ATTENDANCE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY:

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines St. Mary's University approach to monitoring student attendance and supporting student engagement.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:
- Define the University's obligations in terms of student engagement and attendance
- Support students' mental health and wellbeing
- Enhance academic attainment, standards and progression
- Enhance student experience

Satisfy external reporting/accreditation requirements and legal obligations in relation to attendance, where relevant.

1.2 Scope

This policy :

- Applies to all students at levels L3 - L8, and some professional doctorate programmes.
- Does not apply to students studying online only master's programmes and postgraduate research students.
- Applies to all students studying with collaborative partners
- Is aligned to the University's Academic Regulation B3 which states that any student failing to engage appropriately with their studies may be withdrawn from their studies by the University at any stage in their programme of study.

NB: Apprenticeships and externally accredited programmes may have specific additional attendance requirements because of PSRB, training provider and other statutory or contractual requirements. In addition, students studying on a sponsored Student Visa will also be subject to UK Visa and Immigration regulation and policies as part of the university's UKVI sponsorship responsibilities. See section 2.3

2. POLICY/PROCEDURE

2.1 Overview

The University places student success at the core of its mission, dedicated to empowering all students to flourish while they are with us and beyond. Because we recognise that active participation in teaching and learning activities is pivotal for student retention, advancement, and academic excellence, we emphasise the importance of regular engagement and attendance. Moreover, we acknowledge that a lack of involvement may signify underlying challenges students may be experiencing that necessitate additional support or action.

Through vigilant monitoring of attendance and engagement levels, the University stands ready to provide additional support and guidance to those students who may need it. Therefore, the University is committed to working in partnership with students, to increase their active involvement in their academic studies. This collaboration is supported by responsible data usage, offering comprehensive insights into individual student engagement.

The University is committed to facilitating meaningful dialogues and interventions as this is paramount to addressing students' personal development needs and support requirements effectively, thereby optimising their chances of success. Furthermore, we acknowledge the multifaceted nature of factors influencing student engagement and will endeavour to outline clear expectations regarding academic engagement. To this end, this policy clarifies both student responsibilities in engaging with their academic studies and the University's commitment to monitoring and facilitating that engagement.

2.2 Definitions

Within the scope of this policy, **engagement** encompasses active involvement in guided independent or group study activities, participation in assessments and feedback processes, and any activities fostering learning and personal growth, whether conducted individually or collaboratively with peers. Such activities include but are not limited to, the following:

- Attending scheduled learning sessions.
- Meeting published deadlines for submitting assessments.
- Engaging with online learning resources, such as lecture recordings and study materials.
- Engaging with available learning resources which support academic studies, including the Library, the St Mary's Learning Environment (Moodle) and the student success team.
- Attending tutorials / meetings with Academic Tutors.

Attendance constitutes a component of student engagement. In the context of this policy, attendance is defined as being present at scheduled teaching sessions and other learning engagements mandated by a module or program. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Physically attending face-to-face teaching sessions and other learning activities stipulated by the module or programmes, such as lectures, seminars, laboratory sessions, practical's, tutorials, field excursions, and examinations.
- Virtually participating in synchronous or other learning activities as required by the module or programme, such as online seminars or tutorials.

Absence: a student is considered absent if:
- they do not attend a teaching session that is on their personalised timetable
- they do not attend an examination
- they do not attend any part of a placement
- they do not attend planned activity relating to the learning experiences of the module, for example fieldtrips and rehearsals.

Authorised Absence / Study Break: a short-term interruption of study from the programme, agreed with the University authorities / Programme and that is not defined as a Leave of Absence

Ghost Student: A student is considered to be a ghost student if the student fails to enrol onto the course of study and or the student's attendance and engagement with the course of study remains at 0% by week 6 of the teaching semester without a reasonable explanation

For the purposes of this policy, the terms **"student" or "students"** encompass all individuals currently enrolled in undergraduate or taught postgraduate programmes (excluding online-only master's programmes) who are not on leave of absence or otherwise exempted from attending learning and teaching sessions, as well as from meeting deadlines for assessments and submissions of in-programme assessments. It should therefore be used in conjunction with our extenuating circumstances and leave of absence policies.

2.3 Why do we Monitor Student Attendance?

The University holds the responsibility to oversee attendance at teaching and learning activities, for the whole student body, and to respond to instances of non-attendance. This obligation arises from the necessity to report attendance to **UK student loan agencies** and both UK and international external sponsors. This obligation is captured by the Joint Higher Education Provider and Student Loan Company Service Level Agreement and begins with the process of Registration. The University obligation in this regard extends to collaborative partners and will be articulated within the relevant contract, operations manual and overseen by the relevant Joint Management Board.

Certain programmes, notably those accredited by professional or statutory regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and apprenticeships, may impose a specific attendance criteria, essential for meeting the standards of the respective awards. In cases where these criteria exceed those established by the university, the requirements of the PSRB and/or apprenticeship provider take precedence.

UKVI attendance and engagement requirements

The University has a specific duty to ensure that students sponsored on the UKVI student route are in attendance as this is a continuous condition of their visa; this includes engagement during any placement, as a condition of the University's UKVI license. Acting

as the immigration sponsor, the University is obligated to meticulously monitor these students' attendance at scheduled teaching sessions and to take appropriate measures, including the termination of studies, if attendance fails to meet UKVI stipulations. Should UKVI requirements surpass those outlined by the University, the standards set by UKVI shall govern. Further detail is available at our dedicated website.

Students on a student visa will experience ramifications on their visa status if their studies at the University are terminated, suspended, or interrupted (for the duration of the interruption). By law, the University must promptly notify UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) of any alterations to a student's status within a 10-day timeframe. The University delineates its reporting obligations to UKVI in Regulation A1.

How do we monitor attendance?

We will use data to monitor attendance. This data will be collected through use of the student app which includes geo-location capability. Collection and use of the data will be in accordance with data protection regulations and clearly communicated to students throughout their studies.

What happens with the data?

Academic Schools within Faculties hold responsibility for monitoring student attendance. Using data from the app, they will calculate an overall attendance and engagement rate, for each student across all scheduled learning sessions. If a student's attendance and or engagement rate falls below 50% or if they are absent from teaching sessions for five consecutive (working) days **without notifying their personal tutor or programme lead**, they will be contacted by the Personal Tutor to understand the cause of the absence, ascertain their well-being, direct them to available support resources, and advise their return to scheduled teaching events.

For students enrolled in programs accredited by PSRBs, or undertaking apprenticeships, with specific attendance requirements, contact may commence prior to this stage and/or at a different attendance threshold, aligned with the requirements of the programme. Students on sponsored student visas will be subject to UKVI requirements and the process will begin when attendance falls below 50%.

Schools will continue to monitor the attendance of these students over a six-week period and provide assistance to return until their attendance meets the required threshold. **This support may include invitations to meet with academic and/or professional service staff to discuss reasons for absence and lack of engagement to identify necessary support.** Should a student's attendance and engagement persistently fall below the required levels despite the support offered by the school and professional service staff, the university may opt to issue formal warnings regarding non-attendance and engagement. In exceptional circumstances, following supportive and appropriate intervention and subsequent issuance of two formal non-attendance and engagement warnings, the University may decide to terminate a student's studies. More details on this process can be found in the student withdrawal policy on the university website. All students have the right to appeal a notice of withdrawal. The appeals process can be found on the university website

For students enrolled in programs accredited by PSRBs, undertaking apprenticeships or subject to UKVI regulations, this determination may occur at an earlier stage in accordance with those requirements.

Comprehensive information on the application of this policy, including guidance on support resources and escalation procedures, is provided in the accompanying Student attendance and engagement procedures.

2.4 Supporting student engagement

Why do we monitor student engagement?

The University is dedicated to facilitating student engagement. Staff with roles specifically designed to support and promote engagement may use data we hold about engagement to understand patterns of student engagement. These roles might include Personal Tutors, Senior Personal Tutors, Subject Leads for Student Experience, Student Success, staff, the Widening Participation & Student Engagement Team and Student Services staff. They will analyse individual student engagement data to tailor meetings to student needs (e.g., academic mentoring sessions, study support sessions), enhance student experience and offer additional support as indicated.

How do we monitor student engagement?

The Student Engagement Platform (STEP) offers a comprehensive overview of engagement levels across various activities at both individual and cohort levels. It encompasses data such as:

- Attendance at scheduled teaching sessions
- Submission of assessments
- Assessment results
- Interaction with university systems, including the Moodle Learning Environment and MY SMU app

The platform data is an integration of the above date along with other student information, including interactions with personal tutors, teaching staff, and staff from professional services such as Registry and Student Services.

The utilisation of student engagement data adheres to Data Protection regulations, including the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Monitoring Student Attendance

The Faculties / Schools are responsible for monitoring student attendance and engagement in accordance with this policy and the accompanying procedure for Attendance and Student Engagement. The personal tutors and student service staff are responsible for supporting students and implementing appropriate interventions where necessary if a student's

attendance and engagement falls below the desired level. Where a student's attendance and engagement persistently fail to meet the expectations of the university attendance and engagement policy the Course Leads should report the lack of attendance and engagement to the Academic Registrar to initiate the formal warning process. If a student continues to fail to engage in the support offered by the Faculty / School and Student services to re-engage in their studies, then the Academic Registrar in agreement with the Head of School will initiate the withdrawal from the university process.

3.2 Supporting Student Engagement

The table provided in Annex A provides information on the staff roles that have access to the Student Engagement Platform (STEP). It outlines the type and level of data they have access to, the purpose of that access and the responsibilities of the staff using the platform.

3.3 Expectations of Students

The University views students as active collaborators in their educational journey, encouraging them to embrace the diverse academic, social, and personal growth opportunities available.

As stipulated in Regulation B3, students are obliged to attend all scheduled learning sessions related to their course or chosen modules, irrespective of delivery mode (i.e., in-person or online), and to utilise the provided learning and support resources.

It is the students' responsibility to accurately record their attendance at teaching sessions, using the My SMU app. Any planned or unforeseen absences must be reported through the My SMU app.

The University upholds academic integrity and expects students to maintain honesty in their attendance records; any attempt to falsify records will be addressed through the Student Discipline Procedure.

Submission of all required assessments is mandatory. In instances of exceptional circumstances, such as personal difficulties or health issues impacting assessment participation, students should follow the Extenuating Circumstances Process.

A student may wish to consider interrupting their studies if there are valid reasons that may impact their ability to engage and/or result in their needing additional time to complete their degree programme. Students should discuss their circumstances with their Personal Tutor, Course Lead, or another relevant member of staff. Staff will be able to advise the student on academic implications, such as the availability of the course and particular modules when they return and their ability to progress to the next level of study with their peers. Further information can be found in the Leave of Absence Policy.

Students enrolled in programmes regulated by Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) that involve practical education with patients, pupils, clients, or service users must adhere to specific conduct and behaviour expectations outlined by the accrediting PSRB. The University is obligated to monitor students' adherence to PSRB requirements, taking action if breaches occur. These procedures, known as Fitness to Practice, also apply to applicants for accredited programs.

To enhance student engagement, students will also have access to the Student Engagement Platform (STEP). This tool offers a comprehensive overview of their own individual engagement, enabling students to assess their current focus areas and explore opportunities for deeper engagement with their program of study.

The University remains committed to supporting student engagement. University staff members engage with students through various channels to monitor academic progress. Timely response to university communications, attendance at scheduled meetings with Personal Tutors, and participation in support processes, if recommended or necessary, are crucial for students to benefit from the University's support initiatives.

3.4 Policy Oversight & Governance

Our statutory responsibility to report attendance data is laid out by both the Student Loan Company and for International Students by the Home Office. The Director of Student Operations has responsibility for this on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer.

For discretionary engagement reporting aimed at promoting student experience, progression and attainment this is the responsibility of the Exec Dean of Student Experience on behalf of the Provost.

Regular University level reporting on retention is through the LTSO (or SPSE) committee and the Academic Partnership Committee (APC) for collaborative provision. There will be an annual review of this data and the operation of the policy delivered by the Exec Dean of Student Experience.

The strategic oversight of this policy will be provided by the Academic Registrar. The LTSO / SPSE committee will review and monitor the policy on behalf of the University Academic Board. An annual report of the operation of the policy and summary data on student attendance, and engagement and resulting withdrawal of studies will be provided to the LTSO committee at the end of the academic year, including analysis of the impact of the policy in supporting student success and trends in university performance.

4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy is aligned to Section B.3 of the Academic Regulations, the Student Visa: Engagement and Monitoring Policy, and Student Withdrawal Policy.

Use of attendance and engagement data complies with Data Protection legislation (including the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and any supplemental legislation) and is handled in accordance with the University Data Protection Policy. The Data Protection Officer ("DPO") is responsible for overseeing this policy and developing related policies and privacy guidelines. That post is held by the University Secretary. The DPO can be contacted on:- Email: gdpr@stmarys.ac.uk

Data on student engagement and attendance is managed in accordance with the Student Privacy Notice, which sets out the University's commitment to using student data in ways that are ethical, beneficial, legal and proportionate.

Guidance for staff and students using the Student Engagement Platform (STEP) can be found on the Personal Tutor Hub (SMILE).

Detailed information on the process for monitoring student attendance can be found in the Attendance and Student Engagement Procedure document.

Operational guidance for staff undertaking attendance monitoring can be found in the My SMU app pages on the staff intranet.

Information for students on managing attendance via the My SMU app can be found on the student intranet pages.

Further information on the University's Person tutoring system and the expectations for both Personal Tutors and Personal Tutees can be found in the Personal Tutoring Policy and Procedures document.

The following policies & procedures are also related to this procedure:

Retention Strategy
Leave of Absence Policy
Extenuating Circumstance Policy
Fitness to Study Policy
Fitness to Practice Policy
Academic Appeals Procedure

5. REVIEW, APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION

- This policy will be reviewed by the LTSO / SPSE committees before final approval
- This policy will require final approval by the Academic Board
- This policy will be published on the St Mary's University Website

6. ANNEXES

6.1 Annex A – Roles and Responsibility

Role	Engagement Data Access	Purpose	Responsibilities
Personal Tutor	Personal Tutees	Use information on their students' attendance and engagement profiles to help inform and guide personal tutor meetings, enabling focused discussions and agreement of goals and objectives Review information to support the student's academic progress and development Record summary of personal tutor sessions and any interventions on the Student Engagement Platform (STEP)	Monitor student attendance and engagement information prior to and during personal tutor meetings. Record brief notes and outcomes from personal tutor meetings including goals / targets etc. To be agreed and shared with student and visible to Senior personal tutors / CL / Student success and engagement team / Student Services
Senior personal tutor (SLSE)	Students within the area they are responsible for	For their own personal tutees, as a personal tutor – as above. Access to data to have oversight of the students' engagement in the school / subject area and ensure the personal tutoring process is operating effectively.	Support personal tutors and student success and engagement teams in providing support to students as specific cases arise. Help provide training and practical support for personal tutors on using the Student Engagement Platform (STEP) with their tutees. Use reports to identify patterns of engagement and where actions may be required, to improve levels of engagement or the operation of the personal tutoring system
Course Lead	All students within the programme	Use information on their students' engagement profiles to help support personal tutors and student success and engagement teams Use information on students' engagement to help inform and improve programme management and development.	Support Personal Tutors and Student success and engagement teams in providing support to students. Use reports to monitor engagement across the programme, identify any patterns of engagement which may inform module or programme level action Use reports to evaluate the impact of any actions taken.

Subject Lead / Subject Leads for Student Experience	All students within the subject area	Use information on their students' engagement profiles to help support Course Leads and student success and engagement teams Use information on students' engagement to help inform and improve programme management and development.	Course Leads and Student success and engagement teams in providing support to students. Use reports to monitor engagement across the programme, identify any patterns of engagement which may inform module or programme level action Use reports to evaluate the impact of any actions taken.
Head of Schools	All students within the School	Use School data to produce annual reports and development plans to address emerging patterns of engagement and attendance. Ensure school engagement and attendance addresses Retention Strategy objectives, B3 metrics and APP objectives and milestones	Ensure staff within the school engage with attendance monitoring policy and procedure Approve any students referred for withdrawal due to non-engagement by the course lead and notify the registry department of the student withdrawal request.
Faculty Operating Officers	All students within the Faculty	Use information on students' engagement profiles within the faculty to help support Course Leads / personal tutors and student service teams with administration functions to support student attendance monitoring and engagement	
Dean of Faculty	All students within the Faculty	Use Faculty data to produce annual reports and development plans to address emerging patterns of engagement and attendance. Ensure Faculty engagement and attendance addresses Retention Strategy objectives, B3 metrics and APP objectives and milestones	Ensure staff within the school engage with attendance monitoring policy and procedure
Student Success / WP Student Engagement Teams	ALL Students	To use information on students' engagement to help inform and guide meetings and to facilitate early response to referrals from Personal Tutors. Interrogate an individual student's data on a need's basis, to be able to respond to individual serious/urgent concerns. Use data to identify patterns of attendance and engagement, recognise barriers and design activities and interventions to enhance the student experience	Complementing and following up on referrals from Personal Tutors to support students with setting actions and objectives. Ensure record of meetings with students and any actions (through interventions) to allow for transparency with students and visibility for Personal Tutors / Senior Personal Tutors (non-confidential information only).

		Interrogate data in line with APP objectives, initiatives and milestones for internal planning and reporting	
Specific staff in external reporting where it is required (eg. UKVI, SPO, APP)	ALL Students	Oversight of student data (Student & Cohort level) to meet any external reporting requirements.	Help in the provision of support to relevant students in meeting their requirements. Help to ensure that School and Faculty processes are being followed. Highlight patterns of concerns at a student or cohort level, escalating to & within Student Support/Schools and Faculties, as necessary.
Academic Registrar	SLC funded Students – Students	Maintain compliance with regulatory bodies such as Home Office and Student Loan Company HESA Data Futures for in-year returns are met. To ensure timelines for withdrawals and Ghost students are compliant with reporting requirements.	Submission of enrolment data for SLC students. Managing LOA processes Withdrawal of ghost students and students not engaging. Reporting of withdrawals

7. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	Attendance & Student Engagement Policy
Executive Owner	Student Attendance – The Director of Student Operations on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer. Student Engagement - Exec Dean of Student Experience on behalf of the Provost.
Operational Owner	Personal Tutors / Course Leads / Subject Leads / HoS / FOO's Faculty Deans / Student Service Staff / Student Engagement Team / Pastoral Tutors
Version Number	
Approval Date	TBC
Approved By	Academic Board
Date of Commencement	September 2024
Date of Last Review	August 2023
Date for Next Review	August 2025
Related University Policy Documents	Retention Strategy Student Visa Engagement & Monitoring Policy Student Attendance & Engagement Procedure Personal Tutoring Policy Personal Tutoring Procedure Leave of Absence Policy Extenuating Circumstance Policy Fitness to Study Policy Fitness to Practice Policy
For Office Use – Keywords for search function	Attendance, Engagement, Attendance Monitoring, Ghost Students