



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Directorate of 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 all options available are considered 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) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for apprentices.

- f. 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. Students and apprentices will be referred to as students. Where the policy relates to apprentices and apprenticeship provision only, it will refer directly to apprentices and apprenticeship provision as appropriate.
3. 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.
4. Where cumulative attendance is being monitored, a student's attendance must meet a minimum threshold percentage during the whole teaching period. For example, where there is an attendance requirement of 85%, attendance across the whole semester will be monitored after weeks 2, 5, 8, 11. Therefore, the student must achieve an overall 85% attendance irrespective of whether they are being monitored between weeks 1 and 5, or between weeks 1 and 11.
5. A Break in Study is a formal process to temporarily pause a student's study. This will apply in one of the following scenarios:
 - A student-led request, for example due to health reasons.
 - A University-led decision, for example due to poor attendance and/or engagement.
 - A request from an apprentice or their employer. This may also be referred to as a Break in Learning.
6. 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.

7. 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.

For apprentices only, engagement requirements set out in 3.7 apply as well as requirements detailed in the Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance, section 11.

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.
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. For example, a Basic Life Support session is a mandatory requirement in order to continue onto the course placement block. 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 under this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis 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. For taught provision, if a student has attended zero scheduled learning sessions over a 7-day week (Monday to Sunday), the student will be contacted to discuss their attendance.
3. The frequency of and 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 | Weekly | For a standard 12-week semester formal notifications will be issued after teaching week 2, 5, 8, 11. |
| Home/EU PGT and UG students (Full Time and Part Time) | For example, a student has missed an entire week or more in the three-week monitoring period between weeks 3 – 5 | | For non-standard teaching blocks, week two and then every three weeks. |
| Apprentices | <85% Cumulative attendance | Week 2, 5, 8, 11 | Where the teaching block does not permit the above model, formal interventions will be issued as per course block. |
| Repeat year, semester or module | For example, student must achieve an overall 85% attendance irrespective of whether they are being monitored between weeks 3 and 5, or between weeks 1 and 11 | | |
| Students sponsored by the University through a Student Route Visa – Below degree level | | | |
| Students studying on an accredited PSRB course placement | Student has not met the required number of hours | Monthly | Monthly supervision meeting or monthly contact point |
| 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 | | |
| 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 |

4. Students Repeating their Studies

Where a student is repeating either their year of study, a semester or module, the faculty will ensure that a Learning Agreement is in place which details specific attendance and engagement requirements.

5. 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.

6. 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) .

7. 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.

8. 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.
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 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'.

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.

6. ii) Apprentices

1. Apprentices are required to fully engage with both the on and off the job requirements, and to attend all scheduled learning sessions that form part of the apprenticeship programme.
2. Where an apprentice does not attend a minimum of 85% of scheduled learning sessions, formal attendance notification will commence as outlined in section 6.
3. An apprentice's employer will be notified of any attendance and/or engagement concerns, including absence requests.
4. Apprentices who do not (or cannot) attend scheduled learning sessions for eight consecutive working weeks of their course will be subject to a mandatory break in learning as required by the ESFA.
5. Additional attendance and engagement monitoring requirements for apprentices stipulated by the ESFA will be followed as part of this policy are detailed in Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance, section 11.

6. iii) Non-Standard Teaching Periods

1. During teaching periods where alternative teaching and learning activities take place e.g., work placements, field trips, study abroad, students will be required to maintain engagement with the University on a monthly basis as minimum. These may be delivered via a variety of methods e.g., in person, via email or virtual meetings. Where engagement falls below the required level, formal attendance notifications will be issued.
2. Apprentices will be required to record their engagement via their off the job logs on the University system, APTM. Where engagement falls below the required level, formal attendance notifications will be issued.

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 attendance and/or engagement concerns raised, 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.
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. The Faculty will contact the student to discuss the issues affecting engagement and where required, a meeting will be arranged to provide necessary support and advice.
6. 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.
4. For full details regarding absences, please refer to section 10 in the Student Attendance and Engagement Operational guidance.

9. Withdrawal from Course

1. The University will make every effort to support students to re-engage with their studies, exploring all opportunities available prior to withdrawal from their course. Following all interventions and issuing of attendance notifications, and where students are deemed to be no longer attending and/or engaging with their studies, 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, the Home Office, their employer or sponsor, ESFA (apprentices only) 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 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.

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 students withdrawal date is confirmed as that of the date the Stage 3 'Withdrawal from BCU' is issued.
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.

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.
3. To further meet the University's safeguarding responsibilities, the attendance and engagement of its students under the age of 18 will be monitored closely on a weekly basis and action will be taken in line with the University's Safeguarding Policy.
4. Additional attendance and engagement monitoring requirements for apprentices stipulated by the ESFA will be followed as part of this policy are detailed in Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guidance, section 11.