

Attendance Monitoring – Frequently Asked Questions For Staff

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Which students will attendance be monitored for?

Attendance will be monitored for all students on all pre-sessional, foundation, degree and postgraduate taught programmes, including programmes of study with work placement.

The policy also includes attendance for students on postgraduate research programmes - but these students will be monitored manually rather than automatically (as per current processes).

Which sessions will attendance be monitored for?

Attendance will be monitored for all timetabled sessions (as scheduled in the St Mary's Timetabling system, CELCAT).

Non-timetabled sessions such as tutorials (which are managed outside of the CELCAT timetable) will not be monitored automatically.

Why are we monitoring attendance?

Attendance monitoring is nothing new - it's something we already do at St Mary's - we're just changing the way we do it.

For further information please refer to St Mary's Attendance Monitoring Policy.

How will attendance be monitored?

Students will be required to tap their official St Mary's student ID card (issued to them at enrolment) against the card-readers installed in St Mary's teaching locations at the start of each session.

When they tap their ID card, the system will beep.

The blue light on the card-reader will briefly change from blue to red. Then, if their card has been successfully recorded, a green light will be displayed for a few seconds. (then the light will revert to blue).

NB: Contrary to previous instructions, it is not sufficient to listen for the beep alone. If/when there is a problem with the system or the student's ID card, the beep will sound but the light will remain red. If/when this happens, the student's card tap will not be recorded and so the student will not be automatically marked as having attended and they will be marked as 'Absent'.

[The instructions next to card-readers in teaching locations will be updated to reflect this].

See below for details of what to do if/when a student's ID card is not read (i.e. when they don't get a green light).

Where timetabled sessions are held in locations where there is no card-reader available, academic staff will have the ability to update the session register in the system. See below for details.

Do students need to tap-out at the end of a session?

No, they do not.

What counts as 'Present' / 'Late' / 'Absent' for attendance monitoring purposes?

Students who tap-in any time from 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the session to 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the session will be marked as 'Present'.

Students who tap-in more than 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the session (and before the scheduled end of the session) will be considered to have attended but will be marked as 'Late'.

Students who tap-in too early i.e. more than 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the session will not be marked as having attended the session and will be marked as 'Absent'.

Students who tap-in after the scheduled end of the session will not be marked as having attended the session and will be marked as 'Absent'.

Will attendance at all timetabled sessions be monitored automatically?

No – automated monitoring is not possible in all cases but these will be a minority of cases.

There are some timetabled sessions held in locations where there are no card-readers and where it is not possible/practical to install card-readers.

Also there are a few scenarios where there is a genuine reason for a student's attendance to differ from that planned in the timetable.

In such cases, staff will be able to update the registers in the system as necessary (see below for details).

What if the student's ID card is not working?

If the student does not get a green light when they tap their ID card at a card-reader, their attendance has not been recorded.

Firstly, check that they have tapped their card properly i.e. they have used the correct card; they have held it close enough to the card-reader for it to be detected; and they have not tapped it too soon after the previous student / simultaneously with another student.

Secondly, ask whether other students are experiencing the same problem with their ID cards. If multiple ID cards are not working, the problem is likely to lie with the card-reader or the system rather than the ID cards themselves, in which case, please see below.

If the issue is isolated to specific individual students, they need to contact Security to obtain a replacement ID card ASAP.

Meanwhile, you will need to make your own register of the student's attendance and update the attendance register in the system.

What if the card-reader is not working?

If all / multiple ID cards are not working (i.e. not getting a green light), the problem is likely to lie with the card-reader or the system rather than the ID cards themselves, in which case, please inform IT ASAP so that the problem can be investigated.

Meanwhile, you will need to make your own offline register of the students' attendance and update the attendance register in the system (later).

Will students be emailed (by the system) if/when they are absent from timetabled sessions?

No, they will not receive any automated emails.

Student attendance data will be available to staff (as appropriate for their role). The staff member will decide if/when to contact the student (taking into account any related factors).

Will students be able to view their own attendance register?

No, not as part of this project. However, we are investigating ways of making this information available to them in the future.

Will I be able to see the attendance for my student(s) / module(s) / programme(s)?

You will be able to log into CECLAT to view registers for sessions / students.

In addition, Weekly Reports of students' attendance (by student(s) / session(s) / module(s) / programme (s) / department(s) / faculty) will be produced.

The reports will highlight students whose attendance has fallen below agreed thresholds (95% and 80%).

Can I mark all students 'Present'/'Absent' in a register?

Yes. There's a Select All option so you don't have to do each student individually.

Can I access attendance registers from my tablet/smartphone?

Yes. Via the browser on your phone/tablet. CECLAT attendance is mobile enabled so that it formats the screens appropriately for a tablet/phone.

Will St Mary's be providing staff with tablets/smartphones for accessing attendance registers?

No, not in the current financial climate.

Most staff already have their own tablets/smartphones which they can use if they wish. By using the St Mary's WiFi, when on premises, you don't even have to worry about using up your data allowance.

Do I still need to take paper registers?

No. The aim of automating attendance monitoring (where possible) is to remove the need for paper registers and, thereby, the manual overhead of manually transferring the data into Excel spreadsheets. Plus, one of the benefits of the automated system is that for the first time ever it will give us a single holistic view of every students' attendance for the whole of St Mary's in one place.

The only exceptions to this are sessions held in locations where there is no card-reader available. See below for details.

While we're all getting used to the new way of doing things, you may choose to keep your own attendance register to reassure yourself that the automated records are correct. That's up to you.

NB: Any manual registers you take **MUST** be done in parallel to the automated system: not instead of. So, please ensure students continue to tap-in.

Plus, we don't want to confuse students with mixed messages about how their attendance is being monitored and what they do / do not need to do.

What if I'm using other tools to record my students' attendance at my lectures? Can I carry on using them?

No. One of the benefits of the automated system is that for the first time ever it will give us a single holistic view of every students' attendance for the whole of St Mary's in one place.

Plus, attendance monitoring data is used by various staff members across St Mary's not just lecturers. So this information needs to be available centrally - especially as the Schools' attendance spreadsheets of old will cease to exist.

While we're all getting used to the new way of doing things, you may choose to keep your own attendance register using your other tools to reassure yourself that the automated records are correct. That's up to you.

NB: Any registers you take via other tools **MUST** be done in parallel to the automated system: not instead of. So, please ensure students continue to tap-in.

Plus, we don't want to confuse students with mixed messages about how their attendance is being monitored and what they do / do not need to do. So please, do not circulate paper registers for students to sign nor get students to register themselves via other means (e.g. my modules).

What happens if a student is absent (for whatever reason)?

A student who knows that they will be absent from the University for any period of time, whether planned or unplanned, should make this known to their Faculty Business Manager in order that appropriate discussions can take place.

The Faculty Business Manager will use CELCAT to (i) Mark the student as 'Absent' (or 'Excused') in all the session registers for the period the student is absent (ii) add a comment code [see above/below] to explain the reason for their absence.

This does not have to be done one session at a time, the update can be applied to multiple registers simultaneously.

Can I add comments against a student's attendance register?

Yes, this can be done using CELCAT.

The comment field is a 'free text' field which means you could write anything you like – but please use one of the agreed list of reason codes instead - see [here](#).

Using this standard convention will make it easier to produce summary reports of the reasons for absence/lateness and thus enable us to identify any trends.

Why should I add comments against a student's attendance register?

A student may declare a reason for their absence/lateness to you in another session.

Or they may have advised in advance e.g. phoning in sick.

Or they may declare it in a follow-up conversation.

If they have, it is helpful if the reason is captured in the system and, therefore, can be viewed by other staff members who may also have a role in the student's welfare.

Plus, by producing summary reports of the reasons for absence/lateness it will enable us to identify any trends.

How will students' attendance be recorded for sessions held in locations such as Sports Fields which have no card-reader?

Card readers are being installed on the outside of buildings near the sports fields on Campus and at Teddington Lock as follows:-

- J-Block
- Sport St Mary's
- Teddington Lock - main building.
- Teddington Lock - Pavilion 1

These will cover all the sports fields at each site.

Students will have to tap into one of these readers (just as they do in classrooms) at the start of the session.

The system will be configured to know which card-readers cover which sports field locations and will mark students present (or absent/late) as applicable.

How will students' attendance be recorded for sessions held in non-St Mary's locations which have no card-reader e.g. Stamford Bridge, Swimming Pool, Field Trips, Lecturer's Office, Café etc.?

The lecturer will record attendance and update the attendance record in the system.

There are 2 options for doing this as follows:-

Option 1:

The Lecturer records attendance offline as they do today (e.g. on paper).

After the session, they log into CELCAT and update the register in CELCAT (based on the offline register they made during the session).

Option 2:

If they have access, the Lecturer logs into CELCAT, at the start of the session, via their mobile phone/tablet/PC and updates the register in CELCAT.

Will students' attendance for non-taught sessions (e.g. self-study) be recorded?

No. Timetabling will mark these sessions in the Timetable as not requiring a register.

How will students' attendance for non-taught timetabled sessions e.g. work placements, be recorded?

Attendance for these sessions needs to be recorded in the system too so that we have a complete view of all the student's attendance in one place.

Therefore, a staff member will need to log into CELCAT and update the register(s) based on the attendance reports provided by external placement supervisors or by students who self-declare to us.

It is possible to mark all students as 'Present' in multiple registers for such sessions using the Extended Absence feature. If this is done in advance, a staff member only then needs to log into CELCAT and update registers to mark a student as 'Absent' if/when necessary.

Where there are a number of identical instances of a session timetabled at different dates/times of which the student is only required to attend 1 (e.g. attend 1 of 3), will students be able to choose for themselves which session they attend?

No. All students will be timetabled to a particular session.

What happens if a student misses the session they're timetabled to attend but is able to attend a subsequent instance of the same session instead?

The student must inform the Lecturer.

Otherwise they will be marked as 'Absent' from the session they were timetabled for and their attendance at the alternative session will be unrecognised.

The Lecturer will need to log into CELCAT to mark the student as 'Present' at the session which they actually didn't attend - based on the certain knowledge that they did attend the alternate session. [This is simpler than amending the registers for both sessions].

What if the timetable says a student should be at a session but they're not actually required at all / part of the session?

E.g. Drama rehearsals are timetabled for all the cohort but the lecturer doesn't require all the cohort to attend.

The staff member will need to use CELCAT to manually mark the register - e.g. mark as 'Excused' the students who were actually not required.

It is possible to mark all students as 'Present'/'Excused' in multiple registers for such sessions using the Extended Absence feature. If this is done in advance, a staff member subsequently only needs to log into CELCAT and update registers to mark any variations from that if/when necessary.

How will a student's attendance be recorded when they change module?

Once a student has agreed the module change with Programme Director/Lead they can start attending sessions for their new module and stop attending sessions for their old module

However, until their timetable is updated to reflect the change, the student will still appear in the registers of the sessions for their old module and will not appear in the registers of the sessions for their new module. Therefore, attendance records for that student are likely to be inaccurate until the system is updated.

Hence, it is essential that staff ensure the system catches up before too long, as follows:-

The Programme Director/Lead must submit the module change form to Registry by the end of the working day to confirm the change and advising the date (and where applicable time) that this change is with effect from.

Registry will make the necessary changes in the student records system and these will flow through into the Timetable.

All changes should be completed in 2-3 working days from receipt of the email from the academic.

Once the change has been made, the student's historical attendance record on their former module will remain unchanged.

What if a timetabled session is cancelled at the last minute?

If no action is taken, the cancelled session and the register for it will persist in the system. Any students who have tapped-in to the appropriate card reader for that session at the appropriate time, will be marked as 'Present': whereas students who have not tapped-in (e.g. because they knew it had been cancelled) will be marked as 'Absent'.

Therefore, the Faculty [Module Convener / Programme Lead / Head of Department] needs to inform Timetabling by the end of the day.

Timetabling will remove the session from the timetable or reschedule it as requested.

What if I need to change the location of a session at the last minute?

If no action is taken, all students will be marked as 'Absent' at that session because they've tapped-in to a location which does not match that expected for the session.

Therefore, the Faculty [Lecturer / Module Convener / Programme Lead / Head of Department] needs to inform Timetabling by the end of the day.

Timetabling will amend the session location to reflect the location which was actually used. The register for the session will be based on whether or not students tapped into the revised location.

What if I need to reschedule a session at the last minute?

If no action is taken, all students will be marked as 'Absent' at that session because they've tapped-in at a date/time which does not match that expected for the session.

Therefore, the Faculty [Module Convener / Programme Lead / Head of Department] needs to inform Timetabling by the end of the day.

Timetabling will amend the session location to reflect the location which was actually used. The register for the session will be based on whether or not students tapped into the revised location.

What if a student wishes to challenge their attendance record?

The Student will need to raise this with their Head of Department who will require the student to evidence their attendance somehow.

What if a student has withdrawn or never attended?

Registry will mark the students as withdrawn after a certain period (after Induction, after 1st & 2nd exam boards).

What happens when a student is granted Leave of Absence?

The student will remain registered against modules and, therefore, will still be in the timetable and registers.

Use CELCAT Comments facility to indicate why the student is absent.

What if a student has Lost or Forgotten their ID- card?

The student must tell the lecturer ASAP during the session.

Plus, the student must email the lecturer (for each and every lecture that day) ASAP (by midday the next day at the latest).

The lecturer(s) will then log into CELCAT to update the register.

In the event of a lost card, the onus is on the student to get a new card from security ASAP.

What if the Timetable lists a student against a session which they don't actually need to attend because they're just retaking the exam (and don't need to re-attend the lectures)?

The Module Convener will use the Extended Absence feature of CELCAT to mark the student as 'Excused' from these sessions in advance.

What if students have consecutive sessions but on different subjects/modules in the same room?

Students will need to leave their seats and tap-in (again) at the start of the 2nd session.

[Note: This does not apply to "double sessions" of the same module – i.e. if it is one 2-hour session of the same module there is no need to tap-in again after the first hour.]

How is attendance recorded for mid-session room swaps where lecturers stay put and students swap rooms & subjects at half-time?

If the students are timetabled for two different sessions in two different rooms either
(a) the students will have to move rooms and tap-in to the 2nd room at the start of the 2nd session
or (b) if the lecturers swap rooms (instead of the students), the Lecturer(s) will have to log into CELCAT to update the register for the 2nd session.

However, if they're timetabled as one single session then tapping in at the beginning of the session will suffice.

What happens if/when a student gets a replacement student ID card?

The student's historic attendance, using their old ID card, is retained and accessible.

The student's attendance at subsequent sessions, using their new ID card, will be correctly attributed to them.

The student's overall attendance record will reflect their attendance recorded using both their old and new ID cards.

What if a Student Refuses to Tap-in?

We'll be doing lots of comms to explain to students why it's in their own best interest for us to monitor their attendance and, therefore, for them to tap in.

But of course we cannot force them. Just as today a student can refuse to sign themselves in on a paper register.

As with previous examples, you will need to make your own register of the student(s) attendance and update the attendance register in the system.

What if the previous session overruns?

If this makes students arrive at the next session late (>10 mins after the start) they'll be marked as Late (but won't be Absent).

So please ensure you avoid overrunning and allow your students to leave early enough to get to their next session on time.