



Higher Education Programmes Attendance and Course Engagement Policy

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1. Introduction

Poor attendance and engagement can put students at risk academically. The College monitors attendance and engagement in order to ensure students are successfully progressing, and to be supportive and anticipatory in its approach to carrying out its duty of care to all students. The College aims to ensure that students receive information, advice and guidance at the earliest opportunity to support their efforts in overcoming barriers to study and reduce the chance of issues escalating.

1.1. Underpinning Principles

Students need to attend and engage in order to progress in their field of study, and a range of services are available to support students in this;

Good attendance and engagement are essential to a good student experience;

Students are active participants in ensuring their own success;

Identifying poor attendance and engagement early, and intervening early, are key to helping students progress;

Students need to be aware that the opportunities to draw down student finance are limited and it is consequently of the utmost importance that they make optimal use their funding entitlement and be in a good position to attend college and make the best of their studies.

1.2. Requirements of External Bodies

Good student attendance and engagement is also a requirement of external bodies such as Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), the Validating Bodies, and funders e.g. Student Loan Company as well as the Office for Students. The College is able to deliver courses, administer loans and scholarships to students, by fulfilling its responsibilities in relation to these bodies. Any sanctions for poor attendance and engagement for students benefitting from arrangements with these bodies could mean withdrawal of sponsorship or funding.

1.3. Attendance and engagement requirements

Students are expected to attend the College or engage as is necessary to progress in their studies and complete their course, **this is as an absolute minimum 90% of timetabled sessions.**

All staff are expected to familiarise themselves with this document and are expected to provide students with information to support their attendance and engagement.

1.4. Attendance and engagement records - definitions

Attendance and engagement are described as meaningful contacts and should be sufficient for the student to actively pursue their studies. These contacts comprise attending formal academic classes but also pastoral support activities.

A list of activities that could be considered as monitored contact points is provided below:

- a lesson, lecture, tutorial, laboratory session, workshop or seminar;
- an assessment session as required in the module handbook;
- an interaction with a supervisor, tutor or adviser (this can be for academic or pastoral advice related to progressing with studies);
- a research-method or research-panel meeting, writing-up seminars or workshops;
- an oral examination (viva);

- assessed or unassessed coursework including in-class participation in simulated activities;
- an interim dissertation, coursework or report;
- registration (for enrolment or matriculation);
- a meeting related to appeal or disciplinary.

Register, VLE and Promonitor reports showing the frequency of student attendance/engagement at monitored contact points.

Attendance/engagement recording is still required when students are at a different location in the following circumstances:

- on work placements: learning logs record engagement and departments will have their own nominated personnel in place to ensure monitoring.
- on field work or field trips: departments will make their own defined procedures and have nominated personnel in place to ensure monitoring.

1.5. Identifying Poor Attendance and Engagement

Departments should identify students who have missed more than one week of non-attendance without authorisation. A student may be identified in the following ways:

When their attendance and engagement give cause for concern (e.g., is below expected levels)

If the conditions and responsibilities of a learning agreement are not met (e.g., when students are on a repeat year)

The course leader holds overall responsibility for the attendance of students within their suite of programmes.

1.6. Contact, Reporting and Withdrawal

Course attendance and engagement will be discussed, and appropriate actions taken at Course Team meetings. Course teams should contact students in stages as described below, these stages should be executed promptly and at all points the students should be aware that they are jeopardising their place on the programme:

Stage 1

The administration team will send out an email (until this can be automated) to notify the student that there is a concern and remind them of attendance and engagement requirements when they have missed more than one week of non-attendance without authorisation. Email signed off by the Administrator. The PPT and PAT will be copied in so that they can offer support to the student. PAT may conduct a progress review meeting with the student, agreeing targets and regular further meetings to review progress.

Stage 2

Where a student does not improve their attendance and engagement following Stage 1, after an additional week the administration team will send out a second email to notify the student that they will be contacted by the PAT expressing the college's increased concern, the PAT and the PPT will be copied in on the email. The email will be signed off by the Course Leader.

The PAT will invite the student to a meeting where they conduct a progress review, agree an action plan with the student, plan regular further meetings to review progress and discuss other routes of referral for non-academic support or review the agreement made at Stage One.

Students need to attend this meeting within one week of invitation. This stage is to be executed within two weeks of the agreement at stage one.

Stage 3

If no action is taken or improvement seen on the part of the student after Stage 1 and Stage 2, students will be sent an email signed by the Director of Operations/ Head of Student Success advising that if they do not make contact with their PAT within one week, they will be referred to the student discipline board and withdrawn from the course.

The student will be signposted to the student support services.

This stage should be executed within one week of the progress meeting at stage two. If no response or attendance is received to the email by the date given, they will be referred to the Student Discipline Panel and withdrawn from the course.

2. Authorised Absences

2.1. Students should get in touch with their Personal Academic Tutor if they are unable to attend and engage with their course.

2.2. Students who are (or were) unable to attend or engage for more than 6 days due to illness, incapacity, emergency or other valid reason, should inform the Personal Academic Tutor and consider applying for extenuating circumstances.

2.3. In circumstances where a student's absence is expected to prevent them from progressing on their current course, the Student Discipline Committee will consider a period of interruption to studies or withdrawing the student.

3. Student Discipline Committee and Academic Development and Quality Assurance Committee

The Student Discipline Committee (SDC) is a sub-committee of the Academic Development and Quality Assurance Committee (ADQAC) and is chaired by the Vice Dean for Higher Education and has overall responsibility for monitoring engagement within the departments.

3.1. Which student cases should SDC / ADQAC consider?

ADQAC should receive a report of all students who have been flagged to have poor attendance and engagement in line with the guidance in this policy, as well as monitoring students who have a learning agreement or return to study plan, to ensure that they are adhering to this. Temporary and permanent withdrawal rates should also be considered. The report should include all permanently and temporarily withdrawn students including those students who have requested permanent withdrawal or temporary interruption of studies themselves. Reports should include data on the student profile to allow analysis across the College.

3.2. What outcomes are available to the SDC?

SDC has several options available to them when considering individual student cases. The Committee could:

- permanently withdraw the student;
- recommend the student to take a period of interruption to studies with or without conditions of return;
- allow continued enrolment with conditions;
- allow continued enrolment without conditions where the student's attendance and engagement has already improved significantly, and the student has provided an acceptable explanation for serious past absences/poor engagement.

Where a student is temporarily withdrawn, or conditions are imposed, the student and their Course Leader should always agree a return to study plan or learning agreement to help the student resume their studies. The standard learning agreement template for students on a repeat of their first year should be used. Conditions could also include the following:

- a specified attendance requirement;
- referral to and engagement with other College support services as appropriate;
- referral to and engagement with workshops such as study skills or time management.

3.3. How are the outcomes of the SDC communicated?

Outcomes of the SDC should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and reported Academic Services, the Central Information Service and Finance Department. Where a student has been allowed to continue a course, Academic Services must write to the student (via email and hard copy letter) to confirm the outcome of the meeting. Where a decision has been taken to temporarily or permanently withdraw a student, Academic Services will then inform the student in writing of the decision and advise them of the appeal period. Academic Services will also write to confirm the return to study date and advise them of the appeal period in relation to this decision.

3.4. Can students attend the SDC?

In reviewing students that have been flagged to have poor attendance and/or engagement it may be necessary to invite individual students to the SDC to enable them to present their case. A student who is invited to attend should be given at least two weeks' notice. They can attend the meeting in person to present their evidence and are entitled to be accompanied but not to be represented. If the student is unable to attend the meeting, they can submit evidence for consideration in their absence.

4. Appealing a decision of the SDC

A student required by the SDC to withdraw from the College shall have the right to appeal. Details about the appeals process can be found in the Academic Appeals and Complaints Policy.

5. Recording and Monitoring of Attendance

It is important that student attendance monitored in order to improve the student experience. The Academic Development and Quality Assurance Committee records and provides reports to indicate the nature of unsatisfactory attendance, non- attendees and resultant action. These reports are considered in the following ways;

- The monitoring and evaluation of courses, departments, and the College;
- Feed directly into appropriate College committees;
- The monitoring and evaluation the effectiveness of the Attendance and Course Engagement Policy.