

## **Academic Policy Statement APS 25**

### **Middlesex University - Student Attendance Monitoring**

#### **1. General overview**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and staff are aware of the importance of student attendance on, and engagement with, their academic programmes of study.
- 1.2 Student absence is of concern to the University for the following reasons:
  - It may reduce the student's opportunity to learn
  - It may compromise their potential achievement
  - In some cases, student absence may compromise the opportunities others have to learn
- 1.3 Student Absence may be a sign that the students are having difficulty in managing the demands of the course and early action should be taken to offer support to such students with regard to academic, health and wellbeing and financial implications.
- 1.4 This policy is relevant to the whole student body including pre-sessional, undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes – recognising that arrangements for monitoring of attendance should be appropriate to the method of programme delivery. There are specific and additional requirements for those students sponsored under Tier 4 of the Points Based Immigration scheme enabling the University to meet its requirements as a Tier 4 Sponsor.
- 1.5 Some programmes have attendance requirements in addition to those outlined in this policy, particularly those that are accredited by Professional Bodies.
- 1.6 This policy covers all students, including any international students that we have sponsored for a Tier 4 visa. The policy will state when a section covers any differing attendance rules relating to Tier 4 students that must be adhered to because of UKVI regulations.
- 1.7 This policy relates to all Middlesex University campuses (with the exception of UKVI regulations on attendance which apply to Tier 4 sponsored students studying in the UK only). However, an exception may be formally agreed by the Chair of Assurance Committee for Middlesex University overseas campuses, and these agreed exceptions will be expected to follow this policy in the context of local resource and systems. This policy does not apply to franchise provision.

#### **2. Regulatory context**

See appendix 1 for relevant related UKVI guidance.

- 2.1 **University regulation C2.1:** Every student must attend those teaching sessions (i.e. lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, studios, etc.) and undertake such assignments as specified in the regulations governing the module to be eligible for formal assessment and/or continuation on their programme of study.
- 2.2 **University regulation C2.6:** Where a student fails to attend all sessions within a programme for a consecutive period of 4 weeks or longer, without good reason, the University may deem the student to be withdrawn from study on that programme, and cease to be an enrolled student of the University.

### **3 Principles**

- 3.1 Students are expected to attend all timetabled or scheduled events for the modules or programmes that they are enrolled on. Students should aim for 100% attendance.
- 3.2 The University should be informed of any absence and the reasons for this. Students should ensure that they cover any missed work.
- 3.2 Periods of extended absence with good reason should be authorised by the University (see section 4 Authorised Absence below).

### **4. Authorised Absence**

- 4.1 The University recognises that a student may be unable to attend a scheduled class or event because illness or because of urgent unforeseen circumstance. When this occurs the student should complete an Authorised Absence Form and submit this to the Student Attendance Monitoring team.
- 4.2 Acceptable reasons for absence include: illness, compelling personal reasons (such as attendance at a family funeral), late notice of changes to childcare arrangements, to undertake research data collection. For postgraduate research students a short leave of absence period may be approved at the discretion of the Director of Studies. Authorisation for an absence rests with the Student Attendance Monitoring Team in consultation with the relevant Academic Department.
- 4.3 Students who are absent for medical reasons for five days or more will be required to submit a medical certificate.
- 4.4 Where a student is aware that they will be absent in a future period, she or he should submit an Authorised Absence Form to the Student Attendance Monitoring Team and receive authorisation before the absence occurs.
- 4.5 Extended periods of absence due to medical, personal or other reasons may require a student to interrupt their studies. Note that there are specific requirements for Tier 4 Sponsored students (see section 6 below).
- 4.6 There is no automatic authorisation for absence on the basis of religious observance. Where religious observance affects a student's attendance at normal learning and teaching activities, the student should discuss this with the academic department who will give sympathetic consideration to any reasonable adjustments that can be made (e.g. to attend a different timetabled session).

4.7 The University recognises that some students take employment to help fund their studies, however, absence from normal learning and teaching activities due to work commitments will not count as an authorised absence.

## **5. Recording and monitoring student attendance**

### **5.1 Responsibilities**

5.1.1 It is the student's responsibility to:

- Meet the requirements as laid out in this policy
- Check their timetable to ensure they attend the correct session
- Ensure that they are aware of any specific attendance requirements of their programme, particularly those on programmes accredited by Professional Bodies

5.1.2 The tutor delivering the session has a responsibility to:

- Make students aware of the importance of attendance and to outline any programme specific attendance requirements
- Ensure that appropriate records of attendance are collected and retained
- Ensure that records of attendance are completed in a timely manner
- Ensure that records of dissertation supervision contact are created and maintained.
- Assist the Student Attendance Monitoring in ensuring the completeness of records of attendance

5.1.3 It is the responsibility of the Student Attendance Monitoring Team to:

- Monitor records of attendance to ensure that these are completed and submitted in a timely manner, and to assist tutors in achieving this
- To identify students who have a record of poor attendance
- To identify cases to refer to specialist teams for assistance (including programme leaders, Progression & Support Advisers, Student Welfare Advisors and the Student Visa Compliance Team)

### **5.2 Pre-sessional English programmes**

5.2.1 The pre-sessional English programmes are intensive and progressive, building on work already studied in class. For this reason students on these programmes are expected to attend all scheduled classes.

5.2.2 There is a minimum requirement for 80% attendance across all sessions in addition to the other requirements outlined in this policy in order to pass the programme.

5.2.3 Absences may be authorised (in accordance with section 4 of this policy), but both authorised and unauthorised absences count as non-attendance for the purpose of calculating the attendance rate.

5.2.4 A student with two unauthorised absences will be required to meet with the pre-sessional programme team and failure to improve attendance may result in withdrawal from the programme (and cancellation of Tier 4 sponsorship).

5.2.5 In all cases a student with ten consecutive unauthorised absences will be withdrawn from the programme and Tier 4 sponsorship will be cancelled.

### **5.3 Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught programmes**

- 5.3.1 Student attendance should be recorded in at least one 'teaching' session per module per week (or when the sessions occur if they are not weekly)
- 5.3.2 The method of recording of student attendance data is the University's e-register via MyUniHub.
- 5.3.3 Exceptionally, attendance may be recorded on an agreed standard template register. Records must be maintained electronically and exceptions to use of the e-register must be agreed with the Student Attendance Manager
- 5.3.4 All tutors will be required to keep their own records of planned group or individual 'teaching' or supervisory sessions that are scheduled outside the University timetable.

### **5.4 Postgraduate research students**

- 5.4.1 The Director of Studies for a postgraduate research student is responsible for monitoring progress and recording attendance at expected contact points – including supervisory sessions.
- 5.4.2 Postgraduate research students who are sponsored under Tier 4 will be responsible for ensuring that their monthly supervisory sessions are signed by the Director of Studies and submit a copy of this each month to the Student Attendance Monitoring Team.
- 5.4.3 Postgraduate research students who are sponsored under Tier 4 will also be required to check-in at UniHelp every two weeks throughout their programme except for periods of authorised absence.

### **5.5 Students on placement**

- 5.5.1 The placement provider will monitor attendance of the placement student.
- 5.5.2 A single unauthorised absence should be reported to the Placement Supervisor by the placement provider.
- 5.5.3 The Placement Supervisor will escalate any Tier 4 placement students to the Student Visa Compliance Team.

### **5.6 Students studying by distance learning**

- 5.6.1 For distance learning students, the Programme Leader will be responsible for monitoring student participation and will implement mechanisms to ensure that appropriate contact with the student is maintained.

## **6 Tier 4 Sponsored students**

- 6.1 Middlesex University is a registered sponsor of students under Tier 4 of the Points Based Immigration System, and as such it has specific duties and obligations which it must meet in order to retain its sponsor licence.

- 6.2 There are additional responsibilities for sponsored students to ensure full compliance. Engagement with these requirements forms part of the conditions of Tier 4 sponsorship and sponsorship may be withdrawn for failure to comply.
- 6.3 *Students undertaking Masters Dissertations:* Regular contact (at least one instance per month) between the student and the supervisor must be maintained, and it is the responsibility of the supervisor to maintain local records of contacts.
- 6.4 *Students on placement:* The placement provider monitors attendance of the placement student. The placement provider should notify the University if the student should fail to attend on a single occasion without good reason in line with the employer's absence policy, or in any circumstances if the absence is 5 working days or more. The employer should notify the University no later than 5 working days from the first day of absence.
- 6.5 In addition to the usual attendance monitoring, students sponsored under Tier 4 are required to attend a Census Check twice per year. This is a face-to-face check that takes place at UniHelp. Students will be given notice of when and where to attend and must bring original copies of passports and visas. A student may be withdrawn from their study if she or he fails to attend when asked to do so.
- 6.6 Retaining relevant documents is a requirement for a Tier 4 sponsor and sponsored students are expected to supply the University with up to date copies of visas, passports and other immigration related documentation. The University conducts an annual review of documentation held on file for sponsored students to ensure that this is complete, current and that clear copies are retained. A sponsored student may be asked to supply clearer copies or additional documents to ensure that the record is complete, and may be asked to bring these documents in person during the Census Check.
- 6.7 Tier 4 sponsored students who are identified through attendance monitoring procedures as having poor attendance will be escalated to the Student Visa Compliance Team who will contact the student. Failure to provide good reason for non-attendance, failure to improve attendance and failure to attend the UniHelp Census will result in withdrawal from the programme, cancellation of Tier 4 sponsorship and subsequent reporting to the Home Office.
- 6.8 Middlesex University must notify the Home Office of any period of absence of 60 days or more and cannot continue to sponsor a student in this situation. In most cases where a 60 day period of absence is required, the student should be interrupted from their studies following the usual procedure. Request for a visa extension as a result of an interruption of studies will be considered on a case-by-case basis and assessed against the regulations and policies in force at the time.

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## APPENDIX 1

### UKVI Guidance

#### **Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for sponsors: Document 2 Sponsorship Duties**

- 2.6 *UKVI may ask a sponsor to complete a spreadsheet showing the details of each of its Tier 4 students and their attendance. If requested, this must be sent electronically to the UKVI within 21 days of the date of the request, providing all of the information requested.*
- 6.24e *A student misses 10 consecutive expected contact points ... [The University] can either report a tenth missed contact whenever it occurs during the year or set two checkpoints during any rolling month 12-month period. [The University] must report any students who have missed 10 consecutive expected contacts, without [the University] reasonably giving them permissions, leading up to that checkpoint, and [the University is] withdrawing sponsorship of that student.*
- 6.25 *[The University does] not need to tell us if:*
- b. *[The University has] decided not to withdraw sponsorship even though a student has missed 10 consecutive contacts. This should be very rare and [the University] must keep evidence of [the] decision and the reasoning behind it as our compliance officers will monitor these exceptions*

#### **Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for sponsors: Document 3 Tier 4 Compliance:**

- 3.15 *The following is a non-exhaustive list of failings which are likely to be considered a serious breach: ... Failure to monitor student attendance effectively*

<b>Revision history</b>	<p>The revisions to this policy were considered by the Assurance Committee at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016, and approved subject to amendments. The updated policy was approved by Academic Board at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017.</p> <p>This policy is due for review in June 2017.</p>
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