

International Student Engagement and Attendance Policy

1. This policy outlines the mandatory engagement and attendance requirements for students who have been issued a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) by Birkbeck. It does not apply to international students who hold a non-Student visa¹ immigration status.
2. Students who are issued with a CAS are in the United Kingdom primarily for the purpose of education and must therefore attend and engage with their studies to the full extent. In practice, this means students must actively and consistently follow their programme of study, attending all sessions in their timetable. Students are responsible for ensuring that their attendance is registered at their session by using their ID card to swipe into the classroom, confirm attendance via a paper register, or by logging into an online session via the Join Live Sessions link in their My Birkbeck timetable or Moodle.
3. For the purposes of holding a Student visa, the terms *attendance* and *engagement* are used interchangeably. Students sponsored for Student Visas are expected to abide by the College's Student Engagement and Attendance Policy in addition to the requirements laid out in this policy.
4. The College Secretary and Clerk to the Governors as the Authorising Officer will delegate to the Academic Registrar as the Key Contact, the operational responsibility for ensuring appropriate policy, process and communications are in place to support engagement and attendance for students who have been issued a CAS by Birkbeck.
5. Within Registry Services the International Student Administration Team (ISA) will implement the attendance and engagement requirements and intent of this policy and be supported by International Student Coordinators in each School. The Executive Dean of the School will appoint the International Student Coordinator who will be the primary liaison point with Registry Services. Schools are expected to regularly and proactively check international student attendance.

Taught Programme Requirements

6. Taught programmes are defined as Bachelor's and Master's degrees, Graduate and Postgraduate Diplomas and Master's of Research. Note that Master's of Research in Psychology and Chemical Research have a 120 credit research module and as such these are monitored using the Postgraduate Research Requirements.
7. The minimum requirement for students on taught programmes during teaching terms² is engagement with at least one scheduled teaching activity each week. Students must also attend at least two in-person activities in every rolling four-week period. Examples of engagement include attendance at laboratory sessions, seminars, lectures, exams, registration sessions and submission of assessed or non-assessed coursework.
8. Registry Services will also monitor attendance patterns to ensure that students who have ongoing poor attendance are identified and provided with support. To meet this aim, students are expected to attend at least 60% of scheduled events during teaching terms. Those who fail to meet this requirement will be contacted by ISA to discuss their situation and signposted to relevant support services.

¹ 'Student visa' is the updated term for the student immigration route, but for the purpose of this policy it is also used to include students sponsored on the previous Tier 4 route.

² 'Teaching terms' are defined as Autumn and Spring terms, plus the Summer term where three term learning is in place.

9. Outside of term time, there is no requirement to attend College. The definition of term time varies depending on the level of study undertaken. Undergraduate students (including those studying Graduate Diplomas) and Postgraduate students studying Postgraduate Diplomas will use the published term dates to define their term time, excluding departmental reading weeks. Postgraduate taught student (those studying Master's degrees) and research students are deemed to be in term time throughout the calendar year, excluding Christmas and Easter breaks and reading weeks.
10. Students who fail to meet the minimum engagement and attendance requirements will be contacted by Registry Services. Details of the actions that the College will take in these circumstances are laid out in *Appendix 1 and 2*. Where visa sponsorship withdrawal is required, the decision would follow a discussion between the Academic Registrar and a nominee of the Executive Dean of the appropriate School in which the student is registered.
11. If a student is determined to have gone 60 days without engagement or attendance, they will have their visa sponsorship withdrawn and their student record will be terminated. The 60 days can be calculated at any point from the beginning of the academic year and then at any point throughout the year. A series of intervention measures and communications will be sent to students prior to withdrawal, including signposting to the necessary support services. These are outlined in the Appendices below.

Non-Standard Teaching Periods

12. During teaching periods where alternative teaching and learning activities take place students will be required to maintain engagement with the College. Examples of such periods are work placements, field trips, study abroad or intercollegiate study. An appropriate form of engagement will be determined for each case and may include regular meetings with academic tutors or other College staff.
13. During a period of retake or reassessment, the standard undergraduate programme progression rules contained in the Common Award Scheme (CAS) Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study permit students to study a reduced number of credits. Students taking a reduced credit load are permitted to continue with Student visa sponsorship during this time, as they continue to be registered on a full-time programme. However, there must be scheduled attendance requirements in each term during this period to enable continued visa sponsorship, in line with the requirements in paragraph 7. Students retaking a module or reassessment who do not have attendance requirements, will have their Student visa sponsorship withdrawn.

Taught Student Dissertation Periods

14. The College accepts that there will be minimal teaching requirements during this time, but the underlying principle is that all students should have academic engagement at least once every 60 days. Engagement for students who are in a dissertation period with no taught elements will be based on the student's regular meetings with their dissertation supervisor, submission of written work and attendance at exams.

Authorised Absences

15. Students can request a period of authorised absence for a maximum of 60 days, provided the absence does not result in an extension to their expected programme completion date. During this absence, formal engagement with the College is not required. Approval for this type of absence will require the agreement of a relevant academic member of staff e.g. Course Director or Personal Tutor, and approval from ISA. Requests for authorised absences can be submitted via the

International Students area in Moodle and should normally be submitted before the absence, but can be submitted retrospectively if there is a valid reason.

Postgraduate Research Requirements

16. For students who are enrolled on postgraduate research programmes, engagement will be monitored via supervisor meetings and seminars. A minimum of three engagements should take place per term and the expectation is that at least two of these are in-person meetings.
17. The College accepts that there may be a lower frequency of supervisory meetings or reduced teaching requirements after the summer term, (July to September), as well as during the Writing Up period. However, the underlying principle is that all students should have academic engagement at least once every 60 days.
18. As a result of the difference in study patterns, the MRes Psychology and MRes Chemical Research programmes in the School of Science are monitored using the postgraduate research attendance requirements outlined in this section. All other MRes programmes in the College use the taught attendance requirements (minimum one session per week, two in-person sessions in a rolling four-week period and 60% overall).

Off-Campus Study

19. Off-Campus Study is defined as any period of time where a student is required to be away from the Bloomsbury campus as part of their programme and Student visa sponsorship continues. This can include compulsory field trips, field work or work placement. Work placement must be an integral and assessed part of the programme.
20. Off-campus periods which last longer than one academic year, will result in the College withdrawing Student visa sponsorship. The College will consider a new period of Student visa sponsorship when the student is ready to resume their research at the College campus. Work placements cannot exceed more than 50% of the length of the programme, for example a work placement for a 12 month Master's cannot exceed 6 months in length.
21. Research students who undertake Off Campus Study will continue to be required to satisfy the relevant engagement requirement (three engagements per term). However, the requirement for that contact to be in-person, set out in paragraph 16, will not apply. Students on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes who undertake work placement are expected to continue to attend all scheduled teaching sessions during a period of Off Campus Study, unless there is a mandatory requirement for the student to be away from Campus, for example attending a fieldtrip.
22. An Off-Campus Study Request form, or Work Placement Agreement form, are available from the International Students Area of Moodle, and must be submitted after obtaining an approval from the relevant supervisor(s) and a minimum of 15 working days before their intended departure date. A retrospective request will not (normally) be considered.
23. The agreed Off-Campus study period and the relevant details, including the location of Off-Campus study and expected return date, will be reported to the Home Office in accordance with the Student Sponsor guidance. The student must report to their academic department and ISA their return to the College by the agreed date so that the Student visa sponsorship can continue. The student must inform their academic department and ISA if they cannot return by the agreed date and discuss a possibility of amending the date in advance.

COVID Concession Period: Distance Learning

24. Due to the challenges that some international students face arriving in the UK for the start of the academic year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some temporary concessions permitted for those studying outside of the UK. This concession period runs up to 6 April 2022.
25. During this time, students who have been issued a CAS and have not arrived in the UK may begin their studies online via distance learning. However, in order to continue to receive Student visa sponsorship, they must arrive in the UK by 6 April 2022 and engage with in-person events, ensuring that the requirements in paragraphs 7-8 and 16-18 are met. In these cases, physical attendance is not required, but online engagement will be monitored. Students must access their scheduled online sessions from their timetable in My Birkbeck or through the link on Moodle to ensure that their engagement is logged correctly.
26. Due to the amended UKVI guidance for this period, if a student is determined to have gone 30 days without engagement, they will have their visa sponsorship withdrawn. This replaces the normal 60 day requirement. Full details of the requirements and actions taken for taught students during this period are found in Appendix 3.
27. It is not permitted for students to study in the UK via distance learning. Once students arrive in the UK they must immediately begin attending in-person sessions and should follow the requirements found in Appendix 1 and 2. If this requirement is not met, Student visa sponsorship will be withdrawn.
28. Postgraduate research students have a lower number of expected engagements per term and as such have a different set of requirements and actions, which can be found in Appendix 4.

Further reading

The following policies should be read in conjunction with this policy.

- [Student Engagement and Attendance Policy](#)
- [Terms and Conditions of Study](#)
- [College Policy on the Termination of Registration](#)

Academic Board
September 2021

Appendix 1 – Taught Students - Actions taken where minimum attendance not met

The following table outlines the actions taken where there has not been academic engagement for consecutive weeks.

Consecutive weeks	Action
2	Student is sent email by Registry Services notifying them of missed scheduled engagements. Academic Department informed and meeting with Registry Services/Department will be required if another week missed.
3	Mandatory meeting arranged between Registry Services staff, the academic Department and the student. The purpose of the meeting is to remind the student of their external visa obligations and to be signposted to relevant academic and student support services as appropriate. This can be an in person or online meeting which the student must attend. The student may bring a supporter with them but not a legal representative. The supporter may not talk on their behalf.
4	Student is sent a further email by Registry Services notifying them of missed engagements. Registry Services will investigate and document whether appropriate support and intervention measures have been put in place in accordance with the Departmental and College's policies and procedures, including consideration of mitigating circumstances. A range of academic and student support services may be engaged as appropriate to support the student. Where there are protected characteristics or sensitive personal issues discussed these will be shared with appropriate consent and fairness. The health and safety of the student will always be considered paramount.
5	Final warning issued by email and a posted letter by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered. Students may bring a supporter with them but not a legal representative. The supporter may not talk on their behalf.
6	The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study.

Sub 60% Attendance	Once per teaching term, Registry Services will send an email to students who have attended less than 60% of their scheduled teaching events within the past 4 weeks. These students will be invited to a mandatory meeting with the relevant International Student Coordinator to discuss the importance of attendance and their visa obligations.
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Two in-person events per rolling four-week period	<p>Students will engage in a blend of in-person and online activities. However, the minimum requirement is for two in-person events in a rolling four-week period.</p> <p>Students who are at risk of failing to meet this requirement will be sent an alert email by Registry Services. Failure to meet this requirement can result in withdrawal of Student visa sponsorship and termination of the student record.</p>
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Appendix 2 Postgraduate Research Students - Actions taken where minimum attendance not met

The following table outlines the actions taken where there has not been academic engagement for consecutive scheduled engagements.

Consecutive engagements	Action
1	<p>Student is sent email by Registry Services notifying them of missed engagements. Academic Department informed and meeting with Registry Services staff/Department will be arranged. The purpose of the meeting is to remind the student of their visa obligations and to be signposted to relevant academic and student support services as appropriate. The student may bring a supporter with them but not a legal representative.</p>
2	<p>Registry Services and the Department will investigate and document whether appropriate support and intervention measures have been put in place in accordance with the Departmental and College policies and procedures, including consideration of mitigating circumstances. A range of academic and student support services may be engaged as appropriate to support the student.</p> <p>Where there are protected characteristics or sensitive personal issues discussed these will be shared with appropriate consent and fairness. The health and safety of the student will always be considered paramount.</p>
3	<p>Final warning issued by email and a posted letter by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered. Students may bring a friend (but not a legal representative) to the first or second meetings. The friend may not talk on their behalf.</p>
4	<p>The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study.</p>

Appendix 3 Taught Students - Actions taken where minimum attendance not met during COVID Concession Period: Distance Learning

The following table outlines the actions taken where an undergraduate or postgraduate taught student has not academically engaged for consecutive weeks. This includes MRes students, with the exception of those studying MRes Psychology and MRes Chemical Research.

Consecutive weeks	Action
1	Student is sent an alert email by Registry Services notifying them of missed engagements and the academic Department is informed.
2	Student is sent a further alert email by Registry Services notifying them of missed classes. Academic Department is informed and meeting with the Department will be required.
3	<p>Final warning issued in writing and by email by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered. Students may bring a friend (but not a legal representative) to the first or second meetings. The friend may not talk on their behalf.</p> <p>Mandatory online meeting arranged by Registry Services staff and the student. The purpose of the meeting is to remind the student of their visa obligations and to be signposted to relevant academic and student support services as appropriate. The student may bring a supporter with them but not a legal representative.</p> <p>Registry Services and the Department will investigate and document whether appropriate support and intervention measures have been put in place in accordance with the academic Departmental and College policies and procedures, including consideration of mitigating circumstances. A range of academic and student support services may be engaged as appropriate to support the student. Where there are protected characteristics or sensitive personal issues discussed these will be shared with appropriate consent and fairness. The health and safety of the student will always be considered paramount.</p>
4	The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study.

Sub 60% Attendance	Once per teaching term Registry Services will send an email to students who have attended less than 60% of their scheduled teaching events within the past 4 weeks. These students will be invited to a mandatory group meeting with Registry Services and the relevant International Student Coordinator to discuss the importance of attendance and their visa obligations.
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Appendix 4 Postgraduate Research Students - Actions taken where minimum attendance not met during COVID Concession Period: Distance Learning

The requirements for Postgraduate Research Students (including those studying MRes Psychology and MRes Chemical Research) studying during the COVID Concession Period via Distance Learning are the same as those laid out in Appendix 2, with the exception that in-person engagement is not required.