

Student Engagement and Attendance Policy

Introduction

1. This Policy outlines the mandatory attendance requirements and expectations of all registered undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled on a credit-bearing course with scheduled teaching as well as undergraduate, postgraduate or research students sponsored for a visa by the College. Adhering to this Policy is a condition of registration and enrolment students accept when agreeing to the College's Terms and Conditions.
2. The College has adopted a blended approach to teaching and learning for its taught provision with interactive teaching sessions supported by high-quality learning materials. Interactive teaching sessions may take place in-person or online depending on the study style of the programme. **Students are expected to attend all mandatory in-person or online timetabled teaching events for their programme.** Some students have additional attendance requirements resulting from their funding or student visa (see paragraph 6).
3. The College collects and monitors student data for the purposes of supporting engagement with learning and teaching. This data includes how students engage with online learning materials, Birkbeck services and attendance at online teaching events (recorded in the College's computer systems) as well as when students tap their ID card to confirm attendance at in-person teaching venues. If students are not actively engaging with their studies, the College may contact them to check on their welfare or to signpost them to services to help them succeed. All data is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation and can be found by following this link on privacy.

Why is attendance and engagement important?

4. Students are active participants in the Birkbeck learning community. It is therefore important that they take responsibility for achieving their academic potential through attending and participating at teaching events, engaging with learning materials, and seeking further help, support and advice when they require it. Students make a considerable investment in time and money when choosing to register and enrol for a programme of study. Birkbeck therefore has responsibility to follow-up on non-attendance so that students can be supported and given every opportunity to complete their studies. Learning is a shared experience and attendance is critical so that students can:
 - learn from the expertise of teaching staff and contributions from other students.
 - contribute to the collective learning experience by actively participating in classes.
 - benefit from the support of a learning community in their classes.

- cover all course content to enable them to meet the learning outcomes of the course.
 - ensure they have all the programme information and are well prepared for assessments.
 - complete any practical or group work (including working with others in classes)
 - gain and develop further skills for employment or career progression.
5. Frequent non-attendance means students do not benefit fully from the Birkbeck learning experience. Non-attendance impacts collaborative projects and peer work, and it is consistent with lower module marks and lower degree classifications achievement or awards. It may also ultimately lead to assessment failure and non-completion of the programme. Students who engage with all aspects of study benefit most from their course.
6. All students are liable for the tuition fee set by the College and may have opted to take out a UK government loan or pay via an instalment plan. The College monitors attendance and engagement for the Student Loans Company (SLC) to accurately assess a student's eligibility for fee and maintenance support and to ensure the College receives the correct tuition fee payments. The College also monitors international students on a Student Visa to comply with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements. The College uses numerous contact points throughout the academic year to record and review attendance to help demonstrate that students meet the required contact points and are engaging academically. The Office for Students (English Universities' regulatory body) indicates in its [Guidance for Sponsors](#) that full-time programmes of study should require students to attend for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks during the year. A lack of engagement and attendance may indicate a student is at risk of withdrawing, failing or underperforming, and can have consequences for the receipt of government financial support and discretionary bursary support. The College also monitors attendance to meet the conditions of funding from other countries, such as US Federal Student Aid.

Student responsibilities

7. The College expects students to:
- a. Enrol for their programme of study as directed by the College, within the agreed period.
 - b. Attend all orientation and induction activity organised by the College, Faculties or Schools.
 - c. Engage with their programme of study by attending all mandatory in-person or online timetabled teaching events and any other events or activities defined as mandatory in Programme Information on Moodle (see **Appendix 1** for definitions of terms). It is also recommended that students attend all optional sessions where possible.

- d. Declare any absences to their academic school and when they expect to return to their studies should an unforeseeable event occur that prevents them from attending.
- e. Adhere to any additional attendance requirements associated with their funding or visa sponsorship. Certain students need to attend some or all their teaching events **in-person** to ensure their eligibility for funding e.g., SLC maintenance loans, or to meet the requirements of their student visa. International students should read paragraphs 19 onwards below carefully.
- f. Register their attendance at every teaching session by following Birkbeck guidance, which is to either swipe into the classroom using the student identity card, confirm attendance via a paper register, or log into an online session via the Join Live Session link in My Birkbeck timetable or Moodle, which has been sent to them by the academic school. Students should log into online events using their Birkbeck login. Students must use an electronic student card to swipe into each learning and teaching event when in a Birkbeck-managed facility using a card reader. If the reader is not working, it should be reported to the individual delivering the teaching who will then report this via [ASK](#).
- g. Attend any meetings the College may arrange to signpost them to services to help them succeed in cases where they are not actively engaging with their studies. If invited to a meeting students must attend these meetings or make all reasonable endeavours to do so, and where they are unable to, a written record of the meeting will be taken and provided to them.
- h. Meaningfully and purposefully liaise with members of staff when contacted about attendance or engagement records (see paragraph 15).
- i. Arrive in person or be logged in on time and stay for the duration of the teaching session.
- j. Contribute to in-person and online teaching events as directed by teaching staff.
- k. Complete all provided preparatory work as directed to in Moodle (e.g., reading, pre-recorded videos/lectures or other activities) before attending teaching.
- l. Participate in peer or group activity as directed.
- m. Turn on cameras and microphones when required to in an online teaching event.
- n. Engage with examinations and assessments, attend timetabled examinations on time and submit assessed work when required.
- o. Take their student ID card to classes and assessment venues and present it to a member of staff if requested.
- p. Familiarise themselves with details of any specific programme or module engagement and attendance requirements, e.g., attending field trips. This information will all be available in Moodle. If unsure when to attend, students must contact their Faculty for advice.
- q. Follow any guidance provided to maintain health and safety and protect individuals or equipment. This includes, for example, protective clothing or wearing face masks.

Teaching staff

8. The individual staff member delivering teaching must:
 - a. Update the attendance register in College systems within 48 hours of an in-person teaching event if they are using manual registers. This is essential to ensure the student record is correct.
 - b. Report via ASK any card readers not registering in-person attendance at their teaching event as soon as possible following the session.
 - c. Join in-person and online teaching events when scheduled and notify their school as soon as possible if they are unable to attend meaning that a class will need to be rescheduled.
 - d. Seek approval from the Faculty to move any session from in-person to online (or vice versa).

Faculties

9. Faculties will:
 - a. Ensure programme information in Moodle clearly describes all expected contact points and mechanisms for reporting absence; the escalation mechanism, with respect to cases of continuing non-attendance/disengagement; and fitness to practice requirements, where applicable.
 - b. Maintain accurate and complete records in accordance with the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (follow this link on [privacy](#)) and that student attendance and engagement is monitored effectively.
 - c. Monitor student attendance data from the various Birkbeck data sources used to support learning, teaching and assessment and refer students who are not attending or engaging to appropriate support mechanisms.
 - d. Notify the International Student Administration (ISA) if a student visa student is failing to maintain satisfactory attendance or engagement with their programme of study.
 - e. Where possible give students and staff at least 24 hours' notice of a move of an in-person class to online to allow students and staff time to make alternative arrangements to be able to join or deliver an online class. These changes will only be made in the event of unforeseen circumstances (e.g., weather conditions, travel disruption etc). The session must be changed to online in by professional support staff in the Faculty.

Academic Registrar

10. Responsibility for ensuring appropriate records of student registration, enrolment and attendance are maintained lies with the Academic Registrar (or their nominee). The Academic Registrar (or their nominee) will contact Faculties if insufficient attendance data is available or additional information is required.

Absence, non-attendance or non-engagement

11. The College expects students to make every effort to attend. Students who are unwell and/or likely to be contagious should not attend classes where they are likely to pass on an infection to others (e.g., COVID-19). The College reserves the right to ask students not to attend if they have reported illness or potential infection, and this will not impact attendance monitoring decisions.
12. The College expects students who miss a teaching event to endeavour to catch up with their learning. Where students expect to be absent for more than one week of timetabled learning, they are expected to make contact in writing with the relevant member of staff in their school i.e., their lecturer and arrange to ensure they can catch up on missed work. Students can apply for a [break in their studies](#) if needed. This will allow them to suspend their studies for up to two years, either for a period of two years or non-consecutive shorter periods that add up to a total of two years or less. However, they cannot apply for a break in studies of less than one term.
13. The Academic Registrar (or their nominee) reserves the right to suspend, withhold, or seek reimbursement of funding given by or via the College to students who do not meet the attendance or engagement expectations (see paragraph 6). The same principle applies to student visa sponsorship (see paragraph 18 onwards).
14. The College reserves the right to terminate a student's registration and withdraw them from their programme if they have consistently low attendance at mandatory teaching and learning events. The College will communicate withdrawal dates in writing (see paragraph 16)
15. The College will contact students to discuss their attendance and engagement if sufficient information is unavailable. If a student does not respond to these communications within the timescale requested, the Academic Registrar (or nominee) reserves the right to inform the relevant funding body or sponsor. The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will, where appropriate, withdraw a student's registration and enrolment. The College will communicate the date of withdrawal from a student's programme to them in writing.
16. The last day of attendance or engagement is the date the College is informed in writing that a student is withdrawing or suspending their studies. The College reserves the right to determine the date of withdrawal when there is a difference between the notified last date of attendance and the last date where there is evidence of the student engaging with their studies. This evidence includes lecture, seminar, lab session or examination attendance, a research student attending a one-to-one session with a supervisor, or assessment. If a student decides to stop attending, they must follow the Cancellation Procedure and consider the financial implications of withdrawal and/or suspension, as outlined in the Fees Policy. If the



College has initiated a student withdrawal, the College will determine which final date applies and this will be based on evidence of the last point at which the student engaged with their studies.

17. Irregular or intermittent engagement is insufficient justification for submitting a Mitigating Circumstance request for an upcoming assessment. (See [Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Procedure and Guidance](#)).

International students

18. Students issued with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) are in the United Kingdom primarily for the purpose of education and must attend and engage with all aspects of their studies. This means students must attend all timetabled sessions, and actively follow their programme of study. **It is expected that this attendance should be in person, on campus.**
19. Birkbeck's Student Visa Sponsor Licence Authorising Officer is the College Secretary and Clerk to the Governors. The College Secretary delegates to the Academic Registrar (or nominee) the operational responsibility for ensuring appropriate Policy, process and communications is in place to support attendance for students who have been issued a CAS by Birkbeck.
20. Within Registry Services, International Student Administration (ISA) implements the visa attendance requirements and related provisions of this Policy. They are supported by Student Engagement Officers (SEOs) in each Faculty. Several different data sources are used to identify students who are not attending.

Taught programme requirements – international students

21. Taught programmes are defined as Bachelor's and Master's degrees, Graduate and Postgraduate Diplomas and Master's of Research (MRes) and may have different monitoring requirements (see **Appendix 1** for definitions).
22. International students must attend all timetabled classes and engagement activity (see **Appendix 1**) within the teaching terms. International students who fail to attend at least one in-person timetabled teaching activity each teaching week will be contacted in line with the thresholds in **Appendix 2**.
23. Where the College contemplates withdrawing an international student's visa sponsorship, this will be subject to review and decision by the Academic Registrar (or their nominee) and the relevant Executive Dean (or their nominee) of the Faculty in which the international student is registered.
24. In addition to the thresholds in **Appendix 2**, if 60 teaching days have passed without the international student's engagement or attendance at the College, they will have

their visa sponsorship withdrawn, and their student record will be terminated. The College will communicate with international students before withdrawal, alerting them of attendance or engagement issues. These communications will include signposting them to the necessary support services (see **Appendix 2**).

25. During a period of retake or reassessment, the standard programme progression rules contained in the Common Award Scheme Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study permit international 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, international students must have in-person timetabled activities on campus in each term during this period to enable continued visa sponsorship. International students undertaking only reassessment or retaking a module without any timetabled sessions, are not entitled to visa sponsorship.

Taught student dissertation periods – international students

26. The College accepts that there will be minimal teaching points during an international student's dissertation period. However, the underlying principle is that all international students should have an academic engagement at least once every 60 teaching days. Engagement for international students who are in a dissertation period with no taught elements will be based on the international student's regular contact with a relevant member of the Faculty, including emails, meetings with dissertation supervisor, submission of written work and attendance at exams.

Postgraduate research requirements – international students

27. For international students enrolled on a postgraduate research programme, attendance is monitored via supervisor meetings and seminars. A minimum of three events should take place per term and at least two of these must be in-person meetings.
28. There may be a lower frequency of supervisory meetings or reduced teaching requirements after the end of the summer term, (July to September), as well as during the Writing Up period. However, the underlying requirement is that all international students have an academic attendance at least once every 60 teaching days.
29. The MRes Research programmes outlined in **Appendix 1** are monitored using the postgraduate research attendance requirements in this section. All other MRes programmes in the College use the taught attendance requirements.

Authorised absences – international students

30. International students can request a period of authorised absence for a maximum of 60 teaching days, provided the absence does not result in an extension to their expected programme completion date. During this absence, neither attendance nor

engagement is required or permitted, but international Student visa sponsorship continues. Approval for this period of absence is required from the relevant academic member of staff, for example the Course Director or Personal Tutor, and from ISA. Requests for authorised absences can be submitted via the International Students area in Moodle and should be submitted before the absence.

Off-Campus Study – international students

31. Off-Campus Study is defined as any period where an international student is away from the Bloomsbury campus and Student visa sponsorship continues. This is distinct from Authorised Absence as the student will continue to engage in their studies whilst away from campus. This can include mandatory field trips, study at overseas institutions, work placement, writing up of a final year dissertation, or essential research work outside the UK. Full requirements for students undertaking study at overseas institutions and work placements can be found in **Appendix 4**. For other forms of Off-Campus Study not covered prescriptively in this Policy, an appropriate form of engagement will be determined for each case and may include regular meetings with academic tutors or other College staff, attendance at exams or timetabled optional events, and submission of coursework
32. The length of any Off-Campus study should be proportionate to the work that is required to be undertaken and should not undermine the core requirement for a student to be in the UK studying a full-time programme. Request for Off-Campus study which are determined to not meet these requirements will be rejected and may result in the College withdrawing Student visa sponsorship. The College will consider a new period of sponsorship when the student is ready to resume their research at the College campus.
33. Attendance requirements outlined in **Appendix 2** and **Appendix 3** continue to apply during a period of Off-Campus study, but with the following exceptions:
 - a) International research students can complete their three meetings online.
 - b) International students on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes who undertake work placement must continue to attend all other timetabled, in-person teaching events during a period of Off-Campus Study. The only exception to this is if there is a mandatory requirement for the student to be away from the Bloomsbury Campus, for example, attending a mandatory field trip.
 - c) Final year Postgraduate Taught students may be permitted to write up their dissertation from overseas, provided this takes place outside the published term dates.
34. Requests for Off-Campus study must be submitted via the ASK query system no later than 15 working days (i.e. three weeks) before their intended departure date. The request will not be formally accepted until approved by the relevant Faculty representative and ISA.

35. 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 international Student Sponsor guidance. The student must report their return both to their Faculty and to ISA by the agreed date so that visa sponsorship can continue. If there are delays to their return, the student must inform their Faculty and ISA if they are unable to arrive by the agreed date. They should confirm this before the initial return date to determine if another return date can be agreed in advance.

Further reading

The following policies should be read by all students in conjunction with this Policy.

- [Terms and Conditions of Study](#)
- [College Policy on the Termination of Registration](#)
- [Fees Policy](#)
- [Birkbeck PGR code of practice](#)
- [Parental Leave for research students' policy](#)

Appendix 1: Definition of terms

Attendance (also see study style): Relates to timetabled learning, teaching or assessment events or activities that students must attend in person or online*. These are scheduled by the academic department and include field trips, laboratory work, lectures, seminars, supervisions, personal tutor sessions and practicals.

It also relates to participation in formative and summative assessments in class and attending examinations.

* Please note that there are specific **in-person** attendance requirements for Student visa holders and certain types of funding e.g., SLC maintenance loans. Online attendance may not be acceptable in these cases

Mandatory: Relates to any learning, teaching or assessment events or activities that are timetabled by the academic Faculty that students must attend

Engagement: Is a holistic term, relating to pre- or post-teaching event activities (e.g., pre-reading, watching pre-recorded videos or completing pre or post session work in Moodle) meeting with a member of staff for inductions, demonstrations, individual tutorials, learning support sessions or workshops and preparing and submitting all summative and formative assessed work on time.

Programme of study: The course on which a student is registered and enrolled.

Scheduled: Activities that are timetabled by the academic Faculty.

Term time: Refers to the period that the College is in session. Birkbeck programmes of study are typically taught across an academic year comprising three terms. All full-time Postgraduate Taught students (including MRes) and research students must study for a full calendar year, except during the Christmas and Easter closing periods. This allows postgraduate taught students to complete their dissertation in time for submission at the end of September (or in January for students who start their programme in January). Students who hold a Student/Tier 4 visa will be restricted to the [maximum working hours per week stated in their visa](#) during their studies. This might differ for some undergraduates, and postgraduate diploma students. Student should contact their academic school for more information.

Timetabled: Activities that are scheduled by the academic Faculty and are mandatory

Delivery method: Delivery method describes the way in which a module is delivered for a particular teaching group. The types of delivery method are outlined below. Please note that all modules have at least one teaching group, but some modules will have more than one teaching group. Each of a module's teaching groups must be assigned a single delivery method, however different teaching groups of the same module can have different delivery methods.

- **In person:** All mandatory timetabled events for the teaching group are in-person.
- **Online:** All mandatory timetabled events for the teaching group are online.
- **Mixed:** There is a mix of in-person and online mandatory events for the teaching group.
- **HyFlex:** The teaching group has mandatory timetabled events that are concurrently delivered in-person and online.
- **Project/Dissertation:** There are generally no mandatory timetabled events for the teaching group.

Study style (also see attendance): Study style describes what delivery methods students are expected to undertake when on a particular programme route. Each route for a programme will have a study style associated with it and any students enrolled on it will have the corresponding study style associated with their student record. The types of study styles are outlined below. All routes will have a single study style, but different routes on the same programme can have different study styles.

- **On campus - with no compliance-based attendance requirements:** Students will generally have teaching groups that have an in-person delivery method. There may be circumstances where these students select a teaching group with a different delivery method, but the expectation is that they will primarily be assigned to in-person teaching groups.
- **On campus - with compliance-based attendance requirements*:** Students should only be assigned to in-person teaching groups. **



- **Flexible learning:** Students can be assigned teaching groups with any type of delivery method.
- **Online:** Students can only be assigned teaching groups with an Online or HyFlex teaching method with the understanding that they will only be attending the online version of any HyFlex teaching groups.

** Compliance based attendance requirements are primarily related to students with a Student visa and students in receipt of an SLC maintenance loan*

*** Specific exceptions to this are managed via a waiver system subject to consultation with Registry Services (International Student Administration and Student Funding Administration)*

MRes monitoring: The following MRes programmes have a 120-credit research module and as such these are monitored using the Postgraduate Research Requirements: MRes Chemical Research, MRes Global Infectious Diseases, MRes Psychology and MRes Structural Biology*.

*MRes monitoring is specific to International Students.

Note: Delivery methods and study styles are taken from the current teaching model, and this is how Birkbeck currently defines this. [See the relevant ITS Sharepoint connect page for more information.](#)

Appendix 2: International Students on Taught Programmes Actions taken where minimum attendance requirements not met

The following table outlines the actions taken where there has not been in-person attendance for consecutive weeks. The College reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship prior to Stage Five, for example if the student has a poor overall attendance record but has not yet met missed six consecutive weeks.

Stage	Consecutive teaching weeks of absence (in person events)	Action
One	2	The international student is sent an email by Registry Services notifying them of missed timetabled events. The Faculty will be informed.
Two	3	<p>The international student is sent an additional email by Registry Services and a meeting between the Faculty and the international student is recommended. Its purpose is to remind the student of any external visa or SLC obligations, if applicable and to signpost relevant academic and student support services as appropriate. This can be an in person or online meeting, which the international student must attend.</p> <p>The international student may bring a supporter with them. The supporter may not be a legal representative and is not permitted to represent the student or speak on their behalf.</p>
Three	4	The international student is sent a further email by Registry Services notifying them of missed timetabled events. Registry Services will investigate and document whether appropriate support and intervention measures have been put in place in accordance with the Faculty and College policies and procedures, including consideration of mitigating circumstances.
Four	5	<p>Final warning email by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered with the Faculty.</p> <p>The international student may bring a supporter with them but not a legal representative. The supporter is not permitted to represent the international student or speak on their behalf.</p>
Five	6	The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates the student record for their programme of study.

Appendix 3: International Postgraduate Research Students Actions taken where minimum attendance requirements not met

The following table outlines the actions taken where there has not been academic attendance for consecutive timetabled events.

Consecutive missed events	Action
1 - Amber	The international student is sent email by Registry Services notifying them of missed events. The Faculty is informed and a meeting between the Faculty and the international student is recommended. The purpose of the meeting is to remind the international student of their visa obligations and to be signposted to relevant academic and student support services as appropriate. The international student may bring a supporter with them. The supporter may not be a legal representative and is not permitted to represent the international student or speak on their behalf.
2 - Red	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 international student support services may be engaged as appropriate to support the international student. Final email warning issued by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered with the Faculty. The international student may bring a supporter with them. The supporter may not be a legal representative and is not permitted to represent the international student or speak on their behalf.
3 - Final	The Academic Registrar withdraws the international student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study

Appendix 4 – Study at overseas institutions and work placements for international students

Where a programme permits an international student to spend time studying at another educational institution, Student visa sponsorship will continue provided the following requirements are met:

- a. the total time spent at the overseas educational institution does not exceed two terms in length, and
- b. the international student engages in line with the Off-Campus Attendance Requirements below.

Work placements

International students who have Student Visa sponsorship are permitted to complete a period of work placement, provided the following requirements are met:

- placement does not constitute more than 50% of the total length of the course
- placement is an assessed and integral part of the course.

The student must complete a Work Placement Agreement, which must also be signed off by the placement provider and returned to ISA, prior to commencing the placement.

Attendance during placement

In addition to attendance at taught sessions, international students on a work placement are required to meet in person with a relevant academic on a regular basis, outlined in the table below. International students who are not attending Birkbeck modules at the same time as engaging in a work placement will be required to attend academic meetings more regularly.

Work placement requirements for international students

- Term-time: Attending work placement and studying Birkbeck modules: **Once per term**
- Term-time: Attending work placement only: **Once per month**
- Summer months: Postgraduate students attending work placement: **Minimum once every 60 teaching days**

International students who have a student visa can also complete work which is not assessed as part of their academic course. This could be a short-term role, a work placement or internship. They can undertake this work in line with their allocated 20 hours per week permitted under their visa conditions. No attendance monitoring is required as part of work that is not assessed as part of their course.