Attendance Management Guidance for Sponsored Student Visa Holders

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Background

The University has a Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure that provides a supportive learning environment which actively facilitates student success.

The University is responsible for meeting the United Kingdom Visa and Immigration (UKVI) requirements. These state that the University must monitor visa holding students' engagement and report non-engagement if students are no longer in attendance and sponsorship has been withdrawn.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effectively is classed as a serious compliance breach and could result in the University's sponsorship licence being withdrawn.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 for full-time study. Changes to enrolment status must be made through Registry.

Attendance - UKVI may ask the University at any time to provide details of each of Sponsored Student's attendance/absence. If requested, this must be sent to UKVI within 21 days of the date of the request, providing all required information.

The level, nature and timing of required attendance points differs across programmes. 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 contact points must be recorded per month.

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

Examples of expected contact 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 continues to monitor Sponsored Student's attendance while they are:
- on work placements;
- undertaking external research; and
- attending study abroad.

Non-Attendance

Sponsor guidance states that the maximum period of non-attendance before intervention takes place must not exceed 60 days in duration. The University is required to report any Sponsored Students who have missed 10 consecutive expected contact points without explicit prior permission. At that point the University is 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. Reporting is also required when a student has changed their programme, moved campus, or has Authorised Interruption of Studies. Schools must notify Registry when a Sponsored Student is to be withdrawn and/or reported. When a student has missed expected contact points and there are no known mitigating circumstances, or where there are other concerns regarding a student's engagement, the School will investigate to determine if any action is required.

Authorised Absence

Students are not expected to be absent from teaching sessions during term-time for the purpose of holiday travel or attending social occasions (e.g. weddings). In exceptional circumstances a brief period of authorised absence, limited to a maximum of ten working days leave during term-time in one academic year may be permitted by the School. If the 'authorised absence' period is granted, the student must be able to complete the programme within their existing visa expiry date and a visa extension cannot be considered to offset this leave.

Students must ensure the request for authorised absence is submitted at least two weeks before the start date of the proposed period of authorised absence.

There may be exceptional instances where an authorised absence request is made for more than ten working days or requested within a very short time frame (less than two weeks), and these requests will be reviewed on an individual basis by the School. It is recommended that student visa holders only take leave during the University official holiday periods in line with their visa requirements.

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 are monitored by tracking students against their timetabled activities. Exception reports (highlighting non-attendance) are available via a central reporting tool. Schools are responsible for monitoring student attendance and for taking action to confirm a student's status.

Writing Up of Thesis

If a student resides in the UK whilst writing up a thesis, there must be regular contact with their supervisor and their contact details 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.