University Student Engagement
Monitoring Policy 2021/22

Introduction and context

An appropriate level of engagement of all students with their programme of study is important and may have a direct impact on the success with their studies. Sufficient attendance at relevant classes and interaction with on-line teaching material is a strong indicator of engagement. Monitored engagement is also essential for international students who have a Student visa, to ensure compliance with the requirements of the visa both from the International student and the University as their sponsor. It is therefore important for the University to undertake effective and efficient monitoring of student engagement and be able to produce and analyse this data in a timely manner.

It is an important principle of this Policy that Home and International students should not be treated differently in terms of monitoring student engagement with teaching activities, although noting follow-up may be different where reporting of international Student visa holders to the Home Office is required because of the UKVI sponsor requirements where lack of engagement has been identified.

Monitoring of student engagement is also important for pedagogic and pastoral reasons, enabling the timely identification of students who may be at risk in terms of progression or retention. Follow-up actions can then be taken to support students and encourage engagement with their studies.

The Student Engagement Monitoring Policy for 2021/22 Academic Year

a) All academic programmes of study must have monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that students are engaging satisfactorily with the programme.

b) The aims of the University Student Engagement Monitoring Policy are to:

- Enable the timely identification of students whose attendance record or patterns suggest that they may be at risk of failing to progress, or of breaching their visa compliance requirements, so that follow-up measures can be put in place to support students and encourage engagement with their programme.

- Ensure that Home and International students are treated fairly and consistently

- Enable the University to monitor the engagement of international students holding a Student visa, in order to comply with the Home Office (UKVI) requirements and maintain the University's status as a sponsor of international student visa holders.

- Enable reporting of 'presumed withdrawn' students to their sponsor as required by individual sponsorship agreements.

For Taught students (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes)

The University regulations state that except for absence with good cause, students are expected to attend all elements of their programme of study. Engagement for students on Taught Programmes is monitored at a minimum* of one event / contact point per week on average throughout each semester

Student attendance is recorded at the majority of monitored taught Present in Person (PiP) sessions, where sessions or classes to be monitored are normally agreed in advance for each programme of study. This is typically recorded by fixed smart-card scanners on entry to lecture theatres, classrooms or laboratories. Students are responsible for ensuring that at the Present in Person (PiP) scheduled events their attendance is recorded, and should scan their smartcard each time they enter a classroom which has a scanner. The attendance data is available in the

SAP Action Reports enabling colleagues to identify where students have attended or been absent.

Where circumstances arise that a student is prevented from attending scheduled classes, and has permission to study remotely, the following monitoring of engagement with a their programme of studies can still be made, by enquiry with the following systems;

a. Canvas reports showing participation with on-line teaching provision and activities.

b. The NESS Marks Recording system showing where examinations have been attended or assignments submitted.

The Attendance data for students on Taught Programmes is recorded and reported, as follows:

i. The Attendance Data for the agreed monitored PiP events* for the programme of study concerned is retained in the Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS) for a total of two years (the year of monitoring plus one year).

ii. Student Attendance data recorded in SAMS is used primarily for the purposes of Engagement monitoring, in order to comply with this policy and to:

- Enable the University to monitor the engagement of international Student visa holders, in accordance with the Home Office (UKVI) requirements.

- Enable the timely identification of students whose attendance record or patterns suggest that they may be at risk of failing to progress.

For all International and Home students, academic units may determine an engagement threshold appropriate to their discipline (typically at least or above 50% for both student st).

i. Where the engagement of an international student visa holder gives cause for concern (below that agreed by the Academic Unit), a sequence of follow-up contacts with the student should be made in order to check whether any support or further advice are required. The University is obliged to report to the Home Office (UKVI) any Student visa holder who fails, without good cause, to engage with their programme, and this is likely to result in the termination of the student's visa.

ii. Where the engagement of a Home student falls below the agreed attendance threshold for a particular programme of study, (below that agreed by the Academic Unit) this will trigger a sequence of follow-up contacts with the student to check whether any support or further advice are required.

Noting:

* The use of smartcard scanners to record attendance facilitates frequent recording of attendance without the administrative burden of signed class lists. More frequent monitoring of attendance leads to a more accurate picture of the student's engagement and may reduce the need for follow-up.

* In addition, data from all recorded 'smartcard swipes' is retained for up to one year and can be interrogated, if necessary, to demonstrate attendance of an individual above and beyond the agreed monitored events. This may be important (eg to protect a student's Tier 4 study visa) if it is necessary to demonstrate sufficient engagement with a programme where the attendance data for monitored events gives cause for concern. It may also be necessary to modify the agreed monitored events retrospectively (after the start of the semester) in which case the recorded scans will demonstrate attendance.

* In certain circumstances it may be necessary to switch the method of monitoring engagement at teaching events retrospectively (after the start of the semester), for example where social distancing is required and studied are transferred on-line.

For Postgraduate Research Students (PGR)

Following Registration and collection of a smartcard, engagement is monitored through records of confirmed meetings between Doctoral and MPhil students and their Supervisory Team up to

submission of the thesis. These meetings should be recorded in ePortfolio throughout the 12 month cycle. In addition, the attendance of Tier 4 visa holders will be monitored up to completion of their studies while they are subject to UK visa requirements. This will include any periods of pending submission (final writing up), extended submission or under examination if the student continues to reside with the UK.

As a minimum, full-time students should have regular contact with one member of their supervisory team at least ten times a year, approximately monthly, with no more than an eight-week gap between meetings,

Part-time students should discuss and agree the number of formal interactions with their supervisory team, ensuring there is no more than a 10-week gap between meetings.

PGR Occasional Students with a Tier 4 Visa are expected to report to their Graduate School on a monthly basis to demonstrate engagement.

This attendance will be monitored by Graduate Schools, who will undertake a confirmed meeting record check every six weeks for all students and every three weeks for Tier 4 visa holders. Graduate Schools will circulate information to Schools/Institutes and Faculties following these checks.

If a student holding a Tier 4 visa does not have a confirmed meeting record within 8 weeks, Graduate Schools will send a notification email to the student requesting that they take action to ensure they meet the engagement requirements.

 In addition to the above, attendance at key stages of the programme – i.e. Induction, Project Approval, Annual Progress Review or other key Milestones will be recorded on the student record.

Where research students expect to be absent from the University, they must obtain approval either by:
- Completing the "Student Notice of Absence Form" for holiday or sickness leave
- Completing an Outside Study request if they are planning to undertake Primary Research away from their approved campus of study (e.g. fieldwork,data collection, study visit to library/archive/industrial unit) OR are planning to write-up their thesis or complete corrections from home.
- Requesting an Interruption of Studies through ePortfolio.

Regulations and Data Protection

This policy and the associated expectations, guidelines and procedures fall within the over-arching provisions of the University's Regulations and relevant student procedures (e.g. those relating to appeals, complaints and discipline).

The use of students' personal data is subject to the provisions of the Student Privacy Notice. Personal attendance data recorded in SAMS should not be used or shared for purposes beyond these provisions unless there is an identified necessity.

Subject to the specific approval of the relevant Dean, in individual disciplines where this is deemed to be necessary (e.g. for the purposes of professional references where information about attendance is explicitly requested), attendance data may be used to inform general statements about attendance provided this information is shared in advance with the student / graduate concerned. Further guidance is available separately.

This Policy was last reviewed: June 2021.
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