

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

1. This Policy is in the spirit of the University of Suffolk's commitment to be a supportive learning environment which enables all students who have chosen to study at the Institution to achieve their full potential. The University recognises the investment that students and their sponsors make when a student enrolls on a course and believes that it has a duty to monitor attendance and engagement, act on concerns and support students to complete their programme of study. The policy is set in the context of ongoing research which demonstrates that increased engagement and attendance directly correlates with student performance.
2. This Policy applies to all enrolled students at the Ipswich campus and London Centre. Policies applicable to those students studying with the University's academic partners, including those studying overseas, are determined by the partner, and approved by the University. It sets out the policy and procedure for the monitoring of student engagement and attendance in all University courses, including higher and degree apprenticeships, and while students attend assessed placement.
3. The institution has statutory duties with regards to reporting poor attendance and/or engagement to a range of stakeholders, including the Student Loans Company (SLC) and other funding bodies. These duties are taken seriously and the University will report non-attendance or engagement in a timely way to meet compliance expectations.
4. The institution also has a statutory duty to comply with the stipulations of the Home Office under its Student Sponsor licence which requires the accurate tracking of attendance of students subject to visa restrictions.
5. Attendance at timetabled formal and informal learning opportunities that are offered at course, subject, School or university level is a key component in attaining the best possible academic outcomes. Learning and teaching at the University is usually delivered as blended learning. Blended learning is defined as including both in person, and online learning activities. Activities may be time-specific activities (timetabled) as well as activities which are not timetabled but delivered as independent study.

6. The University is committed to ensuring high levels of engagement and attendance of all students, and therefore will take robust, timely action if either aspect falls below expected levels. Levels of engagement and attendance have the potential to indicate those students and apprentices who are at risk of withdrawal from their course early, and / or failure.

7. This Policy recognises that whilst good levels of attendance and engagement are essential for all students, different engagement and attendance requirements will be placed on students or apprentices due to the nature of the course. These may be associated with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) regulations or be based on agreed academic practices. Details of the specific expectation and arrangements for each course will be approved at Validation, published in the Course Handbook and made clear to students during induction. These course-specific requirements are in addition to any associated with a student's status (such as visa sponsored students, and apprentices).

Definitions

8. The University measures of engagement and attendance include:
- a. Attendance at taught sessions including all types of timetabled session (lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, and lab-based learning).
 - b. Attendance at timetabled activities including those delivered through guest lectures, field trips, Library and Learning Services, Careers Employability and Enterprise, or as part of Enrichment Weeks.
 - c. Attendance at group and individual Personal Academic Coaching sessions or equivalent interactions.
 - d. Engagement with online materials and completion of activities which are integral to the course of study.
 - e. Engagement with dissertation (or equivalent) supervision.
 - f. The submission of assessments, and attendance at in-person examinations.
9. It is a student's responsibility to ensure they can engage with their studies, attend all timetabled sessions, and engage with asynchronous learning opportunities. Students should give due consideration to the commitment required prior to embarking on a programme of study, and should maintain arrangements such that they can continue to engage and attend for the duration of their course. Students are expected to attend and participate in all timetabled activities and

learning opportunities, whether they are delivered in person or online, unless they have valid and mitigating reasons for not doing so. Typical reasons for seeking authorised absence are set out in paragraph 14.

10. The University provides students with a range of extra / co-curricular activities designed to further the learning of students and apprentices and provide opportunities to ensure success and progression into further higher study and / or graduate level employment, and includes a students' uptake of these opportunities when considering their overall engagement. These include activities delivered by the course team, Student Life, Library and Learning Services, or Careers, Employability and Enterprise. Students and apprentices are strongly encouraged to engage with these activities throughout their studies.

Attendance

11. Students and apprentices **must attend all learning and teaching sessions** unless they have valid mitigating reasons for not doing so. The learning and teaching methods for each course and module are set out in the Course Handbook. Examples of learning and teaching sessions (which may be face-to-face or virtual) include, but are not limited to: lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, laboratory and practical sessions, professional placements, field trips and industrial visits, meetings with Personal Academic Coaches (PACs), and in the case of research students, scheduled meetings with supervisors.

12. Students must arrive on time for classes and remain for the duration of the session. Late arrival and/or early departure from sessions is disruptive, discourteous, unprofessional and unfair to other class members and tutors. Poor attendance behaviours, including persistent late arrival or early departure, will be addressed in line with the actions set out in paragraphs 27 below.

13. As set out in the [Student Charter](#), all students are part of the University of Suffolk academic community and as such are expected to contribute to their fellow students' learning experience. This is particularly the case when engaging in assessed group work where non-attendance at any stage in the learning process can impact adversely on others' experience. It is unacceptable for a student to fail to engage or attend without valid mitigating reasons when this will have a direct impact on the experience of fellow students.

Authorised and Unauthorised absences

14. The University understands that students may occasionally face difficulty in attending taught session sessions, and as such recognises that there will be cases of both planned and unexpected absence from either in-person or virtual classroom teaching, or both, usually as a result of:

- short-term illness, accident or injury, or medical appointments where rearrangement is not possible;
- the death or serious illness of a close family member or dependent (of a nature which, in an employment context, would have led to an absence in accordance with compassionate leave regulations);
- significant adverse personal or family circumstances directly affecting the student;
- interviews or associated opportunities to gain paid or voluntary work where these appointments cannot reasonably be rearranged;
- other significant exceptional factor.

Students should make module leaders and the Attendance Monitoring Team aware when they are unable to attend sessions due to the above, giving as much advance notice of the absence as possible.

15. Where a student is unable to attend for a period of 7 days or more, evidence will typically be required.

16. Absence from taught sessions where no contact is made by a student, or where no reasonable mitigating circumstance is presented will be considered as unauthorised, and appropriate actions will be taken as set out in paragraphs 27 onwards.

17. High levels of authorised absence (where mitigating reasons are provided) may still trigger attendance related interventions or action where there are concerns about student engagement and/or potential to succeed on their course. This may include referral into the Support to Study or Fitness to Practice Procedures.

Placements

18. The attendance requirements for placements, including the reporting of absences from placement, will be outlined in the Course or Placement Handbook. Absence from placement will be considered as part of wider attendance and engagement monitoring processes, and will count towards any measure of the total number of days of absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

19. Students are responsible for:

- Attending **all** learning and teaching sessions as outlined in paragraph 8;
- Effectively using the CheckIn+ system, and making academic staff leading taught sessions aware of any technical problems;
- Completing any additional registers or attendance checks as required;
- Notifying the Attendance Monitoring Team and Module Leader regarding any unavoidable absences prior to or as soon as is practicably possible after the event;
- Notifying the Student Centre of any concerns regarding recording attendance;
- Making applications in good time for Extenuating Circumstances where absence is impacting their ability to study and submit work to prescribed deadlines. Evidence will be required as outlined in the [Additional Time due to Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#);
- In addition to the above, students studying on programmes with professional practice placements must report absence from placement to the relevant team as outlined in the Student Course Handbook or Placement Handbook. In such cases, evidence will be required.

20. Academic staff:

- Are responsible for encouraging a culture of student attendance and engagement, including providing information, advice and guidance to students at Induction and key points throughout their programme of study;
- Must ensure students are able to register for taught sessions by generating the relevant registration code and/or taking a register of student attendance;
- Must ensure that where an error in attendance data is noted, this is accurately updated either within CheckIn+ or in liaison with the Attendance Monitoring Team;
- Are required to encourage students to engage with registration processes. This extends to include support for the use of additional registration checks as required;
- Should report any concerns regarding misuse of the attendance monitoring systems (such as code sharing), to the Course Leader, Associate Dean or Attendance Monitoring Team.
- Have the opportunity to trigger attendance monitoring intervention processes where poor attendance behaviours are noted, including for example persistent late arrival, especially where these behaviours may not be identified in attendance monitoring data;

- Should advise the Attendance Monitoring Team of student absence when this is not confirmed by electronic records.

21. The Attendance Monitoring Team:

- Are responsible for reviewing student attendance and engagement data, identifying students 'at risk' and/or those not meeting the University's expectations regarding attendance, and for taking appropriate actions to intervene.
- Will liaise with academic teams, Academic Administrators and other stakeholders to develop an holistic understanding of student attendance and engagement, and use these insights to inform intervention strategies.
- Are responsible for reviewing requests for authorised absence, and advising students and academic teams accordingly.
- Are responsible for triggering timely withdrawal processes where a student fails to attend , in accordance with paragraph 27.
- Will provide formal attendance monitoring data and insights to support other relevant student success and progression monitoring processes.
- Keep up to date records of student attendance and interventions made

22. All parties have additional responsibilities with regards to attendance of international students who are subject to visa restrictions. Refer to the [Admissions Policy](#) and paragraph 37-39 below.

Unsatisfactory attendance/engagement

23. Unsatisfactory attendance/engagement (whether in-person or virtually) is deemed to be when a student fails to attend for a period of 7 days, where there is no authorised absence recorded.

24. Where a student is attending, but overall their rate of attendance falls below 80% of scheduled sessions (or 90% in the case of UKVI sponsored students), the University will take proportionate and reasonable action to address concerns and support re-engagement.

25. The requirements of any PSRB associated with the programme, or any in-country regulatory body for transnational education provision, will have precedence where the expectations for engagement and attendance are above those set by the University.

26. Unsatisfactory attendance actions can be triggered by formal attendance registration data or by other information regarding unsatisfactory behaviours. This may include cases of persistent late arrival/early departure, poor attendance patterns across specific modules or types of activity, persistent non-submission of work or where there is other cause for concern.

Actions in case of unsatisfactory attendance

27. Where a student fails to attend for a period of 7 days and absence has not been authorised, they will be contacted with the aim of supporting re-engagement. Further communications will be sent where there is continued non-attendance, with concerns usually escalated every 7 days. Students may be required to attend a meeting with a member of the Attendance Monitoring Team to discuss concerns, and an Attendance Agreement may be put in place. Compliance with such agreements will be monitored by the team, and failure to adhere to terms may result in further action.

28. Failure to re-engage with studies or to adhere to an Attendance Agreement will usually result in the student being notified of the intention to withdraw them from their programme of studies. Where there is no contact made by a student and no re-engagement, withdrawal will be usually actioned after **30 days** of consecutive non-attendance. Withdrawal will be actioned by the Attendance Monitoring Team in conjunction with the Head of Student Administration and Associate Dean. Withdrawal may be paused where there is need to undertake further investigations, or where other relevant processes are underway, such as those set out in the [Support to Study Procedure](#).

29. The student's sponsor, including an employer, the Local Authority, or the SLC may be informed about the ongoing unsatisfactory attendance.

30. Where a student is in receipt of funding from SLC, access to funds may be paused while attendance concerns are addressed. This action protects the use of public funds and protects students who may be subject to claw back where funding is allocated but it is subsequently found that a student is ineligible.

31. Non-attendance by an **apprentice** will result in the University contacting the apprentice's employer. Reporting expectations are outlined in the relevant Course Handbook.

32. Postgraduate Research students are expected to be in regular contact with supervisors, typically on a monthly basis. They must be able to provide evidence of continued research and

progress with their research topic and this will be formally discussed in the annual review progress Boards. Lack of research progress and/or non-attendance at planned supervisor sessions will be investigated by the supervisor and may result in withdrawal.

33. Attendance and engagement records will be considered in the following cases:

- At Assessment Boards when considering the opportunities made available to students to retake failed modules, or when considering a student's eligibility to progress onto a sandwich year;
- When considering academic appeals, where this information is relevant to the case;
- When considering applications to the Financial Support Fund (FSF);
- When considering visa extension requests.
- When calculating exact fee refunds, where these are applicable;
- When confirming eligibility to receive University of Suffolk bursaries;
- When assessing whether students are meeting attendance requirements of the SLC or other funding body;
- During or following study on receipt of an academic reference request.
- During Postgraduate Research annual progress review Boards.

34. Ongoing unsatisfactory attendance and non-engagement with the above processes will result in the student being removed from their programme of study. Where a student is withdrawn from their course due to unsatisfactory attendance, they will have the right to appeal via the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

35. Deliberate misuse of electronic systems, including the sharing of CheckIn+ registration codes, or falsifying any other attendance records will be treated seriously and will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the [Student Discipline Procedure](#).

36. The Attendance Monitoring Team will complete additional register checks to ensure the accuracy of attendance data collected through CheckIn+ plus. Where discrepancies are found, attendance details will be updated in tracking systems to reflect actual in-class attendance.

Students subject to visa restrictions

37. All parties have additional responsibilities with regards to attendance of visa sponsored students. Sponsored students should be aware that the University is required to report to the UKVI

any student who is issued with a CAS, but does not enrol, misses classes, stops attending or defers their place.

38. Visa sponsorship will be withdrawn where a student has deferred their studies for more than 60 days.

39. The timelines for interventions and student withdrawal for non-attendance set out above will apply to sponsored students. In addition, and where withdrawal has not already been actioned as a result of attendance monitoring or other processes, in accordance with UK immigration law, if a period of non-attendance or non-engagement by a visa sponsored student reaches 60 days (excluding recognised holiday/vacation periods which are not considered term time) , a report will be made to the Home Office. Such reports will result in withdrawal of sponsorship and will cause the Home Office to revoke the student's permission to stay in the UK. A report will also be made to the Home Office if a visa sponsored student has an unsatisfactory engagement or attendance record despite support from the University.

APPENDIX 1

ATTENDANCE AGREEMENT

As a student or apprentice at the University of Suffolk it is essential that you understand attendance and engagement with your course is required in order for you to succeed academically. Failure to attend or engage with your course, without a valid mitigating reason, can result in:

- The issuing of an Attendance Agreement, which will outline specific actions you must take to be considered as suitably engaged with your course;
- A report being made to the Student Loans Company (SLC), other funding body or sponsor, which may result in the suspension or withdrawal of tuition fee or maintenance support;
- In the case of an apprentice, a report being made to your employer;
- In the case of a visa sponsored student, a report being made to the Home Office.

Ongoing failure to engage with your course or adhere to this Attendance Agreement without valid mitigating reasons will result in your withdrawal from study.

As a student, you are reminded of your responsibilities with regards to attendance and engagement:

1. You must attend all learning and teaching sessions as outlined in paragraph 8 of the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy;
2. Engage with the registration mechanism in place at your location of study;
3. Notify your Academic Administrator or equivalent and module leader if you cannot attend with good reason. Wherever possible you should contact staff in advance of the session you cannot attend.
4. Abide by any specific attendance and engagement requirements set out in your Course or Placement Handbook.

Student name	
Student ID number	
Course and location of study	

Action plan to address poor attendance or engagement.

Brief description of agreed action	Any support required:	Who is responsible for taking the action	Date to complete or review action
Other notes/comments:			

Signed by student:

Signed by staff member:

Date: