Plymouth Marjon University
Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

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Introduction

1.1 Plymouth Marjon University has a duty to monitor engagement and to support students to complete their programme of study. The purpose of the policy is to provide clarity for students on the expectations relating to attendance and engagement and what action may be taken where levels of engagement drop to unsatisfactory levels. The University aims to improve the engagement and attendance of all students, ensure a proactive approach to providing support when needed and ensure a consistent approach across all Academic Departments and Faculties to enable students to maximise their full potential, increasing success and achievement.

1.2 This document sets out the policy and procedure employed by the University to monitor student attendance and engagement and applies to all students studying on a taught programme of study, including higher and degree apprenticeships, assessed placements and those students sponsored under Tier 4 or the Student Visa Route. It outlines the activities the University undertakes to encourage students to attend scheduled classes and engage with the full range of learning opportunities ensuring increased success.

1.3 There may be some programmes with additional attendance requirements, such as those accredited by a professional body and apprenticeships. Where additional requirements apply, the University will expect students to comply with those requirements in addition to this policy.

1.4 Students studying at partner institutions may be subject to a local attendance policy, set by the partner. That policy should meet the minimum expectations outlined in this policy. If the partner policy is different to the University's policy, it will be communicated to students by the partner institution following approval by the University.

1.5 It is in the interests of every student to attend their scheduled sessions. Engagement with the University's Virtual Learning Environment Canvas which also provides online resources to enable catch up and review, and other available learning resources including the submission of assessment is also key.

Definitions:

1. Attendance – being present, whether on campus or online, at scheduled learning, teaching and other activities as required by the module and/or programme. Students are expected to arrive punctually and remain present for the duration of the scheduled session. Attendance will be monitored through the University Attendance Tracker and Programme Leaders should ensure that the appropriate approved process is followed.
2. Engagement – participation in guided independent or group study activities, assessment and feedback and any other activities required including submitting assessment by the agreed deadline and accessing and /or interacting with module materials.
3. Taught Student – those students studying on an Undergraduate or Postgraduate programme which is based on predominately taught rather than independent study and normally on campus.
4. Research Student – those students studying a PhD containing original and largely independent study and research.
5. Distance Learner – those students who are registered for a programme that does not meet physically but uses online means only through which to deliver the teaching and associated learning.

6. Flexible Learner – those students who are registered for a flexible degree programme that is delivered predominantly online with a period of study on campus, normally one day or blocks of one week.
7. Higher Level Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship Students – apprentices who are studying on an apprenticeship course which is based on off-the-job training and includes engagement with timetabled sessions.
8. VLE – Virtual Learning Environment and in most cases refers to the use of Canvas
9. Synchronous teaching / virtual attendance – attendance virtually e.g. live sessions through Teams, synchronous participation in an online forum and online examinations.
10. Point of contact / contact point – any whole day where a student is expected (i.e. timetabled) to attend one or more teaching or learning event(s). A student shall be deemed to have met a point of contact or contact point where they attend at least one teaching or learning event per module on this day.

Attendance and engagement requirements

2.1 Engagement is expected of all students in every element of their course. This includes attending campus sessions including lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical sessions, and engagement with online learning resources and learning materials which form part of their course. It also includes all activities defined in the Programme Specification as compulsory and submissions of all summative or formative assessments.

2.2 For students undertaking an assessed placement in industry or practice or a year in industry as part of a sandwich course, this policy also outlines expected attendance during the placement. Further information can also be found in the University's Work-Based Learning and Placement Policy.

2.3 For some programmes, normally those accredited by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBS), and apprenticeships, there are compulsory

attendance requirements which, if a student does not meet them, they will not be able to pass their programme. These requirements will be clearly outlined in the programme description on Canvas and the Programme Specification. Where this is more rigorous than set by the University, the requirement of the professional body will prevail.

2.4 Teaching and learning will normally take place in person face to face unless a distance learning or flexible delivery programme. However, should the University be required under government guidance or through public health requirements to teach students online, their engagement will be monitored through attendance at online sessions and through engagement with resources provided on Canvas or other online platforms as appropriate.

2.5 Where students are not able to come onto campus for any authorised reason (see appendix c), their engagement will be monitored through access to the online study materials provided through Canvas.

2.6 For the purpose of this Policy, engagement will be measured by point of contact. Point of contact is defined as:

- Face-to-face teaching for taught students - attendance at timetabled sessions within a calendar week. This can include attendance at lectures, seminars and tutorials. The University Attendance Tracker will be used to monitor attendance.
- Online engagement – engagement at module level with Canvas the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) within a calendar week.
- Taught postgraduate students at project/dissertation stage meetings with their supervisor.
- For research students - regular supervisory meetings.
- Higher and Degree apprentices – see Appendix A

2.7 Calendar week is defined as every day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays excluding University closure days such as bank holidays and Christmas closures.

UKVI attendance and engagement requirements

3.1 The University has a particular duty to ensure that students sponsored on the UKVI student route are in attendance including during any placement. This is a condition of the University's UKVI License. Non-attendance could result in withdrawal of sponsorship, which will be reported to the UKVI, consequently affecting the student's status in the UK. Monitoring and reporting is a legal requirement for all sponsors. If students are absent for more than 60 days during term time, the University is required to withdraw visa sponsorship, and the visa will be curtailed.

3.2 The requirements for students on UKVI Student visas, are set out in section 11 below.

Attendance and engagement monitoring

Taught students – face to face teaching

4.1 Attendance monitoring refers to the recording of student attendance of scheduled on campus sessions. Attendance will normally be recorded and monitored for each timetabled session per module per week (known as the contact point / point of contact). A student attached to three modules would therefore have at least three contact points per week.

4.2 Engagement is monitored through the students' activity on Canvas, their use of library resources and their assessment activity.

4.3 An entire week with no attendance at any module will normally be considered a missed contact.

4.4 Where a taught student is studying overseas as part of the Turing Scheme or on study abroad, responsibility for recording absence will lie with the partner institution who must inform the University of any missed contact points.

Taught students at project / dissertation stage (postgraduate programmes only)

4.5 The engagement of students solely studying the project/dissertation module of their postgraduate Master's degree is monitored through regular meetings with their supervisor (either face-to-face or online). Each supervisory meeting is considered to be a point of contact.

Taught students on work or clinical / professional placement

4.7 Where a taught student is undertaking a work placement or year in industry, regular contact with the placement tutor or University placement team will serve as evidence of ongoing attendance and engagement. Such contact is usually expected to take place on a fortnightly basis. Two consecutive weeks (one fortnight) without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact. At the end of the placement, students will be required to demonstrate that they have undertaken the required hours at their placement in addition to any assessment.

4.8 Where a student is attending a clinical or other professional placement (e.g. nursing, teaching) in order to satisfy a PSRB professional practice requirement, attendance will be monitored on a weekly basis (in accordance with the Programme Specification).

4.9 If a student is unable to attend their placement for any reason, they should let their Programme Leader know immediately, so that alternative arrangements may be put in place, allowing the student to continue to engage with their studies where appropriate.

Distance learning and flexible delivery students

4.10 The frequency and level of engagement required on a distance learning or flexible degree programme may vary according to the programme, and the circumstances of individual students.

4.11 For students registered on distance learning or flexible degree programmes, engagement will be determined and monitored by the programme team based on the prevailing programme structure. The university retains the right to withdraw a student for lack of engagement, in line with the escalation procedure for taught students.

Attendance and Engagement monitoring escalation procedure (see Appendix D)

5.1 The university will make every effort to avoid having to initiate the formal engagement escalation procedure. However, if informal attempts to contact and re-engage a student are unsuccessful, the following procedure will apply:

All Taught students excluding those on a student visa

5.2 Where an attendance, engagement or progression issue has been identified by a Module or Programme Leader (a maximum of three consecutive timetabled sessions (point of contact) or two weeks no contact, whichever is longest), contact should be made without delay. Informal contact should be attempted by the student's Programme Leader using appropriate communication methods (e.g. email, telephone or other agreed communication channels), taking account

of accessibility and student preference, followed up by an email asking for a response within one calendar week. Prior to initiating formal escalation, the Programme Leader will consult with the student's Personal Development Tutor to ensure that relevant academic or contextual information has been considered and that escalation is appropriate.

5.3 Where unauthorised missed contact continues and where there is no response to the email, the Registry and Programme Support Office will send a letter, copying in the student's Personal Development Tutor and Programme Leader, to the student's University and personal email addresses, with a paper copy sent by recorded delivery to the student's home address.

5.4 After a second consecutive week of unauthorised missed contact, a second email will be sent warning the student that another missed week will likely result in them being withdrawn and requiring them to contact their Personal Development Tutor (PDT) to resolve any issues.

5.5 The Personal Development Tutor (PDT) will monitor for a response to the letter, however if no contact is made by the student within one calendar week, the Personal Development Tutor (PDT) will advise the Registry and Programme Support Office, copying in the Programme leader, to withdraw the student, and the student record will be updated.

5.6 During this period, if the student supplies new evidence to support their lack of engagement, the University may use discretion to consider this. Where there are exceptional circumstances, this may halt withdrawal proceedings, if it is deemed that the evidence is sufficiently strong to retrospectively grant authorised absence, and the student is able to catch-up with their studies.

5.7 The Registry and Programme Support Office will advise the student by email that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect, and their student record will be updated.

5.8 Repeated patterns of intermittent unauthorised missed contact may also be considered sufficient grounds to initiate a withdrawal.

5.9 Any absence/non-engagement of 60 calendar days or more will result in an immediate withdrawal.

Taught students on a student visa

5.10 The University is required to abide by the Student Route Sponsorship duties outlined by the UKVI. Under these duties, the University is legally required to monitor all Student Route sponsored students and to maintain attendance and engagement records, reporting non-attendance and engagement when necessary.

5.11 A student who has been issued a student visa to begin their programme will be provided with a start date. If the student does not attend within two weeks of the enrolment period or start date, their non-attendance will be reported to the UKVI, and their sponsorship will be withdrawn

5.12 After a complete calendar week of unauthorised missed contact, an email will be sent by the Registry and Programme Support Office, copying in the student's Programme Leader, notifying the student that their level of engagement has dropped and requesting that they contact their Personal Development Tutor (PDT) to discuss any issues or support needs.

5.13 After a second consecutive calendar week of unauthorised missed contact, a second email, copying in the student's Programme Leader, will be sent warning the student that another missed week will likely result in them being withdrawn and requiring them to contact their Personal Development Tutor (PDT) to resolve any issues.

5.14 After a third consecutive calendar week, the student will be contacted directly by their Personal Development Tutor (PDT) and informed that they will be withdrawn unless a request for interruption has been submitted within 14 calendar days and subsequently granted.

5.15 During this period, if a student supplies new evidence to support their lack of engagement, the University may use discretion to consider this. Where there are exceptional circumstances, this may halt withdrawal proceedings, if it is deemed that the evidence is sufficiently strong to retrospectively grant authorised absence, and the student is able to catch-up with their studies.

5.16 If a student fails to submit a request for interruption within 14 calendar days, a fourth and final email will advise the student that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect, and their student record will be updated. Sponsorship will be curtailed at this point and UKVI will be notified.

5.17 If a student submits a request for interruption within 14 calendar days that is subsequently not granted, a fourth and final email will advise the student that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect, and their student record will be updated.

5.18 Repeated patterns of intermittent unauthorised missed contact may also be considered sufficient grounds to initiate a withdrawal.

5.19 Any absence/non-engagement of 60 calendar days or more will result in an immediate withdrawal

Use of data for monitoring engagement

6.1 The data on a student's general engagement with the University including learning resources, Canvas, attendance and assessment data, is used to model

the successful study behaviours which enable students to succeed. It is also used to predict which students may require further support. Student activity is monitored throughout the academic year by Personal Development Tutors, Programme Leaders and staff with responsibility for student wellbeing.

6.2 Students who are not attending or engaging with online learning resources will be contacted by the University, normally their Personal Development Tutor (PDT) or Programme Leader to re-engage them with their course. A list is produced on a weekly basis with the process set out in section 5 followed for any missed point of contact.

6.3 The University has a separate process for Apprenticeships (Appendix A). Apprenticeships are a defined group of students who require significant data for reporting purposes. A key aspect of this process is to produce a clear reporting process between all stakeholders involved.

6.4 The personal data that is collected and processed for the purposes of this policy are done so in accordance with the University's legitimate interest to help students interact successfully with their programme of study, and to support their welfare and success. The University will hold and process students' data in compliance with its obligations as Data Controller under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. The University will not share student's data with third parties unless it holds an appropriate consent from the student or is under a statutory or regulatory obligation to do so.

Use of attendance and engagement data for reporting

7.1 Attendance and engagement data is also used to assess whether students are meeting attendance requirements for the Student Loans Company (SLC).

7.2 Where a student is not attending or engaging at the point of a census, they may be withdrawn, and this will be reported to the Student Loans Company (SLC)

who will end payments. The Student Loans Company (SLC) will normally claw back any tuition fee or maintenance loan overpayments. Students should ensure that they are aware of the implications of this.

Authorised absence

8.1 The University recognises that, occasionally, students may be unable to meet the minimum attendance or engagement requirements due to unforeseen circumstances. Short-term absences, of less than four calendar days, due to illness do not need to be authorised, however students must contact a member of staff to inform them if they are not able to attend scheduled sessions, or individual meetings that have been prearranged.

8.2 Students should not be absent from timetabled sessions for a period of four or more calendar days unless agreed with the University. If a student is unable to attend face-to-face sessions or engage with Canvas, they must notify the University via the Registry and Programme Support Office at RPSO@marjon.ac.uk; if this is not completed the absence will be counted as a missed point of contact.

8.3 Instances of illness or other extenuating circumstances that affect an assessment or examination should be reported to the University. Students who are undertaking assignments affected by illness or other factors may request extenuating circumstances (ECs) in accordance with the Student Regulations Framework.

8.4 For absences of four or more calendar days, students must seek approval from their Programme Leader in writing. Requests should normally be submitted prior to the absence. Authorisation for unplanned absence may be submitted up to seven calendar days after the last day of absence. Requests outside this period will not be considered.

8.5 The University will normally approve authorised absence requests (see appendix C) for up to 14 calendar days. In exceptional cases, requests for more than 14 calendar days may be considered. All requests will be treated sensitively, and the University will try to accommodate all reasonable requests. However, where an absence may have a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress, or where absence levels are already a concern, requests may not be granted, and the University may recommend that the student considers interrupting. Students should seek guidance from the Student Wellbeing and Support Team prior to implementing the interruption process.

Normal work demands on the part of an employer and holidays will not normally be viewed as valid reasons for absence.

8.4 Students are permitted to apply for temporary leave, suspension of studies, or deferral of their course of study for personal or medical reasons via the University's interruption process. Guidance and advice on these processes can be found in the Student Regulations Framework, from Personal Development Tutors, the Student Wellbeing and Support Team or the Registry and Programme Support Office.

8.5 Absence for students sponsored for a UKVI Student visa, must be authorised by the University's UKVI compliance lead. Absence for longer than 5 days during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

8.6 Students are responsible for catching up on any missed sessions. Module and Programme Leaders are not required to provide additional support to students who do not attend timetabled sessions.

Post Graduate Research (PGR) students

9.1 Research students must be in regular contact with supervisors and be able to provide evidence of continued research and progress in their research topic through their supervision record.

9.2 Lack of research progress and non-attendance at planned supervision sessions by research students will be investigated by the supervisor, and a determination of the reasons for it sought.

Withdrawal for non-attendance and/or engagement

10.1 The University may withdraw students from a taught course if they are not attending and/or submitting assessments.

10.2 PGR students who are not attending supervisory sessions or engaging with their research may be withdrawn.

10.3 Where appropriate students will be offered an opportunity to attend a meeting with their Programme Leader and / or Personal Development Tutor prior to withdrawal to discuss available support options, interruption or alternative pathways.

Appeals against a withdrawal

Grounds for appeal

11.1 Students have the right to appeal against a withdrawal by default on the following Grounds:

i. That there are extenuating circumstances relating to ill health or personal difficulties which the student was unable to raise prior to or during the escalation procedure detailed in section 5; and/or

ii. That the information held by the University relating to the student's attendance and/or engagement is incomplete or inaccurate, and the student was not in a position to correct this information at an earlier stage;

Students wishing to appeal must show a compelling reason why this information could not be made available before the decision to withdraw was reached and provide documentary evidence in support. Where the student could have made the information available prior to the decision being made, such evidence cannot normally be accepted as grounds for appeal.

11.2 No appeal can be made where an interruption of study has been requested and granted during the attendance and engagement monitoring process but has consequently been rejected by the student.

How to appeal

11.3 Appeals must be made via the University's Complaint procedure.

Appendix A

Higher and Degree Apprentices

The procedure for monitoring the engagement of higher and degree apprentices will follow the processes set out for students on taught programmes of study in the main body of the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy with the additions set out below:

Authorised absence

1.1 An apprentice must seek approval if they wish to take leave for a period up to 4 weeks. Approval needs to be sought from the programme lead and employer using the absence procedures of both the university and the employer. Authorisation cannot be granted unless the Programme Leader and employer are in agreement.

1.2 Apprentices can, in conjunction with their employers, apply for a formal break in

learning where they need to take a period of leave from work in excess of 4 weeks. The duration of the apprenticeship will be adjusted in line with the period of authorised absence.

Measuring attendance and engagement

2.1 There is a minimum requirement of 85% attendance for all apprentices in timetabled sessions. Attendance and engagement with University based study days will be monitored in accordance with the sections in the main policy and procedure relating to taught students.

2.2 The definition of off-the-job (OTJ) training where engagement must be monitored includes teaching of theory, practical training such as shadowing, mentoring and industry visits along with learning support and time spent writing assessments. Apprentices are asked to record non-timetabled sessions for discussion at their tripartite reviews.

Engagement monitoring escalation procedure

3.1 After a second consecutive week of absence or non-engagement, the Registry and Programme Support Officer will report the apprentice's status to the Programme Leader and Apprenticeship Manager. The Apprenticeship Manager may at this stage contact the apprentice's employer.

3.2 The Apprenticeship Programme Leader determines whether the missed contact is authorised. Support and intervention arrangements may be required to support apprentices to catch up on their work.

3.3 After a third consecutive week of absence or non-engagement a meeting will be arranged with the apprentice, employer and Apprenticeship Manager to discuss whether a break in learning is required.

3.4 If an apprentice submits a request for a break in learning this must also be submitted to the Apprenticeship Manager.

3.5 The Apprenticeship Manager is responsible for notifying the apprentice's employer in the event of any concerns regarding engagement in relation to informal and formal progress reviews.

Appendix B

Minimum Expectations

As a minimum the University expects students to:

- Attend scheduled learning and teaching activities
- Engage with and participate fully in all learning activities
- Complete and submit assessments by submission dates and undertake exams
- Undertake independent learning/ research as directed by academic staff
- Attend all scheduled meetings with University staff including with your Personal Development Tutor
- Attend placements as required to complete your programme
- Inform the University if you are unable to attend scheduled learning and teaching activities
- Check their University email account on a regular basis for any formal notifications/ communications

Appendix C

Authorised Absence

In addition to illness, the following constitutes a non-exhaustive list of reasons for absence that may result in a recording of authorised absence, subject to School approval where appropriate:

- Medical appointments
- Parental or caring responsibilities
- Bereavement or other compassionate grounds
- Unforeseen domestic (or other) emergency (including isolated IT issues)
- Appointment with the Police or visa authority for immigration purposes
- Interview (e.g. for a placement) or other career related appointment
- Jury service
- Disability (in liaison with a support plan from the Disability and Inclusion Team)
- Approved University visits, events, workshops and / or conferences

Appendix D

Taught students excluding those on a student visa

Timeframe in weeks

Week 0

Attendance monitoring issue recorded: 3 consecutive timetabled sessions missed or 2 weeks no contact, whichever is longest

PL contacts student by phone and email

Week 1

No contact from student

Letter sent by RPSO to students personal and university email with paper copy sent to home address

Week 2

No contact from student

RPSO send further email stating student likely to be withdrawn and requesting student contacts PDT

Week 3

No contact from student

PDT recommends RPSO withdraws student

Week 4

No contact from student

RPSO process withdrawal and inform student by email they have been withdrawn

Taught students on a student visa

Timeframe in weeks

Week 0

Attendance monitoring issue recorded: 1 week no contact

RPSO contacts student by email asking them to contact their PDT

Week 1

No contact from student

RPSO contacts student by email asking them to contact their PDT

Week 2

PDT contacts student by email stating student likely to be withdrawn unless contact made or a request for interruption received

No contact from student

Week 4

No contact from student or interruption request refused

RPSO process withdrawal and inform student by email they have been withdrawn

UKVI notified of student withdrawal

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