

Engagement Monitoring and Absence from Study: Frequently Asked Questions

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Student Engagement Monitoring Policy](#) and the [Student Sickness and Absence Procedure](#). In general, the guidance in this document refers to absences from classes, rather than absences from assessments. For queries relating to absences from assessments, please consult the information regarding [Personal Extenuating Circumstance \(PEC\)](#) and the [Frequently Asked Questions for Personal Extenuating Circumstances](#).

In what circumstances can I request an absence from my programme of study?

We understand that there are many reasons why you may need or wish to be absent from your studies, noting that it may not always be possible for approval to be given depending on the programme activities and reasons for absence.

These include:

- **Unexpected events**; examples include:
 - Periods of illness;
 - Medical appointments;
 - Bereavements;
 - Acute personal or emotional circumstances (such as relationship break-ups);
- **Life events**; examples include:
 - Family or caring commitments;
 - Weddings, funerals, or other key family events;
 - Difficult family situations (such as serious illnesses, family relationship break-ups);
- **Extra-curricular and other personal commitments**; examples include:
 - Faith or religious observances;
 - Sporting commitments (where you are a high performance athlete and/or represent the University as a First Team athlete);
 - Employability-related activities;
 - Music or stage performances.

What is not considered to be 'reasonable' grounds for an absence?

While each absence request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, a 'reasonable' ground for absence is generally considered to be one which you could not have anticipated or planned for. Examples of 'unreasonable' grounds for absence and may not be approved include:

- Holidays during term-time (for taught students), or which fall outside the rules for PGR leave (for research students);
- Parties or social events;
- The impact of too much alcohol or other substances;

- Transport problems (unless you are able to demonstrate that sufficient time has been allowed for your journey, and that the circumstances you experienced were out of your control);
- Repeated or routine requests for absence at the same time every week (unless this is to accommodate necessary healthcare appointments or for essential employment related activity as discussed in advance with your school);
- Noise disturbance in your accommodation;
- Lack of sleep.

Does my Academic Unit need to approve my absence?

Your Academic Unit will consider your absence request on a case-by-case basis and the expectation is that support for your absence will not be withheld unreasonably.

When you submit an absence request, your School can do one of the following:

- **Note and support your absence.** This means that your School doesn't feel that there is a particular educational risk to your progression at the moment, and that your absence is unlikely to cause a major problem for you in terms of your programme of study;
- **Note your absence with advice.** This means that your School recognises that there are concerns about your overall attendance record and/or ability to fulfil any professional responsibilities (such as professional accreditation or Fitness to Practise requirements). Your absence will be noted, along with a record that you have been advised about the potential consequences of the absence. If you choose to be absent having received the advice, this will be at your own educational risk.

Whether or not your absence is supported, it is your responsibility to ensure that you make up any lost learning time as a result of your absence. It is important to note that it may not always be possible for your School to assist with this, or to repeat certain compulsory sessions.

How do I notify my School that I will be absent?

If you know in advance that you need to be absent from your programme of study, you should fill in and submit an Absence Request form, available via the Student Portal (S3P).

Please note: if you are a Medical or Dental student, you should submit a Request of Absence form to your Academic Unit.

What if I don't know in advance that I will be absent?

Where possible, you are expected to give at least 24 hours' notice of your intended absence, however we understand that not all absences can be planned in advance. If you

are unaware in advance that you will need to be absent, you should contact your Academic Unit as soon as possible to explain your situation.

If you are absent from your programme of study without informing your Academic Unit, your absence will be recorded as 'unexplained' on your attendance record. A pattern of frequent unexplained absences will likely trigger a follow-up from your Academic Unit to ensure that you have appropriate support around you to engage with your programme of studies. For students who hold a Tier 4 or Student visa who have a pattern of frequent unexplained absences, the University is obliged to take additional steps. *(Please see the below guidance: [Are there any additional requirements if I hold a Tier 4 or Student Visa?](#))*

Are there any additional requirements if I hold a Tier 4 or Student Visa?

If you hold a Tier 4 or Student Visa and you are absent from your programme of study without notifying your School of the reasons (i.e. your absence is 'unexplained'), your visa may be terminated if you do not meet the minimum engagement threshold. If you are a Tier 4 or Student Visa-holder with a pattern of unexplained absences, you will be contacted by your School and the Student Progress Service prior to reporting to the Home Office.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand the minimum attendance expectations in line with your visa requirements and the consequences of poor attendance.

What happens if I need to be absent and I am due to submit an assessment or sit an examination?

If your period of absence will impact your ability to prepare for or sit examinations or submit assessments, you will need to request an adjustment to your assessments through the [Personal Extenuating Circumstances \(PEC\) process](#).

What happens if I need to be absent due to Sporting commitments as a 1st Team athlete?

A significant issue for 1st Team athletes students can be the result of attendance at away fixtures on Wednesday afternoons, which may necessitate you having to leave Newcastle early in the morning, thus missing scheduled morning classes.

Requests for absence for this purpose are considered generally 'reasonable' but will be subject to the discretion of your Academic Unit and the specific activities that have been scheduled. To assist with this:

- If you are a 1st Team athlete within performance sports clubs you should let your Degree Programme Director or Senior Tutor know that you may need to request support for absence for some away fixtures, at the start of the year.
- Sports Services will send a list of performance clubs and their respective 1st Team playing members and fixtures electronically to all School Managers. Academic Unit work closely with Sports Services to check lists are up to date.

- For each requested absence, you should submit an online [Student Notice of Absence Form](#) in the normal way, indicating clearly the reason for your absence and the sport represented. Your request should be submitted at least 5 days prior to the date of the specific away fixture.
- The designated person in your Academic Unit will consider the request and advise you of their decision in the normal manner.
- Whilst support should not be withheld unreasonably, academic unit decisions will take account of the cumulative impact of several periods of absence (which may affect the same module / session each time); and the implications for the attendance record of international students who are subject to immigration / visa compliance requirements.
- The approach may vary depending on the programme of study. It should be noted that programme commitments would normally take priority, and support for absence may not always be possible.

The decision of the Academic Unit will be final.

Any Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) requests due to absences relating to sport participation must be endorsed by the Performance Sport Manager (Fraser Kennedy) in Sports Services and his support letter be included with your PEC application.

What happens if I have several unauthorised absences?

If you attend the timetabled sessions on your programme regularly, a small number of unauthorised absences should not result in any follow up action being taken by your academic unit.

Your academic unit will monitor your engagement at least 3 times each semester against an appropriate threshold for your programme of study, typically attendance at a minimum of 50% of scheduled sessions. Any authorised absences will be not be counted.

If your engagement drops below the threshold for your programme, you will receive an e-mail from your academic unit and these will be logged on your student record. There are 3 levels of concern e-mails –

Initial concerns – you will receive this e-mail the first time you drop below the engagement threshold for your programme. This e-mail will remind you about the importance of attending regularly and how to report an absence to your academic unit. It will also signpost you to additional support you may find useful e.g., Student Health and Wellbeing support.

Serious concerns – you will receive this e-mail if your engagement does not improve after receiving the initial concerns e-mail or your engagement falls well below the engagement threshold for your programme. You will be expected to improve your engagement immediately and let your academic unit know if you are encountering any difficulties that are impacting your engagement. You may also be asked to attend a meeting with your tutor or other representative from your academic unit to discuss your engagement.

Final concerns – you will receive this e-mail if your engagement does not improve after receiving previous concern e-mails or for consistently poor engagement on

your programme. You will be expected to discuss your engagement with your academic unit and if your engagement does not improve your academic unit will consider taking further action which could include referral to unsatisfactory progress procedures or withdrawal from your programme. If you are an International student studying on a student visa this may impact your UK immigration status and you may be required to leave the UK.