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Aims

The purpose of the Attendance and Engagement Policy (the Policy) is to reinforce the University's commitment to providing an excellent student experience by facilitating a supportive and collaborative learning environment, with all students actively engaged in their learning.

The Policy mirrors the requirements that are expected within an employment environment and in this way, supports the commitment of the University to developing the skills and behaviours needed by successful graduates.

The Policy recognises that the University's timetabled teaching sessions are a fundamental element of the student experience and provide a forum for debate and the exchange of ideas, for which student engagement and participation is essential.

Also, the Policy is part of a wider University commitment to promoting and enhancing student engagement, consultation and participation across the University.

Finally, the Policy enables the University to support international students in meeting the attendance and engagement requirements of their Student Visas.

Scope

The Policy applies to both taught and research students and will outline the monitoring requirements and intervention procedures for different student types, dependent on their respective level of study.

The Policy is not applicable to students who study wholly with a partner institution as partners will have their own monitoring and management procedures.

Engagement and Participation

Engagement and Participation includes, inter alia, attendance at the University's timetabled teaching sessions, contributing to group work sessions, the submission of course work, completing examinations, meeting with Personal Tutors or Supervisors. It also includes using the University's learning resources, such as the University Library, online resources and Blackboard. The responsibilities of students, set out in the Student Charter, support the Student Engagement and Participation Policy. The Student Charter states that students should;

- Complete all scheduled learning, research and assessment activities
- Contribute to, and support others to contribute to, the academic exchange of ideas and interactions

For students undertaking exclusively online programmes, engagement and participation includes pro-active and regular engagement with module tutors and any other parties involved in programme delivery.

Student Attendance

The University expects all students to attend and engage with all elements of their programme.

Student attendance is essential:

- In promoting greater understanding of the subject
- In engaging with other students on the course
- In providing an opportunity for both student and tutor to assess and monitor progress
- In developing time-management and team-working skills
- To keep up-to-date with any developments relating to the programme of study
- In developing skills essential for employment and/or self-employment

The Policy recognises that some programmes, including but not limited to those leading to a professional qualification, have course specific attendance requirements, over and above the requirements set in this Policy. These requirements will be clearly communicated to students from the start of the course via Programme Handbooks and during introductory meetings. The Policy also recognises that for Student Visa purposes, international students are required to maintain high levels of attendance and engagement, to meet the requirements of the Home Office.

Staff and Student Responsibilities

The Policy aims to place a corresponding set of shared obligations on both staff and students.

STAFF/UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITIES	STUDENT RESPONSIBILITES
Ensure that students are made aware of the attendance requirements of their course.	Familiarise themselves with the particular attendance requirements of their course.
Give students reasonable notice of any timetabling changes.	Give reasonable notice of any planned or unavoidable absences and seek approval.
Ensure that information on any changes to timetabling is communicated effectively to students through Blackboard or any other appropriate means.	Check their course and subject notice boards, Blackboard and University email communications regularly for information on timetabling changes.
Arrive promptly for scheduled sessions, as well as ensuring that sessions end promptly.	Practice effective time management so as to ensure consistent attendance.
Facilitate such changes to a student's timetable as are appropriate and reasonable, having given due consideration to the student's circumstances and obligations	Give appropriate consideration to the logistical difficulties in making timetabling changes to seek such alterations under reasonable circumstances.
Arrange regular meetings or meeting opportunities between Personal Tutors and	Attend and arrive promptly for sessions and scheduled meetings with Personal Tutors or

students and arrive promptly for scheduled sessions.	supervisors and attend for the whole session.
Encourage student attendance by regularly reviewing and improving upon the design of the course and the method of delivery.	Participate in feedback and consultation opportunities.
Monitor student attendance and respond to student absences in a supportive and timely fashion to facilitate student re engagement and success.	Register attendance in the appropriate timetabled teaching sessions and respond to any follow up from staff relating to absences in a positive way.

Students with Disabilities and Long-Term Health Conditions

Students with disabilities and long-term health conditions are, as far as possible, expected to attend all of their timetabled teaching sessions. Where a student with a disability or long-term health condition finds they are unable to attend teaching sessions due to short term ill health, they should notify the School by completing the Authorised Absence Request Form so that the Authorised Absence Policy can be applied to the absence request and processed as appropriate.

Where a student with a disability or long-term health condition is finding that their ability to fully attend timetabled teaching sessions is regularly impaired due to their disability or long-term health condition, the student should be encouraged to seek support from the University's Student Wellbeing Centre and their Personal Tutor to enable appropriate review and action planning to take place.

The existence of a PASS plan which notes that "absences should be viewed sympathetically", or a diagnosis of a long-term condition or disability, should not be viewed by students or staff as meaning that students have permanently authorised absence in place.

Student Success and Engagement Team

The Student Success and Engagement Team (SSET) is based within the Student Support Centre, and forms part of the wider Student Support and Advice Team. Their primary focus is to support students to successfully complete their chosen academic programme. Their role is to identify non-academic barriers to success and engagement and to support students throughout the academic year, identifying key touch points and ensuring students are aware of and have access to the appropriate support. The Team will provide students with an early intervention service using University student information management systems and liaising partners in other Professional Services to identify students who would benefit from additional support.

The Team will accept individual referrals from academic staff where students have failed to engage with the attendance monitoring process or where the barriers to success and engagement are considered to be non-academic, and where the student is at risk of being withdrawn from their chosen programme.

Students considered to be in need of early intervention support will be identified by using information collected from the attendance data and other student engagement indicators.

The Student Success and Engagement Team will request information from School Administrations, Academic Staff, and other Professional Services departments where necessary in order to ensure all relevant information is gathered before early intervention support is offered. Contact will be made with the students to offer support and encourage engagement with early intervention support. This may be via email, Teams message or telephone using both University and personal contact details. Confidential records will be kept of the early intervention package and students' engagement and will only be shared outside of Student Services where it is deemed to be in the best interest of the student.

Where students fail to engage with the early intervention support, the Student Success and Engagement Team will refer the student to the Head of Student Support, or nominee for further advice and guidance.

Students under the age of 18

Staff are expected to be more vigilant when monitoring the attendance of students and apprentices who are under 18. Where the student or apprentice is expected to attend either a face to face or online session and they fail to attend without prior notice, staff are expected to make contact with the student or apprentice at the earliest opportunity to ensure they are safe and well. Failure to make appropriate contact, and where the member of staff has concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the student or apprentice, can be treated as a Concern for Welfare and the Student Wellbeing Team can be contacted for support.

Monitoring study and intervention processes

Monitoring Taught Study

The Policy recognises the importance of monitoring levels of student engagement and participation. Monitoring for taught study is carried out via the Student Attendance System (SAS) which records attendance for all timetabled teaching sessions.

The SAS enables the University to maintain a comprehensive record of student attendance on all taught programmes. To enable students and the University to derive benefit from the SAS, where the attendance of students falls below the required level for their academic programme or where students have missed consecutive teaching days, interventions will be triggered. These interventions are not intended to be punitive and are focussed on ensuring the wellbeing of students, responding in an appropriate and supportive way when students are having personal or academic difficulties and raising the overall level of student attendance, engagement and success.

Registering attendance in taught sessions

For taught timetabled sessions, students are required to register their own attendance in sessions. Students can register attendance by signing into the University campus wi-fi, signing onto the attendance site using their University credentials and by entering a unique verification code provided by the academic. A student can only register their attendance within the first 15 minutes of the timetabled session and this is applicable to in-person classes and synchronous online sessions.

Students should not share their personal credentials or the unique verification code with any other students. If a student is found to have shared their credentials or the

unique verification code, registered the attendance for another student or registered attendance without attending the class, it will be considered as misconduct and students may face disciplinary actions as set out under Part P of the University General Regulations. Where the student holds a visa sponsored by the University and is found to engage in falsifying attendance, they will also be subject to Part C of the University General Regulations where sponsorship of the visa may be withdrawn.

Students must remain in the class for the entire duration of the session. If a student is found to have left the session before it has finished or arrived more than 15 minutes from the session start time, they can be marked as absent.

Intervention Process

The SAS will trigger alerts to the Student and their Personal Tutor through two different set of analyses. The first being the student's attendance percentage over a short period analysis of two weeks and whether this has fallen below the required threshold of attendance and the second being the number of days the student has been absent from timetabled teaching.

Trigger Type	Communication Method	Applicable to
Short Period Analysis, Stage 1	Email to student	All students
Short Period Analysis, Stage 2	SMS Message to student	All students
Short Period Analysis, Stage 2a	Personal Tutor task	All students (Exc. Student Visa holders – Please refer to the Student Visa Appendix)
Consecutive Day Analysis, Stage 1	Personal Tutor task	All students
Consecutive Day Analysis, Stage 2	Personal Tutor task	All students (Exc. Student Visa holders – Please refer to the Student Visa Appendix)

Short Period Attendance Percentage Analysis

Stage 1: Email to student

Where student attendance falls below the required level, initial intervention is via an automated, supportive e-mail from the University reminding the student about the importance of attending timetabled sessions and highlighting support services for students who may have difficulties.

Stage 2: SMS message to student

Secondary intervention is through an automated supportive and personalised text message from the University reminding the student about the importance of attending timetabled teaching and highlighting support services for students who may have difficulties. Where no phone number is available an email will be sent.

Stage 2a: Personal Tutor Task

Where a student has received the Stage 2 intervention on three occasions, and their attendance over the short period percentage analysis has not improved, on the fourth occasion Stage 2a will be triggered. A final intervention will be sent to the student and an automated task will be sent to the student's Personal Tutor to review the student's attendance and engagement.

The Personal Tutor will review the student's attendance and engagement and make one of the following decisions via a workflow task:

- No action (if the student's engagement and overall attendance is satisfactory)
- Establish contact and, if appropriate, arrange a meeting
- Escalate to a Panel Hearing (based on contextual and prior knowledge and whether they would be willing to withdraw the student, at this stage, for a lack of attendance and engagement)

Where an academic task decision has been submitted and the student continues not to engage over the next analysis period, Stage 2a will trigger indefinitely for academic review. Where the Stage 2a trigger repeats, the only part of it that will repeat is the task sent to the Personal Tutor; the student will only receive the intervention on the first occasion of Stage 2a being triggered.

Consecutive Trigger Analysis

Stage 1: Personal Tutor Task

An automated task will be sent to the student's Personal Tutor if the student has missed five consecutive teaching days. The task mirrors that of Stage 2a under Short Period Analysis.

Following a task decision if the student is absent for a further five days (equalling ten days in total) and or/another trigger point occurs, stage 2 is triggered.

Following a task decision, if a student begins attending timetabled sessions, the calculation will be rest to zero from the date of attendance at a timetabled session. Reversion to Stage 1 will take place is and when it is triggered.

Stage 2: Personal Tutor Task

Where a student has missed ten consecutive teaching days and does not have approved authorised absence, or the student has failed to engage following stage 1, the SAS will trigger a further automated supportive text message.

If there is no response from the student, a subsequent follow up should be carried out by the School and alternative attempts should be made to contact the student. This intervention is designed to ensure that students who may be at risk are identified and urgent action taken to support the student.

Monitoring Research Study

Where students are studying a programme that includes research-based study their engagement will be monitored outside of the SAS and interventions will be initiated by the relevant School.

Postgraduate Taught Research Period (Thesis)

Most postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes include a thesis module where there are no timetabled teaching sessions to attend. During this period, full-time students are expected to devote as much time to their thesis as would be spend in full-time employment.

Monitoring Engagement

The School will be responsible for monitoring engagement of students during this period and this is usually in the form of regular supervisory meetings, but can also include regular submission of work or engagement in lab sessions, for example. Where supervisory meetings are occurring, a record of the meeting must be kept ensuring both the student and supervisor are clear of progress made.

At a minimum, there must be a monthly contact point and a record of this must be kept. The expectation for contact points and the format of these should be made clear to the student in advance of them beginning their research period.

Where there is a formal, scheduled vacation period there will be no requirement for engagement to be monitored or recorded during this time.

Intervention Process

Where a student does not engage with the scheduled contact point, or where it can be determined that satisfactory progress is not being made, the supervisor may arrange to meet with the student. These meetings should provide the student with the chance to discuss any barriers to progressing and for appropriate signposting to be offered. Finally, the student should leave the meeting with a clear action plan to support re-engagement.

Where a student does not engage with these interventions, or where the student does not re-engage following an intervention, the Supervisor may choose to escalate the case to the Panel Hearing stage (page 12).

Postgraduate Research (PGR) Programmes

Students must take active participation in their learning experiences and take responsibility for achieving their potential through successful completion of each stage of their studies.

Regular attendance and academic success are closely linked. Students who attend regular supervisory meetings, engage with professional and research-based training and development are more likely to have a rewarding experience and develop core skills and abilities.

Engagement and participation includes, but is not limited to, attendance at scheduled meetings with the Director of Studies and/or supervisor, laboratory work, submission of written work and the completion of all scheduled learning, research and assessment activities.

Monitoring Engagement

As stated in the University Postgraduate Research Regulations: 'Where a student enrols for a full-time programme, they shall be expected to devote as much time to the research as would be given to full-time enrolment'.

The Director of Studies has the responsibility to meet their student on a regular and frequent basis with a minimum expectation that a formal recorded supervisory meeting will take place with their students on a monthly basis (full-time) or every two months (part-time), including during the thesis pending period and during post-viva amendments. The only point where recorded supervisory meetings are not required is when a student has submitted their thesis and is awaiting their viva voce, or where the student has approved and recorded annual leave.

Meetings should normally be face-to-face, or, where agreed as appropriate by the Supervisor, via a virtual equivalent, such as a telephone, email or Teams meeting. Where students are known to be working away from Lincoln as part of their research study, including where there may be a time difference, these monthly meetings must be maintained and recorded. Students and Director of Studies share responsibility for maintaining contact. At the conclusion of each monthly meeting, the PGR Progress Meeting Report form should be completed, signed and dated by the student and Director of Studies and submitted to the School office in a timely manner.

Please refer to the Student Visa Appendix for additional requirements in relation to students who hold a Student Visa sponsored by the University of Lincoln.

Intervention Process

Stage 1

Where a student fails to attend a scheduled supervisory meeting without prior notice or is unable to demonstrate that sufficient progress has been made, initial intervention is via an email from the School informing them that they have not met the requirements of the supervision contact point.

In cases of a missing meeting, a new meeting date and time should be arranged to take place as soon as practicable to avoid the student missing a monthly or bi-monthly meeting. In cases of insufficient progress being made, a clear and measurable action plan should be agreed for review at the next meeting.

Stage 2

Where a student does not engage following Stage 1 of the intervention process, they will be invited to a formal interview with their Director of Studies or nominee.

The interview is designed to ensure that students can discuss any problems of an academic or personal nature that they may have, in a safe, supportive, one to one, environment. The Director of Studies should ensure that students leave these meetings with an agreed action plan in place which is focussed on the outcomes of the discussion.

Where a student does not engage with these interventions, or where the student does not re-engage following an intervention the Director of Studies may choose to escalate the case to the Panel Hearing stage (Page 12).

School Discretion

Where a School does not wish, on the basis of their knowledge of the performance and welfare of a student, to progress with a meeting with the student (even where a student may not have significantly improved their attendance) the reasons will be formally documented as an audit record and there is no requirement for actions to be escalated.

Where a School wishes to progress more quickly in terms of the interventions (based on its knowledge of the student and previous responses to supportive interventions) Schools can decide to move directly to a Personal Tutor meeting or to the formal Student Attendance Hearing.

In these cases, where the student holds a student visa, interventions may still occur via the Student Visa Compliance team as outlined in the Student Visa Appendix

Final Intervention – Panel Hearing

Where all previous attempts to improve attendance have failed (in line with conversations and actions for improvement agreed with the student), or the student has failed to engage with the process, the Personal Tutor or the Student Visa Compliance Team can make the decision to escalate the issue to the final stage of the intervention process.

The student will be invited to attend a panel hearing, chaired by the Head of School or nominee. The panel will normally comprise the Head of School or nominee, a representative from the Students' Union, a relevant academic member of staff and a member of the Student Visa Compliance Team if the student holds a Student visa. Students should be given at least five workings days' notice of the hearing and can be accompanied by a fellow student for support.

Hearings can proceed in the absence of a student who refuses or fails to attend. Formal hearings are the final point in the process and whilst they continue to offer the student an opportunity to explain why they have not been able to attend or seek support, they will usually be focussed on making a decision as to whether a student should be withdrawn from the University due to failure to attend.

Notes of the meeting should be taken and the student should receive confirmation of the outcome of the hearing within two working days, in line with Part O of the University General Regulations.

Appeal

Students may lodge an appeal against a decision taken to terminate their enrolment in line with Part F of the University General Regulations.

Student Visa Appendix

Purpose

As a Student Sponsor Licence holder, the University has an obligation to comply with the rules laid out by the Home Office in relation to student engagement monitoring. The Student Visa Appendix is an essential component to ensure the University, and students sponsored on a student visa, comply with Home Office requirements. It ensures the retention of the Student Sponsor Licence will allows the University to continue to sponsor students to study in the UK. This Appendix should be read in conjunction with the Attendance and Engagement Policy, which applies to all students.

Failure to comply with the Home Office sponsor guidance could result in the University's Student Sponsor Licence being revoked and therefore it is imperative that this policy is implemented consistently across all areas.

The appendix aims to provide support and guidance to ensure that student visa holders have an excellent student experience at the University, whilst complying with the engagement conditions of their visa.

Scope

This appendix applied to students who hold a Student Visa that is sponsored by the University of Lincoln. This extends to students who are on placement, undertaking a period of study abroad or where engaging in research-based study.

This appendix will be implemented by the Student Visa Compliance team with support from professional and academic staff based in the Schools. The University will monitor engagement, in line with Home Office requirements, to identify student visa holders that are not adequately engaging with studies and take appropriate action to support students to re-engage. Where a student does not re-engage, or has breached a Home Office engagement threshold, the University may withdraw sponsorship of a student's visa.

This appendix is aligned to the Banding requirements outlined within the Home Office Sponsor Guidance.

Monitoring Attendance and Engagement

Band 1 – Study below degree level

The information within this banding will be applicable to Pre-sessional English students and standalone foundation programmes.

Monitoring

Students enrolled onto these programmes are required to attend a minimum of 15 hours of daytime (08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday) classroom-based study per week.

For Pre-sessional English students, the International College are responsible for monitoring and recording attendance at all timetabled sessions. The International College will review all Pre-Sessional English on a regular basis and in line with the length of their course. For example, where the course is 5 weeks in length review points may be more frequent.

For foundation standalone programmes, attendance at timetabled sessions will be recorded via the Student Attendance System. Students will be subject to the same triggers outlined for taught students in the Attendance and Engagement Policy. In addition, the Student Visa Compliance team will review attendance monthly.

Intervention Process (Excluding Pre-Sessional English)

Stage 1: Meeting

Where a student has not attended 85% of timetabled teaching within any given month, the Student Visa Compliance team will arrange to meet with the student to review the reason for absence. Students will leave these meetings with a clear and measurable action plan to monitor re-engagement.

Stage 2: Withdrawal of Sponsorship

Where a student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive months, in line with Home Office guidance, sponsorship of the visa will be withdrawn. Any approved periods of authorised absence will be taken into consideration when analysing this metric and before a decision to withdraw sponsorship is made.

Where sponsorship of the visa is withdrawn under Part C of the University General Regulations, the student shall have a right of appeal under Part O of the University General Regulations.

Band 2 – Study at degree level and above

Taught Study

Taught students will follow the same intervention process noted in the Attendance and Engagement Policy for Stage 1 and Stage 2. Where student attendance does not improve following Stage 1 or 2 interventions noted in the Attendance and Engagement Policy the Student Visa Compliance team will initiate a compliance related intervention.

These interventions may include an email communication, a measurable action plan with a review date and signposted support or a meeting with the Student Visa Compliance team, dependent on the level of attendance. Where students are asked to attend a meeting, students should leave these meetings with an agreed and measurable action plan put in place for review.

Upon review of the action plan, the points agreed to will be reviewed and an assessment of whether they have been fully, partially or not met. Dependent on the outcome, the case may be closed, the action plan may be extended, another meeting may held with the Student Visa Compliance team or the case may be

escalated to the Final Intervention – Panel Hearing stage referred to in the Attendance and Engagement Policy.

Monitoring Students on Placement

Whilst a student is on a placement that is an assessed and integral part of their degree, their engagement must continue to be monitored in line with the University's sponsor duties.

The respective School that offers the work placement as part of the programme is responsible for this period of monitoring. They must ensure there are sufficient agreements in place that clearly outline the responsibilities of the student, the Placement provider and the University.

These agreements should include the requirement for Placement Providers to provide regular updates that the student is progressing and attending as expected.

Where poor attendance on placement is reported, investigation should be undertaken by the School to check the wellbeing of the student and to establish the reason for poor attendance. The placement provider must notify the relevant University contact at the stage where a student has missed 5 consecutive working days without authorisation or notification.

Where attempts to re-engage the student fail the School may escalate the case to the Final Intervention- Panel Hearing stage within the Attendance and Engagement Policy.

Research-based Study

Research based study will be monitored in line with the Attendance and Engagement Policy.

Postgraduate Taught students (Thesis Period)

Where a postgraduate taught student does not engage with a monthly contact point during the thesis period, and does not respond to intervention from the School, the School should notify the Student Visa Compliance team within 10 working days. The Student Visa Compliance team will review the information sent by the school and where the student may be at risk of non-compliance a compliance-related intervention will take place.

These interventions may include an email communication, a measurable action plan with a review date and signposted support or a meeting with the Student Visa Compliance team, dependent on the level of engagement. Where students are asked to attend a meeting, students should leave these meetings with an agreed and measurable action plan put in place for review.

Upon review of the action plan, the points agreed to will be reviewed and an assessment of whether they have been fully, partially or not met. Dependent on the outcome, the case may be closed, the action plan may be extended, another meeting may be called with the Student Visa Compliance team or the case may be

escalated to the Final Intervention – Panel Hearing stage referred to in the Attendance and Engagement Policy.

Postgraduate Research students

For Student visa holders, the monthly meetings referred to in the Attendance and Engagement Policy can take place in a hybrid manner. Whilst it is permitted for monthly meetings to take place either face to face or via electronic means such as Teams meeting, at a minimum, every other supervisory meeting must be an in-person meeting (unless the student is on an approved period of study overseas).

Student visa holders are not permitted to study wholly via distance learning and it is important that the student is engaged on campus on a regular basis.

Period of study overseas

Where a student intends to leave the UK during a research period, they must apply for a Change of Circumstances (Change of Study Location) via One Uni.

Where the period of study outside of the UK is directly related to their study (for example to conduct data collection) this will be reported as a change of study location to UKVI. The School must continue to monitor the student's engagement during this period in same way as if they were in the UK.

Where the period of study outside of the UK exceeds two weeks and is not directly related to study, and is not covered under the authorised absence or annual leave policy, the University may withdraw sponsorship of the visa.

Band 3 – Exceptions

There is no requirement to monitor student attendance and engagement during the following periods:

- During vacation periods
- During the post-study wrap up period of the visa

Withdrawal of Sponsorship

If a student fails to comply with the Attendance and Engagement Policy, the decision will be made by the University to either withdraw their student status, withdraw their visa sponsorship or both.

Consideration will be given to the student's entire profile and whether it is feasible for them to successfully complete the programme within their original visa length. This may include attendance to date, submission of work, previous action plan engagement, resubmission opportunities and any evidenced extenuating circumstances that may have affected the student's ability to attend. Dependent on the circumstances, an interruption of study may also be an option considered at the Final Intervention hearing.

Alternatively, if a student is absent for a period of 60 calendar days, sponsorship of their visa may be withdrawn under Part C of the University General Regulations.

In cases where a student's enrolment status is withdrawn they will be given 10 working days to lodge an appeal from the date of the withdrawal letter. During the 10 working days, students may continue to attend classes. If an appeal is submitted in-time against the withdrawal decision, the student can continue to attend classes and submit work whilst the appeal decision is pending.

The student's visa sponsorship will not be withdrawn until either the appeal deadline has passed or, if the student submits an appeal, until after the appeal decision has been made (if appropriate). In cases where a student decides not to appeal the withdrawal decision, the Student Visa will be reported to the Home Office for curtailment within 10 working days of the appeal deadline passing.

Where a student's visa is reported for curtailment, the Home Office will contact the student, by post or email, to confirm the action that will be taken. In most cases a shortened visa expiry date will be given and students should make arrangements to either return home, make an alternative application for leave in the UK, or find a new Sponsor.

Authorised Absence Appendix

Aims

The University is committed to providing an excellent student experience by facilitating a supportive and collaborative learning environment, with all students actively engaging in their learning. Attendance and Engagement is a key aspect of this however the University is aware there may be exceptional reasons why a student is unable to attend classes, or engage with their studies.

The purpose of the Authorised Absence Appendix is to form part of the Attendance and Engagement Policy and to offer support to students where they may be unable to fully engage with their studies.

This policy applies to all students studying at the University, including those on placement or studying abroad, and aims to provide guidance to students and staff in relation to authorised absence.

Finally, the policy enables the University to support international students in meeting the engagement requirement of their study visa while ensuring it remains compliant with Home Office sponsor guidance.

Authorised Absence Process

The University expects students to attend all their timetabled teaching sessions and to engage with all research related activities, unless there is an exceptional circumstance that has been authorised by either the relevant School or the Student Visa Compliance team.

Where a student is unable to attend timetabled teaching sessions, or engage with research activities, they will need to request authorised absence via the Student Absence System as soon as practicable. The system can also be accessed via Blackboard. In cases where a student is unable to submit a request via the system the relevant School or Student Visa Compliance team should submit the request on their behalf. For audit purposes, all requests must be recorded through the system.

Authorised absence can be requested in the following circumstances

- For taught students who will miss a timetabled session(s) or are unable to engage with online learning
- For postgraduate students during their thesis stage
- For postgraduate research students throughout the year (with the exception of periods of approved annual leave)

Authorised absence cannot be requested in the following circumstances

- Authorised absence cannot be used in relation to the non-submission of work
- Authorised absence does not need to be requested during official vacation periods (including approved annual leave for postgraduate research students)

Where an absence request is approved, the period of absence will be removed from a student's attendance profile and will not affect a student's overall attendance percentage. If the University rejects the absence request this will be considered as an 'informed absence'. Informed absences will be considered as unauthorised absence and will be deducted from a student's attendance percentage.

Where a student submits an authorised absence request in advance and subsequently attends the session, the absence will automatically be amended from either informed or authorised absence to 'attended' by the Student Attendance System.

The staff member assessing the absence request must adhere to this appendix and consider the reasoning, the evidence provided, the length of absence requested and whether the period of absence will adversely affect the student's ability to complete the course. In some cases, the staff member assessing the request may need to seek endorsement from a relevant academic member of staff regarding whether the period requested would affect a student's progress.

Where a student holds a student sponsored visa, the decision on the request will be made by the Student Visa Compliance team and the system will direct these requests automatically. In these cases, all decisions will be made in conjunction with Home Office guidance that will be effective in addition to this policy.

Consideration of Absence Requests

Depending on the type of absence requested, the decision of an absence request could automatically be made by the Student Attendance System or by a member of staff. Staff and students should refer to "Reasons for Absence" for details regarding how different categories of request will be decided upon.

System Authorisation

Where a student requests an absence of 5 days or less due to illness, the absence will be automatically considered as authorised and as a self-certified absence without the need to provide a medical note.

For an absence to be authorised in this way, the request must not result in a student having 5 days of self-certified illness in the last 30 days. Where the request would lead to the student exceeding this limit they will be advised to request the absence under the 'other' category to enable a member of staff to assess the request and request supporting evidence. Where this is not available the absence will be marked as informed absence.

Evidence

All evidence will be assessed to ensure that it is date relevant and fully supports the reason for absence. Where evidence does not cover the full period that has been requested, a part authorisation may be given.

All evidence must meet the requirements as laid out in "Reasons for Absence".

Time limits

In considering whether to authorise absence, a student's ability to submit assessments, sit examinations and progress should be considered. When considering a prolonged period of absence, academic endorsement should be sought to consider how the period of absence could affect a student's ability to progress on the programme. In cases where the absence would adversely impact on a student's progression, an interruption of study should be considered as an alternative.

For students that hold a Student Visa, additional Home Office guidance regarding the length of absence will be considered. Where a period of absence exceeds any Home Office limit an interruption of study should be considered.

Tuition Fees and End Dates

Students granted authorised absence will not be eligible for a refund of tuition fees, nor will their expected end date of studies be amended to reflect the period of absence.

Student Visa Holders

Where a student holds a Student visa, all absence requests will be considered by a member of the Student Visa Compliance Team.

All requests will be assessed in conjunction with Home Office rules to ensure students continue to comply with their visa conditions and that the University abides by its duties as a student sponsor licence holder.

An absence request will only be approved where it meets the conditions of this appendix and the period of absence will not affect a student's ability to complete their course within their visa expiry date. In addition, any request made that exceeds 60 calendar days will be declined, in line with Home Office rules, and an interruption of study must be considered as an alternative.

Where an absence request is not approved and a student continues to be absent without interrupting, they will be subject to the attendance intervention processes within the main body of the Attendance and Engagement Policy. Where a student's absence exceeds 60 calendar days, their visa may be withdrawn in line with Part C of the University General Regulations.

All absence requests and supporting evidence will be held for one calendar year from either the date a student leaves the University or from the visa expiry date, whichever is the earliest.

Reasons for Absence

Reason for Absence	Description	Evidence Required	Authorised or Informed
Illness, or Mental Health (5 days or less)	To be used for cases of illness that last 5 working days or less	In most cases evidence will not be required. If a student has had more than 5 days of absence under this category, in a period of 30, evidence may be requested.	Authorised
Illness, or Mental Health (6 days or more)	To be used for longer period<u>s</u> of illness that last more 6 days or more	Under this category a medical note must be provided*	Authorised
Doctors/Medical note	To be used for an appointment with a registered* doctor, healthcare professional or dentist	Evidence of the appointment including the time and date must be provided*	Authorised
Bereavement	To be used if a close family member passes away. For example, a spouse, parent, grandparent, guardian, sibling, son or daughter	Official medical certification or a death certificate* For short periods of absence that do not exceed 5 consecutive working days absence can be granted in lieu of evidence	Authorised
Commute Issues	To be used where an absence has occurred as a result of travel delays	Not required	Informed Absence
Holiday	To be used for a holiday related absence	Not required	Informed Absence
Strike Action	Where there is a <u>national</u> strike, such as a rail strike.	Staff can confirm the status of national rail strikes online.	Where alternative arrangements cannot reasonably made for a session to run online, absence can be authorised.

			Where the strike is local, absence requests should be marked as informed.
Other – including but not limited to			
Maternity/Paternity leave	To be used for a period maternity or paternity leave away from studies	Birth certificate or official medical certificate	Authorised. A minimum of 2 weeks <u>must</u> be given from the date of the birth.
Pregnancy/ Pregnancy related health issues	To be used for a period away from studies as a result of pregnancy related health difficulties	Please follow guidance in line with "Illness 6 days or more"	Authorised
Own wedding ceremony	To be used for an individual's own wedding ceremony	Marriage certificate required, including travel documentation (if applicable)	Authorised
Attendance at family celebratory events	For example, a family member's wedding or graduation ceremony	Not required	Informed Absence
Involvement in a significant/prestigious event	To be used for events such as attending a conference to present a paper or at the request of a financial sponsor	Letter of invitation from the relevant organising body	Authorised
Critical or life-threatening illness of a close family member	To be used where an individual may need to visit a close family member. For example, a spouse, parent, grandparent, guardian, sibling, son or daughter	Official medical certification*	Authorised
Domestic or personal disruptions	For example, moving house	Not required	Informed Absence
Employment related issues	For example, a work shift conflicting with a timetabled session	Not required	Informed Absence

Cultural reasons	For example, to attend a cultural event	Not required	Informed Absence
Visa Extension	To be used to attend an appointment with the UKVI as part of a visa application	Evidence a visa application has been submitted and evidence of the appointment	Authorised

Please note that this is a non-exhaustive list

*Acceptable supporting evidence

Below are the requirements that any supporting evidence must meet to be considered to support an absence request:

   i)   All evidence submitted must be in English. Evidence that is not in English must be translated by a certified translator

   ii)   Any medical evidence provided must signed by a registered doctor, healthcare professional or dentist and they must be registered with the relevant professional body (GMC, NMC etc.). Appointments with a complementary practitioner will not be accepted

   iii)   Evidence in the form of photographs or x-rays will not be accepted, where the request is illness-related

   iv)   All evidence must be date relevant to the absence being requested

   v)   Where satisfactory evidence is provided, the absence request will also be considered in conjunction with the length of time being requested. Where the length of absence would affect a student's ability to progress or successfully complete, and interruption of study should be considered.