



St Mary's
University
London

School of
Medicine

Attendance and Student Engagement Policy (School of Medicine)



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Attendance and Student Engagement Policy (School of Medicine)

1. Introduction

This policy outlines St. Mary's University, School of Medicine approach to monitoring student attendance and supporting student engagement.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define the University's obligations in terms of student engagement and attendance
- Define student obligations in terms of student engagement and attendance
- Support students' mental health and wellbeing
- Enhance academic attainment, standards and progression
- Enhance student experience
- Satisfy external reporting/accreditation requirements and legal obligations in relation to attendance, where relevant.

1.2 Scope

This policy:

- Applies to all students studying on the MBBS course within the School of Medicine at levels (Years 1 to 5).

2. Policy/Procedure

2.1 Overview

The School of Medicine places student success at its core and is dedicated to empowering all students to flourish while they are with us and beyond. Because we recognise that active participation in teaching and learning activities is pivotal for student retention, advancement, and academic excellence, we emphasise the importance of regular engagement and attendance. Moreover, we acknowledge that a lack of involvement may signify underlying challenges students may be experiencing that necessitate additional support or actions.

Through proactive monitoring of attendance and engagement levels, the School of Medicine provides additional support to those students who may need it and is committed to working in partnership with these students to increase the active involvement in their academic studies.

The School of Medicine is committed to facilitating meaningful dialogues and interventions as this is paramount to addressing students' personal development needs and support requirements effectively, thereby optimising their chances of success. Furthermore, we acknowledge the multifaceted nature of factors influencing student engagement and will endeavour to outline clear expectations regarding academic engagement. To this end, this policy clarifies both student responsibilities in engaging with their academic studies and the School of Medicine's commitment to monitoring and facilitating that engagement.

The School of Medicine is supported at all times in achieving the above aims by St Mary's University student support systems.

2.2 Definitions

Within the scope of this policy, **engagement** encompasses active involvement in guided independent or group study activities, participation in clinical and other external placements, assessment and feedback processes, and any activities fostering learning and personal growth, whether conducted individually or collaboratively with peers. Such activities include but are not limited to, the following:

- Attending scheduled learning sessions
- Attending clinical placements
- Attending other types of external placements in other settings
- Meeting published deadlines for submitting assessments.
- Engaging with online learning resources, such as lecture recordings and study materials.
- Engaging with available learning resources which support academic studies, including the Library, the St Mary's Learning Environment (Moodle) and the Elearning platform (RISR Advance)

- Attending meetings with Personal Academic Tutors and Clinical Academic Tutors
- Attending mandatory training

Attendance constitutes a component of student engagement. In the context of this policy, attendance is defined as being present at scheduled teaching sessions and other learning engagements mandated by a module or program. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Physically attending face-to-face teaching sessions and other learning activities stipulated by the School of Medicine. This includes, lectures, small group teaching sessions, practical sessions (e.g. clinical skills), clinical placements and examinations.
- Virtually participating in synchronous or other learning activities as required by the module or programme.

Absence: a student is considered absent if:

- they do not attend a timetabled teaching session
- they do not attend a timetabled clinical placement session
- they do not attend a timetabled session in another setting (i.e. GP placement)
- they do not attend an examination
- they do not attend planned activity relating to the learning experiences of the module, for example mandatory training
- they do not attend a scheduled meeting with a personal academic tutor, clinical academic tutor or SSC supervisor
- they are more than 15 minutes late to a teaching session

2.3 Why do we Monitor Student Attendance?

The Medicine course is regulated by the **GMC**. The GMC expects the University to monitor attendance and be able to assure them that students have enough experience before they graduate.

The University has responsibility to oversee attendance at teaching and learning activities for the whole of its student body, and to respond to instances of non-attendance. This obligation arises from the necessity to report attendance to **UK student loan agencies** and both UK and international external sponsors. This obligation is captured by the Joint Higher Education Provider and Student Loan Company Service Level Agreement and begins with the process of Registration. The University obligation in this regard extends to collaborative partners and will be articulated within the relevant contract, operations manual and overseen by the relevant Joint Management Board.

UKVI attendance and engagement requirements

The University has a specific duty to ensure that students sponsored via the UKVI student route are in attendance as this is a continuous condition of their visa; this includes engagement during any placement, as a condition of the University's UKVI license. Acting as the immigration sponsor, the University is obligated to closely monitor the attendance of these students at scheduled teaching sessions and to take appropriate measures, including absence reporting to the UKVI and ultimately, the termination of studies, if attendance fails to meet UKVI stipulations. Should UKVI requirements surpass those outlined by the University, the standards set by UKVI shall govern.

2.4 What is the attendance requirement for the MBBS programme?

Academic Schools hold responsibility for monitoring student attendance. To prepare students for professional practice, the School of Medicine expects students to make every effort to attend 100% of clinical placements and campus based teaching. Any absences from these activities must be authorised through the appropriate processes. Although the expectation is full attendance, the School of Medicine recognises that occasional authorised absences may be unavoidable. Students must achieve a minimum attendance rate of 80%. Students whose attendance falls to 90% will be required to meet with relevant School staff to discuss their attendance, identify and barriers to engagement and agree any necessary support or actions.

Attendance below 80% will trigger a formal review by the School. Students may be required to undertake remedial learning activities, additional placement time, or other measures to demonstrate that they have met the required learning outcomes. Attendance below 80% may be considered a professionalism concern and may affect a student's progression on the course.

Attendance below 70% will trigger a meeting with the University's UKVI Compliance team.

2.5 How do we monitor attendance?

For on campus teaching, attendance data will be collected through use of the Student Engagement Platform (SMU STEP) student app. The app includes geo-location capability for student attendance recording. Students are required to register their attendance at every on campus teaching session via the SMU STEP app.

The School of Medicine will use data from the app which will calculate an overall attendance rate for each student across all scheduled campus learning sessions. Students and the School of Medicine team will receive an automatic notification from the SMU STEP app when their attendance falls below 90% and 80%

thresholds (note that these thresholds include any authorised absences). In the instance of a student's attendance falling below both of these thresholds, the student will be required to meet with their Personal Academic Tutor. In the instance of a student's attendance falling below 80% the student will also be required to meet with their Head of Phase to understand the cause of these absences, ascertain the student's well-being, direct them to available support resources, and monitor future attendance.

For placements, students are required to record their attendance via online attendance logs on the RISR Advance eportfolio platform.

Placement staff will notify the School of Medicine of any persistent student absence. Where a concern around student absence is raised via the weekly attendance logs or by the placement, students will be required to meet with the Head of Primary and Community Care or Phase Lead to understand the cause of these absences, ascertain the student's well-being, direct them to available support resources, and monitor future attendance.

2.6 How do students record absence?

Students are required to notify any **on the day, unplanned absences** (i.e. sickness) for **campus-based teaching** via the My SMU App (via the Lecture check in feature and then by selecting "Absent,"

If students have an **unplanned absence** from clinical placement, they should report the absence to the Medical School via the online absence reporting form. This applies to campus teaching and clinical placements. Students are also required to notify their placement supervisor in writing as soon as practically possible.

We understand that students may occasionally be unable to attend teaching due to sickness or other unexpected personal circumstances. Although students are not expected to attend if they are unwell, they are expected to communicate.

For **pre-planned absences** due to faith and belief observance, students should apply for absence/s at least 6 weeks in advance. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sub-Committee will consider these applications and outcomes will be notified to the student. Please see the School of Medicine Faith and Belief Observance policy for further details.

For other pre-planned absences (for example, family weddings, conference participation, medical procedures) students should apply for absence/s as far in advance as possible via the Planned Absence form. This form will be considered by the Head of Phase and the outcome will be notified to the student.

All absences, including pre-planned approved absences such as those described above, should be reported by the student via the MY SMU app (campus-based

teaching) or online absence reporting form (placements). Students are responsible for notifying placements of any pre-planned approved absences directly and should always provide as much notice as possible of such absences.

Students should contact the Student Experience team with any questions around pre-planned absence.

The preplanned absence reporting form, placement absence reporting form and Faith and Belief observance application form are available online here:

[School of Medicine student reporting and application forms](#)

2.7 How do we monitor student engagement?

STEP offers a comprehensive overview of engagement levels across various activities at both individual and cohort levels. It encompasses data such as:

- Attendance at scheduled teaching sessions and placements
- Submission of assessments
- Interaction with university systems, including the Moodle learning environment and My SMU app
- Assessment results

The platform data is an integration of the above data along with other student information, including interactions with personal academic tutors, teaching staff, and staff from professional services such as Registry and Student Services.

The utilisation of student engagement data adheres to Data Protection regulations, including the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Collection and use of the data will be in accordance with these data protection regulations and will be clearly communicated to students throughout their studies.

What happens with the attendance and engagement data?

The University is dedicated to facilitating student engagement. Staff with roles specifically designed to support and promote engagement may use data we hold about engagement to understand patterns of student engagement. These roles might include Pastoral Tutors, Personal Academic Tutors, Clinical Academic Tutors, Leads for Student Experience, Phase and /or Module leads, Student Success staff, the Widening Participation & Student Engagement Team and Student Services staff.

These staff will analyse individual student engagement data to tailor meetings to student needs (e.g., academic mentoring sessions, study support sessions), enhance student experience and offer additional support as indicated. Where a student's attendance and engagement persistently fail to meet the expectations of the university

attendance and engagement policy the Course/Head of Phases will report the lack of attendance and engagement to the Health and Conduct Sub Committee for review, and, if needed, to initiate formal disciplinary processes (including Fitness to Practice).

If a student continues to fail to engage in the support offered by the School and Student Services to re-engage in their studies, then the Academic Registrar in agreement with the Executive Dean of the School of Medicine will initiate the student [withdrawal from the university process](#). All students have the right to appeal a notice of withdrawal. The [appeals process](#) can be found on the university website

3 Roles and Responsibilities

The School of Medicine is responsible for monitoring student attendance and engagement in accordance with this policy. The Personal Academic Tutors, Clinical Academic Tutors, Head of Phases, Module Leads and Student Experience staff are responsible for supporting students and implementing appropriate interventions where necessary if a student's attendance and engagement fall below the desired level.

The table provided in Annex A provides information on the staff roles that have access to the Student Engagement Platform (STEP). It outlines the type and level of data they have access to, the purpose of that access and the responsibilities of the staff using the platform.

3.1 Expectations of Students

The School of Medicine views students as active collaborators in their educational journey. Students are obliged to attend all scheduled campus learning sessions and placements and to utilise the provided learning and support resources.

It is the students' responsibility to accurately record their attendance at teaching sessions, using the My SMU app. Any planned or unforeseen absences must be reported through the My SMU app.

Students are expected to apply for pre-planned absences (usually 6 weeks in advance) of the absence date/s. This includes planned absences for faith and belief observance, conference participation or medical procedures.

Students are responsible for notifying clinical placements in advance about any pre planned absences, and for notifying them of any unplanned, on the day absences with as much notice as possible (preferably before the start of the session). In order to be successfully signed off from clinical placements at the end of placement sign off, placement supervisors will be required to confirm that students have maintained an acceptable level of attendance.

The University upholds academic integrity and expects students to maintain honesty

in their attendance records; any attempt to falsify records will be referred to the Health and Conduct sub Committee.

Submission of all required assessments is mandatory. In instances of exceptional circumstances, such as personal difficulties or health issues impacting assessment participation, students should follow the [Extenuating Circumstances Process](#).

A student may wish to consider interrupting their studies if there are valid reasons that may impact their ability to engage and/or result in their needing additional time to complete their degree programme. Students should discuss their circumstances with their Personal Academic Tutor, Clinical Academic Tutor or Head of Phase. Further information can be found in the [Leave of Absence Policy](#).

To enhance student engagement, students will also have access to the Student Engagement Platform (SMU STEP). This tool offers a comprehensive overview of their own individual attendance and engagement.

The School of Medicine remains committed to supporting student engagement. Students are expected to engage promptly with University staff around any attendance or engagement concerns raised.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

Academic Regulations

Student Visa: Engagement and Monitoring Policy

Student Withdrawal Policy

SMU SoM Faith and Belief Guidance for Students

School of Medicine Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedures

Use of attendance and engagement data complies with Data Protection legislation (including the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and any supplemental legislation) and is handled in accordance with the University Data Protection Policy. The Data Protection Officer (“DPO”) is responsible for overseeing this policy and developing related policies and privacy guidelines. That post is held by the University Secretary. The DPO can be contacted on: - Email: gdpr@stmarys.ac.uk

Data on student engagement and attendance is managed in accordance with the Student Privacy Notice, which sets out the University’s commitment to using student data in ways that are ethical, beneficial, legal and proportionate.

5 REVIEW, APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION

- This policy will be reviewed by the QCSE committee before final approval
- This policy will require final approval by the Academic Board
- This policy will be published on the St Mary’s University Website

6.1 Annex A – Roles and Responsibility

Role	Engagement Data Access	Purpose	Responsibilities
Personal Academic Tutor	Personal Tutees	Use information on their students' attendance and engagement profiles to help inform and guide personal tutor meetings, enabling focused discussions and agreement of goals and objectives Review information to support the student's academic progress and development Record summary of personal tutor sessions and any interventions on STEP	Monitor student attendance and engagement information prior to and during personal tutor meetings. Record brief notes and outcomes from personal tutor meetings including goals / targets etc. To be agreed and shared with student and visible to the Phase and Module Leads/Student Experience team.
Head of Phase/Module Lead	All students within the programme	Use information on their students' engagement profiles to help support personal tutors and student success and engagement teams Use information on students' engagement to help inform and improve programme management and development.	Support Personal Academic Tutors and Student success and engagement teams in providing support to students. Use reports to monitor engagement across the programme, identify any patterns of engagement which may inform module or programme level action Use reports to evaluate the impact of any actions taken.

Director of UG Medicine	All students within the School	Use School data to produce annual reports and development plans to address emerging patterns of engagement and attendance. Ensure school engagement and attendance addresses Retention Strategy objectives, B3 metrics and APP objectives and milestones	Ensure staff within the school engage with attendance monitoring policy and procedure Approve any students referred for withdrawal due to non-engagement by the course lead and notify the registry department of the student withdrawal request.
School of Medicine Student Experience team	All students within the Faculty	Use information on students' engagement profiles within the faculty to help support Phase and Module Leads / Personal Academic Tutors and student services teams with administration functions to support student attendance monitoring and engagement.	
Exec Dean of School of Medicine	All students within the Faculty	Ensure school engagement and attendance addresses Retention Strategy objectives, B3 metrics and APP objectives and milestones.	Ensure staff within the school engage with attendance monitoring policy and procedure
Student Success / WP Student Engagement Teams	ALL Students	To use information on students' engagement to help inform and guide meetings and to facilitate early response to referrals from Personal Academic Tutors. Use data to identify patterns of attendance and engagement, recognise barriers and design activities and interventions to enhance the student experience. Review data in line with APP objectives, initiatives and milestones for internal planning and reporting	Complementing and following up on referrals from Personal Academic Tutors to support students with setting actions and objectives. Ensure record of meetings with students and any actions (through interventions) to allow for transparency with students and visibility for Personal Academic Tutors (non-confidential information only).

Specific staff in external reporting where it is required (eg. UKVI)	ALL Students	Oversight of student data (Student & Cohort level) to meet any external reporting requirements.	Help in the provision of support to relevant students in meeting their requirements. Help to ensure that School and Faculty processes are being followed. Highlight patterns of concerns at a student or cohort level, escalating to & within Student Support/Schools and Faculties, as necessary.
Academic Registrar	SLC funded Students – Students	Maintain compliance with regulatory bodies such as Home Office and Student Loan Company HESA Data Futures for in-year returns are met. To ensure timelines for withdrawals and Ghost students are compliant with reporting requirements.	Submission of enrolment data for SLC students. Managing LOA processes Withdrawal of ghost students and students not engaging. Reporting of withdrawals

