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PARTNERSHIPS STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Date Effective	01 August 2024
Approved By	Academic Strategy, Portfolio and Student Experience Committee
Date Approved	2024
Review Date	01 July 2025
Related Policies	Student Visa Engagement and Monitoring Policy / Extenuating Circumstances Policy / Leave of Absence Policy / Withdrawal Policy

Student attendance is monitored through various methods of study including:

- Physical Attendance
- Distance Learning
- Blended Learning

The University maintains that engagement is essential for student success and students should endeavour to engage with all teaching, either in person or online. Students should also be aware that their engagement with online learning and electronic resources will be monitored via Moodle, Canvas, the Personal Tutoring Dashboard and other related virtual learning platforms.

Student Visa holders should additionally refer to the Student Visa Engagement and Monitoring Policy.

This policy applies only to students enrolled on programmes run by St Mary's University and applies to students studying at collaborative partner locations.

Definitions and Terminology

For the purpose of this and associated policies.

Student: any person registered onto a programme at St Mary's University, regardless of mode of study and number of registered modules.

Attendance: active and continuous participation and engagement with learning opportunities, as part of a programme of study at the University

Engagement: active participation and application to learning, assessment and other academic activities

Absence: no presence in any teaching, assessment, placement or planned activity related to the learning experience of the module or programme

Authorised Absence: a short-term interruption of study from the programme, agreed with the relevant Academic and Professional Services authorities and that is not defined as Leave of Absence

Introduction and Principles

An appropriate level of engagement of all students with their programme of study is important and has a direct impact on success. Sufficient attendance at relevant classes is a strong indicator of engagement and is also essential for international students who have a Student Visa, to ensure compliance. It is therefore vital for the University and collaborative partnerships to undertake effective and efficient monitoring of student engagement and be able to produce and analyse attendance data, in a timely manner.

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

Long periods of unauthorised absence, as monitored by student attendance records, could pose a risk to students' academic progression and may lead to academic failure and withdrawal from the programme of study.

Aims of the Policy

This policy outlines St Mary's University's approach to monitoring student attendance and supporting student engagement. The policy applies to all students at levels 3 to 7, not including students studying an online only master's programme and postgraduate research students.

This policy is aligned to the St Mary's University Academic Regulation Section B, 3:1: *Attendance and associated processes employed by St Mary's University Twickenham to monitor student attendance and engagement on all pre-sessional, foundation, degree and postgraduate taught programmes, including programmes of study with work and placement*.

The University aims to improve the engagement and attendance of all students, as the programme of study is designed to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully complete the programme.

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. The obligation is captured by the Joint Higher Education Provider and Student Loans Company Service Level Agreement and begins with the process of Registration. The University obligation extends to collaborative partnerships and will be articulated within the relevant contract and Operations Manual, and overseen by the relevant Joint Management Board.

Attendance Requirements

Students are autonomous learners and active participants in their education, and are expected to take responsibility for managing their learning and engagement, demonstrated in many ways including:

- Attending all prescribed lectures, seminars, classes, meetings with personal tutors/supervisors
- Preparing for and participating in classes or carrying out their own research
- Directing their own learning beyond that specified by their teachers
- Completing formative and summative assessment tasks
- Monitoring and reflecting on their own progress
- Taking the initiative in seeking support when necessary, from their department and wider institution

Attendance is expected for all sessions whether they are run by University staff or by external professionals/trainers hired by the University

Students' attendance and engagement will be monitored and recorded.

Students are expected to attend all face-to-face and online classes, as well as related course experiences, such as placements and projects, to maintain an attendance level of at least 70% per month.

From the course start date, staff assigned to student attendance and engagement must contact students fortnightly who are found to have attendance below 70%.

Faculty and Student Support staff members must 'check in' with students who have 0% attendance without recorded reasons for their absence. This may also include contacting the Course Lead or Lecturer, to confirm non-attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

We will use data to monitor attendance. Collection and use of the data should be in accordance with data protection regulations and clearly communicated to students throughout their studies.

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

Student attendance should be monitored against all timetabled sessions, whether face-to-face or via any virtual learning platforms, throughout their studies. Students must be made aware of their timetable and teaching weeks from the point of the course start date, including any assessment weeks and submission dates.

Management of Non-Engagement

A student who knows that they will be absent from the University for any period of time, should make this known to their Course Lead or Personal Tutor as soon as possible, in order for appropriate discussions to take place.

A student whose absence is unplanned should inform their Course Lead or Personal Tutor of their absence as soon as possible, in order for appropriate discussions to take place.

The Course Lead/Personal Tutor and the student should discuss how long the likely absence will be and what effect this may have on the student's ability to undertake their programme satisfactorily. When the absence is with good cause involving genuine extenuating circumstances (such as family bereavement, illness, unforeseen circumstances with adverse consequences), the Course team should where possible, be flexible in responding to the needs of the individual student.

If the absence is for a period of more than two weeks or any period considered to be significant by the Course Lead or Personal Tutor, the student may be required to opt for an interruption of studies. With these cases, the Leave of Absence Policy shall apply, with an agreed time for the student to resume their studies on the programme appropriately. In recommendation of a Leave of Absence, the Course Lead/Personal Tutor must notify SMU Registry and specify the student's date of return to study and the modules, either continuing or alternative, the student will be required to take.

Academic Schools within Faculties hold responsibility for monitoring student attendance. If a student's attendance and/or engagement rate falls below 50%, or if they are absent from teaching sessions for five consecutive days without notifying their Course Lead or Personal Tutor, they should be contacted by the relevant University staff to ascertain the cause of absence, check on the student's wellbeing, and direct the student to available support resources, where appropriate.

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 should opt to issue formal warnings regarding non-attendance and engagement.

If the student has zero attendance and the Programme has no knowledge of the student's whereabouts, the Programme should contact SMU Registry to take further action. Following notification of zero attendance and/engagement on the course, SMU Registry will process termination of studies.

In exceptional circumstances following supportive and appropriate intervention and subsequent issuance of two non-attendance and engagement warnings, the University may decide to terminate a student's studies, in according with the Withdrawal Policy.

Termination of Studies

Following formal warnings regarding non-attendance and non-engagement, students may be subject to a forced withdrawal from the academic programme. With the exception of a self-withdrawal, students may be withdrawn from the programme for failure to meet the University's attendance and engagement threshold of 70%. This is inclusive of but not limited to the following reasons:

- Academic failure
- Absence of five or more consecutive classes
- Failure to submit two or more assessments
- Failure to enrol or re-enrol before the given deadline
- Failure to complete payment of fees within the fee liability or provide proof of eligibility for finance

Students who choose to appeal a forced withdrawal decision, should do so by contacting the relevant Partner Registry staff at their campus site. Any decision to reinstate a student's record following a withdrawal, must be approved by the Deputy Academic Registrar.