

St George's, University of London

Attendance and Academic Engagement Policy

Aim of the Attendance and Academic Engagement Policy

- To promote attendance and academic engagement as an important aspect of the student study experience for all students on undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes.
- To promote attendance and academic engagement as an important aspect of professional behaviour during all teaching, learning and clinical encounters.
- To identify students whose academic engagement has been poor in order to offer the appropriate support.
- Where applicable, to maintain compliance with the Home Office, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations and with St George's responsibilities as a Student Sponsor.

Background

Attendance and academic engagement with teaching and learning opportunities are important aspects of student experience, student success and professionalism. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and professionalism throughout their programme of study. Attendance and academic engagement on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes are usually monitored by programme teams, including when students are on clinical and work placements.

The policy is necessary to clarify attendance expectations for staff and students and to ensure student academic engagement in study and research. The policy also supports the improvement of the overall student experience by identifying where students may be experiencing difficulties and ensuring timely intervention and appropriate support. The policy aligns with other healthcare students' policies, the Religious Observance Policy and the General Regulations.

St George's also has a legal responsibility to comply with the academic engagement monitoring regulations of UKVI as part of its continued registration as a Student Sponsor of students who require a Student Visa to study in the UK. This is supplementary to the normal monitoring of the attendance and academic engagement of all students. Sponsored students who fail to comply with monitoring checks may be reported to UKVI in accordance with these regulations and jeopardise their current and future permission to remain in the UK.

Expected attendance

All students are expected to attend all sessions that are timetabled (for example, lectures, seminars, tutorials). Students are notified of programme teaching sessions in programme handbooks and provided with timetables. Expectations of attendance and academic engagement are included in the General Regulations. Students are expected to be punctual for all timetabled sessions.

All students are expected to attend all examinations as per the published examinations timetable. If a student is unable to attend an examination, they are expected to contact the exams team and their programme team for further guidance.

Postgraduate research students are expected to maintain regular contact including attending scheduled meetings (at least once per month) with their supervisors throughout the period of research study until award as detailed in the Research Degrees Student Handbook (MPhil/PhD/MD(Res)).

Special arrangements regarding permitted absences can be made when the student notifies the appropriate member of staff and this is agreed and documented.

Notification of Absence

If a student registered on a programme is unable to attend and engage as required, they are expected to notify their programme team, and in certain circumstances, submit an application for mitigating circumstances:

- 1 **Short term absence / sickness (5 days or less)** – telephone or email the programme administrator. In certain circumstances, guidance will be given on the implications of the absence for teaching and learning and/or professional requirements.
- 2 **Long term / Prolonged absence (more than 5 days and up to 3 weeks)** – students may be asked to submit appropriate documentary evidence to support their leave of absence, for example, a medical or doctor's note if the absence is on medical grounds. In certain circumstances, guidance will be given on the implications of the absence for teaching and learning and/or professional requirements.
- 3 **Continuous Absence (more than 3 weeks)** – students should submit appropriate documentary evidence to support their leave of absence. The programme team will decide whether the absence will be authorised and provide guidance on the implications of the absence for teaching and learning and/or professional requirements. A student may be required to attend Occupational Health to assess their health status prior to resuming their studies. There may be a programme-specific policy which confirms the maximum length of absence that is permitted before a student is required to take a compulsory interruption of study (on the grounds that the teaching missed by the student is too much to catch up).

Repeated unauthorised or un-notified absence or lack of academic engagement will be treated as a potential disciplinary matter and could result in a referral to the Academic Registrar (under General Regulations) or to the university's Student Progress Monitoring Committee (SPMC).

A letter confirming termination of registration in accordance with the General Regulations may be issued with the authority of the Academic Registrar.

Students have the right of appeal against termination under the Student Appeals Procedure to an Appeal Committee which shall be appointed by and report to Council, whose decision

shall be final. Sponsored students should be aware that their visa may be curtailed by UKVI during the complaints process and, in this situation they would be required to return home.

Compassionate leave

In circumstances where absence is necessary at very short notice (e.g. a close family bereavement) students must email the relevant programme administrator, to confirm this absence and to give an indication of the period of absence. Guidance will be given on the implications of the absence for teaching and learning and/or professional requirements.

Request to be absent to observe religious practices or festivals

Students may request to miss specific teaching and learning events to attend a particular faith event. They should follow the advice contained within the [Religious Observance and Examinations Policy](#)

Maintaining contact with students without agreed absence

St George's will make reasonable attempts to contact the student which may include attempting to call all telephone numbers recorded on the student's record and writing to the student's term time address. If the student cannot be contacted, a referral may be made to the Academic Registrar or the Student Progress and Monitoring Committee (SPMC) on the grounds of lack of engagement. A letter confirming suspension or termination of registration in accordance with the General Regulations may be issued with the authority of the Academic Registrar.

If the student has a Student Visa, a report will be made to UKVI notifying them of the student's termination of registration and St George's withdrawal of sponsorship.

Attendance requirements for sponsored students

As a Student Sponsor, the University is legally required to demonstrate that sponsored students are academically engaging in their programme of study and that there are active procedures in place to identify and address any concerns.

Sponsored students are made aware by the Compliance Team in Registry of the sponsor/student relationship including the Student Sponsor's legal responsibility to report to UKVI non-attendance and lack of academic engagement. Reporting a sponsored student to the UKVI is a serious step and can lead to the curtailment of the student's Student visa and a requirement to leave the UK.

The appendix sets out the academic engagement monitoring processes including what action is taken when a lack of academic engagement is identified. This process has been produced so that the University can efficiently and reliably fulfil its Student Sponsor monitoring and reporting duties and also support the improvement of the overall student experience by identifying where sponsored students may be experiencing difficulties and ensuring timely intervention and appropriate support.

It should be emphasised that these are additional requirements for sponsored students only and that the primary responsibility for monitoring academic engagement and identifying and responding to issues continues to rest with programme teams.

UKVI requirements

It is the Student Sponsor's responsibility to decide which study elements are required for a given course and constitute academic engagement and what minimum level of engagement is required for each element.

Academic engagement is indicated by (but not limited to) activities such as attending required lectures, seminars or tutorials; undertaking required laboratory work; undertaking research or fieldwork; submitting essays, assignments and attending examinations.

Under UKVI's points-based system, the University must:

- have robust systems in place to monitor academic engagement of sponsored students including when students are on work placements or research programmes.
- retain evidence of academic engagement to demonstrate that periods of non-engagement can be identified and acted upon, where required. This includes action to be taken to support the student to re-engage.
- notify UKVI and withdraw sponsorship, within 10 working days of a decision,
 - any student whose lack of academic engagement has resulted in their exclusion
 - a student that has deferred their studies for more than 60 days, unless the student can prove exceptional circumstances, such as serious illness or injury, and provided the student can still complete their course within their existing period of leave when they resume their studies.

Sponsored studying away from the University

This responsibility extends to students who hold a Student Visa on a year abroad, year in industry or any other type of work placement. Monitoring arrangements will be agreed in advance for these students, as well as for students who will be studying at a partner institution, either in the UK or overseas, for a specified period of time during their programme of study

A member of staff at the partner university will act as a co-ordinator and report on the academic engagement of students on a regular basis. If the student fails to keep two or more of their expected points of contact without authorisation, the Compliance Team will discuss this with the Year Lead and programme team.

Sponsored postgraduate research students

For postgraduate research students, academic engagement is indicated by (but not limited to) activities such as supervisory meetings, six month progress reports and meeting milestones towards thesis completion.

When research students submit their thesis, the monitoring of academic engagement will continue using other points of engagement such as the viva examination and (if necessary) discussions on corrections and resubmission of the thesis. This will continue until the examiners approve the final thesis submission.

Where students are off-campus (field work, research in another country/location), and wish to retain their sponsored status, they will be expected to continue to engage at the same frequency. There can be virtual contact points: emails, Skype interactions, etc. Scheduled email updates between supervisors and supervisees can constitute contact points, especially those which contain a requirement for the student to forward work completed to date, or linked to research milestones or other programme outcomes.

Academic Registrar
June 2023

Appendix

Our processes for monitoring international students

i) Identify activities to monitor

The Compliance Team will work with programme teams to identify a minimum of 10 activities to monitor academic engagement suited to the curriculum. These points will be spread evenly throughout the academic year, for each year of a programme.

The identified points will involve a mixture of types of contact to ensure that they demonstrate a student's academic engagement with studies, for e.g. taught sessions, placement sign-off and other expected contact (tutorial, assignment submission, examination etc.).

Academic engagement with the activities is recorded by programme administrators for audit purposes and forwarded to the Compliance Team for analysis.

ii) Data analysis

The Compliance Team will review, on a monthly basis, the data collected, to identify those students who show irregular attendance or inadequate engagement. These reviews will determine whether any action needs to be initiated, including direct and immediate follow-up with any student whose academic engagement is deemed inadequate.

Escalation

A student does not need to miss all contact points for it to constitute non-engagement. Similarly, the missed contact points need not be consecutive before it is appropriate to draw the student's attention to engagement requirements.

The Compliance Team will take the following action if a student has missed expected points of contact. As best practice, the Compliance Team will liaise with the programme team when steps are taken regarding a sponsored student's lack of academic engagement.

First Stage

i) **Three scheduled contact points missed without authorisation i.e. unauthorised absence.**

An email message will be sent from the Compliance Team informing the student that they have missed three scheduled contact points and reminding them that academic engagement is a programme and visa requirement.

Second stage

ii) **Four – Six scheduled contact points missed without authorisation.**

The student will be invited to meet with the Compliance Team to discuss any issues affecting academic engagement. If deemed relevant, the possibility of an interruption of studies and visa implications will be discussed. A brief minute of this meeting will be retained on file. At this stage, a decision will be taken, in light of any relevant information, whether a more formal discussion with the student and the programme team is merited.

Third stage

iii) **Seven scheduled contact points without authorisation; lack of academic engagement could be reasonably deemed to be inconsistent and of concern.**

The Compliance Team will meet with the programme team to discuss the student's overall performance and determine whether the student has made a serious attempt to recover their position and is otherwise progressing with the programme. The student will be invited to a formal meeting to discuss their continuation on the programme. The possibility of a referral to the Student Progress and Monitoring Committee (SPMC) will be discussed with the programme team. A minute of this meeting will be retained on file.

Final stage

- iv) Where a student has missed 10 consecutive contact points without authorisation or his/her academic engagement or progress more widely is at a level deemed unacceptable.**

The student's overall progression should be considered in relation to the course policies. A decision should be made, in consultation with the Academic Registrar and programme team, as to whether the student should be interrupted or withdrawn from the programme for reasons of non- engagement.

If a decision is made to withdraw the student, a report to the UKVI will be made by the Compliance Team within 10 working days of the date of the decision.