



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Student Attendance Policy

Introduction

Providing a student experience of the highest possible quality is a priority for Queen Margaret University. Promoting and encouraging student engagement with all aspects of their learning experience is a key aspect of this. This policy has been developed to provide a supportive learning environment of which student attendance is one aspect of overall engagement. The University needs to be able to record the attendance of students at timetabled teaching sessions for the following reasons:

- a. To aid the retention of students by allowing early identification of those students at risk and allow timely interventions to be made in terms of academic and personal support.
- b. To comply with the requirements of the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) under our Tier 4 licence that requires us to record the attendance accurately of those students subject to visa restrictions so that an attendance return can be made within specified timescales required by the agency.
- c. To comply with the requirements of the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) who require attendance confirmations to be made on a regular basis for those students who are in receipt of SAAS financial support.
- d. To enable timely notifications of withdrawals and deferrals to external stakeholders (e.g. UKVI, SAAS).
- e. To meet the demand placed on the University to report absences to employers, Professional Statutory Bodies, or other sponsors where they are funding/partially funding course tuition fees.

Key Principles

- a. Students are active participants in their learning experience and must take responsibility for achieving their potential through successful completion of each stage of their studies.
- b. Recording attendance can provide an indication of student commitment, motivation and highlight any difficulties which need to be addressed.
- c. Student welfare is a priority for Queen Margaret University. Schools will ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to both identify students considered to be at risk and

offer appropriate academic and pastoral support and guidance. This may include advising students of alternative options for successful completion of their studies.

- d. Regular attendance and academic achievement are closely linked. Students who regularly attend classes are more likely to enjoy a rewarding experience in which core skills and abilities, such as team-working, are developed.
- e. Attendance is a key component in student retention, progression and achievement.
- f. Attendance develops attributes for employability – e.g. timekeeping, professional behaviour and responsibility
- g. The University has a dual duty of care for Tier4 sponsored students in terms of providing appropriate support to international students studying here in the UK and fulfilling the reporting requirements of our UKVI licence.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

- a. Attending all timetabled learning/teaching sessions associated with their programme of study and ensuring they have their attendance recorded by swiping their student card against the card reader outside the relevant room.
- b. Notifying in advance (e.g. using the Student Absence Form within the Portal) that they expect to be absent from timetabled classes. Reasons may include authorised absence involving representation at University events or Students' Union related activities. (Please see Appendix 1 – Absence Policy)
- c. Notifying any unforeseen absences from classes as soon as practically possible.
- d. For absences lasting more than 5 days, submitting a medical certificate to the School Office (or other relevant evidence).
- e. Ensuring that they check their Queen Margaret University email account on a regular basis for any formal notifications/communications.
- f. Ensuring that they maintain up-to-date contact details via the Student Portal.
- g. Making full use of any support mechanisms within the University which may help facilitate successful completion of their programme e.g. Personal Academic Tutor, Student Services, Effective Learning Service, Stay on Course

Academic Staff Responsibilities

Academic staff are responsible for:

- a. Reminding students of the importance of attendance at learning and teaching sessions through induction and longitudinal induction activities.
- b. Signposting 'at risk' students to support services available within the School or University e.g. the student's Personal Academic Tutor, Student Services, Stay on Course, Effective Learning Service or International Office.

Programme Leaders, Personal Academic Tutors and School Manager Responsibilities

Programme Leaders, Personal Academic Tutors and School Managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- a. Regular reviews are taken of attendance/absence data and communications are made to 'at risk' students in a timely manner.
- b. Appropriate systems are in place at School level for students to provide notification of planned absences or report any unexpected absences.
- c. Authorised periods of absence should not exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students who request extended absence beyond 4 weeks may be required to defer their studies. Any requests for extended periods of absence will be subject to Programme Leader approval and will depend on the nature of the programme delivery.
- d. Data is reviewed for patterns of non-attendance and where appropriate referring students to their Personal Academic Tutor for discussions on reasons for pattern.
- e. Students are informed in writing of the importance of regular attendance at learning and teaching sessions, and through Programme Handbooks of any approved programme or module specific attendance requirements.
- f. All students have access to a Personal Academic Tutor.
- g. There are regular reviews of students' progress on their programme, including attendance, completion of assessment requirements and academic achievement, and that appropriate action is taken either to help students achieve their academic aims or, where students are failing to engage with the course, provide appropriate guidance.
- h. Students are advised of the support available to them, whether provided by the School or central support.
- i. In the case of the absence of a member of teaching staff, students are informed at the earliest opportunity of the alternative arrangements for the class.
- j. Review the absence notification lists provided by the Administrator, and alert them to any students who may have provided confidential information to the Programme Leader or PAT as a reason for their absence.

Action taken due to unsatisfactory attendance – Full-time and Part-time Undergraduate

- a. A green-amber-red system is utilised in assessing the attendance percentage of each student.
- b. Check points will take into consideration a 3 week period of attendance and reviewed in Academic Weeks 5, 8 and 11 in Semester 1; Weeks 23, 26, 29 in Semester 2.
- c. The attendance percentage for each student calculated at these check points will align with either a green, amber or red communication. The PAT and/or Programme Leader will be alerted to student with potential attendance concerns and students will be contacted depending on the severity of their apparent non-attendance. In particular:
 - Green – mild lapse of attendance. Students falling into this category will be sent a communication recommending that they speak to their PAT, Stay on Course, or other source of pastoral support, if they deem this necessary or helpful.
 - Amber - more serious lapse of attendance. Students falling into this category will be sent a communication directing them to speak to their PAT, and recommending other alternative sources of support.
 - Red – Serious lapse in attendance. Students falling into this category will be sent a communication requiring that they speak to their PAT; they will be referred directly to Stay on Course and be required to improve their attendance before the next check point or be at risk of withdrawal.
 - Students falling below any of these categories (i.e. those students who have 5% or less attendance) at the first check point will be investigated to ascertain their overall engagement. This will include looking into their Hub access, their contact with Academic Staff, etc. If there is no satisfactory reason for their non-attendance, they will be withdrawn at that stage.
 - Level 4 students will not be contacted unless this is specifically requested by their Programme Leader or PAT.
 - Conversely, beginning study on a new Programme is a crucial time for students adjusting to University; this is particularly true for new Undergraduate students. As such, particular attention is paid to these students during their initial weeks at QMU. These students will be subject to additional weekly attendance reviews in the run up to the first check point.
- d. Registry will inform relevant stakeholders of the student withdrawal.
- e. Student IT accounts and Smartcards will be deactivated at this point.
- f. All relevant communications and notes relating to attendance concerns must be maintained within the student's record.

Action taken due to unsatisfactory attendance –Taught Post Graduate

Postgraduate students are required to register their attendance by swiping their student card against the card reader outside the relevant room of each timetabled teaching session. While the same check-point system will apply to Postgraduate students, they will only be communicated with if their Programme Leader (PL) or Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) feels that this is necessary for the purpose of highlighting continued non-attendance. In some cases, students may be invited to attend a meeting to discuss their attendance with either their PAT or PL, and will be offered a range of support mechanisms to help them return to the expected level of attendance. As with Undergraduate students, extremely low or continued non-attendance and a failure to engage with communications or any other aspect of their Taught Programme may result in withdrawal from the institution.

Programme Specific Requirements

Due to the diversity of programmes delivered at QMU, there will be a number of Professional/Statutory body requirements with respect to attendance. Where programmes must conform to such requirements, these should be clearly communicated to students. Where programmes implement their own timeframes, these must not be longer than the timeframes detailed within this policy.

Tier 4 Sponsored Students

In addition to attending classes, International Students who do not have indefinite leave to remain within the UK (e.g. on a Tier 4 student visa) must attend on a monthly basis, sign-in sessions at the Registry Information Point, during which a student's contact details and address will be confirmed. When considering an application for a CAS extension, or a CAS in cases where international students with a non-Tier 4 visa wishes to switch to Tier 4, a student's attendance record may be taken into account when a decision is made about whether a CAS will be issued or not.

Placement Activities

Students who undertake a placement as part of their programme are responsible for ensuring that their attendance matches the requirements of the placement provider. Placement providers will inform the University if a student is failing to maintain a good attendance record, which may lead to the students being withdrawn from the placement activity and potentially from their programme of study. Additionally, Professional Bodies may specify requirements for placement attendance which must be adhered to. Any Professional Body requirements will be detailed in the relevant Student Programme Handbook.

Formal Examinations and Coursework

Students are expected to attend all necessary formal examinations and submit coursework by published submission dates. Students who fail to attend a scheduled formal examination or submit a piece of coursework (where no approved extension has been granted), will be marked as a non-submission.

Student Fraud

Student must only record themselves as present at a learning/teaching session. Where students are identified as having fraudulently recorded the attendance of another student in their absence, then both parties will be subject to the University's student discipline procedure.

Appeals Process

Any student who has been required to withdraw due to non-attendance is entitled to appeal the decision through the normal University academic appeals procedure. Students who wish to appeal must do so within 21 days of receiving notification of withdrawal.

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