

Document information	
Author	Tracey Grace, Zoe Heathcote, Melissa Farrugia
Owner (committee)	
Last revisions	06/06/2023
Type of Document	Defined policy

Academic engagement and attendance policy (2023/24 academic year)

Contents

Introduction	2
Section A : All Students	2
A1 Principles	2
A2 Student engagement expectations	3
A3 Contact points	3
A4 Programmes below degree level	3
A5 Taught programmes at or above RQF 6 – undergraduate and postgraduate taught	4
A6 Research programmes at RQF 7 and RQF 8	5
Section B : Students sponsored with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for a Student visa under the UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) points based immigration route	5
B1 Additional Student engagement/attendance expectations	5
B2 Contact points	6
B3 Absences from study	6
B4 Programmes below degree level	6
B5 Taught programmes at or above RQF 6 – undergraduate and postgraduate taught	7
B6 Research programmes at RQF 7 and RQF 8	8
B7 Student Union sabbatical officer	9

Introduction

The University of Southampton aims to support our students' academic success and wellbeing through providing learning, curriculum, and support opportunities. This policy outlines our approach to supporting success in relation to attendance and academic engagement.

- Section A applies to all students studying at the University of Southampton
- Section B sets out the University of Southampton's expected contact points and compliance specifically relating to those students sponsored with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for a Student visa under the UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) points-based immigration route.

Section A: All Students

A1 Principles

- 1.1 The University is committed to supporting students to complete their programmes of study and attain the best possible academic outcome. As part of this, it is important that student engagement with all aspects of their programme is encouraged so that any difficulties can be identified and supported.
- 1.2 The University is also committed to providing a positive learning environment for all students and extends this commitment to ensure an appropriate response in circumstances where a student's level of attendance and/or engagement is a concern. Wherever possible, the University will provide support mechanisms for those students with difficulties in attending and/or engagement, including appropriate and timely referrals to relevant support services.
- 1.3 The University recognises that not every student will approach their learning in the same way, and that our students live with a wide range of personal responsibilities and challenges, in addition to study. Nevertheless, students are expected to attend and engage with all learning activity associated with their programme of study and are responsible for their own learning.
- 1.4 The University will consider flexibility in attendance requirements for students in protected groups, including making reasonable adjustments for disabled students where possible, in line with its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010). Such flexibility will take account of students' individual circumstances and any supportive evidence provided.
- 1.5 This policy applies to students at all levels of study (undergraduate, postgraduate-taught, and postgraduate research) and to those studying full-time and part-time, with the exception of students enrolled to undertake online or distance learning courses, courses at collaborative institutions and courses at our overseas campuses.
- 1.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with the University Calendar, Section IV: General Academic Regulations, 'Attendance and Completion of Programme Requirements' and 'Regulations Governing Students Sponsored by the University under the Student Points Based Visa System'.

A2 Student engagement expectations

- 2.1 Students are expected to attend and engage with all learning activity associated with their programme of study.
- 2.2 Students should not assume that meeting the minimum academic engagement contact points as set out in this document will ensure a successful or their desired outcome.
- 2.3 Specific degree programmes at the University of Southampton are accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs), some of whom have attendance requirements necessary for demonstrating how students meet professional competences through practice-based learning. Programme-specific attendance requirements are set out in the programme specification/programme information document(s).

A3 Contact points

- 3.1 There are several contact points that constitute engagement with learning, that apply to all students, some in person and some online:
 - Lectures/seminars
 - Labs/studios/workshops
 - Personal/academic tutor meetings
 - Supervision meetings
 - BlackBoard access (Virtual Learning Environment)
 - Library and Campus access
 - Coursework submission
 - Exams – written and oral
 - Project/dissertation submission
 - Appointments with the University professional services and academic staff
- 3.2 Academic engagement for students is recorded in the University's chosen academic engagement monitoring systems, subject to the University's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy.

A4 Programmes below degree level

- 4.1 The only programmes currently offered for enrolment by the University of Southampton that are below Bachelor's degree level are Pre-sessional English language courses.
- 4.2 Where a student's attendance at pre-sessional English falls below 85% of classroom-based activities in any given month, the University will take a risk-based approach, and *may* contact the student to check whether any information, guidance or wellbeing support is needed.

A5 Taught programmes at or above RQF 6 – undergraduate and postgraduate taught

- 5.1 This section of policy relates to all the University's taught programmes, bachelors and masters level. This includes students who enrol on Bachelors or Masters degree programmes where an exit award of CertHE or DipHE may be made, and students studying for credit on an exchange or visit arrangement. This includes all years of study, including foundation year study delivered by the University, that is an integrated part of an undergraduate award. This includes study on the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma awards.

During scheduled teaching periods

- 5.2 As stated in section A2 2.1, students are expected to attend all learning activity, and contact points are a mix of in person and online. During term-time, students are expected to record their attendance at a **minimum** of two in-person teaching events per week on different days of the week. For students on modular teaching patterns, engagement expectations may differ.
- 5.3 Where students fail to meet the minimum two in-person teaching events per week on different days of the week for 4 consecutive weeks, the University will take a risk-based approach and *may* contact the student to check whether any information, guidance or wellbeing support is needed.

During placements

- 5.4 For students on placements engagement is monitored by the placements team relevant to their programme of study. If there are any concerns about a student's engagement during their placement, the University will take a risk-based approach and *may* contact the student to check whether any information, guidance or wellbeing support is needed.

Study abroad

- 5.5 Students undertaking a study abroad are monitored by the University. The University maintains contact with students throughout their time abroad to ensure academic credentials and standards are maintained.
- 5.6 Following notification from the appropriate team about lack of engagement, the University will take a risk-based approach and *may* contact the student to check whether any information, guidance or wellbeing support is needed.

Dissertation period

- 5.7 Postgraduate taught students completing their dissertation over the summer period are expected to record a **minimum** of one in-person contact point a week. This may be a supervision or use of on campus facilities.

- 5.8 Where a student has missed the minimum contact points for four consecutive weeks the University will take a risk-based approach and *may* contact the student to check whether any information, guidance or wellbeing support is needed.

A6 Research programmes at RQF 7 and RQF 8

- 6.1 Students undertaking research degrees have very different expected contact points to that of taught students and have set milestones that vary in frequency depending on where in their candidature timeline they are.
- 6.2 The University also monitors the academic engagement of all postgraduate research students. This involves recording supervisory meetings, milestones, annual leave, and other absences.
- 6.3 Where a student has missed two consecutive expected contact points the University will take a risk-based approach and *may* contact the student to check whether any information, guidance or wellbeing support is needed.

Section B: Students sponsored with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for a Student visa under the UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) points-based immigration route

B1 Additional Student engagement/attendance expectations

- 1.1 The University of Southampton is a Student sponsor with a track record of compliance. As such, the University must abide by all Home Office (UKVI) sponsor licence duties. This includes monitoring the academic engagement of all sponsored students. Section B sets out the University of Southampton's Academic Engagement Policy specifically relating to those students sponsored with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for a Student visa under the UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) points-based immigration route.
- 1.2 The policy sets out the minimum academic engagement thresholds that visa sponsored students must meet. Where these are not met, the policy details the intervention point actions and the point where action to remove visa sponsorship is taken.
- 1.3 Students are expected to live within a reasonable commutable distance from the University that enables them to travel to campus daily during core teaching hours. If a student chooses to reside at such a distance from the University that prevents them from attending campus for teaching, this is not in any circumstances an acceptable reason for non-engagement with in-person activities.

B2 Contact points

- 2.1 In addition to the contact points mentioned A3 3.1, you will be required to attend an in-person Right to Study check and where necessary appointments with the University visa compliance team.

B3 Absences from study

- 3.1 Authorised absences are discounted when assessing periods of non-engagement. All periods of authorised absence are recorded on the University's student record.

- 3.2 Authorised absences - are only granted where:

- the period of absence is less than 60 days in duration* **and**
- it is supported academically **and**
- it will not affect a student's ability to complete their programme of study within their grant of permission

*Absence exceeding 60 days would only be granted in exceptional circumstances and then only if the student can complete their programme within their current grant of permission.

Where an authorised absence is not granted, this may result in suspension of study and sponsorship removal.

- 3.3 Unauthorised absences will be reviewed and actioned as appropriate.

B4 Programmes below degree level

- 4.1 The Home Office (UKVI) stipulates that programmes below RQF 6 (degree level) must include a minimum of 15 hours of daytime classroom-based study per week (08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday).
- 4.2 The only courses currently being offered by the University of Southampton that are below RQF 6 are Pre-sessional English language courses.
- 4.3 Where attendance falls below 85% of classroom-based activities in any given month, the University visa compliance team will contact the student to request the reason for their poor attendance. All communications with the student include links to the University support services to support them to re-engage.
- 4.4 Students who fail to respond to the communication as set out in 4.3 or who continue to show poor attendance for an additional (fifth) week, will be invited to attend a scheduled visa compliance appointment.
- 4.5 Failure to attend the visa compliance appointment will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.

- 4.6 Actions taken will be recorded against a student's record on the University's student record.

B5 Taught programmes at or above RQF 6 – undergraduate and postgraduate taught

During scheduled teaching periods

- 5.1 As stated in section A2 2.1, students are expected to attend all learning activity, and contact points are a mix of in-person and online. During term-time, students are expected to record their attendance at a **minimum** of two in-person teaching events per week on different days of the week.
- 5.2 Students who fail to meet the minimum weekly in-person requirements for four consecutive weeks will be contacted by the University visa compliance team to request the reason for their poor engagement. All communications with the student include links to the information provided by the University support services to support them to re-engage.
- 5.3 Students who fail to respond to the communication as set out in 5.2 or who continue to show poor engagement for an additional (fifth) week, will be invited to attend a scheduled visa compliance appointment.
- 5.4 Failure to attend the visa compliance appointment will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.
- 5.5 Sponsorship removal action may also be taken where a student is in contact with the University visa compliance team yet does not re-engage with studies as required.
- 5.6 Sponsorship removal action is also taken where confirmation is received that a student has withdrawn from studies, or had their enrolment terminated; there may not be any periods of non-engagement prior to their withdrawal from University candidature.

During work placements

- 5.7 For students on work placements engagement is monitored by the placements team relevant to their programme of study. If there are any concerns about a student's engagement during their placement, this is brought to the attention of the University visa compliance team for action.
- 5.8 Following notification from the relevant placement team, the student will be invited to attend a scheduled visa compliance appointment.
- 5.9 Failure to attend the visa compliance appointment will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.
- 5.10 Sponsorship removal action may also be taken where a student is in contact with the University visa compliance team yet does not re-engage with studies as required.

Study abroad

- 5.11 Students undertaking a study abroad are monitored by the University. The University maintains contact with students throughout their time abroad to ensure academic credentials and standards are maintained.
- 5.12 Following notification from the University about lack of engagement, the student will be invited to attend a scheduled visa compliance appointment.
- 5.13 Failure to attend the visa compliance appointment will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.
- 5.14 Sponsorship removal action may also be taken where a student is in contact with the University visa compliance team yet does not re-engage with studies as required.

Dissertation period

- 5.15 Postgraduate taught students completing their dissertation over the summer period are expected to record a **minimum** of one in-person contact point a week. This may be a supervision or use of on-campus facilities.
- 5.16 Students who have missed the minimum contact points for four consecutive weeks will be contacted by the University visa compliance team to request the reason for their lack of on campus engagement. All communications with the student include links to the University support services to help them to re-engage.
- 5.17 Students who fail to respond to the communication as set out in 5.13 or who continue to show poor engagement for an additional (fifth) week, will be invited to attend a scheduled visa compliance appointment.
- 5.18 Failure to attend the visa compliance appointment will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.
- 5.19 Sponsorship removal action may also be taken where a student is in contact with the University visa compliance team yet does not re-engage with studies as required.
- 5.20 Students that need to complete a short period of data collection away from campus need to complete the relevant authorised absence from campus form. For those sponsored with a Student visa, absence from campus for data collection is only permitted if essential to their study. During the dissertation period, postgraduate masters' students are expected to remain in the UK.

B6 Research programmes at RQF 7 and RQF 8

- 6.1 Students undertaking research degrees have very different expected contact points to that of taught students and have set milestones that vary in frequency depending on their candidature timeline.

- 6.2 The students' supervisory team monitors the academic engagement of all postgraduate students. This involves recording supervisory meetings, milestones, annual leave, and other absences.
- 6.3 Students who miss two consecutive expected contact points with their supervisory team will be brought to the attention of the University visa compliance team.
- 6.4 Following a report from the students' supervisory team as above, the University visa compliance team will contact the student to request the reason for their lack of engagement. All communications with the student include links to the University support services to help them to re-engage.
- 6.5 Students who fail to respond to the communication as set out in B6 6.4 or who continue to show a lack of engagement with the University, will be invited to attend a scheduled visa compliance appointment with the University visa compliance team and a representative from the students' supervisory team.
- 6.6 Failure to attend the visa compliance appointment will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.

B7 Student Union sabbatical officer

- 7.1 Sabbatical officers do not have scheduled teaching activities whilst undertaking this role.
- 7.2 A schedule of contact points during their time in post will be agreed with the student at the start of them taking up the role as sabbatical officer.
- 7.3 Failure to meet the expected contact points will result in a sponsorship withdrawal warning being sent with action to remove sponsorship taken 5 working days after that.