

# Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

September 2023

## Department of Academic Services

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## Summary

### **What is this document about?**

Monitoring of engagement and attendance is an important aspect in supporting both student retention and achievement to maximise the prospect of success and completion. This document outlines the University of Portsmouth's approach to identifying students who require additional support, evidenced by engagement and attendance records.

### **Who is this document for?**

This document will be of most interest to our academic staff and students and Department of Academic Services. It will also be of interest to the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Office for Students (OFS) and may also be of some interest to the wider public.

### **How does the University check this document is followed?**

The document is checked intrinsically through the process it details, through the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Board and operationally through the Department of Academic Services.

### **Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?**

If you have questions about this document please contact the Department of Academic Services, [academicservices@port.ac.uk](mailto:academicservices@port.ac.uk)

## 1 Introduction

Monitoring of engagement and attendance is recognised as an important aspect in supporting both student retention and achievement and, therefore, to minimise the risk of academic failure or withdrawal.

Students who actively engage with all of their learning and attend timetabled teaching sessions on campus and online:

- ◆ are more likely to better understand their assessments (exams and coursework)
- ◆ have the opportunity to ask questions of the teaching staff to ensure they understand the topic and what they need to do for their self-directed and independent learning
- ◆ feel like they 'belong' at university
- ◆ achieve better outcomes strengthening career opportunities.

There is a serious risk of failure for students who do not engage with all of their learning and do not attend, or attend very few, timetabled teaching sessions on campus.

This Policy outlines the University of Portsmouth's approach to identifying students who may require pastoral care to effectively engage or those students who have chosen not to engage or attend.

In line with the University of Portsmouth [Student Charter and Graduate Hallmarks](#) all students are required to "Commit wholeheartedly to a stimulating learning environment, provide and respond to timely and constructive feedback, and push the boundaries of your subject". This can be achieved through active engagement.

At the University of Portsmouth, Blended and Connected Learning means that our students engage with their studies:

- ◆ through activities that enable them to take ownership of and critique new concepts, ideas and feedback;
- ◆ in and outside the classroom, synchronously and asynchronously, individually and in teams;

- ◆ for the development and application of subject knowledge, professional and digital skills.

This aspirational approach requires student engagement, collaboration and reciprocity and is underpinned by coherent patterns of activity that are based on practical and realistic expectations of engagement, are inclusive and supportive and are staff and student partnership centred.

## 1.2 Expectations

- Students are expected to attend all teaching sessions (face-to-face and online).
- Students are expected to work formally and informally with their fellow students.
- Students are expected to engage with resources and supporting materials, activities on the virtual learning environment, Moodle, and the Library.

The University of Portsmouth Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Policy aligns with the Home Office UK Visas and Immigration UKVI Student Route requirements by applying a single academic engagement policy that covers all students across the institution. Academic engagement is indicated by attending required lectures, seminars and tutorials, laboratory work, undertaking research or fieldwork, attending meetings with personal tutors, which can be online or in person, participating on virtual platforms, and submitting assignments including essays, dissertations, laboratory reports etc. and attending examinations. It is the University's responsibility to decide which study elements are required for a given course and constitute academic engagement and what minimum level of engagement is required for each element. Supplementary to the standard UKVI Student Route academic engagement monitoring requirements, the University will report, to the Home Office, students on the UKVI Student Route who fail to register, or are absent for a prolonged period that does not exceed 60 days in duration (30 days for students studying distance learning) without authorisation - this excludes post-graduate research and doctoral students.

This policy provides Personal Tutors, Academic Schools/Departments, the Department of Student Support Services and the Department of Academic Services with guidance for the administration of engagement and attendance monitoring and absence reporting procedures for all students.

## 2 Measures of Engagement

Engagement will be monitored through the following mechanisms:

- I. The student is present at scheduled/timetabled events, in person, both in the classroom or where it is available, 'live' on virtual platforms.

- II. The student is present at scheduled/timetabled events on the virtual platform (synchronous virtual event)
- III. The student engages in asynchronous events and comprehensively engages in the virtual learning environment
- IV. The student submits assessments

Face to face engagement is monitored through a student's attendance records, which are created when a student registers attendance at their scheduled/timetabled event.

The systems for collection of data are students registering attendance at on campus events the Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS), the Strategic Information Technology Services system (SITS) (student data), the Central Management Information System (CMIS) (scheduled, timetabled events data), Library usage and virtual synchronous events on a variety of platforms linked from Moodle (the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)), and also Moodle engagement (interactions). The data from these mechanisms is available in the data warehouse and is reportable through an engagement dashboard accessible to Personal Tutors, Student Engagement Officers, the Department of Academic Services, Department of Student Support Services and other relevant academic and professional staff.

### 3 Absence from On-Campus Sessions

The University's Content Capture policy for staff specifies that staff should capture core content of all formal teaching sessions and make them available on Moodle. Although core taught content will be captured, the University expects all students to participate fully in the learning opportunities provided by their course of study, and thus expects attendance at lectures, seminars and other events as outlined in the Student Charter.

If a student is absent from a teaching session they are advised to check Moodle for missed activities/content and contact their module or course leader, as appropriate. The University's content capture policy for students can be found here: [Content Capture Policy](#)

Students with long term absence, of more than 10 days, must speak with their personal tutor for advice on how best to remain on track, however, they may be advised to take a [Study Break](#). If a student on a Student Route visa is considering a Study Break, they should also discuss this with the [International Students Advisers](#).

### 3.1 Exceptional Authorisation to Travel in Term-time (EATT)

Students on a Student Route visa may request authorisation to travel to their Home country during term-time for exceptional reasons, for example to attend medical appointments, religious observances and family bereavements. In order to comply with border agency requirements, an Exceptional Authorised Absence letter is required. This letter can be requested from [MyPort Hub](#).

## 4 Implications following low engagement/attendance

Personal Tutors will meet with each tutee to go through the Engagement Dashboard with them in the first few weeks of the teaching block. This will allow them to understand what data is reviewed as part of their engagement and attendance record.

Where a student's engagement is considered to be low, they will need to meet with their tutor to discuss their engagement/attendance. Improved engagement and attendance is expected following this, however, if low engagement/attendance continues, further meetings and possible action will be discussed with the student.

Where a student has not engaged with any on-campus activity and has had minimal engagement with other learning, teaching and assessment, personal tutors and course leaders may refer that student to the Head of School/Department, who will contact the student.

It should be noted that a student's engagement/attendance levels are considered as part of any academic appeal.

We recognise that there could be valid reasons for non-engagement and for which the student may need support. Students should discuss any such matters with their tutor. Where information is required to be shared between tutors, engagement officers and the Departments of Academic Services/Student Support Services, an Intervention Note will be added to the Student's record.

## 5 Students with 0% engagement

Those students with zero engagement will be contacted by the Department of Academic Services and advised that if they do not begin to engage within two weeks from the start of the course, or do not engage for two weeks, we will assume they are not commencing or continuing on their

course. If the student does not respond to the email, other contact mechanisms as available will be tried. If a response is not received within two weeks, or a student does not begin to engage, the student will be withdrawn from the date of last engagement or start date of course as appropriate. Emails will be sent to all available email accounts (University/personal/work).

Any Student holding a Student Route Visa who does not engage will firstly be referred to the International Student Advice team so that they can be advised on any visa implications and given further advice: [international.student.adviser@port.ac.uk](mailto:international.student.adviser@port.ac.uk).

## 6 Outline of Responsibilities

A collaborative approach is required across the University to support the engagement, retention and achievement of students. Specific responsibilities are outlined below:-

### 6.1 Students' Responsibility

Students must carry their Student Card whilst on campus. Students are expected to attend their on-campus timetabled sessions and must register attendance at that session by presenting their student card to the card reader located near the entrance to the classroom.

Information will be provided to students on how to register attendance at on-campus sessions through student communications and [here](#). Students will be able to view their engagement on a mobile app. If a student has any questions regarding their record of engagement, they should contact their Personal Tutor.

Misuse of student cards for registering attendance at a timetabled session may result in a formal warning/ meeting with the Head of School (for instance registering for a session and not attending and/or, asking others to register on your behalf).

Attendance at on-campus timetable events (where available) is not the only important area of engagement. The University's virtual learning environment (VLE), Moodle, is one of the primary learning resources and engagement with the material held there is essential.

Students should be using their student login details to access moodle (including any other online learning sources). If there are issues with accessing the VLE or other online resources then students should inform [servicedesk@port.ac.uk](mailto:servicedesk@port.ac.uk)

The University of Portsmouth recommends that a campus based student's term time address is normally no greater than 30 miles away by public transport from the University. This will enable them to attend on-campus and will provide them with an opportunity to regularly access the University's support services.

## **6.2 Department of Academic Services (DAS)**

It is the responsibility of the Department to ensure that the student engagement policy is fit for purpose and reviewed annually. The DAS will ensure that there is a robust process in place to deliver this policy through regular meetings of the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring (SEAM) Board. And ensure compliance with UKVI and Student Loan Company requirements.

During induction, and at the start of both teaching blocks, the DAS will send an explanatory email informing all students of the student engagement policy, detailing how to register attendance on sessions, and the University's expectations on engagement.

The Department is responsible for withdrawing all students with 0% engagement, where there are no exceptional circumstances.

The Department is responsible for reporting non-engagement of a Home student to the Student Loan Company (SLC) and, for a student on a UKVI Student Route visa, to the Home Office.

For SLC sponsored students, this will mean that no further funding will be released and may amend their repayment plan to the SLC.

For visa sponsored students, this will result in cancellation of their student visa. At the point the University has reported the student to the Home Office, they are no longer sponsored by the University of Portsmouth on a UKVI Student Route Visa.

## **6.3 Academic Staff**

Academic staff are required to inform students of the student engagement policy in induction sessions.

Academic staff are requested to remind students to register attendance at each timetabled session to enable the capture of accurate data to support the process.

Faculty/Department timetable contacts are required to inform the Central Timetabling Unit (CTU) in all cases where not all students need to attend a session. This should be done via the Timetable Request Form during the data collection stage of the timetabling process as events where student attendance is not compulsory must be added to the timetabling system with an appropriate event type (e.g. Drop in).

Academic staff are required to inform CTU as soon as possible of planned changes to published timetabled sessions, via the timetable Modification Request Form. All changes must be communicated in a timely manner to students via the portal and Moodle.

Academic staff are required to inform students via email, copying in CTU, of any unplanned cancellations or changes to timetable sessions caused by sickness or other unforeseeable circumstances.

Academic staff will be able to view all student's engagement data on the student engagement dashboard.

#### **6.4 Personal Tutor**

In line with the Curriculum Framework it is recommended that tutorials support the monitoring of engagement and attendance. Personal tutors will have full access to all student engagement data on the student engagement dashboard and should support engagement as described in the [Personal Tutor and Development Framework](#).

Personal tutors must meet with each tutee early in the teaching block to go through the Engagement Dashboard. This will allow tutee's to understand what data is reviewed as part of their engagement and attendance record. The impacts of both non-attendance and non-engagement for student outcomes will be stressed. The Engagement Dashboard measures both attendance (swipe card) and engagement (a variety of measures including library and Moodle). Personal tutors will remind tutees that email is the formal method of communication and it is a student's responsibility to check it.

Personal tutors will make contact, via appropriate means e.g. email/phone/meeting, etc., depending on the situation (i.e. first/second, etc., intervention) with any tutees with sub-optimal

engagement, which is flagged automatically by the Engagement Dashboard. A tutee's engagement will be discussed, with emphasis of the impacts of non-attendance and non-engagement etc., and support will be offered as appropriate, recognising that there could be valid reasons for the non-engagement for which the tutee needs support. Where information is required to be shared to appropriate parties, tutors should add an Intervention Note to the Student's record. Where there are known reasons why a student should not be withdrawn for non-engagement, an intervention note should be added to the student record.

### **6.5 Central Timetabling Unit (CTU)**

CTU will provide a list of rooms with events at the beginning of each teaching block, so that a card reader analysis and test can be carried out by Information Services.

CTU will provide IS with a list of those classes where attendance is optional.

CTU will ensure that when Departmental Timetable Contacts request changes to timetabled sessions they are made on the timetabling system prior to the teaching event being delivered, which will then update the MyPort timetable accordingly for staff and students.

### **6.6 Student Engagement Officers**

Student Engagement officers are employed in some Faculties and will support students with engagement, retention and achievement, following self-referral or referral from personal tutors.

## **7 Exemptions**

The following guidance is provided in relation to exemptions:

### **7.1 Short Courses**

Short courses may require full attendance (100%) to obtain the relevant certificate. Student attendance on short courses is recorded and monitored at School/Departmental level via electronic registers in accordance with School/Departmental set requirements.

### **7.2 Pre-sessional Programmes**

The pre-sessional programmes require full attendance (100%) to facilitate the student in meeting the English Language requirements to progress on to the main course of study, at the University. Pre-sessional student's attendance is recorded and managed in accordance with the School of

Education, Languages and Linguistics (SELL) requirements. Students whose absence is not 100% will be at risk of withdrawal from the course.

### 7.3 Degree Apprenticeships and other block teaching

Apprentices are expected to engage with all scheduled learning and teaching activities.

Engagement and attendance will be monitored by the Department of Academic Services and any action to be taken in response to non attendance will be discussed with their employer in line with Education and Skills Agency (ESFA) funding rules. Apprentices must still register attendance as described above.

Apprentices must record regular learning engagement (6 hours per week off the job training) on APTEM. Off the job training is a mandatory condition of all apprentices. Off the job logs will be reviewed by Work Based Tutors during apprenticeship reviews, which take place, as a minimum, every 12 weeks. Failure to maintain an up to date training log will be raised with the apprentice's employer and propose a risk of withdrawal.

### 7.4 Research

Postgraduate Research Students (PGRS) are expected to engage with their programme of research and meet regularly with their supervisor(s) as detailed in the University's Research Degrees Operational Handbook.

Attendance and engagement is also monitored through attendance at Graduate School Development Programme sessions and local faculty/Department research seminars or training events, along with engagement in the annual monitoring requirements of the Major Review and Annual Review.

The Faculty Research Degree Committee monitors the experience, registration and progression of PGRS, and can approve the withdrawal of PGRS who are not in attendance or engaging as appropriate.

### 7.5 Work Placements

A contract between the University and the work placement provider stipulates that a student on a work placement will be monitored in conjunction with the placement provider and the University work placement contact. The provider is obliged to inform the University if there is an unexpected absence in accordance with the contract. If a student on the UKVI Student Route is undertaking a

work placement or a work based learning unit, the University is required to inform the Home Office of the work placement location.

### **7.6 Study Abroad and Exchange students**

If students are undertaking a period of study abroad or exchange during their course they would normally gain credit from the partner institution for that period. The inter-institutional agreement between the University of Portsmouth and the host University outlines the University's expectation for engagement to be monitored robustly. Students undertaking study abroad or exchange should contact their Personal Tutor twice if they are abroad for a full year or once if they are abroad for one term.

### **7.7 Fieldwork**

The fieldwork leader will monitor the engagement of students participating in fieldwork, any absences will be followed up through the briefings and progress meetings that students undertake as part of normal activity.

### **7.8 International College Portsmouth (ICP)**

For ICP students studying on both integrated (IDM) and Standard (SDM) Delivery Models, the University of Portsmouth delegates responsibility to ICP for the monitoring of engagement of this cohort. ICP monitors in line with the Navitas attendance policy and UKVI requirements, which is reviewed on an annual basis by the Navitas Head of Compliance and provides regular reporting to the University on student engagement. ICP monitors its Integrated Masters students through the Engagement Dashboard.

### **7.9 Collaborative Courses**

The University collaborates with a wide network of UK and international academic partners in which students register on a course delivered by the partner institution and gain a University of Portsmouth award. All partnership agreements will outline that all students on such collaborative courses will be expected to meet the University's engagement requirements. In instances where a collaborative partner institution has its own student engagement and/or attendance policy, the partner's policy will apply instead. If a student is studying a percentage of their studies overseas and at the University of Portsmouth on a UKVI Student Route Visa, UKVI Student Route academic engagement monitoring obligations must be met.

### **7.10 Professional body requirements**

Many courses have professional body accreditation or approval. This can bring with it a specific minimum attendance requirement which differs from the level set out in this policy. Where such a requirement exists, students will be made aware of this via the appropriate course or module handbook and will be expected to adhere to this localised rule.

## **8 Equality Analysis and review and monitoring of this policy**

The University's Equality Impact Assessment procedure was used in the development of this policy. Student needs relating to protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) will be taken into account as far as possible in the application of this Policy. Consideration of arrangements for students to meet privately will be made and confidentiality assured. This Policy will be reviewed annually. The University's internal monitoring process is an important way of determining whether measures taken by the University to combat harassment, discrimination and ensure inclusion are effective, and plays an important part in ensuring equality and diversity are properly promoted and protected within the University.

## **9 Reasonable adjustments for Disabled Students**

The University supports disabled students as part of its anticipatory duty under the Equality Act 2010. Under the Act, disabled students are protected against discrimination arising from their disability and any failure to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments. The Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC) will make a reasonable adjustment to the engagement and attendance monitoring process if appropriate and in consultation with the disabled student and academic Department. This is carried out on a case-by-case basis with the adjustment recorded on the ASDAC confidential database.

## **10 Data processing statement**

The personal data that is collected for the purposes of this engagement and attendance monitoring policy will be processed in compliance with the relevant data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018). We believe it is within the University's legitimate interests to collect, use, and store this data, to help students maintain engagement with their course. The personal data collected will be stored securely on University

systems and will not be shared with any third parties. Students have the right to see this, or any other personal data, held about them by the University. Students can exercise this right in the first place by contacting personal tutors, or alternatively, the University's Data Protection Officer who can be contacted on [information-matters@port.ac.uk](mailto:information-matters@port.ac.uk), to whom any further queries about the processing of your personal data can be directed.