagement must continue during the period of absence.	Letter of approval from PhD supervisor(s).
Wedding of close family member	To be used if you are required to travel overseas to attend a wedding or ceremony of a close family member.	Invitation
Conference	To be used if you are attending a conference, either as an attendee or to present your work.	Invitation/ confirmation letter.
Cultural or religious events	To be used if you intend to go overseas to attend a cultural or religious event.	Details of the event, including dates.
Other	To be used if you are requesting an absence for any reason other than those above.	To provide dates of the absence and supporting evidence for the request.

- Evidence that is not in English must be translated into English by a certified translator and both the original and certified copy must be provided.
- This list is not exhaustive and other reasons may be considered.
- Each case will be considered on its own merit and in line with University policy.
- If you require further support from the University, then please see the following webpage:  
<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-support>

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