



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Student and Academic Services

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1. Introduction

1. There is clear evidence to show that students who attend their scheduled learning sessions and engage with the learning resources available to them tend to achieve better results. Adopting a campus-first approach to its teaching, the University will play an active role in enabling and empowering students to gain the most from their studies and allow each individual to reach their full potential. It is however expected that students also take an active role in and responsibility for attending and engaging with their studies.
2. Levels of low attendance and engagement can be an early indicator that a student may be experiencing challenges which may lead to underachievement, inability to continue with their studies or withdrawal from their course. Early identification of any such challenges will enable the University to put in place appropriate interventions and support mechanisms to help students re-engage with their studies. Our university community will support students to overcome any barriers that may impede their ability to succeed. Therefore, monitoring attendance and engagement, which specifically targets non-attendance as the first trigger for intervention is a key focus for the University.

2. Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to:

- a. Detail to all students the University's expectations with respect to their attendance at scheduled learning sessions (on campus and online) and engagement with all learning resources and activities available during their studies.
- b. Explain actions that will be taken when attendance expectations are not met, making clear the potential implications of a continued lack of attendance and/or engagement.
- c. Set out how the University will monitor attendance and engagement.
- d. Ensure that the University supports students to re-engage with their course where possible, and that options available are considered where appropriate, before a decision is taken to withdraw a student from their course.
- e. Ensure that the University remains compliant with obligations pertaining to attendance requirements as set out by external agencies and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), e.g., Student Finance England (SFE), UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Increase the proportion of our students who:
 - continue on their course of study
 - progress to the next stage/year of study
 - successfully complete their course

3. Definitions

1. 'We', 'Our' and the 'University' refers to Birmingham City University.
2. A 'working day' is classed as a day within the week from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, not including any Public Holidays or days when the University is closed.
3. Cumulative attendance means that a student's attendance must meet a minimum threshold percentage during each monitoring period as outlined in section 6. For example, this applies to students repeating a year of study. For these students there is an attendance requirement of 85%, attendance across the monitoring periods weeks 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11. Therefore, the student must achieve 85% attendance overall within each of the monitoring periods.
4. A Break in Study is a formal process to temporarily pause a student's study. A student will be on a break in studies for an agreed period of up to one academic year. During this time the student will not have access to teaching, resources or buildings. This means that a student will not be able to continue with their studies, submit assessments or take exams. Students who hold a Student Route Visa will also be required to return to their home country. A Break in Study will apply in one of the following scenarios:
 - A student-led request, for example due to health reasons, please refer to the Change of Circumstances policy.
 - A University-led decision, for example (but not limited to) poor attendance and/or engagement.
5. Attendance is defined as the presence of the student for the entirety of a scheduled learning session on-campus and/or online. Sessions include but are not limited to:
 - Lectures, seminars and tutorials, practical sessions (for example studio, demonstrations, lab sessions and workshops).
 - Project/dissertation supervision meetings.
 - Presentations and performances.
 - External visits and/or fieldwork which are a mandatory part of the curriculum.
 - Clinical, work experience and work-based placement sessions.
6. Engagement is defined as active participation by the student to enhance their learning demonstrated by engaging with learning activities and resources, as well as engaging with summative and formative assessments. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Attendance at and active contribution to personal or group tutorials.
 - Submission of assessments.
 - Attendance at examinations or time-constrained assessment activities.
 - Engagement with the virtual learning environment (Moodle).
 - Responding in a timely manner to communications from the University.
 - Proactive engagement with Course Team and/or Personal Tutor.

4. Scope

1. The policy applies to all students, whether on an undergraduate (UG) or postgraduate taught (PGT) course who are required to attend scheduled learning sessions at a BCU campus and/or online in the UK. It also applies to postgraduate research (PGR) students who are required to attend formal supervision sessions and students on a Study Abroad programme, studying at the University or overseas at a host institution. A separate policy applies to apprentices on apprenticeship programmes.
2. The policy does not apply to students studying on a distance learning course, Continued Professional Development short course, or on a BCU course delivered at one of the University's partner institutions in the UK or overseas - in such instances the partner institution's attendance policy applies.
3. Attendance and engagement will be monitored across a whole academic year and across 7 days per week during teaching weeks (includes weekend scheduled learning sessions).
4. The University reserves the right to make reasonable changes to this policy which will normally come into effect at the beginning of an academic year, however changes could be implemented during the academic year when we consider it to be in the best interests of students or it is required by law or by a PSRB.

5. Principles

1. The University expects students to attend all scheduled learning sessions (on campus and/or online) and to engage with all learning activities, resources and assessments during their studies. Students should be proactive in seeking support if they face any challenges preventing them from engaging with their studies to the expected level.
2. This policy is underpinned by the [Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance](#). The University community and our students all have responsibilities in relation to attendance and engagement as detailed in this guidance, section 8.
3. Attendance at some scheduled learning sessions (e.g., laboratory sessions, studio sessions, workshops) may be mandatory due to PSRB requirements. The student Course Handbook will make clear where there are any enhanced attendance requirements and any consequences of non-attendance.
4. Students will be expected to reside in a location that enables them to comply fully with the requirements of attendance and engagement as outlined in this policy.

5. Attendance and engagement monitoring aims to be supportive. This means that the University will contact students to offer support to improve their attendance and/or engagement where expectations have not been met and wherever possible enable a student to continue with their studies (as outlined in section 6.3).
6. Attendance patterns at scheduled learning sessions will be the first trigger to identify a student who is at risk of disengaging with their studies and where the faculty identifies attendance and/or engagement patterns that are inhibiting a student's ability to successfully complete their year of study, formal monitoring will be undertaken as outlined in section 6.
7. The University will provide information and/or refer students to appropriate support services to help them to overcome any barriers that might be preventing them from attending and/or engaging with their studies.
8. All decisions taken will be made in line with this policy to ensure that students are offered appropriate support, that the University complies with its statutory and regulatory obligations and where possible, that the full profile of a student's attendance and engagement has been considered when assessing the ability of the student to remain studying on their course.
9. Where a supportive action and formal intervention does not lead to a student meeting the University's attendance and/or engagement requirements, a student may be withdrawn from their course.
10. The University will treat any deliberate attempt by a student to circumvent this policy - e.g., by asking another student to register attendance on their behalf - extremely seriously. Any such attempt will lead to disciplinary action being taken under in the Student Disciplinary Procedure.
11. Attendance and engagement data will be captured using a range of systems, the details of which are set out in the [Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance](#). All data will be held and processed in accordance with the [University's Data Protection policy](#).

6. How the University will Monitor Attendance and Engagement

1. The University wants to support students to maximise their potential and will monitor attendance at scheduled learning sessions from the first week of teaching. There will be a range of informal and formal interventions throughout the academic year and where attendance and/or engagement is flagged as a concern, we will contact a student, initiating formal attendance notifications.
2. The frequency of any trigger points for the monitoring process are outlined in the table below. Where the requirements are not met, formal attendance monitoring notifications will be issued. Students who do not contact the University and do not have an approved absence or exemption (section 8) will be subject to the staged approach detailed in section 7. Please note that where a student has an approved absence on the day of a scheduled learning session, this will be discounted from a student's attendance record provided it is in line with permitted absence limits as detailed in Section 10.

Student	Formal Intervention Trigger	Monitoring Frequency	Formal Notification Schedule
Students sponsored by the University through a Student Route Visa (including Study Abroad - Incoming students) - Degree Level or above	Student has missed an entire week or more within the monitoring period*. For example, a student has missed an entire week or more in the three-week monitoring period* between weeks 3 – 5	Weekly	For a standard 12-week semester formal notifications will be issued after teaching week 2, 5, 8, 11. For non-standard teaching blocks, week two and then every three weeks.
Home/EU PGT and UG students (Full Time and Part Time)			
Repeat year, semester or module	<85% attendance in each monitoring period. For example, student must achieve an overall 85% attendance in each set monitoring period*.	Week 2, 5, 8, 11	Where the teaching block does not permit the above model, formal interventions will be issued as per course block.
Students sponsored by the University through a Student Route Visa – Below degree level	<85% a month will trigger formal protocol <70% over a consecutive 3-month period will trigger a stage 3	Monthly	Monthly
Students studying on an accredited PSRB course placement	Student has not met the required number of hours	Monthly	
Students undertaking any of the following activities (Home/ EU and Sponsored on Student Route Visa): • Professional Placement • Dissertation	Student has missed monthly supervision meeting or contact point	Monthly	Monthly supervision meeting or monthly contact point
PGR Level 8 (Home/EU and Sponsored on Student Route Visa)	Student has missed monthly supervision meeting		
Study Abroad - Outgoing students	Student has missed monthly contact point		
Students' Union Sabbatical Officer (Student Route Visa Holders)			Monthly for duration of employment

*Monitoring periods are:

Monitoring period 1: Weeks 1 – 2

Monitoring period 2: Weeks 3 - 5

Monitoring period 3: Weeks 6 - 8

Monitoring period 4: Weeks 9 - 11.

3. **Students Repeating their Studies**
Where a student is repeating either their year of study, a semester or module, the student must attend 85% of their scheduled learning sessions within each monitoring period.
4. **Taught Students – Dissertation Period**
For all PGT students who have completed all taught elements of their course and are completing their dissertation, attendance and engagement will be monitored via regular meetings with their dissertation supervisor and a formal record of the engagement will be recorded via monthly contact points. These meetings should be in person wherever possible for Student Route Visa holders.
5. **Postgraduate Research**
For all PGR students, attendance and engagement will be monitored via monthly supervisor meetings and routinely monitored by Faculty Research Degrees and Environment Committee (FRDEC). These meetings should be in person wherever possible for Student Route Visa holders.
6. **Professional Placement and Study Abroad**
For all students undertaking a Professional Placement or a Study Abroad programme at a host institution, attendance will be monitored via monthly contact points.
7. **Mandatory Work Placements**
If a student is studying on a course where placement activity is mandatory, for example Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work, Teaching or Allied Health Professions, their attendance on placement will be monitored to ensure they meet the requirements of the course and the PSRB. For such courses, there will be a set requirement regarding the quantity of placement activity that has to be undertaken as part of the course. Placement requirements and attendance monitoring arrangements will be detailed in the student course handbook. Failure to complete the required placement hours could lead to the student being temporarily or permanently withdrawn from the course.

6. i) International Students – Student Route Visa Holders

1. For international students who are Student Route Visa holders, the University must meet legal requirements to monitor attendance.
2. For students holding a Student Route Visa, attendance will be the primary measure for triggering formal attendance notifications and although engagement data will be reviewed, if a student is not attending scheduled teaching sessions, they are at risk of receiving formal attendance notifications and being withdrawn from their course. They may also have the University's visa sponsorship removed; where this is the case the Home Office will be informed that sponsorship has ceased.

3. There may be the need for students holding a Student Route Visa to adhere to additional attendance and/or engagement requirements in order that the University can fulfil its obligations to the Home Office in respect to visa requirements for study and attendance. For example, a holistic review of attendance over a given semester. Low attendance identified at such a review will likely lead to a formal attendance notification.
4. By monitoring attendance and engagement, the University will ensure that early supportive interventions are implemented to ensure students are not in breach of the terms and conditions of their visa requirements.
5. The University reserves the right to escalate and issue a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' attendance notification to any student holding a Student Route Visa who does not meet the attendance threshold and who has a history of poor attendance at scheduled learning sessions and/or engagement with their studies resulting in action being taken in the same academic year.
6. Courses below Degree-level – Student Route Visa
For students who are studying at a Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) level 5 (and below), they must attend for 85% of scheduled teaching. If attendance falls below 85% in a month, the student will be issued with formal attendance monitoring protocols and reasons for non-attendance must be noted along with a plan to re-engage with their studies. If a student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive month's they will be issued a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' attendance notification.
7. Students' Union Sabbatical Officer
For students undertaking a Students' Union Sabbatical Officer work placement who hold a Student Route Visa, attendance and engagement will be monitored via monthly contact points for the duration of the work placement.

7. Monitoring Process

1. Throughout the academic year, the University will monitor the student's attendance and engagement to determine whether to make contact to offer support. However, formal attendance notifications will be issued where a student's attendance at scheduled learning sessions (as outlined in section 3.6) and engagement (as outlined in section 3.7) give cause for concern.
2. There are three stages to the formal attendance notifications: see [Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance](#) section 3 for further details outlining each stage:
 - a. Stage 1 – 'Your Attendance Requires Improvement' email.
 - b. Stage 2 – 'Urgent Attendance Notification – Contact us Immediately' email.
 - c. Stage 3 – 'Withdrawal Notification from BCU' email

3. Attendance notifications are designed to encourage students to re-engage with their studies and will be sent to a student's BCU and personal email addresses held on the student record. Attendance notifications will clearly outline the steps the student must take and who to contact to discuss any issues that are affecting their attendance and/or engagement.
4. A student's record of engagement activities, detailed in section 3.7, will enable the University to understand the broader attendance and engagement commitment of an individual and will be considered when progressing a student through the formal stages of attendance monitoring. Additionally, the record can be utilised to inform Faculty level interventions to support a student to re-engage with their studies, and it may be considered when reviewing cases that trigger a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' or Stage 3 student appeal. For Student Route Visa holders, whilst engagement data will provide a detailed overview of student performance, attendance data at scheduled learning sessions will be the primary trigger for formal attendance notifications and attendance will form the basis of the decision for the student being withdrawn from their course.
5. The University will take appropriate action where a student does not engage with the escalation process and whose attendance at scheduled learning sessions does not improve. At stage 2 the FSC will contact the student to discuss the issues affecting attendance and where required, a meeting will be arranged to provide necessary support and advice.
6. Where a student has zero attendance over two consecutive monitoring periods, the university reserves the right to escalate and issue a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU notification'.
7. The University reserves the right to escalate and issue a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' notification to any student who does not meet the attendance threshold and/ or who has a history of poor attendance at scheduled learning sessions and/ or engagement with their studies resulting in action being taken in the same academic year.

8. Authorised Absence

1. The University recognises that on occasions some students will have exemptions in place, usually through personalised learning agreements or other formal arrangements that consider personal circumstances affecting their ability to attend scheduled learning on campus. Absences at such sessions on campus will be considered when monitoring attendance for these students.
2. It is the student's responsibility to request a short-term absence. Absence requests will be reviewed and will be authorised or rejected if there is insufficient evidence to support the absence request or if the time requested will detrimentally impact their studies.

3. For Student Route Visa holders, absence requests in excess of five working days will need to be approved by the University's UKVI Compliance Team and approved absences should not exceed 20 working days in total across one academic year. Where a student exceeds the absence allowance a review will be undertaken of the timing within the student's academic course. Depending on the timing of this absence and the ability to successfully complete their course or year of study the student may need to take a break in study or will be withdrawn from their course.
4. For all non-student route visa holders, absence limit is 20 working days in one academic year. Where a student exceeds the absence allowance a review will be undertaken of the timing within the student's academic course and this could result in a student being withdrawn from their course.
5. For full details regarding absences, please refer to section 10 in the Student Attendance and Engagement Operational guidance.
6. There are occasions when the University exercises its duty of care to members of the University community by issuing a student with a precautionary suspension under the Student Suspensions Guidance. Although suspended students will receive support to engage with their course remotely as far as is reasonable, any period of absence from campus imposed through suspension will be recorded as an authorised absence for the purpose of attendance monitoring. Where an extended period of suspension is imposed or is likely to be required, students will be supported to consider their academic options, including taking a break in study; and the University reserves the right to actively place a student on a break in study where it is deemed to be in their best academic interests.

9. Withdrawal from Course

1. The University will support students to re-engage with their studies, but a student is expected to make every effort to re-engage with their course. The FSC will support a student to consider other opportunities where appropriate and where available prior to withdrawal from their course. However, there may be circumstances where a student has been absent for a significant amount of time from their studies, and they will be permanently withdrawn from their course.
2. The University has a legal requirement to notify certain external bodies when a student has been withdrawn from their course. The withdrawal will be reported to Student Finance England (SFE) or equivalent funding body, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), their employer or sponsor and/or their Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB).
3. For Student Route Visa holders, the University will cease sponsorship of the student's visa once the student has been withdrawn from their course. This will be reported to the Home Office within 10 working days and students will be expected to return to their home country with immediate effect.

10. Appeals Process

1. Students will have the right to appeal a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' notification within five working days of receiving the notification email. All appeals should be submitted in writing to attendanceappeals@bcu.ac.uk and must be accompanied by appropriate evidence which could include:
 - medical certificates
 - evidence of their attendance
 - evidence of engagement with their studies
 - actions being taken to overcome barriers to study
 - detail of how a student will improve attendance and engagement moving forward including how they will catch up with missed learning and where relevant assessments.

An appeal may be rejected where insufficient and/or unsatisfactory evidence is provided. Where a student reaches a Stage 3 on more than one occasion during the academic year, an appeal will only be considered where new evidence is provided by the student.

2. An appeal may require a meeting to discuss reasons for the dis-engagement and discuss any options which may be available to the student to support them to continue with their studies. Where appropriate, the student's academic profile will be discussed to determine whether a support plan can be put in place for in-year continuation or whether a Break in Study could be an option.
3. The final decision of a student appeal resides with the Academic Registrar and Director of Student and Academic Services or nominee. For Student Route Visa holders, input from the UKVI Compliance Team will form part of the decision. All evidence including attendance and engagement data will be reviewed as part of the appeal. Further consultation may be required with other relevant teams and/or the relevant PSRB in order to fully assess the ability of the student to succeed academically.
4. If the student does not appeal or their appeal to review their Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' is unsuccessful, the student will be withdrawn from their course in the student record system and actions will be taken as outlined in section 9. The student's withdrawal date is confirmed as that of the date the Stage 3 'Withdrawal notification from BCU is issued. For students being funded by the Student Finance Authority, a further review may be required and if there is evidence of zero attendance and/or engagement, there may be a need to backdate the withdrawal date. This may also result in clawback from the Student Finance Authority with the student.

5. Any student who has received a Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' and has made an unsuccessful appeal can pursue a formal appeal under the University's [Academic Appeals Procedure](#). Any such appeal would need to demonstrate that a procedural irregularity had occurred in the withdrawal process; that the withdrawal or appeal decisions had been biased; or that new evidence can be provided, which could not reasonably have been provided sooner and which would have had a material effect on the previous decision(s). Formal appeals should be submitted within 15 working days of the Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' appeal decision being issued. Student Route Visa holders who submit a formal appeal must still make arrangements to leave the UK.
6. Where a student has not made use of the appeal process set out at 10.1 – 10.3, any formal appeal submitted under the Academic Appeals Procedure is likely to be deemed ineligible.
7. Where a student has been withdrawn and a formal appeal submitted, the withdrawal decision will take effect and will continue to stand unless the formal appeal decision means the withdrawal should be set aside. Student Route Visa holders who submit a formal appeal will still be reported to the Home Office at the point of withdrawal in line with section 9.3 of this policy and will still be required to make arrangements to leave the UK.

11. Safeguarding and Wellbeing

1. The University takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of any member of the University community and to work together with other agencies to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to identify, assess, and support any member of its community who may be suffering from abuse, harm and/or neglect. This is in line with the University's [Safeguarding Policy](#) and procedures. Therefore, where a student is identified as being immediately at risk through attendance and engagement monitoring activities, a report will be made to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team via [Report and Support](#).
2. Where a student would benefit from support from the University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Team, university staff will provide details of how to access relevant support services directly to the student.