



# Policy on Student Engagement

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Regular engagement is an important aspect of learning and the student experience. Students who fully engage with all aspects of their programmes are more likely to succeed with their studies. This policy is designed to support student achievement by encouraging students to engage actively with all learning activities and support offered.
- 1.2. The University expects students to engage fully with their programme of study, join all timetabled on-campus teaching events, and participate in any online teaching events that are part of their programme.
- 1.3. The University recognises that engagement with a programme of study takes many forms including participation in on-campus teaching, group work, workshops and online interactive content, and completion of non-interactive content, coursework and assessments. This policy sets out the University's expectations on student engagement and the potential consequences of non-engagement.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all campus-based undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. The policy:
  - articulates the University's expectations with respect to engagement with timetabled on-campus teaching
  - outlines expectations around student online engagement
  - explains action taken when the expectations are not met
  - complies with the regulatory requirements articulated in Senate Regulation 4: Regulations Governing Student Obligations, which include requirements regarding attendance and engagement with learning and teaching events
  - ensures that the University can meet the requirements of UKVI relating to students sponsored by the University under the UK Government's Points-Based Immigration System (PBS).
- 2.2. The Procedures for Managing the Policy on Student Engagement explain how this policy operates in practice.

## 3. Principles

- 3.1. This policy supports the aims of the University's Education Strategy. It evidences an ongoing commitment to delivering a student experience that engenders success, supported by a strong focus on retention and engagement and on identifying and supporting students who may need help and guidance to help them succeed in their studies. The University believes that active engagement with all learning and teaching activities is an important factor in enabling students

to achieve academic success.

- 3.2. It is important that programme teams monitor student engagement with a variety of learning activities to identify students who may have circumstances that are affecting their studies and provide support to them where appropriate.
- 3.3. This policy seeks to ensure that all students are treated fairly and with equity in respect of their engagement, whilst recognising that students may face specific challenges during their studies.
- 3.4. Where there is a concern around a student's engagement, the student's School<sup>1</sup> will contact them to ensure that they are aware of the support available and the courses of action open to them.

## **4. Engagement Requirements**

- 4.1. In accordance with Senate Regulation 4, students are expected to participate in all timetabled teaching events associated with their programme of study to achieve the maximum benefit from the learning opportunities offered to them.
- 4.2. On certain programmes of study students are required to engage at a specified level to qualify for their award. Where there are such requirements, they will be stated in module specifications and communicated to students in programme handbooks and other programme information. Equally, where engagement through timetabled events is optional, students will be notified in programme handbooks and other programme information.
- 4.3. As a condition of its licence to sponsor students under PBS, the University is required to monitor the engagement of sponsored students and to withdraw sponsorship from students who do not meet the engagement requirements. These expectations may vary in accordance with guidance issued by the Home Office and this policy may be updated as required to reflect changes to UKVI requirements during the course of the academic year.
- 4.4. Some Professional or Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) may set out engagement requirements for all students as a condition of accreditation that are more stringent than those set out in this policy. In such cases, these requirements are stated in programme specifications and are communicated to students in programme handbooks and other programme information. This point relates particularly, but not necessarily exclusively, to programmes regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC).

## **5. Engagement Expectations and Monitoring**

- 5.1. Students are expected to be on campus for mandatory in-person teaching events scheduled in their timetables.
- 5.2. Schools will monitor participation in on-campus teaching events and will judge whether the level of participation is appropriate in the context of students' individual circumstances.
- 5.3. A limited amount of teaching on all campus-based programmes may be delivered online where there is a strong pedagogical reason. The expectation is that students will engage fully and regularly with online content, which may include:
  - synchronous (live) interactive sessions, such as seminars, and tutorials
  - pre-recorded lectures and other asynchronous teaching content

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<sup>1</sup> CITE for students not assigned to an academic School, e.g. Study Abroad

- laboratory and practical-based teaching sessions.
- 5.4. Students must submit all assessments, including coursework and examinations by published deadlines. Regulations governing the late submission of work continue to apply.

## **6. Authorised Absences**

- 6.1. 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. Students must take full responsibility for the completion of outstanding academic work.
- 6.2. Students who are absent due to illness or due to self-isolation should inform the University at the earliest possible opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken. Students in this position should continue to access online materials regularly, if they remain well. Schools will liaise directly with students who indicate they are unfit to study.
- 6.3. In accordance with Senate Regulation 4, students may request permission from their programme team for short periods of absence for personal or religious reasons.
- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. If a student's circumstances are such that they are likely to be unable to engage with their studies on an ongoing basis, they should discuss the possibility of a suspension of studies with their personal tutor or other programme contact. Schools should seek advice on the implications of suspension of study for sponsored students from the University's Student Immigration Advice and Compliance Team.

## **7. Non-engagement**

- 7.1. The University will proactively both support and monitor student engagement to help students achieve the best possible academic outcome.
- 7.2. Full information on how this policy is applied, including signposting to support and escalation processes, is detailed in the Procedures for Managing the Policy on Student Engagement.
- 7.3. Schools will monitor students' engagement with online materials and activities as well as on-campus teaching events on a weekly basis.
- 7.4. Students who do not engage sufficiently with their studies will be considered to be 'at risk' and will be contacted by their School to determine what support is required.
- 7.5. Schools will continue to monitor 'at risk' students and may withdraw students who, after supportive and appropriate intervention fail to engage or re-engage within one calendar month or any other reasonable timeframe agreed by the School.
- 7.6. Students who have provided a valid reason for their low level of engagement (as measured by the University's weekly engagement monitoring system), should discuss the options available to them with their School.
- 7.7. Where there is evidence to indicate that a student's ability to engage with their studies may be impacted by disability or ill-health, or there is concern for a student's wider wellbeing arising from non-engagement, they may be referred to the University's Support to Study Policy. If such referrals relate to students sponsored under PBS, Student Support Services will liaise with the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance Team to ensure that any support measures or

interventions are compliant with the terms of the student's visa.

## **8. Patterns of Dis-engagement**

- 8.1. Schools will monitor students' overall engagement with their programme. If patterns of engagement give cause for concern that a student may be experiencing difficulty in engaging with their studies, then the reasons for this will be explored directly with the student and the School may decide to move the student to the 'at risk' category.
- 8.2. Examples of patterns of engagement that may be explored with students include:
  - Patterns of non-engagement with on-campus events, particularly mandatory teaching events or sessions, where students are not known to have authorised absence from such events
  - Patterns of non-engagement with online course materials related to a specific module, or specific event types such as tutorials
  - Patterns of non-engagement with assessment
  - Patterns of non-engagement with placements or other external activities
  - For students sponsored under PBS: patterns of non-engagement that suggest that a student is in danger of breaching the conditions of their visa.
- 8.3. Students will be contacted by their School to offer support and guidance, which may include referral to the University's Support to Study Policy. Those who fail to re-engage satisfactorily with their studies within a timeframe deemed reasonable by the School, should be referred to a Student Engagement Panel who will review the student's overall engagement and performance and determine next steps.

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

- 9.1. Student Engagement Experts will review engagement in the first instance and 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. The Student Engagement Expert will determine the cases that require consideration by a Panel. These will normally include all 'at risk' students who have failed to engage or re-engage with their studies as follows:
  - Students who are absent consistently from mandatory timetabled teaching events who are not known to have been granted authorised absence
  - Students whose pattern of engagement with online activities and materials causes concern that academic and/or compliance requirements are not being met due to their infrequency.
  - International students who reach stage 4 in the Attendance Management System.
- 9.3. 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.

- 9.4. The Procedures for Managing the Policy on 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 are, or were, circumstances materially affecting their ability to engage appropriately with their studies. There should be supporting evidence not known to the Student Engagement Panel at the time its decision was taken, and which it was not possible for the student to make known beforehand.
- 10.2. A student must submit an appeal on their own behalf, within fourteen 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 Head of Student Registry Services 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. Students Sponsored under PBS**

- 11.1. The University holds a Sponsor Licence that permits it to sponsor international students who wish to undertake full-time study at the University of Leicester under the UKVI Points-Based Immigration System. As a Sponsor, the University has specific responsibility to act in accordance with the Immigration Rules and Sponsor Guidance. Any changes to UKVI rules will supersede the relevant sections of this policy.
- 11.2. The UKVI has clear expectations with respect to the engagement of students sponsored under PBS and requires the University to monitor engagement closely.
- 11.3. Campus-based sponsored students are required to join all on-campus teaching events unless the University has granted an authorised exception. This includes any teaching events where engagement is permitted either in-person or online; sponsored students are expected to join these teaching events in-person.
- 11.4. The UKVI expects the University to monitor patterns of engagement to ensure that students engage fully with their studies and are not missing particular sessions/days on a regular basis. Where on-campus engagement falls below an acceptable level, and a reasonable acceptable explanation is not provided the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance Team (SIAC) will contact students to discuss concerns that they are not meeting the conditions of their visa.
- 11.5. Sponsored students who are not engaging with their course and fail to attend in-person teaching on campus or to access online materials or events for the modules studied on a regular basis will be considered 'at risk'. Students in this position will be contacted initially by their School. SIAC will monitor the student's progress. Students who fail to re-engage with their studies within a reasonable timeframe agreed by SIAC are likely to have their sponsorship withdrawn. SIAC will carry out periodic checkpoints for the withdrawal of sponsorship.
- 11.6. Students who wish to appeal a withdrawal of studies should follow the process outlined in section 10.

## **12. Data Protection**

- 12.1. All student records in relation to student engagement and decisions taken in relation to student registration status will be subject to the University's Data Protection code of practice and data retention schedule.