University of Greenwich

Student Engagement Policy and Procedure

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The Student Engagement Policy and Procedure is an attendance policy that is both understanding of the issues and pressures facing students and enables the university to ensure that all students are fully engaged with their studies.	

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1. Introduction

This policy takes account of students' individual circumstances, whilst providing a supportive learning environment which enables all students to achieve their full potential.

The University has a duty to monitor engagement and to support students to complete their programme of study. The purpose of the policy and its associated procedure is to provide clarity for students on the expectations relating to 'engagement' and what action may be taken where levels of engagement drop to unsatisfactory levels.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures summarised in Section 10: *Related policies and procedures*.

Definitions:

1. **Taught Student** – This term applies to those students studying on an Undergraduate or Postgraduate programme which is based on engagement with timetabled sessions.
2. **Distance Learner** – This term applies to those students who are registered for a programme that does not meet physically but uses online means only through which to deliver the teaching and associated learning.
3. **Flexible Learner** – This term applies to those students who are registered for a flexible degree programme that is delivered predominantly online with one day of study on campus.
4. **Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students** – This term applies to those students undertaking a research degree where there is a varied amount of on campus engagement.
5. **Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Students** – This term applies to those in employment who are studying on an apprenticeship course which is based on off-the-job training and includes engagement with timetabled sessions.
6. **VLE** – This term stands for Virtual Learning Environment and in most cases refers to the use of Moodle.

2. Scope

2.1 The policy applies to the following groups of students:

- All students registered on a taught or postgraduate research programme that is awarded and wholly delivered by the University of Greenwich.
- All students registered on a Distance Learning or Flexible Degree programme delivered by the University of Greenwich.
- All students registered on a taught dual degree programme that is awarded by the University of Greenwich while they are being taught at the University of Greenwich.
- Students studying on a programme at the Medway School of Pharmacy.
- Higher and Degree apprentices who are sponsored by their employers to undertake a degree apprenticeship at the University of Greenwich.

2.2 The university has a number of other categories of student registration, which are not subject to this Policy:

- Students registered on a programme that is delivered wholly or in part by a UK partner institution, except where its application may be stipulated under the relevant franchise agreement.
- Students registered at one of our international collaborative partners.
- Students at University of Greenwich International College (UGIC).

2.3 Higher and Degree Apprenticeship courses follow the process for taught students with the additions/exceptions set out in Appendix A.

2.4 Some programmes of study at the university are subject to attendance requirements specified by professional bodies and other external organisations. Where this is more rigorous than set by the University, the requirement of the professional body will prevail.

2.5 Where necessary, variations from the policy may be introduced with appropriate university level agreement based on specific programme requirements, which must be indicated in programme documentation.

3. Key Principles

3.1 For the purposes of this policy, engagement will be measured by point of contact, which is defined as follows:

- Face-to-face teaching for taught students - attendance at timetabled sessions within a calendar week. If required by particular faculties and/or the programme, attendance at lectures can also be considered as a point of contact.
- Online engagement – engagement at module level with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) within a calendar week.
- Taught postgraduate students at project/dissertation stage – meetings with supervisor.
- For research students - regular supervisory meetings.
- For EdD/MRes students – for the taught element of the degree programme attendance will be measured according to requirements set out for taught students within this policy; for the research element of the degree programme attendance will be measured according to requirements set out for postgraduate research students within this policy.
- Higher and Degree apprentices – see Appendix A.

3.2 All timescales referred to in this document are measured in 'calendar days' which means every day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays, except for university closure days such as public holidays and Christmas closures. Full details of term dates and university closures can be found here https://docs.gre.ac.uk/rep/sas/term-dates

3.3 Attendance and engagement records will be held centrally in a searchable system. Faculties are responsible for the management and maintenance of attendance and engagement records for all students on modules run by that faculty.

4. Authorised Absence

4.1 The University recognises that, occasionally, students may be unable to meet the minimum attendance or engagement requirements due to unforeseen circumstances.

4.2 If a student is unable to attend face-to-face teaching or engage with the VLE as detailed in section 5, they must notify the University; if this is not done, the absence will count as a missed point of contact.

4.3 For absences of **more than three calendar days**, students must complete an authorised absence form. This form must be authorised by their Programme Leader or research supervisor and lodged with the faculty Retention and Success Officer and, where relevant, the Research & Enterprise Training Institute.

4.4 Where possible, a request for authorised absence should be submitted in advance. Authorisation for unplanned absences may be submitted up to 7 calendar days after the last day of absence. Requests for authorised absence submitted after 7 calendar days may not be considered.

4.5 Authorised absence forms must be supported by [appropriate evidence](#).

4.6 The university will consider requests for authorised absence supported by evidence that demonstrates why the absence should be permitted. All requests will be treated sensitively, and the university will try to accommodate all reasonable requests. However, where an absence may have a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress, or where absence levels are already of concern, such requests may not be granted.

5. Measuring attendance and engagement

Taught students – face-to-face teaching

5.1 Attendance will usually be recorded and monitored in **at least one timetabled session per module per week**. These could be workshops, seminars, tutorials etc. A student attached to four modules would therefore have at least four contact points per week.

5.2 Attendance during the first two taught weeks following the start of a cohort will be recorded but will not be used to escalate notifications for non-attendance.

5.3 An entire week with no attendance at any module will normally be considered as a missed contact.

5.4 Where a taught student is studying overseas as part of a dual degree, Erasmus exchange or on study abroad, responsibility for recording attendance will lie with the partner institution, who must inform the student's faculty of four consecutive weeks missed contact within 7 calendar days and supply attendance records on request within 7 calendar days.

Taught students at project/dissertation stage (postgraduate programmes only)

5.5 The engagement of students solely studying the project/dissertation module of their postgraduate Masters degree is monitored through regular meetings with their supervisor (either face-to-face or online). Each supervisory meeting is considered to be a point of contact.

5.6 Students are normally expected to engage with their supervisor on a fortnightly basis. Two consecutive weeks without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.

Taught students on work or clinical/professional placement

5.7 Where a taught student is undertaking a work placement, regular contact with the placement tutor or Faculty placement team will serve as evidence of ongoing attendance and engagement. Such contact is usually expected to take place on a fortnightly basis. Two consecutive weeks without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.

5.8 Where a student is attending a clinical or other professional placement (e.g. nursing, social work, teaching) in order to satisfy a PSRB professional practice requirement, attendance will be monitored on a weekly basis (in accordance with published programme regulations).

5.9 If a student loses their placement for any reason they should let their faculty employability office know immediately, so that alternative arrangements may be put in place, allowing the student to continue to engage with their studies where appropriate.

Postgraduate Research (PGR) students

5.10 The engagement of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students is monitored through regular meetings with members of their supervisory team (either face-to-face or online). Each supervisory meeting is considered to be a point of contact.

5.11 Students are normally expected to engage with a member of their supervisory team on a monthly basis. An entire calendar month without a point of contact will normally be considered as a missed contact.

5.12 In exceptional circumstances, contact with the Faculty/Departmental research coordinator or administrator can also be considered as a point of contact.

5.13 PGR students are expected to demonstrate engagement at all points up to submission of their draft thesis for examination. Once a student has submitted their draft thesis for examination, they will only be required to submit evidence of engagement again if they receive an outcome of:

- Major amendments
- Re-submission
- Write-up for MPhil

5.14 Students will record contact points/supervisory meetings on the PULSE system, which will be used as a record of engagement.

5.15 If a student fails to undertake and/or record a contact point or meeting on the PULSE system, this will usually be considered as a missed contact.

5.16 Engagement will usually be demonstrated through face-to-face supervisory meetings, but where this is impractical[1], contact via online means (e.g. Skype, Teams or Zoom), telephone, email, and other means may also be accepted.

5.17 Contact must be made and recorded regardless of the physical location of the student.

Distance learning and Flexible degree students

5.18 It is recognised that the frequency and level of engagement required on a distance learning or flexible degree programme may vary according to the programme set-up, and the circumstances of individual students.

5.19 For students registered on distance learning or flexible degree programmes, engagement will be determined and monitored by the programme team based on by the prevailing programme structure. The university retains the right to withdraw a student for lack of engagement, in line with the escalation procedure for taught students detailed in section 6.

Students' Union Officers

5.20 Where a student is on a student visa undertaking an official role such as an elected Students' Union full-time Officer, regular contact with the Faculty Retention and Success Officer will serve as evidence of ongoing engagement.

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[1] For example, where the student is on an agreed assignment overseas or away from campus

6. Engagement monitoring escalation procedure

The university will make every effort to avoid having to initiate the formal engagement escalation procedure. However, if informal attempts to contact and re-engage a student are unsuccessful, the following procedure will apply:

Taught students on a student visa

6.1   After a complete calendar week[2] of unauthorised missed contact, an email will be sent notifying the student that their level of engagement has dropped and requesting that they contact their Personal Tutor/Retention and Success Officer to discuss any issues or support needs.

6.2   After a second consecutive week[3] of unauthorised missed contact, a second email will be sent warning the student that another missed week will likely result in them being withdrawn and requiring them to contact their Personal Tutor/Retention and Success Officer to resolve any issues.

6.3   After a third consecutive week[3] of unauthorised missed contact, the student will be contacted directly by their Faculty Retention and Success Officer (RSO) and informed that they will be withdrawn unless a request for interruption has been submitted within 14 calendar days and subsequently granted.

6.4   During this 14-day window, if a student supplies new evidence to support their lack of engagement, the faculty may use discretion to consider this. Where appropriate, this may halt withdrawal proceedings, if it is deemed that the evidence is sufficiently strong to retrospectively grant authorised absence, and the student is able to catch-up with their studies.

6.5   If a student fails to submit a request for interruption within 14 calendar days, a fourth and final email will advise the student that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect and their student record will be updated.

6.6   If a student submits a request for interruption within 14 calendar days that is subsequently not granted, a fourth and final email will advise the student that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect and their student record will be updated.

6.7   Repeated patterns of intermittent unauthorised missed contact may also be considered sufficient grounds to initiate a withdrawal.

All other Taught students

6.8   After two complete calendar weeks[3] of unauthorised missed contact, an email will be sent notifying the student that their level of engagement has dropped and requesting that they contact their Personal Tutor/Retention and Success Officer to discuss any issues or support needs.

6.9   After a second fortnight[3] of unauthorised missed contact, a second email will be sent warning the student that further unauthorised absences will likely result in them being withdrawn and requiring them to contact their Personal Tutor/Retention and Success Officer to resolve any issues.

6.10   After a further week[3] of unauthorised missed contact, the student will be contacted directly by their Faculty Retention and Success Officer (RSO) and informed that they will be withdrawn unless a request for interruption has been submitted within 14 calendar days and subsequently granted.

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6.13 If a student submits a request for interruption within 14 calendar days that is subsequently not granted, a fourth and final email will advise the student that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect and their student record will be updated.

6.14 Repeated patterns of intermittent unauthorised missed contact may also be considered sufficient grounds to initiate a withdrawal.

Post Graduate Research (PGR) students

6.15 After a complete month of non-engagement, an email will be sent notifying the student that their level of engagement has dropped and requesting that they contact their supervisor to discuss any issues they might have. The email will be copied to the student's first supervisor.

6.16 After a second consecutive month of non-engagement, a second email will be sent warning the student that another missed month will likely result in them being withdrawn and requiring them to contact their supervisor to resolve any issues. The email will also be copied to the student's first supervisor. Where the student is also a member of staff, the line manager will also be copied in.

6.17 After a third consecutive month of non-engagement, the student will be contacted directly by their Faculty Retention and Success Officer (RSO) and informed that the process of withdrawal will begin unless a request for interruption has been submitted within 14 calendar days and subsequently granted. The RSO will liaise with the Research & Enterprise Training Institute to ascertain whether a request for interruption has been made.

6.18 If a student submits a request for interruption within 14 calendar days that is subsequently not granted, a fourth and final email will advise the student that they will be withdrawn with immediate effect. This withdrawal should happen no later than the 4 calendar days after the decision not to grant the interruption.

6.19 In the case of research students where the student is also a member of staff, prior to further action being taken a meeting will be convened between the student, supervisor and line manager, normally within 14 calendar days of the end of the monitoring period.

7. Appeals against a withdrawal

Grounds for Appeal

7.1 Students have the right to appeal against a withdrawal by default on the following grounds:

(i) That there are extenuating circumstances relating to ill health or personal difficulties which the student was unable to raise prior to or during the escalation procedure detailed in Section 6; and/or

(ii) That the information held by the Faculty relating to the student's attendance and/or engagement is incomplete or inaccurate, and the student was not in a position to correct this information at an earlier stage;

Students wishing to appeal must show a compelling reason why this information could not be made available before the decision to withdraw was reached and provide documentary evidence in support. Where the student could have made the information available prior to the decision being made, such evidence cannot normally be accepted as grounds for appeal.

7.2 No appeal can be made where an interruption of study has been requested and granted during the Engagement Monitoring Escalation process but has been rejected by the student.

How to Appeal

7.3 Appeals must be received no later than **14 calendar days** after the date of email notification of the withdrawal. An acknowledgement email will be issued on receipt of the appeal.

7.4 Appeals received after the 14 calendar day deadline will be deemed out of time and will not normally be considered. A Completion of Procedures letter including details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 8) will be issued.

7.5 In exceptional cases only, a late appeal may be considered provided that it is accompanied by detailed and supported reasons for the late submission.

7.6 The appeal should be submitted in writing using the Student Engagement Policy Appeal Form. Procedures for submitting the form are outlined in the accompanying Guidance for Students.

7.7 Original evidence must be provided in support of the appeal and listed on the Appeal Form. If evidence is unable to be provided with the appeal form, it must be submitted no later than 7 calendar days after submission of the appeal form.

Consideration of the Appeal

7.8 The appeal will be reviewed by the appropriate senior Faculty colleague a response to the student will be provided within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

7.9 The following decisions can be made:

(i) To dismiss the appeal if it is determined that no substantive case has been established. The appeal procedure within the University will be at an end, in which case the student will be given the reasons for the decision in writing. This will contain a Completion of Procedures statement including details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 8).

(ii) To uphold the appeal and request Student & Academic Services to reinstate the student's registration with or without a recommendation that the student be granted a retrospective period of authorised absence.

The Faculty may specify conditions of reinstatement and the consequences of the student failing to adhere to these conditions. Should subsequent failure to adhere to these conditions result in the student's withdrawal, the student has a further right of appeal on the grounds detailed in 7.1 above.

(iii) To rescind the withdrawal decision and offer a period of interruption in light of relevant issues which may be raised in the appeal submission.

If the offer of interruption is rejected by the student, the original withdrawal decision stands. It will also be deemed that the offer has been declined if the student fails to respond by the deadline. The student will be given a Completion of Procedures letter containing details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 8).

If the issues raised within the appeal submission are considered to potentially impact on the student's ability to study on return to the university, the Faculty may refer the case to the Fitness to Study procedure.

(iv) To refer the appeal to a meeting of the Engagement Policy Appeals Committee. See Appendix B for further details.

8. External Adjudication

Students who have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they remain dissatisfied with a final decision of the University providing that their complaint is eligible under its Rules, which are available on the OIA website at http://www.oiahe.org.uk.

Students will need to send to the OIA a Scheme Application Form within **twelve months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter. A Scheme Application Form can be downloaded from the OIA website.

9. Student Guidance

- Engagement - Student Guidance

Students can seek independent, free, and impartial advice from the GSU Advice Service:

https://www.greenwichsu.co.uk/advice/

10. Related policies and procedures

- Sponsorship of International Students for Visa Purposes
- Fitness to Practise Procedure
- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure
- Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure
- Withdrawal and Interruption Policy and Procedures
- Pregnancy and Maternity Policy for Students
- Research Student's Supervisors Handbook

Appendix A

Higher and Degree Apprentices

The procedure for monitoring the engagement of higher and degree apprentices will follow the processes set out for students on taught programmes of study in the main body of the Student Engagement Procedure with the additions set out below:

1. Authorised absence

1.1 An apprentice must seek approval if they wish to take leave for a period up to 4 weeks. Approval needs to be sought from the programme lead and employer using the absence procedures of both the university and the employer. Authorisation cannot be granted unless the programme lead and employer are in agreement.

1.2 Apprentices can, in conjunction with their employers, apply for a formal break in learning where they need to take a period of leave from work in excess of 4 weeks. The duration of the apprenticeship will be adjusted in line with the period of authorised absence.

2. Measuring attendance and engagement

2.1 There is a minimum requirement of 85% attendance for all apprentices in timetabled sessions. Attendance and engagement with university-based study days will be monitored in accordance with the sections in the main policy and procedure relating to taught students.

2.3 The definition of off-the-job (OTJ) training where engagement must be monitored includes teaching of theory, practical training such as shadowing, mentoring, industry visits and participation in competitions along with learning support and time spent writing assessments. Apprentices are asked to record non-timetabled sessions in their OTJ Moodle and these are reviewed at tripartite reviews.

3. Engagement monitoring escalation procedure

3.1 After a second consecutive week of absence or non-engagement, the RSO will report the apprentice's status to the Programme Leader and Apprenticeship Manager. The Apprenticeship Manager may at this stage contact the apprentice's employer.

The Apprenticeship Programme Leader determines whether the missed contact is authorised. Support and intervention arrangements may be required to support apprentices to catch up on their work.

3.2 After a third consecutive week of absence or non-engagement a meeting will be arranged with the apprentice, employer and Apprenticeship Manager to discuss whether a break in learning is required. This replaces sections 6.4 to 6.7 above for taught students.

3.3 If an apprentice submits a request for a break in learning this must also be submitted to the respective Apprenticeship Manager.

3.4 The Apprenticeship Manager is responsible for notifying the apprentice's employer in the event of any concerns regarding engagement in relation to informal and formal progress reviews.

Appendix B

Engagement Appeals Committee

1. <u>Membership</u>

1.1 The Engagement Appeals Committee will normally comprise:

For students on taught or distance/flexible learning programmes of study:
- Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee (Chair)
- One member of Academic Council or its sub-committees
- Students' Union Officer (or nominee)

For students on postgraduate research programmes of study:
- Pro Vice-Chancellor or appropriate nominee
- One member of the Research and Enterprise Committee or its sub-committees
- Students' Union Officer (or nominee)

1.2 No Committee member should work in the School within which the student's programme of study resides.

1.3 No member will have had any previous involvement with the student in matters directly relating to the appeal.

1.4 Academic Registry will appoint a Secretary to the Engagement Appeals Committee. The Secretary is not a member but will be present throughout to advise on regulatory matters and take an accurate record of the meeting.

2. <u>Procedures of the Engagement Appeals Committee</u>

2.1 The student will be given a minimum notice period of 7 calendar days of the date, time and manner[4] of the meeting. The notice of the meeting will be accompanied by copies of all documentation to be used in consideration of the appeal.

2.2 The student will have the right to be heard in person by the Engagement Appeals Committee and to be accompanied by a friend or supporter of their choice or a representative of the Students' Union. The student must inform the Secretary of the name of the accompanying person in writing in advance of the meeting.

2.3 The student may invite witnesses in support of their case providing that the Secretary is informed at least 5 calendar days in advance of the meeting.

2.4 The Committee may deal with the case in the student's absence if they fail to appear without reasonable excuse or notify the Secretary that they do not wish to appear. The Chair will determine what constitutes a reasonable excuse.

2.5 For students on taught programmes of study, a senior member of staff from the Faculty will be invited to present a response to the appeal. The Faculty may also invite witnesses providing that they have informed the Secretary at least 5 calendar days in advance of the meeting.

2.6 For postgraduate research students, a representative will be appointed by RETI to respond to the appeal. They may also invite witnesses providing that they have informed the Secretary at least 5 calendar days in advance of the meeting.

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[4] The meeting will take place by the most appropriate method, either on campus or via video conference.

2.7 During the hearing:

- The Chair will outline the procedure of the meeting to both parties
- The Chair will ask the student to present their case and to introduce any witnesses
- Members of the Committee may ask the student and witnesses questions
- The Chair will ask the Faculty/RETI to respond to the appeal
- Members of the committee may ask questions of the Faculty/RETI
- All parties will be asked to leave the meeting and the Committee will consider the evidence in private

2.8 The Committee may request supplementary information from the student or the Faculty/RETI within a given deadline before reaching a decision, which will be confirmed in writing. On consideration of any supplementary information, the Committee will determine its final decision within 14 calendar days of the receipt of the supplementary information.

2.9 After considering the evidence, the Engagement Appeals Committee may decide as follows:

a) That the appeal is rejected and the original decision stands, in which case the student will be given reasons for the decision.

The student will be notified in writing by the Secretary within 7 calendar days. The decision of the Appeal Board will be deemed final and the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter including details of the OIA Scheme (see section 8 of the main policy).

b) That the appeal is referred back to the Faculty to reconsider the original decision taking into account such information or findings as the Engagement Appeals Committee may have presented. The Faculty will have the power to confirm or amend the original decision.

The student will be notified in writing by the Secretary within 7 calendar days. The outcome of the referred decision will be provided to the Secretary within 14 calendar days and will include the reasons for the decision made. The student will then be notified in writing of the final appeal outcome by the Secretary within 7 calendar days of receipt of the referred decision. The referred decision will be deemed final, and the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter including details of the OIA Scheme (see section 8 of the main policy).