

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

POLICY FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

1. Preamble

- 1.1. This Policy should be read alongside the University's *Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement*. While the Code sets out the formal requirements and expectations governing academic engagement, this Policy explains how the University implements its approach to academic engagement, the principles that underpin it, and the expectations for students and staff. It highlights the ethos of early identification, compassionate intervention, and shared responsibility, and signals how the approach will continue to evolve in future years.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Academic engagement is central to success, wellbeing, and progression. By working together in a compassionate and constructive way, students and staff can identify and address challenges early, ensuring every student is enabled to achieve their academic potential. Active and consistent academic engagement enables students to make the most of their studies, contributes to positive progression and attainment, and supports the University's commitment to equity and inclusion.
- 2.2. This Policy forms part of the University's cohort legislation and applies to all registered students, regardless of year of entry. It will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that the University's approach develops in line with sector expectations, regulatory requirements, and institutional priorities, and continues to evolve in ways that best support students in their successful academic engagement.
- 2.3. This Policy is underpinned by the following principles, which guide the University's approach to academic engagement:
 - **Clarity and transparency:** expectations for academic engagement are defined and communicated clearly to students and staff.
 - **Support and early intervention:** engagement concerns are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity to enable students to access appropriate assistance.
 - **Equity and inclusivity:** the approach recognises varied learning contexts and individual circumstances, ensuring that monitoring and interventions are applied fairly.
 - **Shared responsibility:** students, Principal Academic Units (PAUs), and the University each have defined responsibilities in sustaining engagement.
 - **Consistency:** the framework is applied institution-wide, with space for appropriate disciplinary variation where required.

3. A University-wide Approach to Student Academic Engagement

- 3.1. The University is committed to creating an environment in which students are active participants in their learning. For the purposes of this Policy, academic engagement refers to the active and consistent participation of students in the learning opportunities, activities, and assessments provided by their programme.
- 3.2. Engagement will therefore be reviewed at defined points throughout the academic year, with timings adapted as needed to reflect the characteristics of different student groups (for example, first-year undergraduates, postgraduate taught (PGT), or postgraduate research (PGR) students). This approach enables the early identification of students who may be struggling to engage consistently with their studies.
- 3.3. Where engagement concerns are identified, interventions will be initiated in a staged and proportionate way, ranging from early wellbeing and academic guidance through to formal measures where necessary. All interventions will be designed to be compassionate and consistent

across programmes, with the primary aim of encouraging successful re-engagement with their studies.

- 3.4. To ensure fairness and transparency, all scheduled learning and teaching sessions will be recorded through the University's *MyAttendance* system. The University has set a minimum threshold of 65% attendance at these sessions. This figure represents an absolute minimum below which concerns about a student's academic engagement will be raised and should not be regarded as a target. Students are expected to engage more fully with their programmes, and many programmes, particularly those with professional or regulatory requirements, require a higher level of attendance. All students are encouraged to aim for full and consistent participation to benefit fully from their studies.
- 3.5. Postgraduate research students will continue to be monitored by their supervisors through agreed milestones and formal review points. This includes regular supervisory meetings recorded through the University's GRS2 process, and an annual progress review recorded through the GRS3 process, in line with the University's *Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Postgraduate Researchers*.
- 3.6. The University also recognises that patterns of academic engagement will vary across contexts, for example, in laboratory work, tutorials, placements, year abroad study, and research supervision, and these are equally integral to a student's academic progress and success. Principal Academic Units (PAUs), referred to in most cases as Schools, are responsible for making these expectations clear to their students, including where professional or regulatory requirements require higher levels of engagement.

4. Escalation and Intervention Framework

- 4.1. Where engagement concerns arise, the University will follow a staged escalation process. Interventions may include wellbeing checks, guided reflection activities, action plans, or formal meetings with academic staff. At each stage, students will receive clear and supportive communication, and all actions will be applied consistently across programmes within a single institutional framework.
- 4.2. Academic staff may also be engaged earlier in the process where contextual insight would assist in supporting the student. Dependent upon individual circumstances, students may be referred to relevant specialist services (for example, the International Student Team for those sponsored under a Student Route visa, or Disability Services for students with a Reasonable Adjustment Plan) or may be accelerated to higher levels of the escalation process where earlier, more intensive support is required.
- 4.3. Decisions will always take into account the individual circumstances and patterns of engagement of each student. In rare cases where students do not re-engage after all appropriate steps have been taken (including if a student does not engage at all for a continuous period of 60 days), options such as a formal Leave of Absence or, if approved by the relevant academic decision-making body, withdrawal from the University may be considered. These are last-resort outcomes, and every effort will be made to avoid escalation to this point. All escalation decisions will be proportionate, context-sensitive, and focused on supporting successful re-engagement with studies. Where a student sponsored under a Student Route visa commences a formal Leave of Absence or is required to withdraw, this will also include withdrawal of visa sponsorship in line with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements.
- 4.4. Decisions and actions taken at each stage of the escalation process will be recorded and communicated appropriately, ensuring that relevant academic staff within the student's PAU have oversight of engagement concerns and a full picture of their individual circumstances.
- 4.5. Where engagement concerns arise for students undertaking programmes of study or research that are subject to Fitness to Practise requirements, the procedures outlined in Regulation 8 and the *Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees* will take precedence over the

escalation procedures specified in this Policy and the *Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement*.

5. Responsibilities for Academic Engagement

5.1. Academic engagement is a shared responsibility:

- **Students** are responsible for participating actively in their programmes, informing their PAU promptly if circumstances affect their engagement, and responding in a timely manner to communications from the University.
- **PAUs** are responsible for clearly communicating expectations of academic engagement to students, monitoring engagement consistently, ensuring early and proportionate intervention when concerns arise, and maintaining oversight of engagement within their programmes. They are also responsible for designing and delivering teaching, learning, and assessment in ways that actively encourage and enable student participation.
- **The University** is responsible for providing the framework, systems, and oversight needed to monitor academic engagement consistently across all programmes, ensuring equity, inclusivity, and compliance with external obligations (for example, UKVI requirements).

6. Future Development of Academic Engagement Monitoring

- 6.1. This Policy marks a significant shift from previous attendance-focused processes towards a more holistic understanding of academic engagement, with an emphasis on supporting student success while continuing to meet external requirements. While attendance remains the primary indicator for 2025/26, the University is committed to implementing a broader set of contextual indicators and measures (for example, digital participation, assessment submission, communication patterns) that better reflect the diverse ways students engage with their studies.
- 6.2. The expansion of engagement indicators beyond attendance is a key institutional priority and will be introduced in a phased and carefully managed way.
- 6.3. Future iterations of this Policy will build on this foundation and will continue to evolve towards a more holistic, contextual, personalised, and student-centred model of academic engagement.