Student Attendance Monitoring Policy and Procedures for Taught Higher Education Programmes

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Category: Policies - Student Support (HE)
Owner(s):   Principal; Head of Registry
Approved by: The Board of Governors

Access: **Public** – Anyone can view this document

Scope: This policy applies to all taught Higher Education programmes at
                Fairfield School of Business (FSB)

Contents:

1.   Introduction

1.1.   Fairfield School of Business ("the School, "FSB") recognises that, as responsible institution, it has a duty to monitor students' attendance and to intervene where a student is not on course to successfully complete their study programme. Such interventions will seek to determine the reasons for non-attendance and explore all options for getting students back into their studies in a way that gives them the greatest possible chance of success.

1.2.   The following sets out the School's approach to monitoring student attendance in classes and the steps it will take where it has concerns about a student's non-attendance. It should be read in conjunction with the Schools *Personal Academic Tutoring Policy* and *Student Support Policy*.

2.   Attendance Monitoring Procedure

2.1.   FSB's approach to monitoring and managing students' attendance and academic engagement will be characterised by the following:

    i.   The School has an established system that accurately monitors students' attendance and academic engagement in their timetabled classes,

    ii.   Students have an accessible means of excusing themselves from lessons they cannot attend for any reason, and will be reasonably supported in catching up with their studies,

    iii.   Students are given sufficient means to explain and excuse instances of non-attendance where prior authorisation was not given, whether for medical, personal or other reasons. The School will ensure that such explanations are supported by genuine evidence and that procedures for considering absence authorisations are transparent and fair,

    iv.   The School takes a proactive approach to intervening students with deteriorating attendance at an early stage; administrative teams within the Registry will coordinate with Personal Academic Tutors and other School support departments to reengage the student and determine the most appropriate support,

    v.   The School will make every effort to support students who have valid reasons for prolonged periods of absence which may, for example, be due to medical issues or other personal crises; in such instances, the School will consult with the student and the awarding body to consider all possible alternatives to avoid a scenario of withdrawal from the programme,

vi.   The School will take prompt and decisive action where continued non-attendance requires the suspension or withdrawal of a student,

vii.   Students will be informed of their right to appeal any formal decision made by the School which affects their academic status, including a decision to withdraw a student on the basis of insufficient attendance, academic performance or their finance status,

viii.   Students will be made aware of any implications that persistent non-attendance or poor academic performance may have on their eligibility to receive financial support, and any potential liability to repay maintenance payments in the event of withdrawal from studies following a suspension,

ix.   The School will use information from attendance & academic engagement monitoring procedures as a key indicator by which it will benchmark the quality of its provision.

3.   Students' Responsibilities

3.1.   Students are expected to attend all lectures, tutorials, seminars, projects, assessments and all other scheduled activities according to their timetable for their course of study and submit their work on time.

3.2.   Students are required to arrive for their classes on time and remain for the duration of the teaching session.

3.3.   Where a student cannot attend a lesson or other scheduled activity, they should contact the attendance officer on attendance@fairfield.ac with evidence to excuse themselves before the class is scheduled to take place. They should also contact their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) and make adequate arrangements to catch up on any lesson content missed.

3.4.   Where a student misses a lesson or other scheduled activity due to unforeseen circumstances, they should use the correct procedures (Self-certification or Leave of absence) for authorising periods of absence (see Appendix).

3.5.   Students should also ensure that necessary arrangements are in place for their tuition fees. If they are being funded by Student Finance England (SFE), it is highly recommended that requisite evidence is provided and SFE is contacted in a timely manner to avoid going into debt.

4. Recording Attendance

4.1. The following convention will be used by the School's Registry in recording students' attendance for the purposes of applying this policy:

- Students arriving up to 15 minutes after the start of the lesson will be marked 'in attendance' or 'Y-Present',

- Students arriving between 15 and 45 minutes after the start of the lesson will be marked 'late'; attendance will still be recorded for the purposes of claiming student finance, however, persistent lateness may result in a review of a student's SAPR by the School – see Section 5 below),

- Students arriving 45 minutes or more after the start of the lesson will be recorded as 'absent' for that lesson, but may enter the lesson at the discretion of the lecturer (students will be permitted entry to a lesson at any time where their lateness is owing to genuine extenuating circumstances),

- Students who depart the lesson before its scheduled end are recorded as 'early leavers',

- Time is recorded when the student taps the card on the card reader. Attendance will not be recorded if the student's card is not available, or the card has been tapped before the start of the class. Additionally, failure to tap in may result in attendance being recorded as an absence.

NB: Attendance monitoring procedures will predicate on actual attendance in class, as opposed to other 'contact points' (for example: inductions, exams, PAT sessions or any personal appointments with support services). Engagement with other contact points may however be considered as contextual information by the Appeals or Student Attendance & Academic Engagement Panel (SAAEP) when reviewing a case of non-attendance.

5. Procedures for Dealing with Late Arrival/Early Departure

5.1. Late Arriving students (Arriving between 15 to 45 mins) will be dealt with internally by the lecturer who will address the issue all the while emphasizing the importance of punctuality.

5.2.   Three successive instances of lateness and/or early departure will be reported by the lecturer to the attendance officer. The student will be contacted by the attendance officer to ascertain the reasons behind later arrival/early departure and to have a better understanding of the matter to substantiate whether any additional support can be provided by the school to mitigate the situation. The attendance officer will also forward the student's name to the engagement team who are trained to provide support to students with poor attendance & academic performance.

5.3.   Students who continue to arrive late for classes or leave early will be referred to the next available SAAEP Panel by the attendance officer.

5.4.   The SAAEP Panel will consider a referred student's pattern of attendance since their registration, along with any other contextual information and will agree on an appropriate course of action, which may include a requirement to attend remedial activities (support/catch-up sessions), suspension from studies or, as a last resort, withdrawal from the programme.

5.5.   A student may use the School's Appeals Policy to challenge the decision of the SAAEP Panel, where they have grounds to do so; the notification of the SAAEP Panel's outcome will inform them of this recourse.

6.   Engaging Non-attendees

6.1.   Attendance reminders and warnings will be triggered by successive instances of absence at timetabled classes or by a pattern of irregular attendance or lateness which may reflect poorly on the student's academic performance.

6.2.   FSB has introduced the **Student Academic Performance Review system (SAPR**) (see Appendix). This proactive tripartite system (Red Amber Green) rates students based on a percentage of attendance 4 weeks after the start of the semester and alerts specified services to take action and reach out to students with attendance below 30%.

6.3.   Students will automatically be sent an Attendance Reminder from the Registry for each week of unsatisfactory attendance **from the commencement of the semester**, urging them to contact Student Support or their Personal Academic Tutor to discuss their attendance.

6.4.   **On the second week of unsatisfactory attendance,** students will be sent a Formal Warning via email to Student's Fairfield email address.

6.5.   If no response is received, no satisfactory attendance is recorded or Personal Tutors report no engagement with the student to the Registry, the student will be sent a **Withdrawal notice**; this will inform the student of the School's decision to withdraw them following the SAAEP Panel, and the date that withdrawal will become effective unless a

successful appeal is lodged.

6.6.   Students will have the opportunity to make representations within 10 calendar days of the date of the Notification using the School's Appeals procedure in order to prevent the withdrawal from becoming effective.

6.7.   The School may at its discretion, make reasonable expeditions to the Appeals procedure where external timeframes or service standards necessitate this. Any such changes and the reasons for them will be clearly indicated to the student; the School will ensure that sufficient time for the student to prepare a challenge is allowed.

6.8.   Where an appeal against impending withdrawal is upheld, the School will specify appropriate actions to reintegrate the student within the course, in such a way that gives them the best chance of success (this may include deferral to a new intake). A set of learning objectives, which include attendance requirements, will be included within the student's PDP and SAPR with the understanding that these must be achieved for the student to continue on the programme.

6.9.   If the student's appeal is rejected or the student does not appeal in accordance with the appropriate Appeals Policy, the withdrawal decision will stand. Once the decision to withdraw the student is ratified by the Panel, the Registry will terminate the student's registration with the awarding body and move to withdraw any further financial support from the Student Loans Company (by submitting a Change of Circumstances notification to the Student Loans Company to withdraw financial support).

6.10. A final Notification of Withdrawal will be sent to the student, which will indicate any liability to repay student finance maintenance paid to them by the Student Loans Company from their last recorded attendance in class, up until the date of their withdrawal.

6.11. No refund will be available to students whose registration is terminated for poor attendance, or who withdraw after receiving a suspension for unauthorised absence.

7.   The Student Attendance & Academic Engagement Panel

7.1.   The SAAEP Panel convenes on a regular basis minimum of every term to review students whose academic status is considered 'at risk' owing to poor attendance/punctuality, assignment submission or non-payment of tuition fees. The Panel is charged with making recommendations to the principal on a case-by-case basis concerning the continuance or withdrawal of any students referred to it (as per sections 5 and 6 above).

7.2.   It is the registry's responsibility to share the list of the students to be discussed in the panel with the deans and the student support of the relevant campus to have a holistic picture of all the students being considered in the SAAEP Panel.

7.3.   The Panel will comprise of representatives from the registry, exams, finance, student support and the deans.

7.4.   The Panel is additionally responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, as well as compliance with any external reporting protocol or service standards (such as those of awarding bodies or the Student Loans Company)

7.5.   At the conclusion of each Panel meeting, the Principal will review and ratify the Panel's recommendations, after which they will be carried out by the Registry.

8.   Responsibilities

8.1.   It is the responsibility of the lecturer/tutor to ensure that the School's electronic card system is working at the start of their lesson or that some form of a paper register is taken and promptly submitted to the Registry after the lesson.

8.2.   The Tutor or Lecturer will additionally be expected to:

- Start and finish classes on time and inform the students and Registry staff promptly of any changes (i.e. classroom move);
- Advise students regarding the School's Attendance & Academic Engagement Policy and Procedure;
- Accurately mark attendance, absence, lateness and early leavers if keeping a paper register, or ensure students use their card to clock in when joining the lesson;
- Assist administration staff to make spot checks on attendance;
- Discuss punctuality with students if they are late for the first two occasions and refer the matter to the student's Personal Academic Tutor on the third occasion.
- Allow administration staff to carry out spot checks on SMS and attendance;
- Discuss non-submission of their work during SAPR
- Conduct SAPR with the student at least once a semester and accurately record this on SMS

8.3.   It is ultimately the student's responsibility to ensure they have registered their attendance using their student ID cards or by signing a paper register on their arrival at that lesson.

8.4.   The Attendance officer will be responsible for the completeness and accuracy of student attendance records, monitoring instances of lateness and sending warnings and reminders to students, as well as notifying Personal Academic Tutors where students in their care are not attending classes or arriving late/leaving early.

8.5.   The exams department will be responsible for accurately providing information to the registry department regarding student academic performance

8.6.   The student finance department will be responsible for accurately providing information to the registry department regarding any outstanding balances students have on their account due to non-payment of tuition fee.

9.   Storage of Attendance Records

9.1.   The hard copy of paper registers will be kept securely within the registry until the end of the term. After the end of term, electronic data will be maintained on SMS in the form of attendance with comments.

9.2.   Detailed daily records of students' attendance and comments will remain electronically on the system for the duration of the course year. After this time has expired, detailed records will be archived and only the overall percentage of attendance will be immediately accessible on the system; archived records may be requested from the Head of Registry.

9.3.   Electronic records of students' attendance, and minutes of the SAAEP Panel's meetings will be retained within the Registry for a period of six years.

9.4.   Any evidence of extenuating personal or medical circumstances submitted to authorise a period of absence will be held securely within the Registry in accordance with the School's *Data Protection Policy*.

10.   Review of this Policy

10.1.   This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes in external regulations. Changes to it will be reviewed by the School's Executive Committee and ratified by the Board of Governors.

Appendix: Procedures for Authorising Periods of Absence

1.   Self-Certification for absences of up to 5 days:

1.1.   For illness-related absences of up to 5 days, no supporting evidence is required. Students should complete a Self-Certification Form and submit it to the Registry using the following email address: attendance@fairfield.ac

1.2.   Self-Certification can be used during any one term. Further absences will need to be requested through the Leave of Absence procedure (see below).

2.   Requesting a Leave of Absence for absences of over 5 days or multiple absences in a term:

2.1.   A Leave of Absence covers both medical and non-medical circumstances. For non-medical Leave of Absence requests, students are required to state the type of leave they are applying for. A student wishing to request a leave of absence will need to complete a Leave of Absence Form and submit/email it to the Attendance Officer. If a request is submitted without the form or the supporting evidence, the absence will not be authorised.

2.2.   Suitable medical documentary evidence includes:

- A medical certificate,
- A medical report,
- A note from a hospital,
- A formal notification of a hospital or clinic appointment

2.3.   In case of illness, the note from the GP or a Hospital should also state the period during which the student will not be able to attend classes.

2.4.   Other acceptable documentary evidence for excusing absence includes:

- A court letter,
- A police crime report,
- A death certificate or order of service (absence due to a funeral),
- A death certificate in case of bereavement (only grandparents, parents, siblings, offspring or long-term partners will be included as a close member of family and not aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces or friends),

2.5.   Statements from family, friends or a landlord will not be accepted as the sole supporting evidence.

2.6.   All evidence must be in English or accompanied by an English translation from an accredited translator. The school cannot seek evidence on a student's behalf from a third party.

2.7.   Where the absence falls at a time of assessment (assignment submissions, presentation deadlines or examinations) and the student wishes to request mitigating circumstances, the 'Mitigating Circumstances Request Form' should be used. Please refer to the School's *Mitigating Circumstances Policy* for more information.

2.8.   The maximum length of compassionate leave is four weeks.

2.9.   Students will be expected to liaise with their Personal Academic Tutor to make arrangements to catch up with any work missed during their absence.

2.10.   In certain cases, where this is considered to be in the best interests of the student (e.g. long-term illness preventing the student from attending the classes), the School reserves the right to withdraw the student from the course or transfer them to a different mode of study until their circumstances allow them to return to studies.

3.   Maternity-related Absence

3.1.   Students are advised to inform the Registry of the date they wish to start their maternity-related absence before the baby is due. This will allow sufficient time for the School to liaise with the student and make any necessary arrangements.

3.2.   In line with the *Equality Challenge Unit's* recommendation, students are required to take at least two weeks compulsory maternity-related absence.

3.3.   Students are allowed to decide when they start their maternity-related absence in agreement with the School. If students wish to, they will not be prevented from studying up to their due date.

3.4.   The maximum length of maternity-related absence is four weeks. In exceptional circumstances, students may need to extend the length of maternity leave that they take beyond the standard time allowed, for example in cases of postnatal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby. The extended maternity-related leave would be processed as the Leave of Absence procedure described above.

4.   Paternity-related Absence

4.1.   If a student wants to take paternity-related absence, they are required to inform the Registry of their partner's pregnancy before the baby is due.

4.2.   Students are allowed to take a maximum of two weeks paternity-related absence.

5.   Student Academic Performance/Progress Review (SAPR)

Rating Colour	Criteria	Key Staff	Action attendance	Action Submission
RED = HIGH RISK Multiple complexity	Serious concerns: Attendance below 30%, non-responsive to the school communication and previously offered support. Poor overall performance Does not engage	Student Engagement Team (SET) /Campus Course Coordinators Head of Student Lifecycle	SET liaise with the student and review attendance and academic performance through assisting them with their personal development plan (PDP) and completing Student Academic Performance review (SAPR) on Student Management System (SMS).	Check to see if any mitigating circumstances apply. Campus Course Coordinators send non-submission lists to SET will then liaise with the student and determine if any mitigating circumstances apply. SET/Head of Student Cycle determine if student should be referred for withdrawal.
Amber = MEDIUM RISK **Some complexity**	Some concerns: Attendance in the ranges of 30-55%, moderate response to support offered by attempting some of the assessments and re-sits opportunity. May require pastoral and skills guide. Responds to the school communication but might have time management /engagement issues Broadly on track	Academic Support Centre (ASC) and PAT	Academic Support follow-up on absent students and refer to Personal Academic Tutor to review academic performance through assisting them with their personal development plan (PDP) and completing student academic performance review (SAPR) on SMS.	Academic support and lecturers provide academic support for student. Personal tutor to support student with submissions liaising with lecturers. Students to be advised of 10-day late submission policy. Check if Mitigating Circumstances apply
GREEN = LOW RISK	Good: Attendance above 55%, responsive to support offered and to communication from the school. Takes opportunities to re-sit and do achieve results. Low Risk and on Track	Personal Academic Tutor (PAT)/lecturer	Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) liaises with the student and reviews academic performance through assisting them with their personal development plan (PDP) and completing student academic performanc e, review (SAPR) on SMS.	Monitor progress

Version Tracking:

Version	Author / revisions by	Changes summary	Approved by	Date
1.0	Principal Head of Registry	Differentiated attendance policy for taught higher education provision under franchise – replaces the Student Attendance Policy and Procedures (version numbering reset).	Board of Governor	Sep 2022

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