

## Student Learning Engagement Policy

### 1. PRINCIPLES

The aim of this Policy is to support student engagement with learning, to enable students to stay in university and achieve success in their studies, how it monitors that learning engagement and what it will do where students are not engaging. It replaces the University's previous Attendance Monitoring Policy.

Students are expected to engage with their programme of study, which includes attendance at lectures, seminars and any other timetabled teaching sessions. Learning engagement also includes students' wider engagement with learning, which includes the use of the virtual learning environment Canvas, borrowing or accessing appropriate learning materials such as journals, library books, and online resources. It is clear that student success – at module level; in progressing to the next stage of the programme; and in overall degree classification – is dependent upon students engaging with these learning opportunities made available to them.

The University captures data on the above indicators of engagement to assist it in supporting students, and to enable early academic or support intervention where those indicators might suggest that there could be issues hindering a student's ability to engage which the University could work with the student to address. For example, the University requires students to swipe their campus cards to register attendance in teaching sessions, and it draws on data from Canvas and the library and presents this data to students and relevant staff via its system Engage.

The University has a statutory obligation to monitor attendance for those students who are subject to a Tier 4 visa, and to withdraw any student who is not compliant with the terms of that visa by not attending for a period of six weeks or more. Notwithstanding the supportive approach outlined above, the University will comply with this obligation. In addition, some Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies do set threshold requirements for attendance for the professionally-qualifying programmes that they approve, and again students who breach these attendance requirements will be withdrawn from the University. Longer periods of non-engagement on any programme may lead to a Faculty determining that the student is not engaged with study, and that an appropriate decision would be to withdraw them from the programme. That is a bespoke, individual decision which considers the student's engagement and the known circumstances which apply in that case.

The University recognises the barriers to engagement and success which may exist, as referenced in the University's Access and Participation Plan, and in its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The operation of this Policy will take these factors into consideration, and reporting on withdrawals under this Policy will explicitly reflect on them.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

**Students** are responsible for engaging with their learning to increase their chances of success. This includes swiping into teaching sessions to register attendance, but also engaging with wider learning opportunities made available to them. Where a student cannot attend due to factors beyond their control, for example illness, and this is over an extended period, it is the student's responsibility to log this with those teaching them, and if required at any point, to provide evidence. Where a student is not fit to study, they should consider other options such as a leave of absence.

**Academic Registry** is responsible for this Policy and for the gathering of attendance data and the wider student engagement reporting via Engage. Detailed student attendance reports will still be available, but these will now be supplemented by a wider regular engagement report for Faculties and other key users, which will summarise a student's overall engagement and give headline figures for attendance and other engagement data.

**Faculties (and the equivalent roles at the University of Sunderland in London), including module and programme leaders and personal tutors,** are responsible for considering student learning engagement reports on a regular basis, intervening where necessary to address concerns about learning engagement, referring students to relevant support services (taking into account guidance in the When to Refer document) including the Student Progression Team in Student Journey for first year or IFY students, or where there is long-term non-engagement and efforts to support the student have not remedied this, withdrawing students from the University.

Any such decision is to be based on the broad picture of learning engagement (other than where advised by the University's Immigration Compliance team, where non-attendance alone will trigger withdrawal), and will be a judgement based on a view of the student's likely future ability to succeed on the programme. For example, a student who attends, but does so minimally and does not access any learning materials or engage with their learning in any other way may be withdrawn. Equally, a student whose attendance is challenging but whose use of online resources and other learning engagement is significant, and who has compelling circumstances to explain attendance might be further supported rather than withdrawn at that point.

Withdrawal should not be any sooner than six complete weeks of non-engagement without good cause, and if there are any fixed timescales (for example, because of professional body requirements) these need to be clearly communicated to students through programme handbooks. Decisions about withdrawal should be made by a Head of School, on recommendation of the Programme Leader, accompanied by relevant evidence of learning engagement and what has been done to intervene/support the student. The student has a right to challenge this decision through the University's Complaints Procedure.

The **University's Campuses in London and Hong Kong, and Transnational Partners** may have variant approaches in detail to suit local conditions, but these must follow the Principles set out in this Policy, and those local arrangements must be documented and communicated to students. Sanctions other than withdrawal for non-engagement are not permitted.

**Student Journey** will be responsible for working with Faculties through its existing student support functions, and for early intervention around learning engagement concerns to the groups supported by the Student Progression team. **Legal and Governance** (and equivalent in London) will be responsible for the oversight and assurance of compliance with Tier 4 visa requirements, and advising where students will need to be withdrawn on the grounds of having breached their visa by six weeks non-attendance. **The University of Sunderland Students' Union** can provide further support and guidance in relation to these regulations – see <https://www.sunderlandsu.co.uk/advice>

### 3. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Other policies and procedures which may be relevant can be found via the Student Handbook - <https://my.sunderland.ac.uk/display/SH/Student+handbook>. These include the Academic Regulations, and Policies on Extenuating Circumstances, Leaves of Absence, Fitness to Study, Fitness to Practise and Student Complaints.