



# Policy on Engagement for International Sponsored Students

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. International students studying in the UK on a Student Route visa sponsored by the University have an obligation to attend all of their timetabled teaching and to engage fully in all aspects of their programme of study. The University has an obligation as a sponsor licence holder to monitor their attendance and engagement.
- 1.2. The University recognises that engagement with a programme of study may take many forms including:
  - Attending required lectures, seminars or tutorials
  - Undertaking laboratory work
  - Participating in group work
  - Undertaking research or fieldwork
  - Online interactive and non-interactive content
  - Submitting essays, assignments and attending examinations.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all campus-based international students sponsored by the University of Leicester under the Student Route of the UK Government's Points-Based Immigration System (PBS), including students on pre-sessional English Language programmes and Leicester Global Study Centre students. The policy articulates the University's expectations with respect to international student engagement with campus-based programmes of study.
- 2.2. It complies with the regulatory requirements articulated in Senate Regulation 4: Regulations Governing Student Obligations, and ensures that the University can meet its obligations to UKVI regarding engagement monitoring of sponsored students.
- 2.3. The policy outlines:
  - Systems in place to monitor academic engagement
  - Information recorded to confirm that students are academically engaging
  - Actions to be taken when a lack of academic engagement is identified
  - That where students fail to re-engage following actions taken, the maximum period of non-engagement before intervention takes place must not exceed 60 calendar days in duration, excluding postgraduate research and doctoral students
  - Robust systems in place to identify any student who has ceased to engage with their studies and the action to be taken to support the student to re-engage
  - When non-engagement will lead to withdrawal of sponsorship.
- 2.4. The Procedures for Managing the Policy on Engagement for International Sponsored Students explain how this policy operates in practice.

### **3. Responsibilities**

- 3.1. Students have a responsibility to engage with their programme of study and record their attendance at all in-person teaching events, by swiping their student ID card across the card reader on entry to the teaching room.
- 3.2. Students must only scan their own student ID card and must not give their card to anyone else to scan on their behalf, nor must they scan the ID cards of any other students. Students must only scan their ID cards in teaching events they attend.
- 3.3. Students who are temporarily unable to engage due to personal circumstances (e.g. sickness) are required to provide evidence of this to the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance team (SIAC) if contacted to discuss their attendance.
- 3.4. Students are responsible for engaging with their course and seeking advice or guidance where they are struggling to do so.
- 3.5. Students are responsible for replying promptly to any communications regarding their engagement.
- 3.6. Schools have a responsibility to monitor the engagement of their students within the context of academic success and their personal circumstances.
- 3.7. SIAC are responsible for reporting all changes in student circumstances to UKVI.

### **4. Student Engagement and Eligibility for the Graduate Route**

- 4.1. To be eligible for the Graduate Route visa on completion of studies, students are expected to have studied in the UK for a minimum of 12 months or for the duration of their course.
- 4.2. Students who fail to meet the University's engagement requirements and who are withdrawn from study will not be reported as eligible for the scheme.

## **Students on Taught Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes**

### **5. Expectations**

- 5.1. All students are expected to live within a reasonable daily commuting distance of the University of Leicester campus, to enable them to meet attendance and engagement requirements. Students should be easily able to travel from their term-time address to the University campus in under an hour on a regular basis and at short notice where required.
- 5.2. Undergraduate students are required to remain at their term-time address for the duration of the semester or term including whilst on dissertation periods. They are able to leave the UK during official published holidays or on weekends.
- 5.3. Most postgraduate students do not have term-times and are in active study for the duration of their course including whilst on dissertation periods. Therefore, the expectation is that they remain in the UK for the duration of their studies, residing at their term-time address.
- 5.4. Postgraduate students on January-starting courses and who are entitled to the summer holiday in their first year are able to leave the UK during this official holiday period.
- 5.5. As a student sponsor the University is required to notify UKVI where a student is studying in another location, e.g. outside the UK for 10 working days or more.

- 5.6. Students who leave the UK without permission from their School or without providing the relevant documentation to SIAC will normally have their sponsorship withdrawn.
- 5.7. Students are expected to be on campus regularly and to engage with all mandatory in-person teaching events scheduled in their timetables, which may include lectures, seminars, tutorials and laboratory work, and also to engage with any online interactive or non-interactive content.
- 5.8. Students must submit all assessments, including coursework and examinations, by published deadlines, except where they have been granted an extension through reasonable adjustments or where Mitigating Circumstances apply. Regulations governing the late submission of work continue to apply.
- 5.9. Students are expected to comply with the requirements of attendance monitoring with honesty. Any students found falsifying engagement records such as scanning in for others, scanning and then leaving the class, or having others scan in on their behalf will receive a written warning which will remain permanently on their record. Any subsequent requests for a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS), e.g. to cover resits, will normally be refused. Any second incident of falsification will normally result in withdrawal of sponsorship on the authority of the Academic Registrar. The student may be given the opportunity to complete their studies overseas.
- 5.10. Students are expected to comply with all other terms and conditions and Senate Regulations including paying all tuition fee instalments by the relevant payment due dates.

## **6. Systems for Recording and Monitoring Student Engagement**

- 6.1. The physical attendance of undergraduate and postgraduate students at campus-based teaching events is recorded when students swipe their student ID card against the card readers in centrally timetabled teaching spaces. Attendance can be recorded up to 15 minutes before the start time of a teaching event. Students are expected to have swiped in by the start of the session.
- 6.2. Swipe data is stored in the Attendance Management System and can be viewed and monitored by Schools using the AMS programme and through the Student Engagement Review Dashboard.
- 6.3. Students can track their engagement using the Engagement tile on the MyUoL App and are able to see their percentage of teaching events attended and view data around absences, including those which were authorised.
- 6.4. Students' engagement with digital materials available on Blackboard is recorded and available to staff in Schools and SIAC through the Student Engagement Review Dashboard and through various data reports. Schools are able to review the number of log-ins and the length of time spent by students in Blackboard.
- 6.5. Personal Tutors have access to a Personal Tutor Dashboard which allows a tutor to review individual students against metrics such as attendance and engagement with digital learning materials.

## **7. Authorised Absences**

- 7.1. Absences should be kept to a minimum during term-time. Frequent or lengthy absences can affect a student's eligibility for the Graduate Route.
- 7.2. Students who will be absent from on-campus teaching for a short period should notify their School at the earliest opportunity providing clear and credible reasons for the absence and required documentation as appropriate.
- 7.3. Students can self-certify to request an authorised absence as a result of illness of 7 calendar days or less.
- 7.4. Absences longer than 7 calendar days must normally be evidenced with a UK doctor's note, otherwise only 7 days absence may be authorised.
- 7.5. In accordance with Senate Regulation 4, students may request permission from their programme team for short periods of absence for personal or religious reasons.
- 7.6. Students who do not return from their authorised absences as expected or who do not provide the relevant information or documentation when requested, e.g. evidence of exit or a return flight ticket, may have their sponsorship withdrawn.
- 7.7. No more than two absences should be authorised within a term or absence totalling no more than two weeks. Students absent for two weeks or more are advised to meet with their Personal Tutor regarding their academic progress when they return to study.
- 7.8. Students should note that absence may impact on their progress and they must take full responsibility for the completion of outstanding academic work arising from any absences. This includes accessing missed learning materials and contacting academic staff for support as required.
- 7.9. In accordance with Senate Regulation 7, if a student has been unable to sit an examination or submit coursework for assessment due to circumstances which have caused them to be absent from scheduled teaching events, they should submit a Mitigating Circumstances claim.
- 7.10. Students who are unable to engage consistently with their studies due to personal circumstances should request a suspension of studies. There are academic and financial implications associated with suspension and students are advised to discuss these with their School and with the Student Fees and Income Management team. They should discuss the implications for their visa with SIAC.
- 7.11. It is the responsibility of students to request a suspension, except where the decision is made to place them in suspense through the Support to Study Policy. Students who are not engaging and who do not request a suspension risk being permanently withdrawn from study by an Engagement Panel.

## **8. Monitoring Student Engagement**

- 8.1. SIAC will monitor the attendance of all sponsored students and will contact them on behalf of Schools about their level of engagement:
  - Students who have not attended any campus-based sessions during the preceding two-week period will be contacted at least fortnightly and instructed to take immediate action to improve their attendance. They will be required to meet with their Personal Tutor and to attend an International Student Checkpoint.

- All other sponsored students whose engagement falls below expectations will be contacted at least monthly to advise them of the actions they must take to improve their engagement.
- 8.2. Overall engagement will be monitored by Schools for patterns of non-attendance or non-engagement with a particular module or teaching session.
  - 8.3. Schools will have access to information on their students' levels of engagement and the actions students have been instructed to take. Students whose engagement is below a satisfactory level will be encouraged to meet with their Personal Tutor or a designated member of staff in their School. The student is responsible for arranging the meeting by following instructions provided by their School. The Personal Tutor or other staff member should record attendance and brief notes of the meeting including any agreed actions.
  - 8.4. Students who have not attended any campus-based sessions for two weeks and who then fail to attend the International Student Checkpoint or who fail to re-engage with campus-based teaching for a further two weeks will be informed their registration is now at risk and will be considered by an Engagement Panel. Students who fail to provide mitigation or to re-engage with campus-based sessions for a further two weeks will normally be withdrawn from studies.
  - 8.5. Students who have attended some campus-based sessions but have a generally low level of attendance and who fail to improve their engagement, or who fail to respond to communications regarding their engagement, may also be considered by an Engagement Panel. Students who fail to provide mitigation or to re-engage with campus-based teaching will normally be withdrawn from studies.
  - 8.6. Students who fail to re-engage with their studies within 60 days of the first contact regarding their lack of academic engagement will have their sponsorship withdrawn. An exception may be made in exceptional circumstances such as serious illness or injury provided satisfactory evidence is provided. This applies even where the student has been referred through the Support to Study Policy.

## **9. Student Engagement Experts and Panels**

- 9.1. Student Engagement Experts will review engagement and liaise with SIAC to identify cases that require consideration by a Student Engagement Panel. The Student Engagement Expert will be a member of the School's professional services team with sufficient seniority and experience to undertake the role effectively and is likely to be the person who is also the Mitigating Circumstances Expert. The Student Engagement Expert will be trained and have access to all relevant information and systems to enable them to make an informed decision on whether to refer a student to a Panel.
- 9.2. Student Engagement Panels will be chaired by the Senior Tutor, or another member of academic staff nominated by the Head of School and will comprise at least three academic and professional services staff who, between them, have experience, knowledge and expertise in reviewing non-engagement cases. Student Engagement Panels are likely to be run alongside Mitigating Circumstances Panels.
- 9.3. The Procedures for Managing the Policy on International Student Engagement outline how Student Engagement Panels should be operated and the possible outcomes that may result from the consideration of student cases.

## **10. Appeals against Student Engagement Panel Decisions**

- 10.1. A student may only appeal against a Student Engagement Panel decision if there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the application of the Policy on International Student Engagement or there are circumstances that materially affected their ability to engage that they could not have reasonably made known at the time they occurred.
- 10.2. A student must submit an appeal on their own behalf, within 14 calendar days of the notification of their withdrawal of registration. Appeals should be made on the withdrawal of registration appeal form, with evidence attached, and submitted to [AMappeals@le.ac.uk](mailto:AMappeals@le.ac.uk).
- 10.3. Appeals will be considered by the Director of Academic Administration and System Integration or their nominee.
- 10.4. Notification of the outcome of the appeal will complete the University's procedures and students will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter that will include information on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

## **11. Engagement Monitoring whilst on a Dissertation or Project Block**

- 11.1. Students are expected to remain at their term-time address for the duration of the semester or term including when working on their dissertation or project unless a period of off-campus research has been approved by the student's School.
- 11.2. Students must attend any in-person meetings or sessions, should avail themselves fully of all facilities required for the successful completion of their programme, and be able to evidence their continued campus presence.
- 11.3. Schools will be responsible for managing students whilst on a dissertation or project block and for setting expectations. Engagement requirements including in-person sessions must be communicated clearly to students.
- 11.4. It is recommended that as a minimum, students attend an in-person meeting with their project supervisor in the early stages of their dissertation or project. Students who fail to attend this meeting should be contacted by the School and the meeting re-arranged. Students who continually fail to attend the meeting should be considered by an Engagement Panel which may result in them being withdrawn for non-engagement.
- 11.5. Schools may host timetabled project sessions for cohorts and these should be subject to the same monitoring as above.
- 11.6. There should be regular contact between project supervisors and students, either in meetings or by email. As a minimum, all students must receive a monthly check-in by email to monitor progress and remind students of support available including in-person support. This email should be sent from the Personal Tutor, project supervisor or designated member of School staff, and students whose supervision is contracted out during the project must also meet or maintain appropriate regular contact with an assigned supervisor who is a member of University staff.
- 11.7. Students who fail to complete the project but meet engagement requirements should be considered in line with progression or awarding requirements by the Board of Examiners or under academic neglect regulations.
- 11.8. Any requests for authorised absence during a dissertation or project block should be treated consistently as per section 7 above. Students whose Schools have approved a

period of off-campus research are responsible for providing exit documentation and flight details, including any return to the UK, so that the correct report can be made to UKVI by SIAC. It is the student's responsibility to provide the correct documentation and if a return is not evidenced satisfactorily, it may be assumed the student will complete their studies overseas and sponsorship will be withdrawn.

## **12. Engagement Monitoring whilst on Study Abroad (Outgoing)**

- 12.1. Study Abroad students are monitored by their host School and the Study Abroad team within the Centre for International Training and Education (CITE).
- 12.2. Whilst on a period of Study Abroad the student is subject to the engagement requirements of the host institution.
- 12.3. It is formally agreed in contract that host institutions will notify the University through the Study Abroad team of any unexplained non-engagement which causes concern in line with the local policy. The Study Abroad team will notify the School and SIAC in the event of receiving a notification concerning a sponsored student.
- 12.4. Students should maintain contact with their Personal Tutor or other designated member of School staff in Leicester. Schools should notify SIAC and the Study Abroad team if the expected level of contact is not maintained.

## **13. Engagement Monitoring whilst on Study Abroad (Incoming)**

- 13.1. The University of Leicester has a reciprocal arrangement with Study Abroad host institutions to notify them of any significant concerns relating to a student on the programme.
- 13.2. Students will be monitored in the same way as others in the School and the Study Abroad team notified of any significant or ongoing concerns who will notify the overseas institution.
- 13.3. Students who are not allocated to a School will be monitored centrally by SIAC who will be responsible for raising any concerns through the Study Abroad team.

## **14. Engagement Monitoring during Work Placements**

- 14.1. Although placement learning primarily takes place off-campus, students on work placements remain registered with the University throughout the duration of their placement and must abide by University regulations and policies including those relating to engagement.
- 14.2. A student's engagement with their work placement is recorded and monitored through monthly journals submitted digitally through Blackboard. The journal also serves as a commentary to the students' progress on placement and may be considered as part of the overall placement assessment.
- 14.3. The journals must be completed by the student and authorised by the employer. The student is responsible for uploading the journals to Blackboard within agreed deadlines published by their School who will monitor submissions.
- 14.4. Schools will check their students' submissions on a monthly basis.
- 14.5. Students who fail to submit their journal within deadlines will be contacted by their School in the first instance. Students who fail to respond satisfactorily to reminders will be escalated to SIAC and the Placements team in Careers and Employability.

- 14.6. Students who fail to submit two consecutive journals should be considered by an Engagement Panel which may result in them being withdrawn for non-engagement.

## **15. Engagement Monitoring during Module Placements**

- 15.1. Some taught programmes include module placements which are generally shorter in duration than work placements, such as rotating clinical placements in medicine or healthcare programmes, or occupational placements in a range of academic disciplines.
- 15.2. Schools will identify and inform students of the engagement requirements for module placements depending on the duration of the placement and the nature of the activity.
- 15.3. Schools will monitor engagement with module placements regularly. The mechanism for monitoring will be identified by the School and will vary depending on the nature of the placement activity, the circumstances of the placement provider, and the duration of the placement.
- 15.4. For programmes with engagement requirements set by professional statutory or regulatory bodies, module placements providers will notify Schools if a student is not meeting expectations.

## **Postgraduate Research Students**

### **16. Expectations**

- 16.1. In line with Senate Regulations postgraduate research students are expected to meet with their supervisor once a month. The meetings must be in-person unless the supervisor or student is outside the UK on an approved period of off-campus study or during a writing-up period.
- 16.2. Students are not expected to meet with their supervisors during periods of annual leave or suspension but should maintain contact during the latter as appropriate to help facilitate a successful return.
- 16.3. Supervisory meetings must be recorded correctly including the mode of contact, such as in-person or TEAMS.
- 16.4. These meetings are important for both parties in monitoring the progress of students and form part of the research degree contract.

### **17. Systems for Recording and Monitoring Student Engagement**

- 17.1. Postgraduate research student records are managed and progression recorded through MyPGR. Supervisory meetings, progress reports, holiday requests and suspension requests are all submitted and recorded within this system.
- 17.2. Students are responsible for logging their supervisory meetings in MyPGR. They should include brief notes around the content of the meeting, progress made and any agreed actions.
- 17.3. Supervisors are responsible for authorising and confirming the meeting in MyPGR. They are able to add their own notes concerning the meeting.



## **18. Monitoring Student Engagement**

- 18.1. Postgraduate research student records will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the Doctoral College and by SIAC to ensure that meetings are being held, recorded and authorised as outlined above.
- 18.2. Where supervisors have failed to confirm/authorise meetings the Dean of the Doctoral College will notify the student's Head of School who will contact the supervisor and remind them of their responsibilities and duties.
- 18.3. Students who have failed to record a monthly meeting will be contacted and reminded of their responsibilities and support made available to them.
- 18.4. Students who fail to record a second consecutive monthly meeting or respond to the reminder will be informed their registration is now at risk. The student will be required to record a meeting or provide mitigation within 14 calendar days. Students who fail to provide mitigation or record a meeting should be considered by an Engagement Panel which may result in them being withdrawn for non-engagement.
- 18.5. Students who fail to re-engage with their studies within 60 days of the first contact regarding their lack of academic engagement will normally have their sponsorship withdrawn. An exception may be made in exceptional circumstances such as serious illness or injury provided satisfactory evidence is provided. This applies even where the student has been referred through the Support to Study Policy.

## **Students studying pre-sessional programmes at the Centre for International Training and Education (CITE)**

### **19. Expectations**

- 19.1. On-campus pre-sessional modules are full-time intensive study of 35 hours per week.
- 19.2. Students are expected to attend all in-person teaching events and assessments, and submit all coursework.
- 19.3. Students must meet their course, participation and visa attendance requirements, and follow the absence procedure set out in their student handbook.
- 19.4. The minimum attendance requirement on pre-sessional modules is 85%. Students who do not meet the minimum attendance requirement without mitigating circumstances are not able to progress.

### **20. Systems for recording and monitoring attendance**

- 20.1. Tutors record attendance on electronic registers in all timetabled teaching events.
- 20.2. The Course Director reviews attendance registers weekly to identify any students whose overall attendance is at risk of dropping below 85% or any students whose pattern of attendance or absence indicates concern.
- 20.3. Tutors may also flag students of concern to the Course Director.
- 20.4. The Course Director will send a warning email to students to notify them that their attendance needs to improve and that they may not be able to progress on their course if they do not take action. Students will be invited to discuss their level of attendance and given the opportunity to improve.

20.5. Students whose attendance does not improve and who fail to meet the course expectations may be withdrawn from studies and have their visa sponsorship withdrawn.