#### LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT HANDBOOK

## Chapter 29 – Taught Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

### 1. Introduction and Rationale

## 1.1 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1.1 This policy sets out the responsibilities and expectations in relation to the attendance and engagement of taught students at the University of Exeter. It applies to all taught students who are registered on campus-based, academic programmes of study at the University. It includes all Degree Apprenticeships, taught elements of Professional Doctorate programmes and, where they are externally regulated, online programmes of study where all learning takes place asynchronously.
- 1.1.2 The University recognises that regular attendance and high levels of engagement in teaching, learning and assessment activities contributes to successful outcomes for students. Conversely, a lack of attendance or engagement may also indicate that students may be experiencing academic or personal difficulties. The primary purpose of the policy is, therefore, to support students in meeting their attendance and engagement responsibilities and expectations and maximise their opportunity for success.
- 1.1.3 The policy should, therefore, be read in conjunction with the following policies, processes or procedures which may be applied, as and when needed, to provide additional support and adaptations for taught student attendance and engagement:
  - Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedure (HWSS)
  - Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)
  - Exceptional Circumstances (for cohorts of students)
  - Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance
- 1.1.4 A further purpose of the policy is to ensure that the University and its taught students are able to meet their legal and other responsibilities for registering, monitoring and reporting on attendance and engagement. For this reason, regular and appropriate attendance and engagement is also is stipulated in the <u>General Regulations for Students and Ordinance 6</u> of the University of Exeter's Regulations.

1.1.5 To ensure compliance, this the policy sets out the minimum responsibilities and expectations for attendance and engagement at institutional level to meet external requirements for different groups of taught students. Departments with externally regulated programmes or Degree Apprenticeships do, however, have the right to set more prescriptive requirements, including attendance and engagement thresholds, as necessary for such programmes of study. Any programme-specific requirements should be set out in Departmental policies and/or within programme specifications and module records.

### 1.2 Defining Attendance and Engagement

- 1.2.1 For the purposes of this policy, only teaching, learning and assessment activities stipulated as module and or programme of study requirements are defined as requiring 'attendance' and 'engagement'. Optional activities, extra-curricular activities, co-curricular activities or self-guided independent learning are not encompassed within this policy.
- 1.2.2 'Attendance' encompasses the activity of being present, whether on campus or online (where online is offered as a valid mode of attendance), at scheduled synchronous teaching, learning and other activities and actively engaging with them as required by the module and/or programme. This may include:
  - a. Physical attendance at face-to-face scheduled teaching and/or other learning events as required by the programme of study (e.g. lectures, seminars, laboratory sessions, tutorials, fieldtrips and examinations).
  - b. Virtual attendance at synchronous teaching and/or other learning events as required by the programme of study (e.g. video conferencing of live sessions, synchronous participation in an online forum and online examinations).
  - c. Full attendance at/on work placements or study abroad where these are a mandatory part of the programme of study.
  - d. For Degree Apprenticeship students, attendance at mandatory progress review meetings.
- 1.2.3 All students are expected to arrive on time and ready to learn for scheduled synchronous teaching and learning activities whether delivered on campus or online, as required by their module or programme. This is not only to ensure that a student derives

the maximum academic benefit from the activity, but also out of respect for, and to avoid disruption to, Educators and other students participating in the activity. It is, however, recognised that a student may have genuine reasons for arriving late, such as travel disruptions, a mobility or physical disability, or caring responsibilities, which will be accommodated.

- 1.2.3 'Engagement' encompasses the activity of asynchronously actively engaging with, and participating in, guided independent or group study activities, summative assessment and feedback and any other activities required by the module and/or programme of study. Such activities may include:
  - a. Submitting summative assessments, which contribute to module marks, on time or within an approved period of extension.
  - b. Completing formative assessment, which do not contribute to module marks, and responding to feedback provided.
  - b. Accessing and/or interacting with online learning materials, recorded lectures, and set tasks within the Exeter Learning Environment (ELE 2).
  - c. For Degree Apprenticeship students, undertaking portfolio building activity and meeting other off the job expectations.
- 1.2.4 Engagement has been defined differently from attendance within this policy because not all forms of engagement require students to be present, either physically or virtually, at a particular time and place. High levels of engagement are, however, equally critical to successful outcomes for all students.

### 1.3 Responsibilities of the University

- 1.3.1 The University has a legal and other responsibilities to monitor and report on the attendance, and in some cases engagement, of the majority of its taught students at their scheduled teaching, learning and assessment activities. These obligations arise from the following:
  - a. As a Student Sponsor License holder, the University of Exeter must adhere to the Student Sponsor Guidance issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). The monitoring process outlined in this policy ensures that the University meets the requirements of the Student Sponsor Guidance with regards to reporting non-

- attendance and engagement. International students, whether Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught or Professional Doctorates, should follow this link for specific guidance on the requirements for <u>Attendance and Engagement</u>.
- b. Programmes accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory statutory bodies (PSRBs) may have their own attendance and engagement requirements, which must be met in order to fulfil the academic and professional competency standards of their degree. The University of Exeter **must** ensure that students to meet these requirements where applicable. The requirements should be set out in Departmental policies and/or within programme specifications and module records.
- c. Degree Apprenticeship programmes, whether integrated or non-integrated, may also have their own attendance and engagement requirements, which must be met to meet the academic and professional competency standards, and funding requirements, of the taught and work-based elements of the programme. The University of Exeter must ensure that students to meet these requirements where applicable. The requirements should be set out in Degree Apprenticeship specific policies and/or within programme specifications and module records and/or within contractual agreements and commitments.
- d. The University **must** submit accurate and timely confirmation of the ongoing attendance of all students who are in receipt of Tuition Fee or Maintenance Loans to the to the Student Loan Company (SLC) and other UK Higher Education loan agencies. The SLC define 'attendance' as, "active and ongoing engagement with the activities and learning opportunities on a course. These include scheduled learning and teaching activities but are not limited to these." The University must confirm attendance at three separate liability points in the academic year.
- e. Where a taught student's programme of study is funded directly or indirectly by an employer, such as Degree Apprenticeships, or they are in receipt of some other form of sponsorship, such as from the NHS, there may be attendance and engagement requirements associated with that funding or sponsorship arrangement. In accordance with associated contractual arrangements, the University is also required to share information on attendance and engagement with employers and/or sponsors.

## 2. Responsibilities and Expectations of Taught Students

# 2.1 Responsibilities of Student Visa Holding Students on Taught Programmes

### 2.1.1 Attendance and Engagement

All Student Visa holding students **must attend, and actively engage** with, all scheduled synchronous teaching and learning, whether on campus or online and any other activities where attendance had been mandated, for their modules and/or programme of study. All students are **expected to actively engage with asynchronous learning opportunities**, as defined in section 1.2.3 above.

## 2.1.2 Registering Attendance

All Student Visa holding students **must register their attendance** for all scheduled synchronous, on campus teaching and learning activities and any other activities where attendance has been mandated for their modules and/or programme of study. All students **must** register their attendance using the digital tools and processes specified by the University. Guidance on how to do so will be provided and should be adhered to.

### 2.2 Responsibilities of Students on Regulated Taught Programmes

## 2.2.1 Attendance and Engagement

All students on programmes of study where attendance requirements are set by PSRBs, and must be implemented by their Departments, in particular those governing the health and care professions, **must attend and actively engage** with, all scheduled synchronous teaching and learning activities, whether on campus or online and any other activities where attendance has been mandated for their modules and/or programme of study. All students are **expected to actively engage with asynchronous learning opportunities**, as defined in section 1.2.3 above.

# 2.2.2 Registering Attendance

All students **must register their attendance** for all scheduled synchronous, on campus teaching and learning activities and any other activities where attendance at other activities as required by their modules and/or programme of study. All students **must** register their attendance using the digital tools and processes specified by the University. Guidance on how to do so will be provided and should be adhered to.

## 2.3 Responsibilities of Students on Taught Degree Apprenticeship Programmes

### 2.3.1 Attendance and Engagement

All students on integrated or non-integrated Degree Apprenticeship programmes of study where attendance requirements have been set, **must attend and actively engage** with, all scheduled synchronous teaching and learning activities, whether on campus or online and any other activities where attendance has been mandated for their modules and/or programme of study. All students are **expected to actively engage with asynchronous learning opportunities**, as defined in section 1.2.3 above.

## 2.3.2 Registering Attendance

All students **must register their attendance** for all scheduled synchronous, on campus teaching and learning activities, including online where applicable, and any other activities where attendance at other activities as required by their modules and/or programme of study. All students should register their attendance using the digital tools and processes specified by the University. Guidance on how to do so will be provided and should be adhered to.

## 2.4 Expectations for Students on all other Taught Programmes

#### 2.4.1 Attendance and Engagement

All other students, not covered by the requirements set out in sections 2.1 to 2.3 above, are expected to attend, and actively engage with, all scheduled synchronous teaching and learning activities, whether on campus or online and any other activities as required by their modules and/or programme of study. All students are expected to actively engage with asynchronous learning opportunities, as defined in section 1.2.3 above.

## 2.4.2 Registering Attendance

All students are expected to register their attendance for all scheduled synchronous, on campus teaching and learning activities and any other activities where attendance at other activities is mandated by their modules and/or programme of study. All students should register their attendance using the digital tools and processes specified by the University. Guidance on how to do so will be provided and should be adhered to.

## 3. Taught Student Approval for Absence

- 3.1 Students should seek approval for absence and/or non-engagement through the Taught Student Absence Procedure (see <u>How to Report an Absence</u>) or for Professional Doctorate Students taking taught modules through the <u>PGR Student Absence Policy</u>. Failure to do so may result in their reasons for absence being checked and their absence followed up on (see sections 5 and 6 below). Usually, absences would be approved for the following reasons:
  - a. Disability (in accordance with ILP and HWSS recommendations)
  - b. Illness
  - c. Illness of a dependent or other immediate relative for whom they have caring responsibilities
  - d. Medical appointments.
  - e. Bereavement or other compassionate grounds
  - f. Police incident
  - g. Jury service
  - h. Unforeseen emergencies
  - i. Interview/career related appointments
  - j. Approved University visits, field trips and exchanges.
  - k. To fulfil the requirements of Religious Observance (see also the University's <u>Religion</u> and <u>Beliefs Policy</u> and associated guidance).
- 3.2 Students are expected to catch up on any teaching and learning activities missed as a result of approved absences through their own independent learning activities. However, reasonable steps will be taken by Educators and Academic Personal Tutors to provide support and guidance to student in such circumstances.

### 4. Taught Student Attendance under Declared Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.1 Circumstances may arise that lead to an academic year being deemed an 'Exceptional Year' for all students. More localised 'Exceptional Circumstances' may also be declared which affect a defined cohort of taught students. Examples of the circumstances that may lead to such declarations being made and the procedures through which they are agreed can be found in <a href="Chapter1">Chapter 1</a> of the Exceptional Circumstances Handbook of the Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) Manual.
- 4.2 Declared Exceptional Years or other Exceptional Circumstances may result in disruption to the usual patterns of on-campus taught student attendance and engagement across

- the University. This may include changes to the modes and methods of delivering teaching, learning and assessment, the policy options for which are outlined <u>Chapter 2</u> and <u>Chapter 3</u> of the Exceptional Circumstances Handbook.
- 4.3 Declared Exceptional Years or other Exceptional Circumstances may require expectations in relation to attendance and engagement to be adapted, whilst ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the academic student experience are maintained. Such adaptations may include permitting certain students to study remotely for all or part of an academic year, criteria and procedures for which will be published at the time.
- 4.4 Unless a student has formally been granted permission to study remotely during Exceptional Years or other Exceptional Circumstances, then the following requirements will apply:
  - a. If a synchronous session is mandatory for attendance in person, on campus only, then only those with approval not to attend (including students studying remotely or those who have submitted a formal notification of their absence) are permitted to be absent.
  - b. If the synchronous session is mandatory for hybrid / in-person, on campus / online delivery, then students can only request remote access (such as via Teams) if they have a valid reason for which approval has been sought and given.
  - c. If a synchronous session is mandatory for online only delivery, then all students are required to attend, as they would a session delivered in person, on campus, unless they have formal approval not to do so (having submitted a formal notification of their absence).
- 4.5 Should very short-term circumstances arise, such as adverse weather conditions and associated travel disruptions, which do not result in a declaration of an Exceptional Year or other Exceptional Circumstances, then taught students will be notified of any changes to attendance requirements and expectations. Once these short-term circumstances have passed, the usual requirements and expectations for attendance should be adhered to.
- 5. Monitoring of Taught Student Attendance and Engagement
- 5.1 Roles and responsibilities of Pastoral Mentors

- 5.1.1 The attendance of taught students at scheduled learning and teaching activities and engagement with other activities required of their modules and programme, whether on-campus or online, will be monitored during the academic year by <u>Departmental Pastoral Mentors</u>, or other designated members of staff with equivalent responsibilities for student attendance, engagement and support. Data will not be shared with, or accessible by, educators directly involvement in student teaching or assessment, or be used in any way for academic performance monitoring of taught students.
- 5.1.2 Departmental Pastoral Mentors, or other designated members of staff with equivalent responsibilities for student attendance, engagement and support, will use data-informed evidence of attendance, from student check ins, and engagement, from use of the Exeter Learning Environment (ELE2), together with other sources of qualitative and quantitative information, including any approvals for absence and/or non-engagement, to identify potential concerns in relation to a student's ability to undertake/complete their studies and be successful on their programme.
- 5.1.2 The internal processing, sharing or use of students' personal attendance and engagement data by <u>Departmental Pastoral Mentors</u>, or other designated members of staff with equivalent responsibilities for student attendance, engagement and support, will be undertaken strictly in accordance with the University's <u>Information Governance Policies</u>, including its <u>Data Protection Policy</u>, and its legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. It will only be used for the purposes that it was originally collected for including:
  - To support taught student attendance, engagement and maximise their opportunity for success, including through the improvement of student support services; and/or
  - b. To enable the University to meet its legal or other regulatory requirements to monitor and report on the attendance and engagement of its taught students, as set out in Section 1.3 above.
- 6. Informal Action to support Taught Student Attendance and Engagement
- 6.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Pastoral Mentors and Senior Tutors
- 6.1 Should a <u>Departmental Pastoral Mentor</u>, or other designated members of staff with equivalent responsibilities for student attendance, engagement and support, identify

any concerns in respect of a taught student's attendance and/or engagement, following review of available qualitative and quantitative attendance and engagement data and information, they will consult with the Departmental Senior Tutor, or equivalent designated member of staff, who has responsibility for taught students' academic, personal and professional development.

- 6.2 The <u>Departmental Pastoral Mentor</u> and/or designated Departmental Senior Tutor or equivalent designated member of staff, as appropriate **may**:
  - a. Contact the student and seek to identify the reasons for their current pattern or levels of attendance and engagement.
  - b. Provide direct support, or signposting and/or referrals to more specialist areas of support, to enable the student to improve their levels of attendance and engagement.
  - c. Discuss the attendance and engagement of the student on a regular basis in 1:1 Pastoral Mentor meetings / Academic tutorial meetings, whether in person or online, throughout the academic year.
  - d. Where appropriate, in the light of module/programme requirements for Degree Apprenticeships or PSRB regulated programmes, actively take steps to contact students directly whenever scheduled, synchronous sessions are missed.
  - f. Follow and engage with the <u>Academic Tutoring: Code of Good Practice</u> in order to best support the student to attend and engage as required or expected.
  - g. Communicate, as and when necessary, to appropriate staff and student groups, identified trends in and/or barriers to student attendance and engagement. This may include by sharing fully anonymised and aggregated data to enable interventions to be put in place to remove barriers and support improvements.
- 6.3 Where there are ongoing attendance and engagement concerns in relation to Student Visa holders, or other students where there are mandatory attendance and engagement requirements, these will be progress via formal action (see section 7 below and <u>Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance</u>).

## 7. Formal Action where Taught Student Attendance is Mandatory

7.1 As stated in section 1.1.2 above, the primary purpose of this policy is to support students in meeting their attendance and engagement responsibilities and expectations and, in

- doing so, to maximise their opportunity for success. However, if informal approaches, including the provision of additional welfare and wellbeing support where appropriate, have not secured a student's return to meeting their required or expected attendance and engagement responsibilities, formal action **may** be taken. Where the University has legal responsibilities, most notably as a Student Sponsor License holder for Student Visa holders, formal action **will** be taken.
- 7.2 The University's formal approach to taking action on attendance and engagement is set out in the <u>Unsatisfactory Student Progress</u>, <u>Engagement and Attendance</u> Code of Practice and associated, necessary processes. The policy is based on a step-by-step approach, which provides opportunities at all stages for taught students to reengage and adhere to their required or expected attendance and engagement responsibilities. Additional or adapted policies and procedures for specific groups of students, including those on PSRB regulated or accredited programmes and Degree Apprenticeships are set out in Departmental or Programme-specific policies, handbooks and, in the case of Degree Apprenticeships, contractual agreements.