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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- Academic Engagement & Attendance: Policy and Procedure

### 1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1. This is the University's policy and procedure for the management of student engagement with their studies at BU. It applies to the academic engagement of all BU students, including all students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes of study and postgraduate research students. A separate policy and procedure (5B – Student Engagement and Feedback) makes provision for student engagement in the form of student feedback and student voice in University governance and decision-making.
- 1.2. The core purpose of this policy and procedure is to enable the University to support students to fulfil their academic potential by helping them to engage with and progress through their studies and achieve their expected outcome. It sets expectations of students with regard to engagement and outlines the mechanisms the University will use to identify students requiring support to engage with their studies and to help them access appropriate support as early as reasonably possible.
- 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, students in receipt of UK statutory student funding and students on courses accredited by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- 1.4. This policy and procedure provides for the University to withdraw a student from their studies if they do not engage as required but only after appropriate attempts have been made to support the student to re-engage.

### 2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. The **Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Experience** has overall responsibility for implementation of this Policy including ensuring that appropriate engagement management processes are in place under section 5 and that reporting is undertaken in accordance with section 3.3.2.
- 2.2. The **Head of Academic Operations** is responsible for ensuring that appropriate support and guidance are available to staff with responsibilities under sections 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6.
- 2.3. **Faculty staff leading teaching and learning sessions** are responsible for using the tools provided to capture data on student attendance at those sessions.
- 2.4. **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.

- 2.5. **Programme Teams** and other staff will have responsibilities for monitoring and responding to attendance and engagement of individual students as defined in engagement management processes under section 5 of this policy and procedure.
- 2.6. **Programme Leaders, Department leadership and Faculty leadership** will have responsibilities for reporting on engagement under section 3.3.2.
- 2.7. This policy and procedure does not over-ride any other University policy or procedure which is concerned with or may affect 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.
- 2.8. In this policy and procedure:
  - 2.8.1. "the Programme Team" means the Programme Leader, Unit Leaders, any level tutor or level leader for a programme and the Programme Support staff for a programme; and
  - 2.8.2. "assessment" means an assessment set by academic staff to determine the award of credit under the University Assessment Regulations.

### **3. POLICY**

#### **3.1. Principles: reasons for monitoring and managing student engagement**

- 3.1.1. 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.
- 3.1.2. 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.
- 3.1.3. Low engagement by an individual student can indicate the need for intervention to support that student's welfare or academic progress. Low engagement across a student cohort can indicate factors adversely affecting student engagement which could be addressed through changes to University policy, process or practice.
- 3.1.4. Under guidance from the UK Department for Education, the University must not claim funding from the Student Loans Company for students who are not adhering to its attendance policy.
- 3.1.5. 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.
- 3.1.6. 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.

## 3.2. Student engagement requirement

3.2.1. Students are required under their contract with the University to engage with their studies. Students must engage at a level which:

- Meets any legal or regulatory requirement as to engagement; and
- Will enable them to make reasonable academic progress.

3.2.2. To fulfil their engagement requirement, students are expected in particular to:

- regularly attend timetabled teaching or learning sessions and scheduled supervision or progress review sessions;
- if undertaking a placement, attend their placement activities in line with the expectations or requirements of the placement provider and the relevant course requirements;
- 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;
- attend examinations and submit assessments by the deadline or follow the University's process to ask for exceptional circumstances consideration (6J Exceptional Circumstances: Policy and Procedure).

However in assessing the level of a student's engagement the University will also give appropriate consideration to other forms of academic engagement as listed in section 3.3.1.

3.2.3. 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:

- the engagement management processes made under section 4 may make specific provision for students to notify staff of their inability to attend one or more timetabled sessions or activities; and
- 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.

3.2.4. 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:

- necessary to comply with regulatory and legal requirements on the student or the University; or
- 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 they 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.

### 3.3. Monitoring and responding to student engagement

3.3.1. 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 assessments;
- attendance at or completion of 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).

3.3.2. The University will make arrangements for appropriate regular reporting on levels and patterns of student engagement at unit, programme, Department, Faculty and University level. This reporting will include analysis of factors potentially impacting on engagement and, where appropriate, recommendations for actions to support student engagement,

3.3.3. The University will use engagement data as described in section 3.3.1, together with other available relevant information relating to the student, to determine and take appropriate action in response to an individual student's engagement in line with the principles and requirements in this policy and in particular for the following purposes to the extent that they are relevant to the student:

- identifying and responding appropriately to apparent risks to the student's welfare
- achieving an increase in the student's engagement
- identifying and responding appropriately to the student's needs for academic, wellbeing or other support
- compliance with legal or regulatory requirements on the student and/or the University.

3.3.4. 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 3.3.3 and when setting those metrics, checkpoints and intervention steps the University will have regard to:

- the availability of relevant, robust data within section 3.3.1 for the cohort;
- the availability of resources required to take effective intervention steps for all

students who show the relevant level of low engagement;

- 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.

#### 4. PROCEDURE

4.1. The University will determine operational engagement management processes which will be followed in relation to defined cohorts or categories of students. These processes may specify:

4.1.1. engagement metrics (i.e. levels or indicators of engagement or non-engagement within categories of data in section 3.3.1) or engagement analysis based on data in section 3.3.1 which will be generated in relation to those students;

4.1.2. engagement checkpoints, i.e. circumstances in which 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;

4.1.3. 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 or may take at specified points in relation to individual students and how the University will make decisions about taking intervention steps.

4.2. When making decisions on intervention steps, in addition to considering relevant engagement data, metrics or analysis the University may also consider other relevant information about the student, such as information about the student's academic progress, personal circumstances and wider engagement with University staff and services.

4.3. 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
- Encouragement to increase engagement/attendance, including reminders of the impact of low engagement/attendance on academic achievement
- Information about legal, regulatory or PSRB 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 or other student services
- Request or requirement to provide information or attend a meeting with staff
- Referral for consideration under any relevant University policy, such as Support to Study (11J), Interruption (3U) or Fitness to Practise (11H),
- Where this is in accordance with section 4.4, steps referencing or implementing withdrawal from the course in response to continued low engagement, including:
  - 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.

4.4. Each engagement management process will follow a wellbeing approach, aiming to support

students' welfare and re-engage them with their studies. Accordingly:

4.4.1.the processes will:

- include appropriate arrangements for students to be referred or signposted to support services or sources of support on the basis of information available to the University about the student and their circumstances; and
- provide for students to be withdrawn on the grounds of low engagement only if they have been offered appropriate support to re-engage with their studies or otherwise avoid withdrawal, given information regarding steps they can take to avoid withdrawal and given reasonable notice of potential withdrawal.

4.4.2.communications to a student within an engagement management process will:

- offer the student support;
- provide contact details which the student can use to seek appropriate support, obtain information or provide relevant information for consideration in the process; and
- explain any actions students can or should take at that point and the consequences of taking or not taking those actions.

4.5. Engagement management processes will allocate responsibilities for actions to monitor and respond to individual students' engagement. These will usually include responsibilities for the Programme Team and, where section 4.6 applies, may also include responsibilities for staff in Student Services or Professional Services teams with expertise in the relevant specific engagement requirements.

4.6. Where external legal or regulatory requirements as to student engagement and/or the monitoring of student engagement apply to a cohort or category of students (such as, but not restricted to, students with Student Visas, apprentices and students on courses accredited by PSRBs):

4.6.1. Specific engagement management processes will be put in place as necessary to meet those requirements, and these may specify different engagement metrics, set more frequent engagement checkpoints and/or provide different guidance on intervention steps compared to processes which apply to students not within that cohort or category. The provisions in this section 4 must be applied in a manner that does not prevent or impede compliance with the relevant legal or regulatory requirements;

4.6.2. Where engagement metrics, engagement checkpoints or intervention actions within the engagement management process are set by, or determined with reference, to legal requirements or the requirements of PSRBs or government or regulatory bodies this will be referenced in the relevant operational processes and communicated to students as appropriate to enable them to manage their compliance.

## **5. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

5.1. 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.

5.2. 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.

## 6. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- 6.1. [3K Appendix – Engagement and Attendance Procedures for Apprenticeships](#)
- 6.2. [Department for Education guidance on attendance management in the context of SLC funding.](#)
- 6.3. [6J – Exceptional Circumstances: Policy and Procedure](#)
- 6.4. [11J – Support to Study: Policy and Procedure](#)
- 6.5. [3U – Interruption of Study: Procedure](#)