



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed as part of the University's commitment to provide a supportive learning environment in which encouragement is given to all students to develop a range of skills, abilities and approaches to their studies and other activities. This policy takes account of students' individual circumstances, whilst enabling the University to ensure that all students are fully engaged with their studies.

For students to achieve academic success there is a need to engage fully with all teaching and learning, as studying and attending lectures, seminars, tutorials, and practicals/workshops and for Postgraduate Research Students all research activities. These activities provide opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully achieve the outcomes of our degree courses.

The policy is designed to facilitate early intervention where a student's engagement is a cause for concern. It is designed to encourage students to report any factors they feel are impacting on their ability to attend or engage. **The guiding principle of this policy is that wherever possible, withdrawal from studies should be avoided.**

2. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A student is considered to be academically engaging if they are actively and consistently following their course of study. This can be via a range of different means as indicated below:-

- Via attendance at face-to-face teaching sessions, including but not limited to lectures, seminars, workshops, practicals, fieldwork, work placements and study abroad, or peer-to-peer learning activities.
- Through the submission of coursework and sitting of assessments.
- Through the use of Moodle and library resources
- Attending meetings with Supervisors and/or personal tutors/advisors
- Through independent study and use of library facilities
- Wider engagement with the University is through interactions with other services and activities such as those run by Careers, Volunteering, Student Life, CeDAS, and Wellbeing.

As a university we may draw on evidence of engagement with any of these activities to best understand the specific patterns of engagement and needs of students. In sharing data across the University, we will abide by the Data Protection protocols set out at the end of this policy.

3. AIMS OF THE POLICY

This policy, together with the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Students and Supervisors](#) and the additional information and guidance on the [engagement webpage](#), sets out how the University aims to support its students to engage fully with their studies and is intended to:

- 3.1 Support and encourage students to achieve their full potential by engaging in all areas of their studies, and more generally with university services.

3.2 To intervene at an early stage and offer further support where it is apparent that students are not engaging with their studies and with university services and where students may benefit from additional help.

3.3 To help avoid preventable student withdrawals

3.4 To unify the approach across the University to reviewing and supporting engagement to ensure parity of treatment, intervention and support is provided for students.

3.5 To ensure the University and its students who are sponsored by Royal Holloway for their Student Visa comply with UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) legislation to maintain the University's Sponsor Licence and protect students' Student Visa status. This includes not only aligning this policy with the engagement requirements of the [Sponsor Guidance](#) but take into consideration the online delivery (where applicable) and place of study requirements.

4. SCOPE

The policy applies to the following groups of students:

- All students registered with Royal Holloway, University of London, on taught modules delivered by Royal Holloway, University of London.
- All students registered on a taught dual degree course that is awarded by Royal Holloway while they are being taught at Royal Holloway.
- While students are attending other institutions as part of a study abroad year the hosting institution will be responsible for attendance and engagement under their policy and Royal Holloway should be informed of any unauthorised absence as soon as possible.
- While students are attending work placements as part of their degree course, the University is responsible for monitoring regular engagement through workplace visits and regular meeting contact with the employer and student. The employer will inform the University of any unauthorised absence.
- During dissertation periods for taught students, where there are no taught elements, the University continues to retain regular contact with students through regular supervision sessions
- For some qualifications which are accredited by a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB), alternative attendance and engagement guidelines may be required. These will be made clear to students via the School/degree course handbook.
- For students undertaking official roles as Students' Union sabbatical officers, the Student's Union will inform the University of any unauthorised absence.
- Postgraduate Research (PGR) students also see the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Students and Supervisors](#)
- Sponsored Students studying the International Year 1 or Pre-sessional Masters' Programmes delivered in partnership with Study Group are monitored under Study Group's engagement policy. Study Group will inform Royal Holloway as soon as possible of any concerns.
- The University does not offer courses below an Undergraduate Level.
- The University does not monitor attendance or engagement during vacation periods, with the exception of postgraduate taught students during the summer vacation period who are considered to be in their dissertation period.

- Postgraduate Research students (PGRs) are expected to engage with their studies throughout the academic year and are entitled to 8 weeks of annual leave for every 12 months of registration. They are not subject to a termly calendar or any related vacation periods.
- The University does not monitor attendance during the post-study period

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1 Undertaking a course of study indicates a willingness on the part of the student to adhere to the requirements and expectations contained in this policy and an ability to meet these requirements.

5.2 The University has a legal requirement as a Sponsor of the Student Visa route to monitor the attendance and engagement of its visa sponsored students and annotate the student's record with the reason for the lack of academic engagement and the steps taken to ensure the student re-engages with their study. The University must ensure the maximum period of non-engagement before intervention takes place does not exceed 60 calendar days in duration, or if the course has an element of online delivery 30 calendar days. Where the student fails to re-engage with their studies within 60 calendar days (or 30 calendar days for online delivery courses) of the first contact regarding their lack of academic engagement, sponsorship must be withdrawn. Exceptional circumstances may be considered in line with the UKVI [Sponsor Guidance](#). The University must report to the UKVI any student who is found to be in breach of their visa conditions.

5.3 Reviewing and supporting engagement can highlight disengagement with studies and enables poor engagement to be identified early. The University can then offer appropriate support and, in the case of students who are sponsored by Royal Holloway for their Student Visa, warning of potential visa breaches and risk of losing their sponsorship if unauthorised poor engagement continues.

5.4 A student's engagement is one of the factors considered when reviewing academic progress as regular engagement is likely to support a student's ability to succeed and achieve learning outcomes.

5.5 A student's engagement record can also indicate challenges with their health and wellbeing, or complex personal circumstances and the University is committed to supporting students to enable them to succeed in their learning and helping them understand the importance of maintaining good wellbeing as part of their work towards academic success.

6. REVIEWING AND EVALUATING ENGAGEMENT FOR STUDENTS ON TAUGHT DEGREE COURSES

6.1 All Schools are required to use the University's designated attendance record system for students on taught courses of study to ensure a consistent approach and robust recordkeeping.

6.2 All Schools must communicate engagement expectations clearly, by referring students to the [engagement webpage](#) or via Student Handbooks. For the avoidance of doubt a student's engagement will be reviewed and evaluated as a minimum based on their attendance record, submission of assessments, and use of Moodle. All Schools must also communicate clearly in Student Handbooks or by reference to the [engagement webpage](#), the engagement escalation process and support available to students.

6.3 The University expects students to attend scheduled learning sessions in the way they are designed to be delivered, for example but not limited to, lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials, field trips, orals, laboratory sessions, PC Labs and practical's. The University also expects students to undertake all set coursework and examinations and play an active role within classes. Participation in learning through the use of Moodle and other learning resources is also expected. It is also recommended that students engage with other services on offer by the University which are aimed at supporting the further careers, learning or mental health and wellbeing of students.

6.4 It is a student's responsibility to ensure their attendance is recorded accurately through the University's attendance record system. Their recorded attendance should correctly reflect the student is on Campus attending in-person, or where permitted, is studying online in the UK. Students sponsored on a student visa must be in the UK to study during term-time, unless on an approved study/work placement abroad course.

6.5 An integrated approach must be adopted between Schools, Wellbeing and Student Administration which will provide all students with the appropriate structure for support when dealing with poor engagement. This must be timely, collaborative, and designed to reengage and support the student towards academic achievement. Recommendations and guidance on implementing this integrated approach is provided to Schools.

6.6 In evaluating whether the School engagement requirements have been met consideration will be given to the whole contextual circumstances of a student and their engagement activities as shown on the Student Dashboard. This will include consideration of attendance records, submission of assessments, and use of Moodle (and, potentially, new data sets as they become available), records in Banner and, for example, circumstances where ill health or other legitimate reasons prevent students from fully engaging with their studies. Students are responsible for informing the University of any absences through the University's notification of absence process and providing appropriate documentary evidence (*where required*).

6.7 Schools are responsible in the first instance for reviewing and evaluating student engagement and for providing and recommending support for non-engaged students from a range of academic and/or professional services staff, including Wellbeing. Where online teaching delivery has been permitted, this will be monitored and reviewed. If only online engagement has been recorded this may be considered as non-engagement. This support is intended to constructively re-engage students and must be clearly documented for auditing purposes. University requirements and guidance for the review and evaluation of student engagement and documentation of interventions and support are provided to Schools.

6.8 While taught students are in their dissertation period, where there is no taught element, the School must establish and document contact procedures during the dissertation period. Contact must occur at least every 60 calendar days, or every 30 calendar days if a course has an element of online delivery.

6.9 While taught students are in their dissertation period Methods of contact may include:

- Scheduled meetings with a dissertation supervisor

- Milestone submissions (e.g., proposal drafts, progress reports)
- Final dissertation submission Contact must occur at least every 60 days.

6.10 In those instances where initial support proves ineffective and students persistently fail to engage with their studies and the University, Schools should consider a range of options with the student, e.g., interruption, commencement of the Support to Study programme, or disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.

6.11 In cases of persistent non-engagement where support has not been taken up, the formal warning process will commence in accordance with section 24 of the [Academic Taught Regulations](#). If a lack of engagement should then continue, and where students have not fully re-engaged with their studies, the University reserves the right to pursue a request to discontinue the student's registration.

6.12 Students may appeal the decision to discontinue their registration in writing, within 15 days of the notification, in line with the formal appeals process (see Section 26 of the [Academic Taught Regulations](#)).

6.13 Students studying on degree courses and modules with PSRB accreditation are obliged to meet any additional engagement requirements set by the accrediting body. These requirements are in addition to the process set out in 6.7 -6.10 above and will be monitored by the relevant School.

6.14 Students who are sponsored by Royal Holloway for their Student Visa are obliged to meet the engagement requirements in line with this sponsorship and policy. The University will monitor those on a Student Visa and identify any engagement concerns or issues, for example, if a student is only engaging with online activities. The University may discontinue a student's registration for failure to engage at an acceptable level without following the disciplinary procedures outlined in the Academic Regulations, as the University's UKVI responsibilities supersede this. The University will report this to the UKVI and their Student Visa will be withdrawn. **The following actions will be taken where minimum levels of engagement are not met for sponsored students.**

6.15

Stage	Trigger	Action
For students studying courses with no online delivery		
1	2 consecutive teaching weeks with no in-person attendance.	International Advice Team will attempt to contact the student via email and phone to understand any wellbeing concerns and manage re-engagement with the School. The University will assess and record this on the student's case file.
2	4 consecutive teaching weeks no in-person attendance.	International Advice Team will attempt to contact the student via email and phone to understand any wellbeing concerns and manage re-engagement. Reasons for non-engagement will be shared with the

		<p>School and Student Visa Compliance team. The University will assess and record this on the student's case file.</p> <p>Student will be signposted to University services and School Engagement Lead for further support.</p> <p>Further recommendations on following action will be given and may include record closure and withdrawal of sponsorship where non-engagement continues.</p>
3	6 consecutive teaching weeks no in-person attendance.	Student will be emailed by Student Visa Compliance Team advising the student is at risk of record closure due to non-attendance and must contact the University.
4	7 consecutive teaching weeks no in-person attendance.	<p>Student will be e-mailed by the Student Visa Compliance Team with a notification of record closure. This will confirm the date that sponsorship will be withdrawn and the record discontinued</p> <p>Student will be signposted to University services such as International Advice and Wellbeing teams.</p>
5	60 calendar days non-attendance during term-time (authorised and/or unauthorised absence).	Statutory obligation to withdraw visa sponsorship and close student record will be actioned by the Student Visa Compliance Team. The student will be emailed to notify they are no longer sponsored by the University and must arrange to leave the UK.
For students studying courses with online delivery		
1	2 consecutive teaching weeks with no in-person attendance.	International Advice Team will attempt to contact the student via email and phone to understand any wellbeing concerns and manage re-engagement with the School. The University will assess and record this on the student's case file.
2	3 consecutive teaching weeks no in-person attendance.	Student will be emailed by Student Visa Compliance Team advising the student is at risk of record closure and sponsorship withdrawal due to non-attendance and must contact the University.
3	30 days consecutive non-attendance during term-time (authorised and/or unauthorised absence).	Statutory obligation to withdraw visa sponsorship and close student record will be actioned by the Student Visa Compliance Team. The student will be emailed to notify they are no longer sponsored by the University and must arrange to leave the UK.

7. REVIEWING AND EVALUATING ENGAGEMENT FOR STUDENTS ON RESEARCH DEGREE COURSES

7.1 The University expects students to demonstrate an appropriate level of engagement with their studies. Full-time students are expected to engage with their research for at least 21 hours per week, or part-time equivalent, pro rata. These hours may vary depending on students' individual circumstance.

7.2 Students should advise on, and agree, a schedule of meetings based on a minimum (for full time students) of one meeting per month in the first year and, on average, one

meeting every six weeks throughout subsequent years (and pro-rata equivalent for part-time students). Supervisory meetings should wherever possible, be held in person. For students who are sponsored by Royal Holloway for their Student Visa it should be established at each meeting that the student is engaging with their studies in the UK.

- 7.3 Students who fail to attend two consecutive supervisory meetings without a valid reason will be issued with an engagement reminder from the Doctoral School and given 10 working days, from the date of the reminder, to re-engage with their research. Individual circumstances or personal situations might have adversely affected students' engagement and where this is considered to be the case will be dealt with sympathetically. Further support may be provided, where appropriate.
- 7.4 If the lack of engagement should continue after the engagement reminder, the formal warning process will commence, in accordance with Section 11 of the Research Degree Regulations. If a lack of engagement should then continue, and where students have not fully re-engaged with their research, the University reserves the right to pursue a request to discontinue the student's registration.
- 7.5 Students may appeal the decision to discontinue their registration in writing, within 15 days of the notification, in line with the formal appeals process (see Section 31 of the Research Degree Regulations).

8. NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

- 8.1 The University recognises that, occasionally, students may be unable to meet the University's engagement expectations due to unforeseen circumstances.
- 8.2 If a student is unable to attend, they must notify the University using the [absence process](#); if this is not done, the absence will count as an unnotified and unauthorised absence.
- 8.3 For short term absences from study of **5 consecutive working days or less**, students should notify the University via the notification of absence process. Students should notify the University by the end of the first day they are absent. Where possible students should submit this in advance. Evidence is not required.
- 8.4 Where multiple notifications of absences are submitted that may have a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress, or where engagement is already a concern, authorisation for absence may not be given. Students with long-standing conditions, or in need of health and wellbeing support, should ensure that they have engaged or registered with the Wellbeing department team. This may include appropriate reasonable adjustments via the Disability & Neurodiversity team. [The International Advice team](#) are available to offer support for International students on how absences may impact their student visa.
- 8.5 For absences of **more than 5 consecutive working days**, or where a student has been unable to notify the University of an absence of five working days or less by the end of the first day it occurred, students should request an authorised absence via the notification of absence process. Students should provide details of the reason for absence. The University reserves the right to request additional information and or evidence. Where possible, requests for authorised absence of **more than 5 consecutive working days** should

be submitted in advance. Authorisation for unplanned absences may be submitted up to 5 working days after the last day of absence. Students should provide details of the reason for absence. The University reserves the right to request additional information and or evidence.

The University will consider requests for authorised absence sensitively and will try to accommodate all reasonable requests. Where an authorised absence request may have a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress, or where engagement levels are already of concern, such requests may not be granted. If the student holds sponsorship for a Student Route visa, the University will also review the student's record in line with paragraph 5.2.

Use of Data

The University is committed to handling student data with care and ensuring compliance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, which set out the legislative framework for managing personal data. The University's Data Protection Policy is available to read online [here](#). For more information about your personal data that we collect and use, please see the [Student Data Collection Notice](#).

Related Documents and Links

[Student Sponsor Guidance - Doc 2 - Sponsorship Duties 2023-07-17.pdf](#)

[Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules part 3: students - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Document Control Information

The current official copy of this policy shall be located on the Policy Hub of the University's website.

<u>Policy Owner</u>	<u>Caroline Beck -Director of Student Administration</u>
<u>Operational Owner (where different to policy owner)</u>	<u>Sarah Smart – Deputy Director of Student Administration</u>
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