



Attendance and Engagement Procedure

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The aim of this procedure is to provide a framework to deal with student attendance/engagement that falls below acceptable levels and should be read alongside the Attendance and Engagement Policy and the Attendance Flowchart.

2. Scope

- 2.1 Where a student's attendance/engagement is still within acceptable levels as defined by the Attendance and Engagement Policy but is a cause for concern, this should still be dealt with, but is outside the remit of these procedure.
- 2.2 For the purposes of both the policy and procedure, attendance/engagement should be considered across the whole of the student's programme rather than at individual module level within their programme. At module level there are alternative approaches as specified in the relevant degree regulations.
- 2.3 Consideration should also be given to the difference between authorised absence, where the student has been in contact with the university and has provided acceptable evidence to justify their absence, and unauthorised absence, where no acceptable evidence has been provided by the student. Guidance on acceptable forms of evidence can be found in the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure document.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 The framework has been designed on a multi-stage basis with each stage being considered more serious than the previous, in a similar way to a performance review procedure in the workplace. It is expected that each case will start at Stage 1 when a student's attendance/engagement has been identified as not meeting the acceptable levels defined by the Attendance and Engagement Policy.
- 3.2 Hopefully, Stage 1 is as far as the case goes before the student's attendance/engagement improves to acceptable levels. However, where the student's attendance/engagement continues to fall below acceptable/agreed levels the case can be escalated to the next stage with the ultimate sanction of the student's studies being terminated. The procedure also allows for a case to be de-escalated, for example from Stage 2 to Stage 1, where some improvement has been achieved but attendance/engagement is still not at acceptable levels. It is important in these situations that attendance/engagement continues to be actively managed until the student's attendance/engagement reaches an acceptable level.

Where a student's studies are terminated due to continued poor attendance/engagement over a period the student has the right to appeal the decision. Any appeal by the student will be considered by Registry, as per the final section of the Procedure (see below).

4. Stage 1 (Personal Tutor)

Student Attendance Falls Below Acceptable Levels

Where a student's attendance/engagement does not meet expected levels, as defined in the Attendance and Engagement Policy, then the student's Faculty Administration team should arrange a meeting between the student and their



Personal Tutor to establish reasons for the poor attendance/engagement and to re-enforce the importance of regular attendance. A minimum of three working days' notice should be provided.

4.1 Student/Personal Tutor Meeting

At this stage the emphasis should be on supporting the student by trying to identify any underlying issues (e.g., Health, Personal, Financial etc.) that may be preventing full engagement and where necessary directing the student to appropriate support services. As part of the meeting, it is important that an Action Plan (including timescales) is agreed between the student and Personal Tutor with the emphasis being on the student to undertake the agreed actions. Any agreed divergence from the acceptable level of attendance/engagement defined in the Attendance and Engagement Policy should be on a case-by-case basis and must be justified with supporting evidence (e.g., Medical Evidence). It must be recorded in the Action Plan.

If a student does not attend the meeting, then this should be considered as a failure to complete a key engagement indicator and the case should be escalated to Stage 2 and the School of Study should arrange a meeting between the student, Personal Tutor, and Head of Department/school for no later than 10 working days after the Student/Personal Tutor Meeting which the student has missed.

4.2 Outcomes

1. Action Plan agreed between Student and Personal Tutor
2. Agreed Review Date
3. Confirmation sent by Personal Tutor to the Student and School Admin Team of Action Plan and Review Date
4. If Applicable, notification sent by the Faculty Admin team to 'Other Departments' so that they can expect/contact student.
5. Possible escalation to Stage 2

4.3 Stage 1 Review Meeting

On the agreed review date, normally 10 working days after the Student/Personal Tutor Meeting or Stage 2 Action Plan Review Meeting, the School of Study should review the action plan and agree any further action. The form of the review will depend on what was agreed with the student. In simple cases, for example where attendance monitoring is all that is required, the review may not require a meeting with the student. In more complex cases, especially where 'other departments or consultation with external parties is required, then a formal meeting with the student may be considered appropriate.

There are likely to be one of three outcomes from the review:

1. Where the student's attendance/engagement is now considered acceptable, as defined either by the Attendance and Engagement Policy or amended as part of the agreed Action Plan, then no further action is required. The School of Study should confirm the outcome of the review to the student.



2. Where attendance is acceptable but there are still some outstanding actions (e.g. contacting/meeting 'other departments') then the School of Study should include these as part of the confirmation of outcome.
3. Where the student's attendance/engagement is still NOT acceptable then the case should be referred to Stage 2. The School of Study will notify the student of the decision to refer the case to Stage 2 within 5 working days and that they will be invited to a meeting with the Head of Department/School within the next 10 working days.

5 Stage 2 (Head of Department/School)

Student Attendance Remains Below Acceptable levels.

Where a student's attendance/engagement remains below expected levels, as defined in the Attendance and Engagement Policy, then the Student's School of Study should arrange a meeting between the student, their Personal Tutor, and the student's Head of Department/School (or their representative) to establish why attendance/engagement has remained below acceptable levels. The meeting should be held within 10 working days of the Stage 1 Action Plan Review Meeting and a member of the admin team should be present for record keeping purposes.

5.1 Head of Department/School Meeting

At this stage there is less emphasis on supporting the student as any underlying issues (e.g., Health, Personal, Financial etc.) that may be preventing full engagement will have been identified, subject to any new issues/evidence, during Stage 1 and an attempt to resolve them covered at that point. The emphasis moves more towards the impact of poor attendance/engagement on academic outcomes for the student.

During the meeting it should be made clear to the student that continued poor attendance/engagement is likely to result in their studies being suspended/withdrawn. For visa students, this will result in their visa being cancelled and they will have to return their country of residence.

As part of the meeting, it is important that an Action Plan (including timescales) is agreed between the student and the Head of Department/School with the emphasis being on the student to undertake the agreed actions. At this stage in the process, there is limited scope for divergence from the acceptable level of attendance/engagement defined in the Attendance and Engagement Policy, however a case-by-case approach will be adopted, with supporting evidence required (e.g., Medical Evidence) dated after the Stage 1 review. This must be recorded in the Action Plan.

If at this point the student wishes to voluntarily suspend their studies or withdraw from the university, then the implications for this should be fully explained and the appropriate withdrawal/suspension of studies form completed.

If the student fails to attend this meeting, then it should be re-scheduled for no later than 5 working days after the initial meeting. Failure to attend the re-scheduled meeting will result in the case being referred to the (Associate) Dean with a recommendation for termination due to non-engagement.

5.2 Outcomes

- i. Action Plan agreed between Student and Head of Department/School
- ii. Agreed Review Date
- iii. Confirmation sent by Personal Tutor to the Student and School Admin Team of Action Plan and Review Date
- iv. If Applicable, notification sent by Personal Tutor to 'Other Departments' so that they can expect/contact student.
- v. Possible recommendation for termination due to non-engagement

5.3 Stage 2 Review Meeting

On the agreed review date, normally no more than 10 working days after the Head of Department/School Meeting, the Head of Department/School should review the Action Plan and agree any further action.

The form of the review will depend on what was agreed with the student. In simple cases, for example where attendance monitoring is all that's required, the review may not require a meeting with the student. In more complex cases, especially where 'other departments' are involved, then a formal meeting with the student may be considered appropriate.

5.4 Outcomes:

There are likely to be one of three outcomes from the review:

- i. Where the student's attendance/engagement is now considered acceptable, defined either by the Attendance and Engagement Policy or amended as part of the agreed Action Plan, then a Stage 1 Review Meeting should be arranged to check on-going attendance/engagement. The School of Study should confirm the outcome of the review to the student and the date of the review meeting.
- ii. Where attendance is acceptable but there are still some outstanding actions (e.g., contacting/meeting 'other departments' or external parties) then the School of Study should include these as part of the confirmation of outcome.
- iii. Where the student's attendance/engagement continues to be below acceptable levels then the case should be referred to the relevant Faculty Dean with a recommendation to:

a) bar the student from the examination for the module(s) in which the student has been absent and require that the student repeat the module at a later date for honours marks. The student may be required to pay the relevant fee; or
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b) enforce a suspension of studies where the student is not willing to voluntarily interrupt, or.

c) enforce a withdrawal of studies if there has been no contact or engagement from the student for a prolonged period.
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The School of Study will notify the student that due to poor attendance/engagement that their case has been referred to their Faculty Dean with a recommendation that their studies are suspended/withdrawn and they will be advised of the outcome in the next 10 working days.

5.5 Withdrawal/Suspension Recommendation

When a recommendation to withdraw or suspend a student is made to the Faculty Dean they should be provided with all relevant information to the case including, but not limited to:

- i. Latest Exam Grid
- ii. All agreed action plans
- iii. A record of the student's attendance for the period covered by this process including the period resulting in the Engagement Review being initiated.
- iv. Any information requested from 'other departments' as part of this process.
- v. All emails from/to the student relating to this process including attachments.
- vi. Rationale for recommendation

6 Stage 3 (Withdrawal/Suspension Recommendation by Faculty Dean)

By this stage the student's level of attendance/engagement is likely to have been below acceptable levels for several weeks and, despite a number of meetings with School staff, has still not reached acceptable levels.

- 6.1 The decision to withdraw or suspend a student is not one that is taken lightly so the primary purpose of this review is to ensure that the Engagement Review process has been properly followed and that all reasonable options to help the student achieve acceptable levels of attendance/engagement have been explored.

The referral from the Head of Department/School should be supported by sufficient information to decide within 10 working days of the referral, so requests for further information/meetings should be the exception. If it is likely that a decision cannot be made within the period then the Head of Department and student should be notified of the delay and provided with a new decision date.

There is no expectation that the Faculty Dean will meet with either the Student or Head of Department/School at this point.

- 6.2 Outcomes

- i. Recommendation Accepted

Where the decision of the Faculty Dean is to accept the recommendation, the Faculty Dean will notify the student of the decision and their right to appeal. A copy of this notification should also be sent to Registry.



ii. Recommendation Rejected

Where the decision of the Faculty Dean is to reject the recommendation, the (Associate) Dean will notify the Head of Department of the decision, the reason(s) for rejection and recommended next steps.

Although the recommendation has been rejected, the student's attendance/engagement still needs to be at an acceptable level, so the case is effectively referred to Stage 2 with the School of Study arranging a Head of Department/School Meeting to agree a new action plan based on the Faculty Dean's recommendations.

7 Student Appeal

The student can request a review of the Faculty Dean's decision by submitting their request for review to registry@buckingham.ac.uk within one week of the outcome being communicated to them.

The only recognised grounds for appeal are:

- i. Incorrect recording of attendance/engagement
- ii. Mitigating Circumstances that have not been disclosed at an earlier stage of the Engagement Review process and an explanation as to why they could not be disclosed at an earlier stage.
- iii. There has been a demonstrable error in the way that the process has been carried out.

The student is expected to provide any supporting information at the time of making the appeal. Registry will review the appeal and issue a Completion of Procedures letter within 10 working days.

The letter will confirm the outcome of the review and inform the student of their right to request a review of the case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they are not satisfied with the decision.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student appeals and complaints once all internal procedures have been completed. The University is a member of this scheme. Further information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right, can be found here:

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.