

Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

International Students – Student Route Visa Holders

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Introduction

For international students who are Student Route Visa holders, the University has a legal requirement to monitor attendance in line with Home Office conditions.

For Student Route Visa holders, attendance will be the primary measure for triggering formal attendance notifications. While engagement data will also be reviewed, if a student is not attending scheduled on-campus teaching sessions, they are at risk of receiving formal attendance notifications and being withdrawn from their course. When a student is withdrawn from their course, the University will withdraw sponsorship. Where this is the case, the Home Office will be informed that sponsorship has ceased, and they will look to take visa cancellation action.

To ensure active attendance and engagement and full integration with the University's student community, Student Route Visa holders are required to live a commutable distance from campus. For the purposes of this policy, this is defined as within approximately 40 miles (65km) of the University's campuses or 60 minutes travelling time, door to door.

There may also be the need for a Student Route Visa holder to adhere to additional attendance and/or engagement requirements for the University to fulfil its obligations to the Home Office. For example, a holistic review of attendance over a given semester can be taken. Low attendance identified at such a review will likely lead to a formal attendance notification.

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.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 2.1 Provide details to Student Route Visa holders on the University's expectations with respect to their attendance at scheduled learning sessions and engagement with all learning resources and activities available during their studies to remain compliant with the conditions of their visa.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Set out how the University will monitor attendance and engagement.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

2.6 Increase the proportion of our students who:

- continue their course of study
- progress to the next stage/year of study
- successfully complete their course

Definitions

3.1 'We', 'Our' and the 'University' refers to Birmingham City University.

3.2 A 'working day' is classed as a day within the week from Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, not including any Public Holidays or days when the University is closed.

3.3 Cumulative attendance means that a student's attendance must meet a minimum threshold percentage during each monitoring period as outlined in section 6.1.

3.4 A Break in Studies 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. Student Route Visa holders will also be required to return to their home country and evidence this to be eligible for a new Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) to return to their studies in the UK. 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.

3.5 Attendance is defined as the presence of the student for the entirety of a scheduled learning session on-campus. Limited online sessions may be available and attendance at timetabled online sessions will be recorded and monitored. In line with Home Office guidance, Student Route Visa holders are expected to attend the majority of their classes in person on campus. Learning 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.

3.6 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. While this will not be monitored, it can be reviewed alongside a student's appeal. 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.

Scope

- 4.1 The policy applies to all students who are Student Route Visa holders, whether on an undergraduate (UG) or postgraduate taught (PGT) course who are required to attend scheduled learning sessions at a BCU campus. 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Attendance and engagement will be monitored across a whole academic year and across 5 days per week during teaching weeks (Monday to Friday).
- 4.4 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.

Principles

- 5.1 The University expects students to attend all scheduled learning sessions 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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. Therefore, students are required to live a commutable distance from campus (see Appendix 1).
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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 6.1 and 6.2.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 All decisions taken will be made in line with this policy to ensure that students are offered appropriate support as well as ensuring 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.
- 5.8 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 which will result in their Student Route Visa being cancelled.

- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 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 and the University's privacy notices.

Monitoring Processes

Student Route Visa holders will be monitored throughout the academic year through 2 methods, as set out in 6.1 and 6.2, to ensure students are meeting the conditions of their visa. Monitoring will begin once the student has arrived in the UK so it is important for a student to enrol immediately. If a student is unable to enrol immediately, students are still required to attend their lectures during this time.

- 6.1 **Threshold for Attendance.** Students can be monitored through two different methods while studying. Students with timetabled lectures will be monitored during this time through a percentage for example, undergraduate students or the taught period of a Postgraduate course. Students who have contact points will be monitored monthly with the monitored contact point being in person; for example, the dissertation period of a Postgraduate course.

6.1.1 - Taught Students

For Student Route Visa Holders there is a requirement of 65% attendance across each monitoring period (monitoring weeks are as follows: 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11). The student must achieve 65% attendance across these monitoring periods. If a student is below the threshold, they will receive a notice at the end of the monitoring period. If a student has 0% for any given week, this will not count towards their overall percentage for that monitoring period.

6.1.2 - Monthly Contact Points

For Student Route Visa Holders who do not have scheduled teaching, there will be scheduled monthly in person contact points. If a student misses the scheduled face to face contact point, they will be issued a notice at the end of the month.

- 6.2 0% Attendance for a Week. Students who have 0% attendance in any teaching week will be issued a notice. These are issued on a week-by-week basis and outside the monitoring periods detailed in 6.1.
- 6.3 The University reserves the right to escalate and issue a Withdrawal Notice 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Taught Students – Dissertation. For Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students who have completed the taught elements of their course and are completing their dissertation, attendance will be monitored via monthly face to face meetings with their dissertation supervisor and a formal record of the engagement will be recorded via monthly contact points
- 6.6 Professional Placement. Student attendance will be monitored via monthly contact points with a placement tutor. A formal record of the engagement will be recorded via a monthly contact point and these will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 6.7 Study Abroad. For all students undertaking a Study Abroad programme at a host institution, attendance will be monitored via monthly contact points.
- 6.8 Postgraduate Research. For PGR students, attendance will be monitored via monthly supervisor meetings and routinely monitored by Faculty Research Degrees and Environment Committee (FRDEC). These meetings should be in person with online meetings being the exception.
- 6.9 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.
- 6.10 Students' Union Sabbatical Officer. For Student Route Visa holders undertaking a Students' Union Sabbatical Officer work placement, engagement will be monitored via monthly in-person contact points for the duration of the work placement.

Interventions and Notices

For students that have not met the attendance threshold, a formal notice will be issued. The Attendance notices 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. Taught students will receive each notice following the process set out in 6.1 and 6.2. Students who are monitored by monthly contact points will receive 7.2 or 7.3 due to the time between each contact points.

- 7.1 First Attendance Notice: Students identified as requiring support. The First Attendance Notice will be to remind the students of the BCU policy regarding attendance and engagement and to highlight support services available to students and to encourages them to seek advice and support if there are any concerns.
- 7.2 Final Attendance Notice: Student attendance identified as cause of concern. The Final Attendance email will be issued. The purpose is to give clear details about student expectations around attendance and engagement.
- 7.3 Withdrawal Notice: Students attendance identified as high risk. The Withdrawal Notice email will be issued if the student continues to fail to engage or give satisfactory reasons

Appeal Process

- 8.1 Students will have the right to appeal a Withdrawal Notice 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:
 - i) medical certificates
 - ii) evidence of their attendance
 - iii) evidence of engagement with their studies
 - iv) actions being taken to overcome barriers to study
 - v) 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 Withdrawal Notice on more than one occasion during the academic year, an appeal will only be considered where new evidence is provided by the student.
 - Please do not submit any photographs of injuries, accidents, or anything of a graphic nature

- 8.2 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, whether a Break in Study could be an option or the University will continue with a Permanent Withdrawal.
- 8.3 The final decision of a student appeal resides with the UKVI Compliance Team with input from the Academic Registrar, Director of Student Academic Services or a nominee as 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 in order to fully assess the ability of the student to succeed academically and if they are meeting the conditions of their visa.
- 8.4 If the student does not appeal or their appeal for their Withdrawal Notice 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 Withdrawal Notice from BCU is issued.
- 8.5 Any student who has received a Withdrawal Notice 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 Withdrawal Notice appeal decision being issued. Student Route Visa holders who submit a formal appeal must still make arrangements to leave the UK.
- 8.6 Where a student has not made use of the appeal process any formal appeal submitted under the Academic Appeals Procedure is likely to be deemed ineligible.
- 8.7 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 and will still be required to make arrangements to leave

the UK. They should not await the formal appeal outcome before making arrangements to leave

Withdrawal from Course

- 9.1 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. Students will be supported 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 breached their visa conditions resulting in being permanently withdrawn from their course.
- 9.2 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 the Home Office.
- 9.3 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.

Authorised Absence

- 10.1 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. Absence requests involving any overseas travel or are 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.
- 10.2. For full details regarding absences, please refer the Student Attendance and Engagement Operational guidance.

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

- 11.1 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.

- 11.2 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.

Appendix 1: Commutable Distance Radius Map & Requirements

To both facilitate active attendance and engagement with studies and to encourage full integration into the University's student community, Student Route Visa holders are required to live within approximately 40 miles (65 km) of BCU's campuses or 60 minutes travelling time, door to door.

In exceptional cases, where students are not able to meet this requirement, they will need to submit a written rationale for why they are not living within a commutable distance.

Appendix 2: Declaration Form

Significant Distance from Campus – Declaration

Where travel distance from home to Birmingham City University campus exceeds 40 miles.

Student Details

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Full Name | |
| University ID Number | |

Address

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Address Line 1 | |
| Address Line 2 | |
| Town/City | |
| Postcode | |
| | |

Rationale

| | |
|--|--|
| Distance From Campus - Rationale | Please explain why you have chosen to live a significant distance from campus: |
| Distance From Campus - Travel | Please outline the main mode(s) of transport you use to travel from your home to campus: |
| What Is Your Travel Time To Campus? | |
| Do You Plan To Move To Birmingham Soon? | Yes / No (If 'yes' please answer next question) |
| When Do You Plan To Move To Birmingham? | |

Engagement With Studies

You have been permitted to enrol on a programme of study at Birmingham City University (BCU) however, you have been assessed as living a significant distance from campus (i.e. in excess of 40 miles away).

As a Student Visa holder subject to immigration control whilst in the UK, and living a significant distance from campus, BCU requires you to:

- **Fully engage with your studies.**
- **Attend in person ALL of your** lectures / seminars / workshops / assessments.

BCU has stringent attendance monitoring mechanisms and policies in place and failure to fully engage with your course may result in your withdrawal from the University.

In addition, because you live a significant distance from campus, it is important to understand that you are at a higher risk of falling short of BCU's course engagement requirements, compared with someone living a short commutable distance to campus.

Student Declaration (Please Read All Statements Before Signing)

I understand and accept that:

1. It is my responsibility to ensure that I **fully engage** with my course at BCU.
2. It is my responsibility to ensure that I **attend in person all** of my required classes / lectures / seminars / workshops / assessments.
3. I cannot request timetable changes.
4. Any travel disruption is not a valid reason to be absent from classes.

Finally, I understand that any BCU communications regarding my UK contact details status will be sent to my BCU student email address, and I should check this regularly.

Visa Type:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Visa Expiry Date: | |
| Contact Number: | |
| Email Address: | |
| Date: | |
| Student Signature: | |

Document Control Statement

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|---------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| Document Type | Student Attendance and Engagement Policy: International Students – Student Route Visa Holders | | |
| Document Owner | Academic Registrar and Director of Student and Academic Services | | |
| Division / Service | Student and Academic Services | | |
| Version | 1.0 | | |
| Document Status | Approved | | |
| Approved by | University Executive Group | Date | 1 st July 2025 |
| Date of Publication | July 2025 | Next Review Date | July 2026 |
| Related Documents | Academic Appeals Procedure Change of Circumstances Policy Data Protection Policy and Appropriate Policy Document Partner institution attendance policy Safeguarding Policy Student Disciplinary Procedure | | |
| Amendments since approval | Detail of revision | Date | Approved by |
| | | | |
| | | | |