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This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.

3K- Engagement & Attendance: Policy and Procedure

PART A: POLICY

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1. This is the University's policy on the management of student engagement with their studies at BU. It applies to all students, including all students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes of study and postgraduate research students.
- 1.2. As a higher education provider the University must work to support students to fulfil their academic potential helping them to progress through their studies and achieve their expected outcome. This Policy and Procedure outlines the mechanisms for identifying students requiring support to engage with their studies and to help them access appropriate support as early as reasonably possible, and for withdrawing students from the University if they do not engage as required.
- 1.3. This policy and procedure also provides a framework for University compliance with its legal and regulatory requirements relating to attendance and engagement by certain categories of student including students with Student Visas, apprentices and students on courses accredited by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Experience has overall responsibility for implementation of this Policy and for reporting on and reviewing its efficacy.
- 2.2. Faculty staff leading teaching and learning sessions are responsible for using the tools provided to capture data on student attendance at those sessions.
- 2.3. Students are required to facilitate the capture of attendance data in teaching and learning sessions by taking actions as requested to confirm their attendance at individual sessions. Students must not disrupt or interfere with attendance capture or other elements of engagement monitoring. In particular, students must not knowingly either indicate their own attendance at a session when they are not present or enable any other student to do so.
- 2.4. Each Engagement Procedure attached to this policy or guidance on the implementation of such a Procedure will specify responsibilities for actions required to monitor and respond to attendance and engagement.
- 2.5. This Policy and the Engagement Procedures do not over-ride any other University policy or procedure which is concerned with or affects a student's engagement or study status. Staff should apply other policies or procedures as and when they become applicable to a student and should not delay doing so on the basis that an Engagement Procedure may be or become applicable to the student.

2.6. In this Policy and the Engagement Procedures:

2.6.1. “the Programme Team” means the staff who deliver or supervise teaching and learning activity on a student’s programme and the relevant programme support staff or other staff whose role includes student support or management of Engagement Procedures; and

2.6.2. “assessment” means an assessment set by academic staff to determine the award of credit under the University Assessment Regulations.

3. REASONS FOR MONITORING AND MANAGING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1. Where students have good levels of engagement with their studies, they are more likely to complete their course. Engagement is essential for students to obtain value for money under their contract with the University.
- 3.2. Attendance at timetabled or scheduled teaching and learning sessions is a key part of engagement in studies and is linked to better academic achievement. Therefore attendance is a core measure of engagement.
- 3.3. Students who are sponsored under the Student Route and hold a Student Visa must attend in-person taught sessions regularly and engage appropriately with all aspects of their learning and study as a condition of their visa. They are expected to be present in the UK for the duration of their course including any period of time spent working on a dissertation or thesis. The University has a legal responsibility to record and report on engagement of these students to the Home Office through the UK Visa and Immigration Service (UKVI). The University must withdraw its sponsorship from students who do not engage appropriately with their studies.
- 3.4. Students on some courses or pathways of study must (whether or not they hold a Student Visa) meet engagement or attendance requirements set by external bodies in order to meet statutory or regulatory requirements or contractual obligations to other organisations. These include students on apprenticeship courses and those on courses accredited by PSRBs. The University has contractual or other legal obligations to monitor attendance of these students and take certain actions in response to non-attendance.

4. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENT

- 4.1. Students are required under their contract with the University to engage with their studies. Students must engage at a level which:
 - 4.1.1. Meets any legal or regulatory requirement as to engagement; and
 - 4.1.2. Will enable them to make reasonable academic progress.
- 4.2. To fulfil their engagement requirement, students are expected to regularly attend timetabled teaching or learning sessions and scheduled supervision or progress review sessions.
- 4.3. If undertaking a placement, students are expected to attend their placement activities in line with the expectations or requirements of the placement provider and the relevant course requirements.
- 4.4. It is recognised that students’ attendance will be impacted on occasion by routine factors such as short-term illness, caring responsibilities or travel difficulties. Students are not generally required to notify individual instances of absence for these reasons, but:
 - 4.4.1. the Engagement Procedures attached to this policy may make specific provision for certain students to notify staff of their inability to attend one or more timetabled sessions; and
 - 4.4.2. it is the responsibility of the student to tell their Programme Team or Personal Tutor about any circumstances likely to have a significant impact on their attendance during a semester, so that appropriate support can be put in place to allow them to continue with their studies if this is possible or other action taken as required under University

policies.

- 4.5. Students are also expected to engage regularly with study materials and information about their programme and units of study. This includes engaging with communications from teaching or support staff on their programme and responding if this is required.
- 4.6. Where a student is unable or unwilling to engage with their studies or agree an appropriate break in their studies, withdrawal on grounds of non-engagement may be:
 - 4.6.1. necessary to comply with regulatory and legal requirements on the student or the University; or
 - 4.6.2. appropriate, recognising that the student will continue to accrue financial liabilities while enrolled with the University and that where a student is not engaged in their studies that student will not make reasonable academic progress and the University will not be able to fulfil its duties to support that student.

However the University will aim to avoid withdrawal of a student from their course and to work with the student to support them so that they can complete their studies either on the original timeline for their course of study or at a later date.

5. MONITORING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. The University monitors student engagement on an individual and aggregated basis. It does this by routinely capturing and analysing the following categories of data where applicable to the level of study:
 - submission or non-submission of unit assessments;
 - attendance at or completion of unit examinations;
 - attendance at teaching and learning sessions (session attendance data);
 - access to and use of the VLE (Brightspace), Library services and other online services within the BU network;
 - communication with their Personal Tutor;
 - communication with the Programme Team or postgraduate research supervisory team;
 - attendance at any external appointments or activities required for students to meet the requirements of their course, for example mandatory placements or occupational health appointments for students on healthcare professions courses;
 - attendance at specialist learning or study support sessions arranged for an individual student;
 - attendance at supervisory meetings
 - completion of a key milestone or completion of any mandatory training (for postgraduate research students only).
- 5.2. The University sets Engagement Procedures which will be followed in relation to defined cohorts or categories of students. These Procedures may specify:
 - 5.2.1. engagement metrics (i.e. levels or indicators of engagement or non-engagement within categories of data in section 5.1) or engagement analysis based on data in section 5.1 which will be generated in relation to those students;
 - 5.2.2. any engagement checkpoints, i.e. circumstances or points in time at which engagement metrics will be applied to identify students whose engagement gives cause for concern in terms of their personal circumstances and wellbeing, potential impact on academic progress or compliance with regulatory or legal requirements;

5.2.3. ways in which the University will use engagement metrics or analysis for the purposes set out in this policy, including any intervention steps which the University will take at specified points in relation to individual students. These intervention steps will usually involve contacting the student by phone, messaging service or email or discussion with the students at in-person or online meetings, and may include (as appropriate):

- Providing information about their engagement and attendance
- Enquiries as to wellbeing or needs for support
- Reminders of the impact of low engagement/attendance on academic achievement
- Information about PSRB or visa/immigration requirements as to attendance or engagement and the impact of low attendance or engagement on students' ability to continue or successfully complete their course of study
- Offers of, or signposting to, sources of academic, pastoral or wellbeing support
- Invitation/request to attend a meeting with staff
- Warning of potential withdrawal from the course and/or requirement to increase engagement in order to avoid withdrawal
- Notification of withdrawal from the course
- Withdrawal of the student from the course
- Notification of attendance data or withdrawal from studies to external bodies if required to meet the University's legal and regulatory obligations, e.g. notification to UKVI or relevant PSRB.

5.3. Where engagement metrics, engagement checkpoints or intervention actions are set by PSRBs or government or regulatory bodies this will be referenced in the relevant procedure below.

5.4. The University's approach to monitoring and responding to student engagement will develop over time as it further develops its systems and resources. When deciding whether to set metrics, checkpoints and intervention steps for categories of student under section 5.2 and when setting those metrics, checkpoints and intervention steps the University will have regard to:

5.4.1. the availability of relevant, robust data within section 5.1 for the cohort;

5.4.2. the availability of resources required to take effective intervention steps for all students who show the relevant level of low engagement;

5.4.3. appropriate prioritisation of resources, in particular taking into account any relevant legal or regulatory requirements and expected level of impact from intervention action taken in relation to particular students at particular points in time.

6. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

6.1. Records of attendance and engagement data and intervention activity will be kept as necessary for the purposes of supporting the student, applying any relevant procedure under this policy and complying with University policy or regulatory or legal requirements with regard to records management and data protection. The Chief Data Officer and the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Experience will set appropriate retention periods for data captured or generated under this Policy and put procedures in place to ensure data is managed in accordance with those retention periods.

6.2. The University will ensure that students receive appropriate information as to how their engagement will be captured and how that data will be used. In particular, information about attendance capture and other engagement monitoring which will take place during an academic year will be included in the Student Privacy Notice.

PART B: PROCEDURES

This section outlines the Engagement Procedures through which the University captures and responds to engagement and attendance information in relation to specified cohorts or categories of student. Further detail will be provided in guidance to staff.

Where a student is withdrawn from their course under any of these procedures, they may challenge that decision under the Student Complaints Policy & Procedure (11F).

1. Engagement data in the learning analytics system

Student cohort/category: All students on taught courses

Engagement metrics/analysis: Session attendance data and data on engagement with the VLE (Brightspace) and assessment data from the student record system (SITS) will be fed into the learning analytics system which will use it to automatically generate:

Individual student data dashboards showing information on and analysis of the student's engagement and academic progress;

Use of data: available to Personal Tutors, the Programme Team and the relevant student at any point to assist them in understanding the student's engagement and academic progress and to assist staff in supporting the student

Aggregated (non-identifying) data at unit, programme and department level showing information about engagement by students undertaking a specific unit

Use of data: available to academic staff in the Programme Team and senior academic staff to assist them in understanding overall student engagement and academic progress on the unit. This will inform future delivery planning and course/unit development.

2. Standard engagement procedure

Student cohort/category: All students on taught courses

Engagement metrics/analysis:

Core metrics: applied at every submission deadline/examination date:

- (a) Submission/non-submission of assessments which are set to determine the award of credit under the University Assessment Regulations (obtained from the VLE (Brightspace));
- (b) Attendance/non-attendance at examinations which are set to determine the award of credit under the University Assessment Regulations (as captured by staff administering or invigilating the examination)

Supplementary metrics:

- (c) Staff observation or understanding of the student's engagement, including attendance at teaching and learning sessions, participation in group work or communication with the Programme Team, the Personal Tutor or staff with the role of providing 1:1 support to the student;
- (d) Session attendance data;
- (e) Other information on engagement and attendance generated by or displayed within University systems such as the VLE or the learning analytics system

The following procedure will be followed where a student is identified as matching one of the core metrics.

The procedure may also be followed where a student's Programme Team or Personal Tutor has concerns (on the basis of one or more of the supplementary metrics) about the student's ability to engage with their studies and make academic progress. However there is no general requirement on Programme Teams to actively monitor each student's engagement or apply set criteria or thresholds for these purposes.

The aim of the standard engagement procedure is for the student to confirm their re-engagement with their studies if possible and for the University to ensure the student has access to any appropriate academic and wider support.

The first step in this procedure is for the Programme Team to promptly contact the student in writing to explain the issue with engagement, enquire about the student's welfare and ask the student to make contact to discuss re-engagement or other steps to manage their study status. After that the Programme Team will communicate further with the student as appropriate in light of the student's response to the first communication (if any), working with other University staff as applicable and following University guidance on this procedure.

After reasonable steps have been taken to re-engage the student in their studies, the student will be withdrawn from their course unless:

- the student has made contact with the Programme Team; and
- either:
 - the Programme Team has appropriate assurance from the student regarding re-engagement with their studies; or
 - a decision is taken by the Programme Team (in discussion with the student and other University staff where appropriate) to manage the student's engagement and status through another relevant University procedure such as Interruption or Support to Study.

As part of this procedure:

- The student will be offered, referred or signposted to support as appropriate on the basis of any information they provide when responding to the Programme Team.
- The student will be given appropriate notice of any intention to withdraw them from their course.

When considering action to take under this procedure the Programme Team may take into account the supplementary metrics above to the extent that they are available and provide relevant information about the student's engagement.

Where this Engagement Procedure is triggered in relation to a student who has previously been subject to the Engagement Procedure within the same academic year, the Procedure shall be re-commenced at the stage in the Procedure at which the student re-engaged with their studies when it was previously applied.

3. Engagement procedure for international students (students on a Student Visa)

Student cohort/category: all students on taught courses and postgraduate research students who are sponsored under the Student Route and hold a Student Visa.

The following provisions apply to these students in addition to the standard engagement procedure (2) or the PGR procedure (6) and any other engagement procedures applicable to the student. These additional measures are applied on the basis of the requirements on the

University under the immigration legislation and regulations as a sponsor under the Student Route and the conditions of the Student Visa which include engagement with studies:

- Postgraduate research students must notify the Doctoral College of any intention to be based outside the UK for the purposes of conducting their research, as their research location must be notified to the UKVI.
- Authorised absence process: international students who are likely to be absent from their course for a period of two weeks or more (i.e. will not attend teaching and learning sessions during that period) or identify that they may be unable to submit an assessment by the due date, attend an examination or attend a mandatory session of any kind, must notify the Programme Team in advance to explain the absence and seek authorisation for the absence. Authorisation:
 - will not normally be given for any period greater than 30 days and will not be given for a period of more than 60 days;
 - will only be given if the Programme Team consider that the absence will not affect the student's ability to complete their course within the usual timeline (the course end date);
 - will normally be given only for exceptional reasons such as illness, bereavement or family crisis;
 - will not be given for students on the basis that they wish to be based outside the UK while completing a project, dissertation or thesis as this is not permitted under the terms of the Student Visa;
 - will only be given if this is considered consistent with the student's visa conditions and the University's obligations under immigration legislation and regulations;

if given, may be subject to conditions as to submission of assessments, notification of return or the undertaking of appropriate work to catch up following the absence;

- The engagement procedure will be applied if a student is found to have entered into a period of absence from their studies without following the authorisation process above.
- The University may carry out specific checks on the attendance or other engagement of any student to establish whether they have returned from an authorised absence or have undertaken an unauthorised absence.
- For postgraduate research students, provisions for annual leave, sick leave and parental leave will be applied in accordance with the provisions in the BU Code of Practice for Research Degrees (8A) and this procedure.
- Supplementary metrics (as described in the standard engagement procedure) will be used for additional engagement monitoring activities and intervention steps at appropriate points when core metrics are not available. "Relevant students" for these activities are students whose attendance or overall engagement is below or is at risk of falling below an appropriate level with reference to Student Visa conditions or their ability to make appropriate academic progress. These monitoring activities may include any of the following:
 - Use of reports on session attendance data (where that data is accessible and considered sufficiently robust) to identify relevant students;
 - For postgraduate research students, use of records of:
 - monthly engagement with supervisory teams including attendance at supervisory meetings
 - completion of a key milestone
 - completion of any mandatory training.

- Programme Support staff may periodically ask academic staff to notify them of any relevant students. Academic staff must respond promptly and accurately to any such request.

Relevant students identified through these activities will be subject to the standard engagement procedure (2) or the PGR procedure (6) and additional provisions in this international student procedure. Reports on session attendance data or records of attendance at supervision or progress review meetings and further information from academic staff may be used subsequently during the engagement procedure to determine whether students have improved their attendance sufficiently or whether it is appropriate to proceed with later stages of the engagement procedure and ultimately withdrawal from the course.

- The standard engagement procedure will additionally be adjusted as follows:
 - Communications sent to the student will note that their visa conditions require them to engage appropriately with their studies and that failure to respond to the communications and provide appropriate assurance on re-engagement may result in withdrawal of the University's sponsorship for their Student Visa;
 - Shorter timelines may be applied to one or more stages in the engagement procedure.
 - When considering action to take under the standard engagement procedure or PGR engagement procedure, including whether to proceed with withdrawal, the Programme Team or the Doctoral College (as applicable) will additionally take into account any other factors relevant to identifying whether the student appears to be meeting their Student Visa conditions, including but not limited to:
 - any previous non-engagement periods and the length of any period of re-engagement between two periods of non-engagement
 - whether the student has taken any unauthorised absence
 - the student's record as to payment of tuition fees
 - The Programme Team or the Doctoral College (as applicable) shall seek advice from the Immigration Advice and Compliance Team on the University's obligations under immigration legislation and regulations as required before taking decisions or actions under the engagement procedure. It is the responsibility of the Immigration Advice team to provide this advice promptly on request. The Programme Team or the Doctoral College (as applicable) is responsible for assessing a student's academic position and the likely impact of absence, non-engagement or other circumstances on the student's ability to complete their course within the usual timeline.
- Where it is decided to withdraw a student under the engagement procedure this will automatically result in the University withdrawing its sponsorship of the student's Student Visa and:
 - the Programme Team or the Doctoral College (as applicable) will promptly notify the Student Lifecycle Team and the Immigration Advice and Compliance Team (providing both with the reason for withdrawal)
 - the Immigration Advice and Compliance Team is responsible for notifying the UK Visa and Immigration Service of the withdrawal within the required timescales.

4. Apprenticeship Engagement Procedure

Student cohort/category: students on apprenticeship programmes

In addition to the standard engagement procedure (2), these students are subject to the Apprentice Attendance Procedure.

5. Students subject to PSRB attendance or engagement requirements

Student cohort/category: students on courses accredited by PSRBs where engagement or attendance requirements are set by the PSRB as a term of accreditation or a requirement for professional registration on completion of the course. These requirements may include attendance at particular types of mandatory teaching and learning session, attendance at external activities such as placements and occupational health appointments or a requirement to attend a specified proportion of teaching and learning sessions within a certain period.

In addition to the standard engagement procedure set out above (2), the Programme Teams for such courses will:

- inform students of the relevant attendance and engagement requirements, the engagement metrics and checkpoints which will be applied to them and the steps which will be taken where a student does not meet attendance or engagement requirements;
- regularly review attendance data to identify students who appear not to have met the PSRB attendance and engagement requirements
- in line with University guidance on this procedure:
 - notify students of the issue with their engagement, the risk that they will be withdrawn for not meeting PSRB requirements and the action they are required to take to engage appropriately and avoid withdrawal;
 - apply the standard engagement procedure with regard to further communications, action to support the student and notice of withdrawal, provided that shorter timescales may be set for re-engagement than under the standard engagement procedure if necessary to ensure that PSRB requirements are met.

6. Engagement procedure for Postgraduate Research Students

Student cohort/category: Postgraduate Research Students

Engagement metrics/analysis:

- Attendance at supervisory meetings;
- Completion of a key milestone (including probationary, annual and major review panels)
- Completion of any mandatory training.
- Records of other regular engagement with the student's supervisory team
- Demonstrating appropriate engagement in/progress of the student's research and related work between supervision or progress review points (taking account of any authorised absence)

Use of data:

The Doctoral College and Faculties will follow a procedure similar to the standard engagement procedure set out above (2) in accordance with the BU Code of Practice for Research Degrees (8A).

7. Pilot attendance intervention procedure at Foundation and Level 4

Student cohort/category: students at Foundation and Level 4 on a limited number of programmes across the Faculties.

In addition to the standard engagement procedure set out above (2) and any other applicable engagement procedures, the University will undertake a pilot attendance intervention project in relation to students on selected programmes at Foundation and Level 4.

Metrics and checkpoints:

Use of data: students with less than the agreed level of attendance during the relevant period will be telephoned by University staff. Depending on the outcome of the call, further action may be taken. The aims of this activity are to:

- As regards the individual students:
 - establish reasons for non-attendance
 - check on the student's welfare
 - provide the student with appropriate contacts in the Programme Team to facilitate engagement/academic support
 - refer or signpost the student to sources of other support as required.

with a view to supporting and improving their welfare and their engagement with their course during the crucial early period of their studies, and therefore supporting their academic performance and achievement during the remainder of their course.

- Develop the University's understanding of:
 - reasons for non-attendance at this stage of study
 - the impact of intervention at this stage
 - the resource required to carry out interventions of this type]

and therefore develop the University's ability to plan and implement further attendance intervention activity in the future.

8. Programme-specific attendance intervention procedures

Student cohort/category: students on programmes which do not fall within Apprenticeship Engagement Procedure (4) or Students subject to PSRB attendance or engagement requirements (5).

In addition to other applicable engagement procedures, Programme Teams which have previously captured and followed up on session attendance data prior to this Policy & Procedure coming into effect may continue such activities on the following conditions:

- The activity is in accordance with the principles of the main Policy
- The Head of Department is aware of the activity
- Attendance metrics and checkpoints are selected on a clear, reasoned basis as relating to levels and types of non-engagement which are believed to create risk to the academic progress and on-going engagement of students in the context of that unit or programme
- Staff have the necessary skill and capacity to access and analyse session attendance data for this purpose and apply metrics accurately
- Staff time required for follow-up/intervention actions has been agreed with the relevant staff and is consistent with, and does not duplicate, activity required to implement other Procedures under this policy
- Staff apply any guidance provided to them on communications sent to students regarding their attendance

Under this policy there is no obligation to undertake such additional engagement and

intervention activity which was not already undertaken prior to this Policy & Procedure coming into effect. New activity of this nature should not be introduced without agreement with the Faculty's Deputy Dean for Education and the Head of Academic Operations.

9. APPENDICES

[Appendix 1 - Engagement and Attendance Procedure for Apprentices](#)