Apprentice Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance

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Apprenticeship Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance

1. Introduction

1.1 This document provides detailed operational guidance for monitoring apprentice attendance and engagement as specified in the Apprenticeship Attendance and Engagement Policy. It is designed to further support staff and apprentices in their understanding of how the policy is applied and works.

2. Monitoring Attendance and Engagement

2.1 Where attendance data for scheduled learning sessions over a 7-day week shows poor attendance, this should trigger attendance and engagement concerns.

2.2 Informal interventions will be made, where appropriate, by the Academic Team (responsible for apprenticeship programmes/delivery) or the Faculty Student Centre (FSC) in order to identify any apprentice who may be at risk of receiving formal interventions due to their lack of attendance and/or engagement. Informal interventions will vary and may include contacting the apprentice via email, text message, telephone conversation and/or inviting the apprentice to Progress Review meeting with their Academic Lead, Academic Assessor, Personal Tutor or appropriate member of the Course Team/nominee. Please note employers are also required to attend Progress Reviews. Through these interventions, apprentices may be signposted toward appropriate support services and/or FSC colleagues. These types of interventions may continue for any apprentice who has received a formal intervention and an apprentice may have a Support Plan put in place and details recorded in their Progress Reviews. Interventions are intended as a supportive measure to try and prevent the need to invoke the formal three-stage process which may ultimately result in an apprentice being placed on a Break in learning or being permanently withdrawn from their apprenticeship programme.

2.3 It is important to note that at Final Notice (formal attendance notifications), an apprentice will normally have a Progress Review with their line manager and the university (nominated member of the course/academic team) to discuss attendance and/or engagement concerns. The aim is to address any issues that are preventing an apprentice from attending and to set up a Support Plan (detailed in Progress Reviews) with agreed actions to enable an apprentice to fully attend and engage.

2.4 At Withdrawal Notice an apprentice will normally have a Progress Review with their line manager and the university to discuss attendance and/or engagement concerns and to discuss if an apprentice can now continue with their apprenticeship programme or whether they will need to be placed on a Break in learning or be permanently withdrawn from their apprenticeship programme. Where an apprentice does not attend this Progress Review, they will normally be invited to a further Progress Review, if the apprentice does not attend, a decision will be made in their absence and could be to permanently withdraw the apprentice from their programme

2.5 If an apprentice's attendance does not meet the requirements outlined in the policy, then the apprentice they will be issued with formal attendance notifications as outlined in Section 3.1 below.

2.6 The FSC will analyse a range of attendance and engagement data, where appropriate, in order to inform informal and formal interventions. This data and reports will be issued to the Academic Teams so that they can action required follow up for example with the apprentice and/or employer. Such data can also be used by the academic teams in the formal and mandatory 12 weekly Progress Reviews with the University, apprentice and their employer. The list below includes examples of the datasets which may be reviewed:

- Attendance at scheduled learning sessions during the 7-day period (issued weekly for review prior to any monitoring periods for example before the formal notifications at weeks 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11).
- Module level attendance.
- Patterns of specific days/times where absence concerns have been noted.
- Patterns in approved absences.
- Submission data.
- Absence records.
- Moodle engagement.
- Barrier swipe data.

2.7 Attendance and/or engagement will be monitored on a weekly basis. Formal attendance notifications will be issued in line with the apprentice and course parameters set out in the schedule sections 5 and 6 in the Apprenticeship Attendance and Engagement Policy.

2.8 Where attendance is monitored across a 7-day period, formal attendance notifications will be issued after teaching weeks 2, 5, 8 and 11 for a standard teaching semester. For non-standard teaching blocks, week two and then every three weeks. Block delivery courses will follow the same monitoring periods as a standard semester. E.g., a two-week block scheduled over teaching weeks 2 and 3, will be subject to two attendance monitoring trigger points at weeks 2 and 5. Whereas, a two-week block scheduled over weeks 3 and 4 will be subject to one protocol trigger point after week 5 (section 5.3 in policy).

2.9 If an apprentice has attended ≤ 85% scheduled learning sessions over a calendar week in each of the above monitoring periods, this may result in a formal attendance notification being issued. The apprentice may also be contacted to discuss their attendance and engagement and this could be in a Progress review see section 2.3 and 2.4, and in cases where the apprentice has unauthorised absence their employer wil be updated (this may be in a Progress Review or via ad-hoc contact when the unauthorised absence occurs).

2.10 Apprentices must attend all scheduled learning sessions and where there are exceptional circumstances must request an absence. There is a minimum 85% attendance requirement as outlined in section 5 of the Apprenticeship Attendance and Engagement policy, the apprentices' attendance must meet a minimum cumulative threshold percentage during each monitoring block.

2.11 Attendance monitoring runs across the entire academic year, commencing from when an apprentice starts their learning (first day of learning which is also known as scheduled learning and will be on an apprentices timetable) and is provisionally enrolled. This means if an apprentice has received a Final Notice 'Urgent Attendance Notification – Cause for Concern' email in their first year of study, this will not carry forward into their second year. Attendance monitoring will resume once the apprentice re-enrols onto their second year of study. Any courses that are delivered continuously across 52 weeks a year, will be monitored for the full duration. However, a Support Plan and actions discussed, pertaining to attendance and/or engagement, in Progress Reviews will remain in place where applicable and in line with mandatory requirements of an apprenticeship programme.

3. Formal Attendance Notifications

3.1 The following attendance notifications will be issued to an apprentice's BCU and personal email address that is held on the apprentice record system.

3.2 First Attendance Notice Attendance

The apprentice will be contacted by the Academic lead or nominee to ascertain the reason for non-attendance across the monitoring period. Normally, the apprentice will have been contacted within the calendar week in which they have been absent, where possible this will be on the same day that the absence occurred. If contact attempts are unsuccessful the university may also attempt to contact the apprentice. If the absence is not an isolated issue and there is no valid reason for absence, and thus the apprentice has unauthorised absence, the apprentice will be issued with a First Notice Attendance notification (Requires Improvement) by the Attendance Monitoring team.

The attendance notification will advise the apprentice that;

- they must improve their attendance,
- reiterate requirement to log requests for absence in advance,
- discuss absences with their Academic team,
- record attendance at scheduled learning sessions,
- they may receive further contact and formal attendance notifications which could lead to the apprentice being placed on a Break in Learning or permanently withdrawn from their programme if attendance does not improve.

The Apprenticeship Lead or their Deputy/nominee, where appropriate and if reasons for absence mean that the apprentice requires support or to take actions to improve their attendance, will meet the apprentice to put a support plan in place, will signpost the apprentice to appropriate services to assist the apprentice to improve their attendance and will inform the apprentice's employer of any unauthorised absence.

3.3 Final Attendance Notice Urgent Attendance notification

The apprentice will be contacted by the Academic lead or nominee to ascertain the reason for non-attendance across the monitoring period.

Normally, the apprentice will have been contacted within the calendar week in which they have been absent, where possible this will be on the same day that the absence occurred. If contact attempts are unsuccessful the university may also attempt to contact the apprentice. If the absence is not an isolated issue and there is no valid reason for absence, and thus the apprentice has unauthorised absence, the apprentice will be issued with a Final Notice Urgent Attendance notification (Cause for Concern) by the Attendance Monitoring team with content as detailed in First Notice Attendance notification (Your Attendance Requires Improvement) email with the addition of a Progress Review to normally be held because of further unauthorised absence. This could be a planned or ad-hoc review.

The Apprenticeship Lead or their Deputy/nominee will inform the apprentice's employer of the unauthorised absence and normally hold a progress review with the apprentice and their employer to review the apprentices support plan (if already in place or set up a plan) and absence levels to

enable the apprentice to improve their attendance and successfully complete their programme. Apprentices should continue to attend scheduled learning sessions and engage with their programme pending the meeting taking place. The apprentice will be reminded that they may receive further contact and formal attendance notifications which could lead to the apprentice being placed on a Break in Learning or permanently withdrawn from their programme if attendance does not improve. It may also be appropriate to refer an apprentice to available support services to assist in improving their attendance.

3.4 **Withdrawal Notice Email**

The apprentice will be contacted by the Academic lead or nominee to ascertain the reason for non-attendance across the monitoring period.

Normally, the apprentice will have been contacted within the calendar week in which they have been absent, where possible this will be on the same day that the absence occurred. If contact attempts are unsuccessful the University may also attempt to contact the apprentice. If the absence is not an isolated issue and there is no valid reason for absence, and thus the apprentice has unauthorised absence, the apprentice will be issued with a Withdrawal Notice Attendance notification 'Intention of a Break in Learning or Permanent withdrawal' by the Attendance Monitoring Team.

The apprentice and employer will be required to attend a Progress Review meeting with the University which will be arranged and conducted by the Apprenticeship Lead or their Deputy/nominee. Apprentices should continue to attend scheduled learning sessions and engage with their programme pending the meeting taking place. This will outline the attendance concerns to date and discuss whether the apprentice will be required to take a Break in Learning or permanently withdraw from their apprenticeship programme.

This meeting is a supportive intervention and is the opportunity for the apprentice to appeal the decision and provide evidence to support their appeal. Evidence that could be provided would be Off the job logs, medical evidence, attendance records where an apprentice can substantiate that they were present in scheduled learning sessions.

If an apprentice does not attend the Withdrawal Notice meeting a further contact attempt will normally be made to re-arrange the meeting. Where the apprentice does not respond to the contact attempts or attend the rescheduled Progress Review, the decision will be confirmed to permanently withdraw the apprentice from their programme and agreed with the apprentice's employer.

Where possible the apprentice will be supported to re-engage with their apprenticeship programme and the Withdrawal Notice Attendance Notification will be rescinded. In such cases the apprentice will be required to improve their attendance with immediate effect and agree a support plan with their employer and the university which wil be reviewed (as a minimum) at Progress Reviews. If an apprentice is permitted to continue their programme, they will be reminded that further unauthorised absence could result in a further Withdrawal Notice Attendance notification (Intention of a Break in Learning or Permanent withdrawal) being issued. In this case the Withdrawal Notice process outlined above would again be followed.

The Withdrawal Notice attendance notification will also outline the University appeals process (see section xx) should the apprentice be placed on a Break in Learning or permanently withdrawn from their apprenticeship programme and wish to appeal the final Withdrawal Notice decision.

4. Data Capture for Attendance and Engagement Monitoring

4.1 Attendance data will be captured in the following ways:

- Where a card reader is located in a teaching room, apprentices are responsible for registering their attendance by placing their apprentice ID card against the reader.
- Challenge Codes (for on campus teaching rooms where there is no card reader).
- Manual register updates completed by Academic teams. This may be retained in paper format as well as recorded on the online attendance register, specifically where required for Professional Statutory and Regulatory body requirements.
- Online registers for sessions delivered online.
- Supervision meetings (PGR and PGT apprentices) recorded via monthly meeting.
- Access to campus buildings via ID card swipes will be collected at entry gates.
- Off-the-Job hours recorded and completion of Progress Reviews recorded in APTEM.
- Absences within MySRS.
- Moodle, Virtual Learning Environment (submissions, engagement with learning resources).

5. Monitoring Apprentices Suspended from their Studies

5.1 Apprentices who are suspended from their studies pending the outcome of formal procedures as detailed in Student Governance Procedures in the Student Contract will not be subject to formal attendance and engagement monitoring for the period that they are suspended. However, this does not necessarily mean that an apprentice cannot attend online scheduled learning sessions, submit or take assessments online or engage with Moodle and/or other online resources. The means by which an apprentice will engage with their studies during their period of suspension will be agreed with their Course Leader or nominee and will take account of any PSRB requirements. Some courses may not permit an apprentice to continue to engage with their studies during a period of suspension, in such cases an enforced Break-in-Learning may be required. If a suspension is over a consecutive two month period and no Off-the-Job training hours can be completed, a Break-in-Learning will be required.

6. Attendance and Engagement Support Plans

6.1 Following intervention by the Academic Teams/nominee or FSC, where an apprentice has received a Final Notice Urgent Attendance Notification – Cause for Concern' email or where the apprentice has had a successful appeal for their Withdrawal Notice – 'Intention of a Break-in- Learning or Permanent Withdrawal email, a Support plan may be agreed with the apprentice. Where appropriate this will outline actions that the apprentice will need to take to re-engage with their course and will be agreed in a Progress Review.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Apprentices' Responsibilities

The University expects apprentices to;

- attend **all** scheduled learning sessions punctually and for the full duration;
- engage with all learning activities and resources;
- complete both formative and summative assessment tasks at the first opportunity;
- always carry their ID card and use it in line with Student ID card guidance. Where a card is faulty or lost, the apprentice must visit their FSC to obtain a new card;
- record their attendance at on-campus timetabled sessions either by the card reader, challenge code or manual register;
- make tutors aware, in timetabled sessions, if they do not have their ID card or there is an error when scanning the card reader, so that attendance can be updated manually;
- log into any sessions delivered online using their BCU student email address so that attendance can be accurately recorded,
- attend the correct timetabled session as presented in their timetable. Attendance will not be recorded if any alternative sessions are attended;
- record attendance for each individual session if back-to-back sessions are scheduled in the same teaching room;
- notify the University of absence requests in advance where possible using MySRS;
- regularly check their attendance record via MySRS to ensure that their attendance is being accurately recorded. Where anomalies exist, they should contact their FSC;
- ensure that their employer is aware of any absence request, any unauthorised absence will be notified to the employer by BCU,
- respond in a timely manner to any communication from the University relating to their attendance and/or engagement;
- make reasonable attempts to attend scheduled learning sessions and re-engage with their studies where a concern (informal or formal) has been raised;
- contact their FSC or academic teams or tutor/s to discuss any matters that are impacting on their ability to attend and/or engage with their studies;
- ensure the University holds up-to-date and accurate contact information via MySRS;
- have personal integrity and do not misuse student ID cards for recording attendance;
- be familiar with available support services and access those services where appropriate.

7.2 Academic Responsibilities

Academics support attendance and engagement in a number of ways including;

- Contact apprentices (sometimes via a nominee or FSC) where they are absent for scheduled learning sessions to ascertain reasons for absence (informal intervention),
- ensuring accurate attendance data is captured via PRESTO Academic for the sessions that they deliver in week. This could be via card reader swipes, manual updates or using challenge codes;
- reminding apprentices at the start of each on-campus session to register their attendance;
- prompting apprentices in back-to-back sessions to record their attendance for each session;

- signposting apprentices to their FSC if there are issues with their ID card or registering their attendance;
- where monthly contact points are required, ensuring attendance and engagement notes are updating in MySRS;
- logging card reader issues in teaching rooms with ITHelp@bcu.ac.uk, copied to attendance@bcu.ac.uk;
- inform the Timetabling Team where there is a change to a scheduled learning session and ensure non-mandatory sessions are correctly reflected in TermTime;
- following up on attendance and/or engagement concerns in personal tutoring sessions and Progress Reviews;
- discuss professional behaviours of attendance and engagement and address punctuality concerns immediately,
- ensuring that monthly off the job logs (OTJ) are checked and approved;
- completing and planning in Progress reviews, every 12 weeks and are held as per the schedule agreed in the Training Plan;
- ensuring that employers are made aware of any attendance and/or engagement concerns in a timely manner (normally on the same day it occurs) this includes any unauthorised absences;
- Support and carry out steps detailed for First Notice, 2, 3 attendance notifications,
- where a Break-in-Learning or permanent withdrawal is required during this process or at Withdrawal Notice, work with the FSC and Apprenticeship Compliance Team to ensure this is processed in a timely manner.

7.3 Student Retention Responsibilities

The Student Retention Team supports attendance and engagement in a number of ways including;

- early identification of apprentice behaviours that may require interventions to maintain good levels of attendance and engagement;
- produce weekly attendance/absence reports that enable the academic teams to tackle apprentice attendance and ensure records are correctly updated prior to formal attendance notifications being issued,
- contact and support apprentices, where required and requested, who are at risk of disengaging from their programme through informal and formal interventions and/or attendance notifications (as per the policy);
- refer apprentices to appropriate BCU support services where a need is identified;
- action absence requests from apprentices in-week, monitoring absence patterns and highlighting any concerns to academic teams to support apprentices to re-engage with studies;

7.4 Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance Team (ADCT)

The ADCT supports attendance and engagement in a number of ways including;

- monthly OTJ logs are submitted via APTEM, where required following up with apprentices and where necessary the employer;
- where required a BiL is processed in a timely manner on the Apprentice Record system;

- working closely with the academic teams to ensure OTJ's have been approved and Progress Reviews have been held as per the schedule agreed in the Training Plan;

7.5 Employer responsibilities

Employers have a responsibility to support an apprentice's attendance and engagement with their course and this includes:

- Ensuring that apprentices are given sufficient time as part of their contracted hours to meet their off-the-job obligations,
- Supporting the completion and submission of OTJ training logs on a monthly basis,
- Informing the university academic contact of any absences e.g., annual leave, for illness that will mean the apprentice is unable to attend scheduled learning sessions,
- inform the university contact of any changes to circumstances e.g., redundancy, break in learning that will impact on their ability to meet the off-the-job hours,
- revise the Apprenticeship Agreement, training plan and employee contract with the university where absence means the apprenticeship cannot be completed as planned,
- support the completion of End Point Assessment (EPA), which is aligned to the Apprenticeship Standard and assessment plan to be awarded the Apprenticeship and occupational competence,
- attend and engage with mandatory (DFE) progress review meetings at least every three months, which have been planned and agreed to within the Training Plan signed by the employer prior to the apprentice commencing their apprenticeship. Where you as the employer are unable to attend the progress review you will be given the opportunity to contribute to these discussions however this must not become the default position.

8. Recording Attendance at Scheduled Learning Sessions

8.1 For scheduled learning sessions, an apprentice will only be considered to have been in attendance if their card is scanned and recognised by the readers located in each teaching room. Where sessions are in a room without a card reader, the tutor will ensure attendance is captured via manual registers or using Challenge Codes.

8.2 If an apprentice does not scan their card at a scheduled learning session, they will be recorded with as an unauthorised absence and these absences will count negatively towards an apprentice's attendance record.

8.3 Apprentices can scan into a scheduled learning session 20 minutes before the start of the session, and up to 20 minutes before the end. Apprentices will not be able to scan in and log their attendance after the session has ended; if they do it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

8.4 If an apprentice has forgotten their ID card, they **must** inform the tutor and ensure that their attendance is manually updated for that session. Failure to do so could lead to incorrect issuing of attendance notifications and it cannot be guaranteed that attendance can be recorded in retrospect. Where this has occurred, the apprentice is responsible for contacting the session Tutor to confirm their attendance and request that the register is updated accordingly. If a session tutor cannot verify attendance the register will remain as unauthorised absence.

8.5 Where online learning sessions are scheduled and delivered via Microsoft TEAMS, the apprentice must login using their BCU email account. Attendance will only be recorded where

an apprentice's BCU email address is used. Failure to log in using a BCU email address could lead to incorrect issuing of attendance notifications and it cannot be guaranteed that attendance can be recorded in retrospect.

8.6 An apprentice is required to scan in using their own Apprentice ID card only. If an apprentice scans into a scheduled learning session using another apprentice's ID card, the actions of both the card holder and the individual who scanned the card will be considered under the University's Student Disciplinary Procedure. Where an apprentice is enrolled on a course leading directly (or partially) to a professional qualification or the right to practice a particular profession, they may also be referred under the University's Fitness to Practise procedures.

8.7 Where there are circumstances outside of an apprentice's control that means they cannot attend on campus scheduled learning, for example if extreme weather leads to the cancellation of a scheduled teaching session, then attendance will not be monitored and will not count towards the apprentices attendance record. However please note, transport strikes are not classed as exceptional circumstances and the apprentice must make every effort to attend on campus. In this scenario, any absence will be classed as unauthorised absence.

9. Approved Absences

9.1 FSCs will oversee and approve absence requests made by apprentices on an individual basis and where relevant, apprentices may be advised to follow the Extenuating circumstances procedure or Change of circumstances policy.

9.2 It is the responsibility of each apprentice to request, in advance where possible, any absence request where they will be unable to attend scheduled learning sessions via the MySRS portal.

9.3 Evidence to support an absence request could include:

Medical Documentation
Suitable types of medical documentation include:

- A medical certificate.
- A medical report.
- A note from a hospital.
- A formal notification of a hospital or clinic appointment.

Other Documentation
Suitable types of documentation include:

- A note from an independent responsible person who can vouch for the event which led to the absence.
- Evidence from a member of staff who was alerted to the circumstances at the time.
- A letter from a student counsellor or other professional that the student actually consulted during the period when the difficulties were occurring.
- A note from the police.

9.4 The University reserves the right to refuse any request for authorised absence as outlined in the policy.

9.5 Apprentices' attendance will be reviewed and taken into consideration when reviewing apprentice absence requests submitted via mySRS. Where there are regular patterns of non-attendance that are attributed to approved absence requests, the apprentice may be subject

to formal attendance monitoring notifications as outlined in Section 3 above. All absences will be reported to the employer where these have not been approved by the employer.

9.6 Where an apprentice does not make a request for approved absence and is not present in scheduled teaching sessions, their absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The apprentice's employer will also be notified.

9.7 In all cases where absence requests are authorised, it is the apprentice's responsibility to complete any outstanding academic work and agree how to re-plan learning so that the requirements of the Training Plan and Apprenticeship Agreement are met.

9.8 Where an apprentice has an approved absence on the day of a scheduled learning session, this will be discounted from an apprentice's attendance record.

9.9 Where patterns of absence raise concern, the FSC will inform the academic team via the provision of data and/or reports, and there will be contact with an apprentice to discuss this further, with a view to putting appropriate support in place or to discuss options such as Break in Learning. These discussions may take place at a scheduled or ad-hoc Progress Review and include the employer. Where such patterns place an apprentice at risk of in-year academic failure, the university may issue formal attendance notifications.

9.10 Apprentices should inform their employer before requesting absence from the University.

9.11 An apprentice's employer will be notified of any attendance and/or engagement concerns, including absence requests.

9.12 Apprentices who will be absent for two consecutive months and have not completed any Off-the-Job training hours, will be placed on a retrospective mandatory Break-in-Learning.

10. Rescinding an attendance notification

10.1 There may be rare occasions where an attendance notification needs to be rescinded from an apprentice's record. This will most likely be if an administrative error has occurred such as a register was not updated or an apprentice has provided medical evidence or requested an absence in retrospect. In such cases, the apprentice's record will be updated and they will be notified by email that the attendance notification has been rescinded.

11. Break in Learning or Permanent Withdrawal

Where an apprentice has been placed on a Break-in-Learning or Permanently withdrawn from their course due to on-going non-attendance, the last date of evidenced learning will be the date the permanent withdrawal or Break-in-Learning is recorded. This date will be recorded on the student record system, APTEM and the Individual Learner Record (ILR) .

Access to BCU buildings, resources and systems are immediately restricted following permanent withdrawal.

During a Break-in-Learning an apprentice will not be able to access any learning, resources or campus buildings, submit assessments, accrue Off-the-Job hours or take exams but will have access to their BCU account.

Once withdrawn from their course an apprentice will no longer have access to statutory apprentice an apprentice will no longer be funded to complete their apprenticeship via their employer. If an apprentice is placed on a Break-in-Learning funding for their apprenticeship programme will temporarily pause until they recommence on their programme.

12. Appeals

12.1 Apprentices who receive a Withdrawal Notice Attendance notification (Intention of a Break in Learning or Permanent withdrawal) email from the University, in accordance with the Apprentice Attendance and Engagement Policy, will have the right to appeal via the Academic Appeals process.