Attendance & Engagement Policy

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Purpose

1 The purpose of attendance monitoring is to ensure the University provides the best possible support for all learners so they are successful in their learning.

2 The University recognises that there is a strong link between learner attendance/engagement and academic success, and therefore actively supports and encourages learners to participate in learning sessions and to engage with learning activities. In order to do this, the University monitors levels of attendance and engagement:

- Learners are encouraged and supported to fully engage with their studies so that they acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed
- Monitoring engagement and attendance can identify learners at risk of withdrawing from, or failing, their course, and enable support mechanisms to be put in place

3 An erratic pattern of attendance/engagement can be an early indication of problems that may lead to underachievement, failure to progress, or withdrawal. Early identification of, and timely intervention with such learners, enhances retention and wellbeing.

4 The University has a duty to monitor the attendance and engagement of its learners to fulfil its legal obligation to inform relevant external agencies of their registration status.

Applicability and Scope

5 This policy applies to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate learners including apprentices, whether studying at any University campus or Partner institution, or by distance learning.

6 The policy also sets out how the University monitors the attendance and engagement of students sponsored under the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) student visa route in compliance with the requirements as a Student Sponsor licence holder.

7   This policy **does not** apply to postgraduate research (MPhil/PhD), or Professional Doctorate students who should refer instead to their appropriate *Code of practice*.

Policy

Expectations

8 The University expects learners and apprentices to:

- Engage in **all** scheduled learning and teaching activities forming part of their programme of study, including scheduled online activities run by the University or Partner institution and those run by external professionals/trainers, and/or in conjunction with employers;
- Attend punctually and for the full duration of all such activities;
- Make full use of the available resources to support their learning;

- Complete and submit both formative and summative assessment tasks within agreed timeframes.

9   Where a learner has reasonable adjustments the above will be considered in respect of those adaptations.

10   Learners and apprentices are expected to participate in their learning, to take responsibility for their own development and through such engagement to demonstrate a positive attitude to their studies.

11   The University will treat any deliberate attempt by a learner to circumvent this policy - e.g. by asking another learner to register attendance on their behalf - extremely seriously. Any such attempt may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Monitoring

12   The University will ensure learners and apprentices are monitored in order to identify those whose attendance and engagement records raise concerns and indicate that they may be experiencing difficulties. Attendance of Sponsored Students is subject to additional monitoring to meet the requirements of the UKVI. (See 19-23 below)

- Where levels of attendance and / or engagement, including in scheduled online activities raise concerns, the University will take appropriate steps to provide support. The initial focus will be on support and wellbeing for the learner, encouraging re-engagement. This policy is used alongside the Fitness to Study Policy which supports learners in their studies.

- Continued attendance and / or engagement issues will trigger communications designed to encourage students to re-engage with their studies.

- Following all interventions, where learners are deemed to be no longer attending and/or engaging, their registration may be withdrawn and they will be reported, as applicable, to the Student Loans Company (SLC), the UKVI, their employer or sponsor, and/or their Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) to meet the University's statutory reporting duty.

- Apprentices' employers will be notified of any unauthorised absences or punctuality issues. Apprentices who miss 4 weeks or more (including because of illness) of their apprenticeship will be interrupted from their studies and EFSA funding paused.

- Attendance is monitored in line with ESFA and Ofsted requirements where applicable.

13   All decisions taken under this policy will ensure that learners are offered support according to their needs.

14 Learners have the right to respond to a recommendation to withdraw them from their studies under this policy: communications with learners will detail the process to follow.

Authorised Absence

15 Personal Tutors/course leaders have the authority to grant short periods of absence to learners for personal or compassionate reasons. Wherever possible, such absences should be requested in advance and at the earliest available opportunity.

16 Learners should not normally be absent from scheduled teaching sessions for more than 5 working days, and must contact tutors where they are unable to attend eg. due to a short-term illness. Where sudden illness affects assessment learners should apply for mitigating circumstances to be taken into consideration. https://www.bucks.ac.uk/current-students/registry-helpdesk-and-academic-advice/exceptional-circumstances

17 Requests for absences of more than 5 working days will be considered as exceptional due to the potential impact on a learner's studies. Such requests must be made in writing and will only be granted where the Personal Tutor/course leader (and employer where applicable) agrees with the proposal, and the learner understands their responsibility for completing any outstanding academic work. (For UKVI students see 21 below)

18 Requests for authorised absence may be refused where the pattern of attendance and engagement already gives cause for concern. Where relevant, learners may be advised to follow the interruption of studies procedure.

UKVI Student Route Sponsored students (UKVI students – visa holders)

19 Under the duties of the UKVI Student Route Sponsorship, the University is required to continually monitor all sponsored students, to keep attendance and engagement records and report non-attendance and withdrawal of sponsorship.

20 UKVI students must attend the University within two weeks of the start date of their programme. Non-attendance may result in the UKVI being informed and the student's sponsorship withdrawn.

21 UKVI students should not normally be absent from scheduled teaching sessions for more than 5 consecutive working days, and must contact tutors where they are unable to attend eg. due to a short-term illness. Expected absences for more than 5 consecutive working days during scheduled teaching weeks must be authorised by the International Compliance team, and for exceptional reasons only.

22 UKVI students are expected to attend all scheduled teaching sessions, and their attendance records are monitored on a weekly basis. Communications warning UKVI students of the consequences of non-attendance will be sent where students fail to attend for one week, with

further communications sent where the non-attendance continues regarding withdrawal of registration.

23 Students whose unauthorised non-engagement persists beyond seven weeks will normally have their sponsorship withdrawn with the UKVI being informed. Where there are acceptable extenuating circumstances the University will take these into account.

24 Where UKVI students are undertaking work placements, research programmes or undertaking the dissertation element of their programme and there are no scheduled teaching sessions, engagement is monitored through tutorial sessions with the respective Course Teams. Course Teams are required to maintain records of tutorial/supervisions sessions and provide evidence of these on request.

Responsibilities

25 Learners are expected to be proactive in engaging with attendance recording mechanisms, and must communicate with their course team if they experience difficulties engaging with their studies.

26 Teaching staff, both at University campuses and at Partner Institutions, are responsible for ensuring learner attendance is recorded, and for reaching out and keeping in contact with those learners for which engagement causes concerns.

27 For BNU core learners the Directorate for Student Success will communicate with learners identified as being of concern due to their patterns of attendance and engagement, and offer support to re-engage them with their studies. Where students do not respond to such communications, or fail to re-engage with their studies, they may be recommended for withdrawal.

28 Partner institutions are responsible for identifying learners whose attendance gives cause for concern, for supporting approaches to re-engage those learners, and for informing Academic Registry of those being recommended for withdrawal.

29 Academic Registry is responsible for processing recommendations for withdrawal of learners, including following recommendations from Partner institutions, and for informing relevant internal departments and external agencies, except where a Partner institution has a direct relationship with an external agency and a legal obligation itself to make such a report.

30 International Compliance is responsible for monitoring UKVI student attendance and engagement (in liaison with the Academic Registry International team) and for informing UKVI of non-attendance and withdrawal.

Table of Definitions

Attendance	The presence of the learner during the scheduled teaching or learning activity for the entire session (including remote attendance for online, live sessions);
Engagement	Active participation by the learner with their studies (attendance or distance-based) and use of resources to support their learning, including: • Attendance of scheduled learning and teaching sessions and activities; • Active contribution to personal and group tutorials, lectures and seminars; • Use of library facilities and other learning resources; • Engagement with and submission of assessment tasks set; • Attendance at examinations or time-constrained assessment activities; • Responding in a timely manner to formal communications from the University or Partner institution, such as letters, emails, text messages and telephone calls; • The use of the Aptem Apprentice platform to record 'off the job' training hours for apprenticeships.
Scheduled teaching and learning sessions/ activities	These include: Lectures, seminars and tutorials Pre-sessional English language or programme preparation courses where these are a condition of entry Project and dissertation supervision meetings Practical classes, demonstrations and workshops Presentations and performances External visits Study abroad and distance learning activities Clinical, work experience and work-based placement sessions Apprentice tripartite progress reviews
Attendance and Engagement Records	The University will monitor learners' attendance and engagement and may draw upon the following records to inform an overall profile: • Submission of assessment tasks as recorded on the University's Student Records System; • Engagement with the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), e.g accessing of materials and participation in discussion board activities; • Attendance patterns as recorded on Attendance Monitoring System, AMS and MyBNU; • Usage of the University Library and other learning resources, e.g. borrowing of books, and accessing e-books or journal articles; • Swiping of the Student ID card to gain access to University premises; • An apprentice's engagement with the Aptem Apprentice platform to log 'off the job' activity • Partner equivalent of the above mechanisms, resources and record keeping systems.

Appendix: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What is changing and why?
Following the first year of implementation of the Attendance Monitoring System (AMS), the Attendance and Engagement Policy and accompanying process were reviewed. Feedback from users revealed that the AMS was considered simple and easy to use, and that it demonstrated BNU cared for its students while raising their awareness of the importance of engagement with all aspects of their studies and the link between such engagement and academic success. However, time constraints made it difficult for teaching staff to keep up with the requirements of the old process, and the frequency of data checking and trigger points for contacting students varied widely. Consequently, the Attendance and Engagement Policy has been updated in version 2.0 and revised to reflect the changes to the monitoring process: the main principles in the Policy required no changes. Rather than having "missed consecutive teaching incidences" as the trigger points for contacting students (which in themselves are difficult to identify across modules and other forms of engagement), specific weeks in the semester/term will be used to identify students of concern, using both attendance patterns and other forms of engagement. Specific details for monitoring of UKVI students have also been added to the Policy.

2. What do you know?
Consultation took place across the University, alongside desk-based sector research. A cross-University working group devised the revised process which relieves academic staff of some of the administrative follow-up work associated with the old process, specifically through the use of School Retention Panels, whilst still allowing for concerns about students at risk to be raised. Discussions were also held with the International Compliance Team and the University Secretary over the additional specific requirements for monitoring the attendance and engagement of UKVI students.

3. Assessing the impact

	Could benefit	May adversely impact	What does this mean? *Impacts identified from what you know (actual and potential)*	What can you do? *Actions (or why no action is possible) to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations*
a) How could this affect different ethnicities? *Including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and*	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.

	Yes	No		
Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.				
b) How could this affect cisgender and transgender men and women (including maternity/pregnancy impact), as well as non-binary people?	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.
c) How could this affect disabled people or carers? *Including neurodiversity, invisible disabilities and mental health conditions.*	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.
d) How could this affect people from different faith groups?	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.
e) How could this affect people with different sexual orientations?	☐	☐	None identified	
f) How could this affect different age groups or generations?	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.
g) How could this affect those who are married or in a civil partnership?	☐	☐	None identified	

h) How could this affect people from different backgrounds such as: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers.	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.
i) How could this affect people with multiple intersectional experiences?	☒	☐	<u>Positive impact</u> Learners requiring additional support could be identified through the Retention Panels and actions initiated.	Apply Policy equally to all as appropriate under its provisions.

4. Overall outcome			
No major change needed ☒	Adjust approach ☐	Adverse impact but continue ☐	Stop and remove ☐

5. Details of further actions needed

Review of revised process to be undertaken at regular intervals to assess its continued suitability and effectiveness.

6. Arrangements for delivery and future monitoring

Communication to staff through BEN. Retention Panels to be arranged and members to become familiar with their responsibilities.

7. Completed by:	*Miriam Moir*	Academic Registrar	**Date**	**14/10/2022**
8. Signed off by:	*Professor Rachel Cragg*	Senior PVC Education and Digital	**Date**	**18/11/2022**

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