



# 2AC Student Attendance & Engagement Policy and Procedure

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## 1. Introduction

As a university we have a duty to monitor engagement and to support you to complete your course of study. The purpose of the policy and its associated procedure is to provide clarity for you on the expectations relating to 'engagement' and what action may be taken where levels of engagement drop to unsatisfactory levels.

This policy takes account of your individual circumstances, whilst providing a supportive learning environment which enables all students to achieve their full potential.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures summarised in Section 10: *Related policies and procedures*.

Definitions:

1. Taught Student – This term applies to those students studying on an Undergraduate or Postgraduate course which is based on engagement with timetabled sessions.
2. Distance Learner – This term applies to those students who are registered for a course that does not meet physically but uses online means only through which to deliver the teaching and associated learning.
3. Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students – This term applies to those students undertaking a research degree where there is a varied amount of on campus engagement.
4. Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Students – This term applies to those in employment who are studying on an apprenticeship course which is based on off- the-job training and includes engagement with timetabled sessions.
5. VLE – This term stands for Virtual Learning Environment and in most cases refers to the use of SOL.

## 2. Scope

2.1 The policy applies to the following groups of students:

- All students registered on a taught or postgraduate research course that is awarded and wholly delivered by Solent University.
- All students registered on a Distance Learning delivered by Solent University.
- Higher and Degree apprentices who are sponsored by their employers to undertake a degree apprenticeship at Solent University.

2.2 The university has a number of other categories of student registration, which are not subject to this Policy:

2.3 Students registered on a course that is delivered wholly or in part by a UK partner institution, except where its application may be stipulated under the relevant franchise agreement. Higher and Degree Apprenticeship courses follow the process for taught students with the additions/exceptions set out in Appendix A.

2.4 Some courses of study at the university are subject to attendance requirements specified by professional bodies and other external organisations. Where this is more rigorous than set by the University, the requirement of the professional body will prevail.

2.5 Where necessary, variations from the policy may be introduced with appropriate university level agreement based on specific course requirements, which must be indicated in course documentation.

## 3. Key Principles

3.1 For the purposes of this policy, engagement will be measured by point of contact, which is defined as follows:

- Face-to-face teaching for taught students - attendance at timetabled sessions within a calendar week.
- Online engagement – engagement at module level with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) within a calendar week.
- Taught postgraduate students at project/dissertation stage – meetings with supervisor.
- For research students - regular supervisory meetings.
- For MRes students – engagement will be measured according to requirements set out for taught postgraduate students at dissertation stage within this policy.
- Higher and Degree apprentices – see Appendix A.

3.2 All timescales referred to in this document are measured in ‘calendar days’ which means every day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays, except for university closure days such as public holidays and Christmas closures. Full details of term dates and university closures can be found here: <https://www.solent.ac.uk/about/term-dates>

3.3 Attendance and engagement records will be held centrally in a searchable system. Departments are responsible for the management and maintenance of attendance and engagement records for all students on modules run by that department.

#### 4. Authorised Absence

4.1 We recognise that, occasionally, you may be unable to meet the minimum attendance or engagement requirements due to unforeseen circumstances.

4.2 If you are unable to attend face-to-face teaching or engage with the VLE as detailed in section 5, you must notify the University; if this is not done, the absence will count as a missed point of contact.

4.3 For absences of more than seven calendar days, students must complete an [authorised absence request](#). This request must be authorised by relevant department and/or Student Success and Visa Compliance staff.

4.4 Where possible, you should submit a request for authorised absence in advance. Authorisation for unplanned absences may be submitted up to 7 calendar days after the last day of absence. Requests for authorised absence submitted after 7 calendar days may not be considered.

4.5 Authorised absence forms must be supported by appropriate evidence. Authorised absences for sponsored visa students will be limited to illness, family bereavement and other exceptional/unforeseen circumstances.

4.6 We will consider requests for authorised absence supported by evidence that demonstrates why the absence should be permitted. We will normally approve authorised absence requests for up to 14 calendar days. In exceptional cases, requests for more than 14 calendar days may be considered. Any absence requests exceeding 4 calendar weeks will not be considered. All requests will be treated sensitively, and we will try to accommodate all reasonable requests. However, where an absence may have a detrimental effect on your academic progress, or where absence levels are already of concern, such requests may not be granted.

#### 5. Measuring attendance and engagement

##### *Taught students – face-to-face teaching*

5.1 We will usually record and monitor attendance in all timetabled sessions per module per week. These could be lectures, workshops, seminars, tutorials etc. If you are studying four modules in a term that would therefore mean that you have at least four contact points per week.

5.2 We will record attendance during the first two taught weeks following the start of a cohort but we will not use this to escalate notifications for non-attendance. This does not apply to WMS students (Cadet/Professional courses only) where non-attendance will be escalated from week

one.

- 5.3 We will normally consider an entire week with no attendance at any module as a missed contact.
- 5.4 Where a taught student is studying overseas as part of a dual degree, Erasmus exchange or on study abroad, we will use a number of contact points including but not limited to certificate of arrival, learning agreement, certificate of departure and transcript of results to verify attendance. The partnership officer and course team will meet with the student at least every 4-6 weeks and highlight any areas of concern regarding non-attendance.

*Taught students at project/dissertation stage (postgraduate courses only)*

- 5.5 If you are solely studying the project/dissertation module of your postgraduate Masters degree, we will monitor your engagement through regular meetings with your supervisor (either face-to-face or online). Each supervisory meeting is considered to be a point of contact.
- 5.6 You are normally expected to engage with your supervisor on a fortnightly basis. Two consecutive weeks without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.

*Taught students on work or clinical/professional placement*

- 5.7 Where you are undertaking a work placement, regular contact with the placement tutor will serve as evidence of ongoing attendance and engagement. Such contact is usually expected to take place on a fortnightly basis. Two consecutive weeks without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.
- 5.8 Where you are attending a clinical or other professional placement (e.g. nursing, social work, teaching) in order to satisfy a PSRB professional practice requirement, attendance will be monitored on a weekly basis (in accordance with published course regulations).
- 5.9 If you lose your placement for any reason, you should let your department know immediately, so that alternative arrangements may be put in place, allowing you to continue to engage with your studies where appropriate.

*Postgraduate Research (PGR) students*

- 5.10 The engagement of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students is monitored through regular meetings with members of their supervisory team (either face-to-face or online). For students on a visa, the majority of these meetings in a given academic year must take place in person. Each supervisory meeting is considered to be a point of contact.
- 5.11 You are normally expected to engage with a member of your supervisory team every six weeks. Six consecutive weeks without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.
- 5.12 In exceptional circumstances, contact with the Research Office can also be considered as a point of contact. This can only replace supervisory contact once in a 6-month period.
- 5.13 You are expected to demonstrate engagement at all points up to your viva. Once you have passed your viva, you will only be required to submit evidence of engagement again if you receive an outcome of:
- Major amendments
  - Re-submission
  - Write-up for MPhil
- 5.14 You will record contact points/supervisory meetings on the university's attendance monitoring system, which will be used as a record of engagement.
- 5.15 If you fail to undertake and/or record a contact point or meeting, this will usually be considered as a missed contact.

- 5.16 Engagement will usually be demonstrated through face-to-face supervisory meetings, but where this is impractical<sup>1</sup>, contact via online means (e.g. Teams or Zoom), telephone, email, and other means may also be accepted.
- 5.17 Contact must be made and recorded regardless of the physical location of the student.

#### *Distance learning students*

- 5.18 We recognise that the frequency and level of engagement required on a distance learning course may vary according to the course set-up, and your individual circumstances.
- 5.19 If you are registered on distance learning courses, engagement will be determined and monitored by the course team based on the prevailing course structure. We retain the right to withdraw you for lack of engagement, in line with the escalation procedure for taught students detailed in section 6.

#### ***Part-time students***

- 5.20 We recognise that the frequency and level of engagement required on a part-time course (both taught and research) may vary according to the course set-up, and your individual circumstances. If you are a part-time student, we will normally allow twice the time for when a contact is required based on the full-time equivalent.

#### *Students' Union Officers*

- 5.21 If you are on a student visa undertaking an official role such as an elected Students' Union full-time Officer, fortnightly contact with the Head of Student Success will serve as evidence of ongoing engagement.
6. Engagement monitoring escalation procedure

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

#### *All Taught students including students on a visa*

- 6.1 After two complete calendar weeks<sup>3</sup> of unauthorised missed contact, an email will be sent notifying you that your level of engagement has dropped and requesting that you contact your Personal Tutor/Student Support to discuss any issues or support needs.
- 6.2 After a second fortnight of unauthorised missed contact, a second email will be sent warning you that further unauthorised absences will likely result in you being withdrawn and requiring you to contact your Personal Tutor/Student Support to resolve any issues.
- 6.3 If you are a WMS student (Cadet/Professional courses only), points 6.1. and 6.2 do not apply. Instead, after one calendar week of unauthorised missed contact, an email will be sent notifying you that your level of engagement has dropped and requesting that you contact your Personal Tutor/Student Support to discuss any issues or support needs. After a second calendar week of unauthorised missed contact, a second email will be sent warning you that further unauthorised absences will likely result in you being withdrawn and requiring you to contact your Personal Tutor/Student Support to resolve any issues.
- 6.4 After a further week of unauthorised missed contact, you will be contacted and informed that you will be withdrawn unless a request for suspension has been submitted within 14 calendar days and subsequently granted.

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6.5 During this 14-day window, if you provide new evidence to support your lack of engagement, we may use discretion to consider this. Where appropriate, this may halt withdrawal proceedings, if it is deemed that the evidence is sufficiently strong to retrospectively grant an authorised absence,

and you are able to catch-up with your studies.

- 6.6 If you fail to submit a request for suspension within 14 calendar days, a fourth and final email will advise you that you will be withdrawn with immediate effect and your student record will be updated.
- 6.7 If you submit a request for suspension within 14 calendar days that is subsequently not granted, a fourth and final email will advise you that you will be withdrawn with immediate effect and your student record will be updated.
- 6.8 Repeated patterns of intermittent unauthorised missed contact or an overall attendance of below 30% over a period of 8 calendar weeks may also be considered sufficient grounds to initiate a withdrawal.
- 6.9 An unauthorised absence of 60 calendar days or more will result in an immediate withdrawal.

#### *Post Graduate Research (PGR) students*

- 6.10 After six weeks of non-engagement, an email will be sent notifying you that another missed six weeks will likely result in you being withdrawn and requiring you to contact your supervisor to resolve any issues. The email will be copied to your first supervisor.
  - 6.11 After a second consecutive period of a further six weeks of non-engagement, you will be contacted directly by the department and informed that the process of withdrawal will begin unless a request for suspension has been submitted within 14 calendar days and subsequently granted.
  - 6.12 If you submit a request for suspension within 14 calendar days that is subsequently not granted, a third and final email will advise you that you will be withdrawn with immediate effect. This withdrawal should happen no later than the 4 calendar days after the decision not to grant the suspension.
7. Appeals against a withdrawal

#### *Grounds for Appeal*

- 7.1 You have the right to appeal against a withdrawal on the following grounds:
  - (i) That there are extenuating circumstances relating to ill health or personal difficulties which you were unable to raise prior to or during the escalation procedure detailed in Section 6; and/or
  - (ii) That the information held by the University relating to your attendance and/or engagement is incomplete or inaccurate, and you were not in a position to correct this information at an earlier stage;

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

- 7.2 No appeal can be made where a suspension of study has been requested and granted during the Engagement Monitoring Escalation process but has been rejected by you.

#### *How to Appeal*

- 7.3 Appeals must be received by Academic Registry no later than 14 calendar days after the date of email notification of the withdrawal. An acknowledgement email will be issued on receipt of the

appeal.

- 7.4 Appeals received after the 14 calendar day deadline will be deemed out of time and will not normally be considered. A Completion of Procedures letter including details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 8) will be issued.
- 7.5 In exceptional cases only, a late appeal may be considered provided that it is accompanied by detailed and supported reasons for the late submission.
- 7.6 The appeal should be submitted in writing using the Stage 1: Academic Appeal Form. Procedures for submitting the form are outlined on the appeal form.
- 7.7 Original evidence must be provided in support of the appeal and listed on the Appeal Form. If evidence is unable to be provided with the appeal form, it must be submitted no later than 7 calendar days after submission of the appeal form.

#### *Consideration of the Appeal*

- 7.8 The appeal will be reviewed by Academic Registry, and/or where appropriate by the UKVI Compliance and Audit Manager and a response will normally be provided to you within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.
- 7.9 The following decisions can be made:
- (i) To dismiss the appeal if it is determined that no substantive case has been established. You will be advised of any further right of appeal under the Academic Appeals Procedure.
  - (ii) To uphold the appeal and request Student Registry to reinstate you with or without a recommendation that you be granted a retrospective period of authorised absence. This decision is not available if you are on a student visa and were withdrawn for 60 or more days of non-engagement.

The department may specify conditions of reinstatement and the consequences of you failing to adhere to these conditions. Should subsequent failure to adhere to these conditions result in your withdrawal, you have a further right of appeal on the grounds detailed in 7.1 above.

- (iii) To rescind the withdrawal decision and offer a period of suspension in light of relevant issues which may be raised in the appeal submission.

If the offer of suspension is rejected by you, the original withdrawal decision stands. It will also be deemed that the offer has been declined if you fail to respond by the deadline. .

If the issues raised within the appeal submission are considered to potentially impact on your ability to study on return to the university, we may refer you to the Fitness to Study procedure.

- 7.10 Where the stage 1 appeal is not upheld, or you do not accept the terms of a return to study or offer of suspension, you will be advised of your right to submit a stage 2 appeal to request a review of the stage 1 decision. A stage 2 appeal review request should be sent to the Complaints and Appeals Manager within 14 calendar days of you receiving the outcome of your stage 1 appeal. The stage 2 appeal should outline the grounds for appeal and include any supporting evidence.
- 7.11 The Complaints and Appeals Manager will review the complaint and make a decision in line with paragraph 7.9 above. You will normally be sent the outcome of the stage 2 appeal within 14 calendar days of receipt of the stage 2 appeal by the University.



7.12 Where a stage 2 appeal review is not upheld, or you do not accept the terms of a return to study or offer of suspension, you will be issued a Completion of Procedures letter advising you of your right to make an appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) (see paragraph 8).

## 8. External Adjudication

If you have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter, you may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if you remain dissatisfied with a final decision of the University providing that your complaint is eligible under its Rules, which are available on the OIA website at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>.

You will need to send to the OIA a Scheme Application Form within twelve months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter. A Scheme Application Form can be downloaded from the OIA website.

## 9. Student Guidance

More information on submitting an appeal is available at:

<https://students.solent.ac.uk/studying/complaints-and-appeals>

You can seek independent, free, and impartial advice from the SU Advice Service:

<https://www.solentsu.co.uk/advice/academicissues/>

## 10. Related policies and procedures

- [UKVI Student Route Compliance Handbook](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#)
- [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Student Pregnancy Policy](#)
- [Doctoral Student Handbook](#)

## Appendix A

### Higher and Degree Apprentices

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

#### 1. Authorised absence

- 1.1 An apprentice must seek approval if they wish to take leave for a period up to 4 weeks. Approval needs to be sought from the course lead and employer using the absence procedures of both the university and the employer. Authorisation cannot be granted unless the course lead and employer are in agreement.
- 1.2 Apprentices can, in conjunction with their employers, apply for a formal break in learning where they need to take a period of leave from work in excess of 4 weeks. The duration of the apprenticeship will be adjusted in line with the period of authorised absence.

#### 2. Measuring attendance and engagement

- 2.1 There is a minimum requirement of 85% attendance for all apprentices in timetabled sessions. Attendance and engagement with university-based study days will be monitored in accordance with the sections in the main policy and procedure relating to taught students.
- 2.2 The definition of off-the-job (OTJ) training where engagement must be monitored includes teaching of theory, practical training such as shadowing, mentoring, industry visits and participation in competitions along with learning support and time spent writing assessments. Apprentices are asked to record non-timetabled sessions in their OTJ VLE and these are reviewed at tripartite reviews.

#### 3. Engagement monitoring escalation procedure

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

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

- 3.2 After a third consecutive week of absence or non-engagement a meeting will be arranged with the apprentice, employer and Apprenticeship Manager to discuss whether a break in learning is required. This replaces sections 6.4 to 6.7 above for taught students.
- 3.3 If an apprentice submits a request for a break in learning this must also be submitted to the respective Apprenticeship Manager.
- 3.4 The Apprenticeship Manager is responsible for notifying the apprentice's employer in the event of any concerns regarding engagement in relation to informal and formal progress reviews.