

Attendance Monitoring Policy

2020/21

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ATTENDANCE MONITORING POLICY

This policy has been revised for 2020/21. Due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, resulting in online/on-campus blended learning, physical attendance will no longer be the single method by which we monitor your attendance.

However, the University maintains that engagement is essential for student success, and students should endeavour to engage with all teaching, either in person or online. Students should also be aware that their engagement with online learning and electronic resources will be monitored via Moodle and the Personal Tutoring Dashboard.

Student Visa holders should also refer to the [Student Visa Engagement and Monitoring Policy 2020/21](#).

This policy applies only to students enrolled on programmes run at St Mary's University Twickenham premises. It does not apply to students studying at collaborative partner locations.

1. Introduction and Principles

- 1.1 An appropriate level of engagement of all students with their programme of study is important and has a direct impact on success. Sufficient attendance at relevant classes is a strong indicator of engagement, and is also essential for international students who have a Student Visa, to ensure visa compliance. It is therefore vital for the University to undertake effective and efficient monitoring of student engagement and be able to produce and analyse attendance data in a timely manner.
- 1.2 Monitoring of student attendance is important for pedagogic and pastoral reasons, enabling the timely identification of students who may be at risk in terms of progression or retention. Follow-up actions can then be taken to support students and encourage engagement with the programme. Research and experience of academic units where attendance has been routinely monitored for many years show that this has a positive impact on student retention, engagement and the student experience.
- 1.3 Long periods of unauthorised absence, as monitored by student attendance records, could pose a risk to students' academic progression and may lead to academic failure and withdrawal from the programme of study.

2. Aims of the policy

- 2.1 This policy is built on the SMU *Academic Regulation 3.1: Attendance* and associated processes employed by St Mary's University Twickenham to monitor student attendance and engagement on all pre-sessional, foundation, degree and postgraduate taught programmes, including programmes of study with work placement. The policy includes attendance for students on postgraduate research programmes who shall be monitored manually. The policy does not include students

on collaborative partnership programmes that are delivered off-site and those on distance learning and blended learning programmes.

- 2.2 It needs to be read within the context of the University's efforts to enhance student success and retention, and the strategic initiatives deployed across the whole breadth of the student experience, both within and outside of the curriculum. Related policies are *Personal Tutoring Policy*, *Fitness to Study Policy*, *Leave of Absence Policy*, *Extenuating Circumstances Policy* and *Withdrawal Policy*.
- 2.3 Engagement and attendance monitoring is valued for its potential to indicate those students at risk of leaving their course early and/or failing their programme of study.
- 2.4 While there are additional requirements relating to attendance for the UK Visas and Immigration Department (UKVI), as set out in the Student Visa Engagement and Monitoring Policy, this policy is applicable to the student body as a whole.
- 2.5 The University aims to improve the engagement and attendance of all students as the programme of study is designed to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully complete the programme.

3. Attendance Requirements

- 3.1 Students are autonomous learners and active participants in their education. They take responsibility for managing their learning and their engagement is demonstrated in many ways:
 - in attending all prescribed lectures, seminars, classes, meetings with their personal tutors/supervisor(s).
 - in preparing for and participating in classes or carrying out their own research
 - in directing their own learning beyond that specified by their teachers
 - in completing formative and summative assessment tasks
 - in monitoring and reflecting on their own progress
 - in taking the initiative in seeking support when necessary from their department and the wider University (e.g. Personal Tutor, Programme Lead, Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success, Student Services, Registry, Students' Union, Wellbeing Team).
- 3.2 Students are expected to attend every element of the programme of study. This refers to lectures, seminars, workshops, practical sessions and any form of summative or formative assessment.
- 3.3 Attendance requirements are inclusive of all sessions whether completed as a large group in lectures, small group for tutorials, or one on one sessions (such as dissertation supervision or work placements).
- 3.4 Attendance is expected for all sessions whether they are run by University staff, or by external professionals/trainers hired by the University.
- 3.5 Attendance at enrolment, orientation and any designated registration event is compulsory.
- 3.6 Students undertaking a year or period of time in work placement or practice or study at another HE Institution are also expected to attend that placement/period of study away

from the St Mary's University Twickenham. Students should refer to their timetable for information on lectures/seminars and all other expected attendance.

- 3.7 Students' attendance and engagement will be monitored and recorded. Attendance of Student Visa holders or students under other immigration controls is subject to additional controls as set out in the Student Visa Engagement and Monitoring Policy. Student Visa holders and students under other immigration controls will be informed of these requirements before enrolment. These controls may be subject to change to respond to developments in UKVI regulations. Students will be notified by the University of any changes. Non-compliance with UKVI regulations regarding attendance can result in withdrawal from the University.

4. Management of non-engagement

- 4.1 A student who knows that they will be absent from the University for any period of time should make this known to their Programme Director or Personal Tutor in order that appropriate discussions can take place.
- 4.2 A student whose absence is unplanned should inform their Programme Director or Personal Tutor that they are absent in order that appropriate discussions can take place.
- 4.3 It is a mandatory UKVI requirement for any notified absence to be noted against a Student Visa holder's record. A Programme Director or Personal Tutor should access the Student Visa holder's record via the Personal Tutor Dashboard to record a note of the informed absence.
- 4.4 The Programme (Programme Director or Personal Tutor) and student should discuss how long the likely absence will be and what effect this may have on the student's ability to undertake their programme satisfactorily, in accordance with the University's *Personal Tutoring Policy*. When the absence is with good cause involving genuine extenuating circumstances, such as family bereavement, illness, unforeseen circumstances with adverse consequences etc., the Programme will where possible be flexible in responding to the needs of individual students.
- 4.5 If the absence is for a period of more than two weeks, or any period considered to be significant by the Programme, the Programme Director or Personal Tutor may require the student to interrupt their studies. In these cases the *Leave of Absence Policy* shall apply, and return at an agreed time in the future that will enable the student to resume the programme of study appropriately.
- 4.6 In making the recommendation for the student that they should consider Leave of Absence, the Faculty Business Manager should notify Registry after taking into account all the circumstances of the individual, including health and safety aspects, and the requirements of the programme and may specify that on their return a student will be required to take alternative modules to those originally taken.
- 4.7 The Faculty Business Manager should also make a note of the recommendation against a Student Visa holder's record via the Personal Tutor Dashboard.
- 4.8 At any point in this process the Programme Director or Personal Tutor may seek advice and guidance from Registry, Finance and/or Student Services or a member of the Students' Union, including advice on personal matters that the

student has given consent for them to discuss, and advice on referrals to University services.

- 4.9 Where the Programme Director or Personal Tutor considers or recommends that the student should either apply for Extenuating Circumstances and/or request Leave of Absence, the relevant University policies on *Extenuating Circumstances* and/or *Leave of Absence* shall apply. However, if the student does not wish to do so, the University policy on *Fitness to Study* should be invoked and applied.
- 4.10 The UKVI Compliance and Immigration Manager must be consulted before a decision is made for a Student Visa holder to be withdrawn or to be placed on a Leave of Absence, as there will be visa implications to consider.
- 4.11 In the event the student wishes to apply for Extenuating Circumstances, Leave of Absence, Withdrawal and/or is considered under the Fitness to Study Policy, Registry will write to the student and provide advice and guidance, in accordance with the relevant Policy. In the event the student is deemed to have withdrawn, their registration as a student will be discontinued in accordance with the Academic Regulations governing Registration and Withdrawal.
- 4.12 If a student has zero attendance and the Programme Team has no knowledge at all as to the student's whereabouts, the Programme Director or Personal Tutor should contact Registry to take further action.

5. Recording engagement and attendance

- 5.1 Students are active participants in their learning experience and are expected to take responsibility for achieving their potential through engaging fully with those experiences and with the requirements of their chosen course of study. Through such engagement students are able to demonstrate industry, diligence and a positive attitudinal approach to their studies.
- 5.2 In order to alert staff to students who may be experiencing difficulties, all students will have their attendance monitored. Students are required to use their ID card to touch in to all timetabled activities.
- 5.3 Information about engagement and attendance will be gathered as follows:
 - Touch Card/Registers- At enrolment students are issued their official student ID card. In order to access any St Mary's University's property and accommodation, students must touch their card at a card reader (where available) thereby creating an electronic record of their entry/exit. Attendance for postgraduate research students is managed through manual registers.
 - Touch cards will also be used to record attendance at required contact points (lectures, seminars, tutorials), where available and matched against the student's expected contact points in the timetable.
- 5.4 Attendance monitoring data will be retained for a limited period of time, as stipulated in the Data Retention Policy, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and shall not be used and shared for any other purposes.
- 5.5 Student Visa holders should be aware that attendance at formal teaching sessions is a condition of their visa. These will be monitored in the same way as for other

(Home/EU) students but with additional, stipulated contact points throughout the academic year.

- 5.6 Student Visa holders, or students under other immigration controls, may request an authorised absence from the Faculty Business Manager and Visa Compliance and Immigration Team. This will be discussed only after the Academic staff within the Department/Faculty has given initial approval, in principle. An absence may only be approved if it is unavoidable and will not adversely affect academic progress.
- 5.7 Faculty Business Manager, Academic staff, including Personal Tutor within Department/Faculty shall have access to reports on attendance for the modules for which they have responsibility.
- 5.8 Research students should be in regular contact with their supervisors or staff within the Graduate School and be able to provide evidence of continued research and progress in their research topic.
- 5.9 Students on work placement should be in regular contact with their University supervisors or work placement administrators.