

Attendance Management Guidance for Sponsored Student Visa holders

Background

UWS, in line with our Curriculum Framework, are moving to a position of hybrid delivery and supportive interventions in order to improve the student experience and retention rates. We are developing a Student Engagement Policy that moves away from punitive outcomes and focuses on supporting the diverse needs of our student population without the imposition of mandatory (and arguably arbitrary) attendance or engagement thresholds.

However, in order to maintain our significant international student population, we are also responsible for meeting the United Kingdom Visa and Immigration (UKVI) requirements. These state that we must monitor visa holding students' engagement and report non-engagement if these students are no longer in attendance and sponsorship has been withdrawn. Failure to monitor student attendance effectively is classed as a serious compliance breach and could result in the University's sponsorship licence being withdrawn.

UKVI Requirements

Enrolment - All Sponsored students are required to be enrolled. Changes to enrolment status must be made through Registry to ensure the University has an accurate record of all currently enrolled Sponsored students.

UKVI may ask the University at any time to complete a spreadsheet showing the details of each of Sponsored Students attendance/absence. If requested, this must be sent electronically to UKVI within 21 days of the date of the request, providing all the information requested.

It is acknowledged that the level, nature and timing of attendance points will differ according to discipline, structure and programme type. All programmes, in accordance with the UWS Curriculum Framework, will provide an appropriate level of on-campus activity which will be used to monitor attendance.

Full-time Study

All Sponsored students must be enrolled for full-time study. Students who are in the UK must attend all in-person classes as well as engaging with the online elements of their course. To show a student's attendance and engagement with their studies, the attendance points must be spread across the academic year and include those which indicate the student's presence on campus. A minimum requirement of two in-person attendance recordings per rolling month is required.

On campus timetabled activities will be used as the basis for attendance monitoring.

Examples of expected attendance points include:

- a lesson, lecture, tutorial or seminar, face to face and/or online
- attending a supervisory meeting
- lab work
- a test, examination or assessment
- PhD progress review
- a meeting with a personal tutor
- a research-method meeting, writing-up seminars or doctoral workshops
- an oral examination (viva)
- submitting coursework
- an interim dissertation, coursework or report

The University must continue to monitor Sponsored student's attendance while they are:-

- On Work Placements
- External Research
- Attending Study Abroad

Non-Attendance

The maximum period of non-attendance before intervention takes place must not exceed 60 days in duration (30 days for students studying remotely). The University is required to report any students who have missed 10 consecutive expected points of contacts without explicit prior permission. At that point we are required to withdraw sponsorship of the student.

Non-attendance and absences must be recorded and acted upon within a reasonable timescale. UKVI requires the University to report within 10 working days from the final notification that a student has been withdrawn from the University. Other reporting is required when a student has changed their course of study or has had authorised leave of absence for more than 60 days. Schools must notify Registry when a Sponsored student is to be withdrawn and/or reported. Where a student has missed expected contact points and there are no mitigating circumstances, or where there are other concerns regarding a student's absence this should be raised and investigated by the School.

Authorised Absence

In some exceptional circumstances a Sponsored student may be permitted an 'authorised absence' this must be managed carefully. During an 'authorised absence' the student will not be placed on an interruption and they must be able to complete their programme within their existing period of leave. Sponsored students are not permitted more than a total of 60 days continued absence from study in an academic year.

Recording Attendance Information

The University is subject to compliance auditing by UKVI and is required to keep evidence showing that Sponsored student attendance monitoring has taken place and that any concerns about attendance have been investigated. Attendance points will be monitored by tracking students against their timetabled activities. Exception reports (highlighting non-attendance) will be readily available via a central reporting tool. Schools are responsible for monitoring student attendance and for taking action to confirm a student's status. This information should be clear and easily retrievable. Records should be kept electronically. The attendance records and any relevant associated information must be easily accessible in case of a UKVI enquiry or audit and should be available for Sponsored students up to a year after they have completed their programme.

Writing Up

If a student resides in the UK whilst writing up, there must be regular contact with their supervisor and their contact details (including telephone numbers) must be kept up to date. Where a student chooses to write up their thesis/ dissertation in their home country, the University will inform the student that their sponsorship will be withdrawn and notification will be made to UKVI.

Procedure Author – Head of Registry

Procedure Owner – Vice Principal Learning, Teaching & Students

Parent Policy Statement – Student Experience Policy Statement

Public Access or Staff Only Access – Public

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Changes and Reason for Changes – New Procedure