STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT MONITORING 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 enrols on a course and believes that it has a duty to monitor engagement, act on non-engagement and support students to complete their programme of study.

2.   The purpose of the Policy is to provide clarity for students and staff on the expectations relating to student engagement.

3.   This Policy applies to all enrolled students at the University of Suffolk and partner institutions.

4.   This Policy recognises that courses may have different attendance requirements. These may be associated with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) regulations or be based on agreed academic practices. For courses where specific attendance and reporting mechanisms are required, such arrangements are approved at validation and will be published in the Student Course Handbook.

5.   The institution also has a statutory duty to comply with the stipulations of the Home Office under its Tier 4 licence which requires the accurate tracking of attendance of students subject to visa restrictions, as outlined in paragraphs 27 to 28.

Definitions

6.   Attendance is understood to mean student attendance at live or time-specific events, whether these are held online (within a virtual classroom, video or audio-conferencing call) or in-person.

7.   Engagement is understood to reflect a wider evaluation of a student's uptake and participation in a range of learning activities including but not limited to, self-directed study, undertaking activities or tasks in the online learning environment, contribution to discussion forums, and undertaking assessments. Satisfactory engagement will be informed by the course requirements (see paragraph 4) considered using a combination of data drawn from attendance monitoring systems and online platforms.

Policy statement

8.   Attendance is a vital component in student retention, progression, achievement and employability. Regular attendance and academic achievement are closely linked. Students who actively participate in their learning by attending classes regularly (either virtually or in-person) should: enjoy a rewarding experience in which knowledge, skills and abilities are developed; successfully complete their course; and achieve better results. Attendance monitoring allows timely intervention and to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between staff and students regarding success and progression.

9.   Students **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 component modules are set out in the Student 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, and in the case of research students, scheduled meetings with supervisors.

10.   Students must arrive on time for classes and remain for the duration of the session. Late arrival at, and early departure from sessions is disruptive, discourteous, unprofessional and unfair to other class members and tutors.

11.   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.

12.   Attendance will be measured formally through registration mechanisms including electronic swipe-in to teaching spaces, paper sign-in registers, and the collection of electronic sign-in information from virtual classrooms.

Planned and unexpected absences

13.   The University understands that students may face difficulty in attending all 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, self-isolation, 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);

- 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.

As a matter of courtesy students are encouraged to make module leaders aware when they are unable to attend sessions due to the above. Wherever possible, advanced notice should be given of absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

14.   Students are responsible for:

- Attending **all** learning and teaching sessions as outlined in paragraph 9;

- Engaging with the registration mechanisms in place within their location of study, including electronic swipe-in or sign-in where paper registers are used, or logging in to virtual classrooms using an agreed identifier (such as student number or full name);

- Notifying their Course Administrator/Higher Education Administrator and Module Leader regarding any unavoidable absences prior to or as soon as is practicably possible after the event;

- Notifying the Infozone or their Higher Education Office of any concerns regarding recording attendance, such as failure of electronic systems;

- 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 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. In such cases, evidence will be required.

15.   Academic staff:

- Are responsible for encouraging a culture of student attendance/engagement, including providing information, advice and guidance to students at Induction and key points throughout their programme of study;

- Are required to encourage students to engage with registration processes either via swipe-in or in the appropriate completion of paper registers, and that where used paper registers are passed to Course Administrators/Higher Education Administrators

    promptly after teaching events. This extends to include compliance with any back-up systems used in the event of electronic system failure;

- Have the opportunity to trigger the unsatisfactory attendance processes (as outlined in paragraph 20) in cases where concerns have been informally raised and/or when formal attendance triggers are hit;

- Should advise relevant Course Administrators/Higher Education Administrators of student absence when this is not confirmed by electronic records.

16. Administrative staff:

- Are responsible for retaining student attendance records;

- Will liaise with students and staff to arrange meetings with Personal Tutors, Course Leaders and Deans of School regarding unsatisfactory attendance as required;

- Will provide formal attendance monitoring data on request to support the processes outlined in paragraph 18, and other relevant student success and progression monitoring processes.

17. 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 27 to 28 below.

Unsatisfactory attendance/engagement

18. Unless otherwise defined by PSRB requirements, unsatisfactory attendance / engagement (whether in-person or virtually) is deemed to be when a student does not attend any scheduled sessions for a period of fourteen consecutive days, and does not have valid reasons for non-attendance.

19. Unsatisfactory attendance actions will be triggered by formal attendance registration data and in cases where other unsatisfactory behaviours are noted which may not be reflected in this data. This may include cases of late enrollers, persistent late arrival/early departure, or where there is other cause for concern.

Actions in case of unsatisfactory attendance

20. Where it is identified that attendance/engagement is unsatisfactory, the following actions will be taken:

- After 14 days of non-attendance or non-engagement the Course Leader will, informed by a range of attendance and engagement information, normally take one of the following steps:
  - o Address the concerns directly with the student or through liaison with the student's Personal Tutor, Module Leader(s) or relevant member of Professional Services staff. The student may be contacted by telephone, email or letter. The aim of the intervention shall be to support the student to successfully re-engage with studies as soon as possible.
  - o Escalate concerns to the Dean of School or nominee. This may happen in cases of repeated non-attendance or where there are serious concerns about the student's engagement.
  - o Conclude that no further action is required. This may be the case where there is a known and approved reason for absence and a plan in place for the student to re-engage in the future.
- After 28 days of consecutive non-attendance or non-engagement, and where previous attempts to contact the student with regards to concerns have not resulted in re-engagement with studies, the concern will be escalated to the Dean of School or equivalent, who will normally issue the student with a written warning and/or make arrangements for an Attendance Agreement to be put in place.

21.　Failure to adhere to an Attendance Agreement or to re-engage with studies will usually result in the student being notified of the intention to withdraw them from their programme of studies after a further 7 days if there is no evidence of re-engagement.

22.　The student's sponsor, including an employer, the Local Authority, or the Student Loan Company may be informed about the ongoing unsatisfactory attendance.

23.　Where School or partner institution approaches have been developed to support retention strategies, additional arrangements may be put in place.

24.　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;
- At Assessment Boards 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 calculating exact fee refunds due to those leaving early;
- When confirming eligibility to receive University of Suffolk bursaries;
- During or following study on receipt of an academic reference request.

25.   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.

26.   Deliberate misuse of electronic systems or paper registers with the aim of falsifying attendance records will be treated seriously and will result in disciplinary action.

Students subject to visa restrictions

27.   All parties have additional responsibilities with regards to attendance of international students who are subject to visa restrictions as detailed in the Admissions Policy.

28.   In accordance with UK immigration law, a report will be made to the Home Office if an international student holding a visa is absent from the Institution for more than 10 scheduled interactions without authorisation.