

Academic Engagement Policy

1. Scope of Policy

- 1.1 This policy establishes the University's expectations regarding student academic engagement, the responsibilities of staff and students, the procedures for notifying the University of a student absence, how academic engagement is monitored, and the support and action taken should this fall below a satisfactory level. This policy also seeks to provide a safe and productive learning environment for all students.
- 1.2 The policy applies to all students, including those with a Student visa. In addition, specific requirements apply to apprentices and these are covered in Section 4.
- 1.3 This policy is separated into three sections for ease of reference:
 - a) An introduction providing an overview of the importance of engagement with learning opportunities and the expectations and responsibilities of all students regarding their attendance;
 - b) Academic engagement with teaching and assessment;
 - c) Student Attendance at Clinical Sessions;
 - d) Additional requirements for apprentices.

2. Overview

2.1 An overview of academic engagement

- 2.1.1 Engaging with and attending all learning opportunities (i.e., all formal teaching, clinical, practical and study sessions, placements, and assessment, including examinations) provided on a course is fundamental to students' success and achievement. Students who regularly attend and participate fully are more likely to:
 - a) Appreciate and enjoy a rewarding learning experience through the development of their knowledge and skills
 - b) Prepare well for examinations
 - c) Achieve better results
 - d) Successfully progress and complete their course to a high standard
 - e) Be prepared for the requirements of professional practice in their chosen field
- 2.1.2 The University formally monitors student academic engagement at School-level engagement monitoring meetings. These meet a minimum of twice per semester through the academic year and involve Course, Registry and Student Services teams. The meetings aim to identify students struggling with engagement by monitoring levels of recorded attendance and any known engagement issues, and instigate appropriate support mechanisms that will enable them to improve their attendance profile.
- 2.1.3 In addition to these scheduled meetings, concerns about a students' engagement can be raised and addressed at any time through the appropriate channels.

2.2 Expectations & Responsibilities of Students Regarding Attendance and Engagement

- 2.2.1 You are expected to make every effort to attend all formal teaching sessions (which include timetabled lectures, seminars, tutorials, study days, practical classes, clinic sessions, placements, and examinations) regularly and punctually, and to engage and participate in all learning opportunities professionally and appropriately.
- 2.2.2 You should note that it is:
- a) Discourteous and unprofessional to arrive late for or leave early from classes and clinical sessions without a valid reason. Tutors or Practice Educators can ask you to leave if you arrive late for a class or clinical session.
 - b) Discourteous and unprofessional to colleagues and tutors to disturb a teaching session by participating in personal conversations, taking phone calls, and using electronic devices for browsing not related to the class topic (social media, online shopping etc.) during teaching sessions. Tutors can ask you to leave if you disturb a teaching session in this way or regularly engage in behaviour that interrupts or hinders the learning of others.
- 2.2.3 Students with continued lack of engagement through unauthorised absences from classes or clinical sessions may be withdrawn from the course in accordance with the procedures outlined here.
- 2.2.4 It is acknowledged that student absences can occur due to unavoidable circumstances, and this is considered as part of the student attendance and engagement monitoring process. Student absences are categorised as “authorised” or “unauthorised” depending on the reason for the absence.
- 2.2.5 Authorised absences usually involve unforeseen issues that are outside of your control and are notified to the University at the earliest opportunity and include, but are not limited to those relating to:
- a) Student illness or injury
 - b) Unexpected changes to childcare arrangements
 - c) Difficulties with care of a dependent person
 - d) Religious holidays
 - e) Major transport disruptions
 - f) The death or funeral of a close relative
 - g) Unexpected changes to financial circumstances
- 2.2.6 Unauthorised absences may include but are not limited to:
- a) Holidays during the term
 - b) Difficulties with regular work schedules
 - c) Job interviews
 - d) Medical appointments unless due to an acute illness or emergency; you are expected where possible to arrange non-emergency medical appointments around your teaching sessions and clinical commitments, including dental appointments
 - e) Any other absence that you have not informed the University about
- 2.2.7 You should notify the University of your absence from any learning opportunity. In cases where you do not notify the University of your absence, the absence is automatically classified as ‘unauthorised’.
- 2.2.8 If you have an authorised absence from any formal teaching session, you are responsible for contacting the tutor(s) concerned to identify what you have missed to ensure that you do not

fall behind in your studies. Resources to support teaching sessions are available on the VLE and students are expected to access to these to review missed teaching materials.

- 2.2.9 You are expected to comply with any course-specific attendance requirements in addition to this policy that are contained within Unit Handbooks, Course Handbooks, Course Information Forms or Unit Information Forms as appropriate.
- 2.2.10 You are expected to prepare adequately for each formal teaching session as directed by tutors.

2.3 Monitoring Student Attendance and Engagement

2.3.1 The monitoring of student attendance at teaching and clinic sessions is based on expected attendance thresholds to enable the University to follow up on any issues with academic engagement. This threshold is as follows:

- a) **Stage 1** - If your attendance **falls below 60%** at any one School-level monitoring meeting for the first time in any one academic year, and/or you have 2 or more unauthorised absences, you will normally be contacted by your course team to discuss the impact on your studies and how your attendance can be improved.
- b) **Stage 2** - If your attendance is **still below 60%** at the next School-level meeting, and/or you continue to have unauthorised absences, you will normally be contacted by a member of course team to discuss your attendance, the support that can be provided, and formal conditions will be set that you will be expected to meet for your registration to continue.
- c) **Stage 3** - If your attendance is **still below 60%**, and/or you continue to have unauthorised absences, and/or the formal conditions are not met at the next meeting you will normally be contacted by the Academic Registrar, or nominee, who will implement either the Study Break Procedure, Withdrawal Procedure, and/or the Student Fitness to Practise Policy due to limited academic progress and engagement with the course.

Students with immigration sponsorship from the University, notwithstanding any procedures implemented at Stage 3, and any further action required as a result of any additional engagement concerns, will be issued with a final warning at this stage to improve overall attendance levels.

- d) If, at any School-level meeting, it is clear that your **final attendance level will be below 60%** by the end of the academic year, and there are no exceptional or mitigating circumstances to explain your absence, action may be taken through the Study Break Procedure or Withdrawal Procedure.
- e) The threshold for students with **defined clinic hours is 80%** and contributes to the overall attendance thresholds described above.
- f) Students will not be permitted to graduate unless they have completed the required clinic hours. Clinic attendance is also monitored at the School-level meetings and the Clinic Lead (or their nominee) may also contact students who are at risk of failing to obtain the necessary clinic hours to progress and/or complete their studies.

2.3.2 Any of your course team may also contact you directly at any time to discuss attendance issues and/or may inform another appropriate staff member and ask them to manage any attendance issues that they identify.

2.3.3 **For Student visa holders:** In addition to the attendance and engagement requirements outlined above, any student studying under a Student visa sponsored by the University must meet the following requirements:

- Any two-week period where no attendance or engagement is recorded will be reported to the UKVI Compliance Manager. Continued non-engagement may result in sponsorship being withdrawn as part of our Student Sponsorship duties.
- Student visa holders should refer to the *Immigration Sponsorship for Students Policy and Procedures* for more information about their obligations whilst a student.

3. Academic engagement with teaching and assessment

3.1 Attendance at formal teaching sessions (including examinations)

- 3.1.1 Formal teaching sessions include, but are not limited to, lectures, tutorials, seminars, technique and practical classes, online classes, workshops, contact days and conferences. This also includes attendance at formative and summative examinations. Where online attendance is available, students who show no evidence of being present throughout via camera or microphone will be considered absent. Joining an online session but showing no engagement is not considered attendance.
- 3.1.2 You are expected to comply with any course-specific attendance requirements in addition to this policy that are contained within your Unit Handbooks, Course Handbooks, Course Information Forms or Unit Information Forms as appropriate. This includes any thresholds higher than those outlined in section 2.3.1.
- 3.1.3 Attendance at all formal teaching sessions is expected unless absence has been reported in advance and is consistent with the definition of “authorised” absences listed in this policy.
- 3.1.4 Student visa holders must attend all teaching sessions in person where possible. Attendance at online teaching events will be taken into consideration as part of the overall attendance record but cannot be used in place of in person requirements.
- 3.1.5 Student visa holders are not permitted to undertake a course which is fully online or remote.

3.2 Recording Student Attendance

- 3.2.1 Student attendance at formal teaching sessions will normally be recorded by the tutor concerned.
- 3.2.2 It is the responsibility of Registry to:
- Provide systems, information, and training to ensure registers are available for each formal teaching session as requested by the appropriate course team;
 - Ensure attendance records are up to date and available for review by course teams;
 - Provide the School-level meetings with up-to-date monitoring reports in line with section 2.3 and as and when required.
- 3.2.3 It is your responsibility as students to:
- Ensure that you attend all formal teaching sessions to attain the required attendance level.
 - Ensure that you do not register another student as present in a class or give a false name on a register – this is a disciplinary offence within the University’s *Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures*.
 - Ensure you attend your allocated group’s teaching sessions only; it is in students’ interest to attend only their group’s sessions as timetabled to maintain appropriate tutor/student ratios.

- d) Follow available procedures if you wish to swap your allocated group, completely or for particular sessions, for a legitimate reason (requests for group swaps will be considered on an individual basis).
- e) Ensure that you inform the University of any absence in line with the procedure stated below. If students do not inform the University the absence will be considered “unauthorised”.
- f) Speak to your course team or seek advice from Student Services if you have concerns that you are falling behind with your studies, or are struggling to engage properly with your course.

3.2.4 It is the responsibility of course teams to:

- a) Complete the registers for all formal teaching sessions.
- b) Monitor student attendance and engagement for their students and raise any concerns regarding student attendance with students directly or report their concerns to a School-level meeting or relevant Course Leader, Unit Leader or Student Services as appropriate.
- c) In addition, raise acute concerns about the engagement of students with immigration sponsorship in accordance with the *Immigration Sponsorship for Students Policy and Procedures*.

3.3 Notification of student absence procedure for formal teaching sessions

- 3.3.1 You should notify the University if you are going to or have been absent from any formal teaching session by completing the Student Absence form on the VLE.
- 3.3.2 For any unavoidable absence due to illness or injury lasting more than seven consecutive days or two teaching weekends of timetabled commitments, you must submit a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner or other qualified health practitioner to Registry upon your return. You should then contact your Course Leader and course tutors to make arrangements for catching up on missed work.
- 3.3.3 If you are absent for five consecutive days or less and are not seriously ill, it is assumed that you will be able to catch up with any work you have missed and will take the necessary steps to do so.
- 3.3.4 If you are absent during any one semester without notification for a period of fourteen consecutive contact days (full time) or six consecutive contact days (part time), you may be presumed to have withdrawn yourself from your course and may have your registration discontinued under the Withdrawal Procedure. For Student visa holders section 2.3.3 applies.
- 3.3.5 You should respond immediately to any communications from the University regarding your attendance and any proposed action to be taken as this will give you the opportunity to explain any unknown periods of absence.

4. Attendance of internal clinic and external placement activity

- 4.1.1 You are expected to attend all your internal clinic sessions and/or external placement activity in line with PSRB requirements. You should be punctual and engage and participate in all learning opportunities professionally and appropriately. Attendance at your clinic sessions is mandatory unless absence has been reported in advance and is consistent with the definition of “authorised” absences listed in 2.2.5 above.
- 4.1.2 Students with repeated absences will be considered as part of the monitoring and intervention as outlined in 2.3 above.

- 4.1.3 Any internal clinic and or external placement activity that you are not able to attend, regardless of the reason, will need to be completed at an alternative time.
- 4.1.4 For planned absences that cannot be avoided, such as those outlined in 2.2.5, email registry@aecc.ac.uk / clinicabsence@uco.ac.uk with as much notice as possible, so that that your internal clinic and/or external placement activity educators can be advised. For any on-the-day sickness or emergencies, in addition to emailing you must also copy in your Senior Practice Educators, so that they are aware.
- 4.1.5 If you are absent from clinic without notifying the University, or if you are absent for reasons outside of those outlined in section 2.2.5, you will be required to meet with a Senior Practice Educator who will discuss your clinical attendance.
- 4.1.6 If you have persistent absence from clinic, usually defined as 2 or more unauthorised absences or attendance below 80% of scheduled clinical hours, the procedure outlined in section 2.3 will be followed.
- 4.1.7 If you have unauthorised absences for 2 or more days, you must meet with a Senior Practice Educator to plan your return, which may include a period of collaborative work before reopening your list. If this period of collaborative work overlaps with a clinical assessment period, you will be required to defer this assessment.
- 4.1.8 Absence from clinic may also be followed up under the Student Fitness to Practise Policy if sufficiently serious.
- 4.1.9 It is the responsibility of students to keep a record of any clinic sessions that they will need to complete due to absence. All pre-registration students are expected to complete all required clinic hours as part of their course and will not be able to graduate or register with the relevant Professional Statutory & Regulatory Body (PSRB) until these are completed, even if you have successfully completed all your assessments.
- 4.1.10 Students struggling to manage clinic time or who have any concerns about clinic are encouraged to please speak with their Senior Practice Educator, Course Leader, or Student Services.

5. Specific requirements for apprentices

- 5.1 Apprentices will be included in the processes outlined above for monitoring engagement with their academic studies in addition to the following specific requirements.
- 5.2 All apprentices are expected to adhere to the contract signed by them and their employers regarding attendance on all University apprenticeship courses. It is expected that the apprentice attends all aspects of their training unless an authorised absence is agreed as per 2.2.4 & 2.2.5 above.
- 5.3 Apprenticeship attendance is governed by the apprenticeship agreement signed by the Apprentice/Apprentice Line Manager/Apprenticeship Lead for the organisation. This agreement governs the 20% off the job training that the University, acting as the training provider, will deliver. For all apprentices in employment for a minimum of 30 hours per week, this will equate to 6 hours per week for the duration of the apprenticeship.
- 5.4 Monitoring of apprenticeships attendance is based on the above agreement. The Course Leader, in agreement with the Apprenticeships Manager and Course Tutors, will decide a RAG (Red Amber Green) rating for all apprentices on a month by month basis. This is determined by the following stipulated thresholds:

	Red	Amber	Green
Attendance	Ongoing cancellations/attendance problems	1-3 missed classes/cancellations	100% attendance
Timesheet	2+ deadlines missed	1 deadlines missed	Up to date
Submissions	2+ deadlines missed	1 deadlines missed	Up to date
Progress review attendance	Progress review missed and no response to contact	Progress review rescheduled	Attended

5.5 Short-term absences are covered by this policy. Any longer-term absences which are likely to go beyond 4 weeks (or the timespan detailed in the Apprenticeship Funding Rules) should be dealt with under the University's *Break in Learning Procedure*.

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