

University of Sheffield

Attendance and Engagement Policy for Students

This policy covers what is expected of you as a student, why the University monitors attendance and engagement and what you can expect if the University has concerns about your attendance and engagement.

1 Student expectations

1.1: You must adhere to the requirements set out in Regulation XIII of the General University Regulations, which students sign up to as part of their Terms and Conditions. These specify that every registered student is required:

- to attend punctually and regularly at lectures and classes;
- to complete all written assignments, practical or other coursework;
- to keep appointments to meet with the student's supervisor; and
- to attend all examinations, as appropriate in each case to the relevant programme of study or research.

1.2: In addition to this policy, further information can be found on the [University attendance webpages](#). If there is guidance specific to your course it will be available in the student handbook provided by your school.

1.3: As a provider of below degree level programmes, ELTC has a separate and appropriate attendance monitoring policy due to additional requirements from UK Visas & Immigration. If you are studying at ELTC you should refer to their specific attendance policy.

1.4: You are not permitted to be absent from your studies without proper authorisation.

Where there are good reasons for you being unable to attend or engage with your course at an expected contact point (for example teaching events and appointments with your supervisor), you must contact your school in-line with the guidance found in your student handbook on reporting absences. Depending on your circumstances, and the procedures followed by the school, the school may or may not authorise the absence(s). If your school identifies attendance concerns, for example persistent patterns of absence or prolonged periods of poor or non-attendance, they may contact you (see section 'Where the University has concerns about your attendance and engagement').

If you feel your circumstances are directly impacting on your academic performance, for example in examinations, assessments, or failure to submit coursework by given deadlines, you are advised to consider the advice found on the University's [Extenuating Circumstances webpages](#), completing an Extenuating Circumstances Form where appropriate.

If you have a Learning Support Plan in place, it does not supersede the need to routinely attend your studies. However, there may be occasions where your individual circumstances make attendance at certain events difficult. In these circumstances, you are advised to consider the advice found on the [Attendance matters. a guide for disabled students webpage](#).

Where there are longer term circumstances affecting attendance and engagement, it is recommended that you contact your school to apply for a Leave of Absence from studies; this will provide you with an opportunity to address the circumstances impacting on your

ability to engage with your studies, so that you can return with the best possible chance of academic success.

1.5: The University will primarily identify students with attendance concerns where the attendance record shows prolonged or repeated absences, such that you are no longer in regular attendance on your programme, which may lead to you being contacted and further action taken in accordance with the appropriate Route for action as set out in section 3.

1.6: You are expected to arrive on time for any scheduled activities, regardless of the method of delivery. A late arrival may result in you being recorded as absent from the session, which may lead to you being identified as an attendance or engagement concern (see section 'Where the University has concerns about your attendance and engagement').

1.7: You are expected to engage with whatever method(s) are in place to record attendance and engagement with your studies, e.g. digital check-in, using the Personal & Academic Tutoring System (PATs) or paper registers.

1.8: You are expected to act honestly in accordance with whatever methods are in place to record attendance and engagement with your studies. Falsification of attendance and engagement records, including having others sign-in or check-in on your behalf, sharing codes, etc, where identified by your school could lead to disciplinary action according to Regulation XXII: Regulations relating to the Discipline of Students.

1.9 If you have any problems recording your attendance using the relevant University systems, such as iSheffield Digital Check-In, it is expected that you take prompt action to address and resolve these - for example by formally raising a ticket with IT Services and following their instructions. Technical issues are unlikely to be accepted as a reason for repeated and continued non-attendance should you fail to re-engage with studies.

1.10 It is your responsibility to check your student emails on a regular basis. This will ensure that you are aware as early as possible if you need to re-engage with studies or improve your attendance, and can do so within any timeframes that are provided to you. Failure to read your emails is not an acceptable reason for continued poor attendance or insufficient re-engagement and will not prevent formal action where needed, unless there are exceptional reasons (e.g. long-term hospitalisation)

2. Why the University monitors attendance and engagement

2.1: The University has a duty to comply with statutory obligations in relation to attendance and engagement, including:

- the sponsorship requirements of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for the monitoring of international students studying in the UK on a student visa
- the attendance and engagement requirements of student loan agencies as well as UK and overseas-based external sponsors, professional or statutory regulatory bodies (PSRBs).
- Office for Students (OfS) expectations of condition B2 for registration to 'provide all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education'.

2.2: The University will fulfil a duty of care to all students through the collection of attendance data that will contribute to targeting support for students who may need it as part of the University's Student Support Approach (2022-2027) for students who struggle with their academic course or research programme.

2.3: Visa sponsored students are required to observe that the University must comply with its statutory obligations to UKVI to ensure that such students are actively and consistently following their course of study, and to report those students found to be in breach of the University's engagement and attendance policies.

2.4: Due to UKVI requirements, visa-sponsored Student Union Sabbatical Officers (those whom the University continues to support for a Student visa) must remain engaged with their Officer role on a consistent basis throughout. As per registered visa-sponsored students, a prolonged period of absence can result in the initiation of the formal Visa Attendance Route.

2.5: Programmes accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory statutory bodies (PSRBs) may have separate or additional attendance and engagement requirements that need to be met in order to fulfil the standards of their degree.

2.6: To ensure these regulations are met, the University will monitor the attendance & engagement of all registered students throughout the duration of their studies, including those spending a period of time studying away from Sheffield as part of their programme.

2.7: In exceptional circumstances, the University may need to change its approach to the recording of attendance and engagement for a temporary period. For example, in the case of industrial action, disasters or failure of ITS systems to record attendance and engagement.

3. Where the University has concerns about your attendance and engagement

3.1: The University records attendance and engagement using a variety of different methods; the primary method for recording timetabled teaching events is the digital check-in tool (via iSheffield), in addition to this QR codes, paper registers and attendance at supervisory meetings etc may be used. The methods used will vary from school to school; you are expected to engage with whichever system(s) your school uses. The data collected is then returned into a central database that allows both academic schools and Central Support Services to review and identify students in need of support.

3.2 Your academic school may get in touch with you by email or phone to remind you of your attendance and engagement expectations or to offer you a meeting to discuss your attendance and engagement and to offer you appropriate support. In cases of continued poor attendance and engagement, schools may refer your case to Central Support Services through the Progress Concerns Route (Taught students) or Unsatisfactory Progress Route (Research students), or where there has been a complete loss of contact, referral through the Loss of Contact Route. See Routes listed below.

3.3 Central Support Services will review attendance and engagement data at specific intervals in the academic year. Where the data indicates that you have met the appropriate thresholds for non attendance, an email will be sent encouraging you to re-engage with your studies and outlining appropriate support services. Depending on the severity of the absence, you may be instructed to take a leave of absence, attend a meeting, or comply with any conditions as set out.

Whilst absences may be authorised by some academic schools, these do not automatically prevent you from being contacted regarding your attendance or engagement or prevent formal non-attendance Routes for Action from being initiated or followed. Students without a positive record of attendance or engagement (whether because of absences, authorised absences or a lack of recorded events) may still be contacted and required to re-engage with their studies within specific timeframes as per the relevant non-attendance Route as noted in 3.4.

3.4 In cases of continued poor attendance and engagement as identified by Central Support Services, or where academic schools have referred a case centrally, the following Routes may be initiated:

Progress Concerns Route (UG/PGT)/Unsatisfactory Progress Route

(PGR): Where there is a prolonged period of poor attendance and engagement, and the absences are likely to impact on your ability to progress academically, school will attempt to contact you to discuss your progress. If you fail to respond or do not demonstrate sufficient re-engagement after contact has been made, the school may choose to refer the case to Central Support Services. Resulting action includes:

- A Faculty Progress Concern advisory email
- A meeting with a Faculty Officer to discuss your progress
- Referral to a Faculty Student Review Committee, which could lead to exclusion from studies
- Deem withdrawal, which is generally used when the above options have not resulted in sufficient re-engagement

Loss of Contact (leading to deem withdrawal) Route: Where records clearly indicate that there has been no attendance or engagement for a sustained period, and the absences are likely to have a significant impact on your academic progress and learning, and the school has attempted to contact you on at least three occasions/or you have been identified at a Centrally led attendance and engagement check, the Loss of Contact Route will be initiated. A deem withdrawal email will be issued and may include conditions that you must comply with should you make contact prior to the deadline for withdrawal. If no response is received by the deadline given, usually five working days from the point of contact, then you will be deemed withdrawn.

Visa Attendance Route: If you are a visa-sponsored student and your record shows that you have been absent or have not had any attendance or engagement recorded for a sustained period of time then the International Student Support, Advice and Compliance team (ISSAC) or the PGR Support Team will contact you regarding your attendance and your visa requirements. You will receive instructions on how to re-engage with your studies within a limited period of time. If you follow the instructions and successfully re-engage no further action will be taken. Where you fail to re-engage with your studies within the overall timeframe provided, you will be emailed with a withdrawal notification and given the option to submit an Appeal to prevent this, usually within five working days from the point of contact.

If you submit an Appeal within the timeframe provided, a Panel will make a decision as to your continued studies. This may include a mandatory Leave of Absence or withdrawal from the University, and the cancellation of your Student visa sponsorship. If you fail to submit an Appeal within the timeframe provided, the withdrawal will proceed.

4.Storage and use of data

4.1 The attendance and engagement data is stored digitally via central University attendance and engagement systems. As part of the initial collection and processing of such data schools may store this information locally for a temporary period, before uploading locally-held attendance data to these central systems.

4.2 Attendance and engagement data is retained in line with the timeframes provided within the University's Records Retention Schedule.

4.3 The [Registration Declaration](#) and the [University's Privacy Notice](#) provide further details on the use of data for the performance of the University's contract with students, which includes administering study and the monitoring of attendance.

4.4 The attendance data is utilised by both academic schools and Central Support Services to review and identify students whose attendance may be of concern. In such cases the University will contact students with relevant information, support or guidance relating to their attendance and engagement. If a student's absence is such that they are escalated under one of the University's Routes for action they will receive further information and instructions regarding the process at the relevant time. For further details of when students are identified as a concern and what action may be taken see section 'Where the University has concerns about your attendance and engagement'.