

## **Student engagement policy**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The School of Advanced Study, University of London aims to provide a supportive learning environment which enables all students to achieve their full potential. The policy is designed to take account of students' individual circumstances.

### **2. Support for Student Engagement**

2.1 The School supports student engagement in a number of ways:

- a) through pre-entry and induction information, activities and processes that are designed to ensure that students are familiar with the requirements of their course and know how to access facilities, services and support;
- b) through high quality teaching and learning experiences;
- c) through high quality course related learning resources and support materials within the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle);
- d) through a range of academic and welfare support services.

### **3. Purpose and scope**

3.1 The School has a duty to monitor engagement and to support students to complete their programme of study. The purpose of this policy and its associated procedure is to provide clarity for students on the expectations relating to 'engagement' and what action may be taken where levels of engagement become unsatisfactorily low and to identify any issues and difficulties at a sufficiently early stage to be able to work with students to facilitate their full engagement with their studies.

3.2 Regulations pertaining to this policy are outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework paras 2.6-2.7.

3.3 The policy applies to the following groups of students:

- All students registered on a taught or postgraduate research programme that is awarded and wholly delivered by the School of Advanced Study.
- Students registered at the School of Advanced Study for University of London awards but where delivery of the programme is outside the UK.

3.4 Some programmes of study at the School may be subject to attendance requirements specified by professional bodies and other external organisations. Where

these are more rigorous than those set by the University, the requirements of the professional body will prevail.

3.5 International students who are covered by student visas (formerly Tier 4) requirements need to be aware that they have additional obligations.

3.6 Except in the above circumstances there will be no deviation from this policy allowed.

#### **4. Key principles**

4.1 For the purposes of this policy, attendance or engagement will be measured by point of contact, which is defined as follows:

- For taught students, attendance at a timetabled lecture, tutorial, workshop or seminar within a calendar week. Online engagement – engagement at module level with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) within a calendar week. A test, examination or assessment; a research training session; an appointment with a welfare advisor or a formal appointment with professional services or academic staff; registration or enrolment.
- For research students, regular supervisory meetings, a research training session, an appointment with a welfare advisor or a formal appointment with professional services or academic staff.
- Submission of assessed or unassessed coursework, an interim dissertation, draft thesis chapters or a report
- assessed or unassessed coursework; or
- an interim dissertation, coursework, draft chapters as part of theses or a report; without prior notice to registry.

4.2 The module leaders for taught programmes and PhD supervisors will keep records of attendance.

4.3 Records of attendance are auditable documents for both the Office for Students for student number verification and the Home Office in relation to students studying on student visas.

#### **5. Authorised Absence**

5.1 The University recognises that, occasionally, students may be unable to meet the minimum attendance or engagement requirements due to unforeseen circumstances. Where possible, a request for authorised absence should be submitted in advance.

5.2 If a student is unable to attend, they must contact their module leader or their supervisors by email if they wish to request to miss a contact due, for example, to illness. This request must be authorised and will be kept on file. If this is not done, the absence will count as a missed point of contact.

5.3 Authorisation for unplanned absences may be submitted up to 5 working days after the last day of absence. Requests for authorised absence submitted after 5 working days may not be considered.

5.4 For absences of **more than 3 consecutive working days**, students must complete an authorised absence form. This form must be authorised by their Programme Director or supervisor, and lodged with the Registry.

5.5 Authorised absence forms must be supported by appropriate evidence. This may include, but is not limited to, medical evidence, invitations to family events, confirmation of a job interview or other official documentation.

5.6 The School will consider requests for authorised absence sensitively and will try to accommodate all reasonable requests. However, where an absence may have a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress, or where absence levels are already of concern, such requests may not be granted.

## **6. Measuring attendance and engagement**

6.1 Students are expected to attend regularly the scheduled classes and seminars on their programmes and to be available for consultation with tutors with reasonable notice. A student who is unable to attend a class, submit coursework or other arranged meeting should inform the module leader or supervisors directly. If this is not done, this will count as a missed point of contact.

6.2 Prolonged absence caused by sickness must be reported to the Programme Director or Director of Studies, and medical evidence must be provided.

### **Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students**

6.3 Attendance will usually be monitored in **at least one timetabled session per module per week**. These could be workshops, seminars, tutorials etc.

6.4 An entire week with no attendance at any module will be considered a missed contact.

6.5 Where a taught student is studying overseas as part of a distance learning programme, Erasmus exchange or on study abroad, responsibility for recording attendance will lie with the partner institution, who must inform the Registry of three consecutive days missed contact within 5 working days and must supply attendance records on request within 5 working days.

6.6 Where a taught student is undertaking a work placement, regular contact with the placement tutor will serve as evidence of ongoing attendance and engagement. Such contact is usually expected to take place on a monthly basis. An entire calendar month without a point of contact will be considered a missed contact.

### **Postgraduate Research (PGR) students**

6.7 The attendance of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students is monitored through regular supervisory meetings – whether on campus, by telephone or online. Each supervisory meeting is considered to be a point of contact. Each meeting should be recorded by completion of the Supervisory Meeting Record form or other form of record.

6.8 Students are expected to engage with their supervisor on a monthly basis. An entire calendar month without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.

6.9 PGR students are expected to demonstrate attendance at all points up to submission of their thesis for examination.

### **Distance learning students**

6.10 Distance learning students' engagement is also measured by the means outlined in section 4.1 above. Engagement will be determined and monitored by the programme team. The University retains the right to withdraw a student for lack of engagement, following prior warning emails.

### **Students on Student visas**

6.11 If a student on a student visa accumulates 10 instances of missed contact by lack of engagement or poor attendance (contacts defined as in section 4.1), the school is required to inform the Home Office, and this may lead to withdrawal of sponsorship.

## **7. Attendance monitoring escalation procedure**

7.1 Students and supervisors are expected to retain a record of their attendance and engagement using the appropriate mechanisms. This includes but is not limited to registers or supervisory meeting forms.

7.2 Contacts must be made and recorded regardless of the physical location of the student.

7.3 The University will make every effort to avoid having to initiate the formal attendance escalation procedure. However, if informal attempts to contact and re-engage a student are unsuccessful, the following procedure will apply:

### **All students**

7.4 After three missed contacts, an email will be sent warning the student about attendance and requesting that they contact their Tutor/Supervisor/Registry to discuss any issues.

7.5 After six missed contacts the student will be contacted again to ascertain the reason for absence and to inform them that the Programme Director/ Supervisor and Head of Registry services will be notified.

7.6 After eight missed contacts, the student will be invited to a meeting with the Programme Director or Supervisor and/or Head of Registry Services to discuss their attendance and a warning will be issued that the student is in danger of being withdrawn from the programme.

7.7 If the student is studying on a student visa, then the student is warned that two further missed contacts would necessitate a report to the Home Office and the visa being revoked.

7.8 The student is given 10 days to respond to this invitation.

7.9 During this 10-day window, if a student supplies new evidence to support their absence, the school may use discretion to consider this. Where appropriate, this may halt withdrawal proceedings, if it is deemed that the evidence is sufficiently strong to retrospectively grant authorised absence, and the student is able to catch up with their studies.

7.10 If a student fails to submit a request for interruption within 10 working days, they will be written to again stating that they will be withdrawn if they do not engage with the process. The student is given a further 10 working days to respond after which the student will be informed in writing that formal withdrawal will take place. This withdrawal should happen no later than the 12th working day after the written notification.

7.11 Repeated patterns of intermittent unauthorized absence may also be considered sufficient grounds to initiate a withdrawal.

## **8. Appeals against a withdrawal**

### **Grounds for Appeal**

8.1 Students have the right to appeal against a withdrawal by default on the following grounds:

- a) That there are extenuating circumstances relating to ill health or personal difficulties which the student was unable to raise prior to or during the escalation procedure detailed in Section 7, and, or,

- b) That the information held by the School relating to the student's attendance and/or engagement is incomplete or inaccurate, and the student was not in a position to correct this information at an earlier stage.

8.2 Students wishing to appeal must show a compelling reason why this information could not be made available before the decision to withdraw was reached, and provide supporting documentary evidence. Where the student could have made the information available prior to the decision being made, such evidence cannot normally be accepted as grounds for appeal.

### **How to Appeal**

8.3 Appeals must be received no later than **10 working days** after the date of email notification of the withdrawal. An acknowledgement email will be issued on receipt of the appeal.

8.4 Appeals received after the 10 working day deadline will be deemed out of time and will not normally be considered. The student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter including details of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator Scheme (see Section 9).

8.5 In exceptional cases only, a late appeal may be considered provided that the submission is accompanied by detailed and supported reasons for the late submission.

8.6 The appeal should be submitted in writing using the Student Attendance Monitoring Policy Appeal Form. Procedures for submitting the form are outlined in the accompanying Guidance for Students.

8.7 Original evidence must be provided in support of the appeal and listed on the Appeal Form. If evidence cannot be provided with the appeal form, it must be submitted no later than 5 working days after submission of the appeal form.

### **Consideration of the Appeal**

8.9 The appeal will be forwarded in its entirety to the relevant Head of Registry Services, where it will initially be established that School records are accurate in relation to the issues raised in the appeal.

8.10 The Head of Registry Services will liaise with the Programme director to provide a response to the student within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal.

8.11 The School is empowered to make one of the following decisions:

- a) To dismiss the appeal if it is determined that no substantive case has been established. The appeal procedure within the University will be at an end, in which case the student will be given the reasons for the decision in writing. This will contain a Completion of Procedures statement including details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 9).

- b) To uphold the appeal and request Registry to reinstate the student's registration with or without a recommendation that the student be granted a retrospective period of authorised absence. The School may specify conditions of reinstatement and the consequences of the student failing to adhere to these conditions. Should subsequent failure to adhere to these conditions result in the student's withdrawal, the student has a further right of appeal on the grounds detailed in 8.1 above.
- c) To rescind the withdrawal decision and offer a period of interruption in light of relevant issues which may be raised in the appeal submission. If the offer of interruption is rejected by the student, the original withdrawal decision stands. The student will be given a Completion of Procedures letter containing details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 9). If the issues raised within the appeal submission are considered to potentially affect the student's ability to study on return to the University, the case may be referred to the Fitness to Study procedure.
- d) To refer the appeal to a meeting of the Academic Appeals Committee, in which case the procedure outlined in Sections 7 and 8 of the Academic Appeals Procedure will apply.

## **9. External Adjudication**

9.1 Students who have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they remain dissatisfied with a final decision of the University, providing that their complaint is eligible under its Rules, which are available on the OIA website at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>.

9.2 Students will need to send to the OIA a Scheme Application Form within **twelve months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

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