

# Engagement Policy

2023-24

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## Committee Approval

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Committee Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
QAEC	Recommended approval	15 November 2023
Academic Committee	Approved	24 November 2023
	<b>Date in force</b>	<b>29 January 2024</b>

This Engagement Policy will be reviewed annually by our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Any amendments will be subject to approval by the Academic Committee.

## 1. Introduction

We recognise the investment that students make, both in time and money, in choosing to pursue a course of higher education. As a responsible institution, we have a duty of care to follow up promptly on matters of non-engagement, whether this be in terms of physical non-attendance at class, non-attendance at virtual classes, non-submission of work, or underuse of the digital learning platforms we provide. Following up instances of non-engagement ensures that students can be supported and given every opportunity to succeed. This duty of care is particularly important in relation to any students under the age of 18 or any vulnerable adults<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, we are obliged to comply with the requirements of the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI), the Student Loans Company (SLC) and other agencies which require monitoring and reporting of student activity and engagement. Engagement involves not only attendance at timetabled classes (face to face or on-line), but also accessing Canvas and eBooks, submission of work etc.

Good student attendance and engagement also contributes positively to the learning experience of fellow classmates.

## 2. Definition of engagement

We believe student engagement is the single most important factor contributing to the success of students as well as the institution. Engagement encompasses various activities, formal and informal, and interaction with which leads to successful outcomes with regards to the course of study, enhanced student experience and development of graduate level skills.

At Bloomsbury Institute, we have adopted Vicki Trowler's<sup>2</sup> definition of engagement:

“Student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution.”

## 3. Scope

This Engagement Policy is a student-facing document. Its primary aim is to provide clear information to students on the importance of attendance and engagement for academic success, personal development, and the quality of both the student experience and that of their peers, and how we record and monitor engagement.

The scope of this policy is mainly limited to three desired outcomes:

1. Enhancement of students learning outcomes
2. Optimising the student experience
3. Development of graduate level skills

There are several other elements of interaction which focus on the student voice and contributions to institutional decision-making processes. These elements are articulated separately in the [Corporate and Academic Governance Framework](#)<sup>3</sup> and are embedded in our practices.

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<sup>1</sup> A definition of “vulnerable adults” can be found in our Safeguarding Policy.

<sup>2</sup> Trowler, V., 2018. Student engagement literature review. The Higher Education Academy, page 3.

<sup>3</sup> [www.bil.ac.uk](http://www.bil.ac.uk)

It should be noted that the scope of this policy is students' engagement with their course of study and not engagement with the corporate and academic governance arrangements as set out in our Corporate and Academic Governance Framework.

## 4. Attendance and engagement requirements

Students are required to attend all timetabled classes (face to face or online) for their relevant course, unless there are exceptional circumstances preventing you from attending a class. Timetabled classes include lectures, seminars, workshops, and revision sessions.

Students should note that the academic year is not restricted to timetabled classes or teaching weeks alone, as re-sits generally take place after teaching ends.

Students are also required to engage regularly on Canvas, the Virtual Learning Environment provided by Bloomsbury Institute, to augment the learning which takes place in the classroom. Canvas provides students with opportunities to review lecture slides, read the resources recommended by teaching staff and engage in discussion with staff and peers.

## 5. Reasons for engagement

Most students who fail their course do so as a result of not attending class, not actively participating, and not engaging with the Virtual Learning Environment. Regular attendance requires time discipline and management skills, both of which are beneficial to whichever career a student chooses to pursue in future.

Most importantly, engagement is necessary for students to:

- enhance their educational development within their area of study
- experience a sense of belonging and mattering within our academic community
- contribute to the learning of others
- receive information about the course
- prepare for all assessments
- undertake any practical work or group work
- maintain compliance with requirements of UKVI, SLC and other external agencies, as appropriate
- develop transferable skills for the workplace including:
  - planning and managing time
  - developing stronger communication skills
  - learning how to give and receive feedback on performance

Sometimes attendance needs to be monitored for certain activities, for example, for the purposes of issuing travel bursaries.

As mentioned previously, poor attendance and engagement not only affect the student concerned, but also affect that student's peers who rely heavily on the attendance of others for group projects and for peer learning. Peer learning offers you the opportunity to develop a number of key transferable skills such as:

- learning how to refine understanding through discussion and explanation
- pooling knowledge and skills
- sharing diverse perspectives
- challenging assumptions

## 6. Methods of recording attendance

Physical attendance at lectures, seminars and workshops is recorded using a swipe card system. Students' ID cards are used to swipe a reader placed inside each teaching room. Attendance at all types of teaching sessions is recorded; lectures, seminars, workshops, revision sessions or other types of sessions. Tutors will sometimes take a register for verification purposes.

For any face to-face classes, attendance will be recorded once per session. If you have a 2-hour seminar, then attendance will be recorded just once for that session. You can register your presence (i.e. swipe) up to 10 minutes before the beginning of the session, so, if the session starts at 10am, attendance can be registered from 9.50am to 10.00am. From 10.01am attendance will be recorded as 'late'. When late attendance is recorded, the system notes 'how late' you were, so we can monitor the actual time you were present during the session. 15 minutes after the start of the lecture, attendance is marked as absent. Our Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success team (SEWS) check attendance data on a weekly basis and will intervene in instances of persistent lateness or absence, or patterns of absence.

For any face-to-face classes you are expected to respect the integrity of our attendance monitoring system and only swipe your cards to record your attendance. If you are found to have swiped in on behalf of another student who is not in the classroom, both students will be referred to SEWS for an interview which could result in a referral to the Deputy Chief Operating Officer for disciplinary action.

In the rare instance where your classes are online, you are expected to use only your own login details to access your online classes. If there is any indication of misuse of the system, then the matter will be referred to SEWS or the Deputy Chief Operating Officer and you may face disciplinary action.

Engagement with the Virtual Learning Environment and virtual classes is monitored using data from the system which shows the frequency and length of student interactions on the platform. By reviewing your interaction, SEWS staff can build up a more holistic picture of your overall engagement with your course as well as the likelihood of you succeeding on your programme of study.

By using attendance monitoring software combined with data from the Virtual Learning Environment, we are able to record and report on engagement. You will also be able to view your attendance record.

## 7. Non-engagement

We monitor engagement carefully on an ongoing basis. We recognise that attendance at lectures, seminars and workshops, and active participation is often indicative of a student's level of engagement overall, so we use engagement monitoring intelligence to contact students who show signs that they may be at risk of non-progression, failure or attrition (dropping out). The approach of our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS) is always supportive and aims to work with students to find solutions to the problems they may be experiencing, whatever those problems might be.

We recognise that instilling the importance of engagement is imperative in the early weeks of a student's study because behaviours learnt during this period set the tone for later practice. SEWS works closely with the Deputy Chief Operating Officer to highlight non-engaging students.

SEWS will always highlight the provision of support within Bloomsbury Institute to students whose engagement gives cause for concern. However, if we have concerns that a student is highly unlikely to engage adequately, we may decide to withdraw a student due to non-engagement. This is covered in our Withdrawal procedures (see Appendix A) and our [Withdrawal Study Break/Suspension of Studies, and Deferral Policy](#). In these instances, we will effect a withdrawal of the student according to our internal monitoring procedures. The start of the period is counted from the date of commencement of the course. Please note that by commencement we mean the date when the course started and not when you started the course. Should there have been any delay in your start of the course due to administrative reasons, then this will be discounted from the calculations for monitoring.

Additional requirements for international students who are sponsored by us for a student visa are detailed in Section 11 of this document.

## 8. Class changes and cancellations

Rooms and, occasionally, class times are unavoidably subject to change, and it is essential that students check before the following week's classes to see if their timetable has changed. Changes may include a change of time or simply a change of room. Students will be notified in the event of any change via email unless it is a change for a session due to take place within the next 24 hours.

For timetable changes that are going to take place within the next 24 hours (e.g. where a class is cancelled because a tutor calls in sick on the day of the class), we will send students a text message, as well as an email. These emails will be sent to the students' institutional email address and texts will be sent to the mobile numbers on our student record system.

It is essential that students keep their contact details up-to-date. In order to change contact details, students should login to their Student Self-service Portal (SSP) and input the change as soon as the change has occurred.

Concessions will not be granted to a student missing a class or arriving late as a result of a change; it is the responsibility of the student to check their timetable and mobile phone for any text messages. The student will simply be marked late or absent, as appropriate.

## 9. Absences or non-engagement with VLE

### 9.1 Evidence in cases of absence

The only acceptable evidence in the case of non-engagement (including absence) is valid third-party (i.e. independent) documentary evidence or, in the case of illness, a self-certification form for the first 7 days of illness.

The most common source of disruption to studies is illness. Students should upload to the SSP a self-certification form, for the first 7 days of illness and other documentary evidence of this if the illness lasts longer than 7 days e.g. a letter from their doctor or counsellor to confirm their illness. (The letter should be current and indicate the period affected with precise dates).

We do not authorise absences from your studies for non-medical problems, other than in exceptional circumstances. To request authorised absence for a non-medical issue, please provide supporting evidence via SSP (e.g. crime reference number if the victim of crime, death certificate or letter from funeral director for bereavement, etc.) and your request will be considered. Our Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS) Team are here for you, if you need any support.

An international student with a student visa is entitled to apply for an authorised absence provided they are able to supply the correct supporting evidence.

## 10. Missed examinations or assignment submissions due to mitigating circumstances

Mitigating circumstances are defined as a serious or acute problem, or an event beyond a student's control or ability to foresee, which has prevented completion of assessment(s) or attendance at examination(s).

It is a student's responsibility to inform the Academic Administration team within Registry about mitigating circumstances. University of Northampton students complete the form located on the [Forms<sup>4</sup>](#) section of the website, submit it via the Student Self-service Portal (SSP). Students will be notified of the decision by Registry through the SSP enquiry. Wrexham students are required to use the online submission portal.

## 11. International (Sponsored) students reportable to the UKVI

For international students, academic engagement is defined by the UKVI as (but not limited to):

- Submission of coursework.
- Engaging with the Virtual Learning Environment.
- Sitting examinations either online or in person.
- Other formal assessment activities.
- Taking part in meetings relating to assessments.

Academic engagement will be monitored each month. Students who fail to maintain academic engagement within a 60-day period will be reported to the UKVI. Such reporting will ordinarily mean that the student's visa will be cancelled. This may lead to the student's deportation. Students may also be interviewed at a UK border and refused re-entry to the UK after a trip abroad. Visa renewal applications may also be declined due to poor attendance. For more information see [International Sponsored Student Policy and Compliance Procedures](#).<sup>5</sup>

For postgraduate students in the dissertation periods where there are no taught elements during this period, you are still required to have regular contact with your academic supervisor.

## 12. Related regulations, policies and procedures

- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Terms and Conditions
- Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies, and Deferral Policy
- Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures (Awarding Partners)
- International Student Policy

## 13. Review of the Engagement Policy

This Engagement Policy will be reviewed annually by our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). Any amendments will be subject to approval by the Academic Committee.

## Appendix A: Withdrawal Overview

The process for the withdrawal of students should be read alongside our:

- Engagement Policy
- Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies, and Deferral Policy

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<sup>4</sup> [www.bil.ac.uk/student-services/forms/](http://www.bil.ac.uk/student-services/forms/)

<sup>5</sup> [www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies](http://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies)



These documents are available on the [QEM](#)<sup>6</sup>:

This is stated in our Terms and Conditions for applicants 2023-24:

if a student fails to engage with their course during the first four weeks of the term as a University of Northampton student and/or there is no engagement across all assessments within the first term of each academic year of study, we will withdraw the student from the course. Wrexham University students can also be withdrawn if you have failed to show satisfactory engagement and/or progression on your programme. If you are funded through the Student Loans Company, we will inform them of your withdrawal and this will result in the cancellation of your loan. The rules regarding International students are articulated in more detail in International Sponsored Student Policy and Compliance Procedures. The timelines for International students may vary in terms of withdrawal. If you are an international student who we have sponsored for a Student Visa, we will inform the UK Visa and Immigration of your withdrawal and this will result in the cancellation of your visa.

If you are withdrawn for non-engagement, you will remain liable for the full tuition fees. For further information see our [Withdrawal, Study Break/Suspension of Studies and Deferral Policy](#).

When we ask students to agree to our Terms and Conditions at enrolment, we draw their attention in particular to Section 10.1.

The purpose of this document is to outline the process and guidelines that are followed to withdraw a student for non-engagement.

## Engagement points

In order to establish non-engagement, a number of agreed engagement points will be monitored:

- Induction
- Enrolment on the VLE
- Collection of student card (if applicable)
- Engagement with the VLE
- Attendance in class (virtual or on campus, whichever is applicable)
- Response to Course Leader email(s)
- Response to Week 2 Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS) intervention
- Response to Week 4 SEWS intervention

There is no formula for which combination of these will result in withdrawal for non-engagement. A student may fail to attend for weeks and then contact us with reliable evidence for mitigating circumstances, and as a result, the student would not be withdrawn.

## Process

As stated above, students are alerted to our withdrawal for non-engagement rules at the enrolment stage. The policy is flagged again at induction.

The engagement points are monitored by SEWS, with the support of the Academic Division.

Any student who is at risk of being withdrawn will be contacted by SEWS (at least twice) during the first four weeks of their studies.

If a student enrolled and started on the course late, the process commences from the first day that the student was able to engage.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies](http://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies)

The decision to withdraw will be made by the Deputy Chief Operating Officer and the Director of the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success.

. Students have a right to appeal should they believe that there is a procedural irregularity. The appeal process is outlined within the [Student Complaints Policy and Procedures](#)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.bil.ac.uk/gem/policies/](http://www.bil.ac.uk/gem/policies/)

