

# Student Engagement Monitoring Policy

Effective from 1 September 2024

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [University Regulations](#) and the [Student Sickness and Absence Procedure](#).

## 1. Purpose

This policy outlines how the University ensures that all students are engaging satisfactorily with their programme of study. Student engagement is monitored in order to:

- Identify students whose attendance record or pattern suggest that they may be at risk of failing to progress, so that supportive follow-up measures can be implemented to encourage engagement;
- Identify any international students who may be at risk of breaching their visa compliance requirements, so that supportive follow-up measures can be implemented to encourage engagement and ensure that the University complies with Home Office (UK Visa and Immigration) requirements;
- Enable reporting of students who are presumed to have withdrawn from their programmes of study, in line with the requirements of their student loan or individual sponsorship agreements.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all registered Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students, regardless of fee status, nationality, or location of study.

It also applies to international graduates of the University who are awarded the status of Sabbatical Officer of the Students' Union and who hold a UKVI Student Visa.

## 3. Policy

### 3.1 Importance of engagement

Engagement is generally measured in terms of student attendance in relevant scheduled classes, interaction with online learning materials, and the timely submission of assessed work (or meetings for Sabbatical Officers).

All students are expected to engage with their programme of studies in a way that is appropriate and which maximises their chances of academic success. By monitoring student engagement, the University is able to identify students who may require additional academic support and implement measures to encourage engagement.

Monitored engagement is particularly important for international students who have a Student Visa, since the University is required to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the student visa. If you are a Student Visa holder and it has been identified that you are not engaging appropriately with your programme of study, the University, as your sponsor, has a responsibility to report this to the Home Office.

### 3.2 Taught (UG and PGT) students

If you have a good reason to be absent from your programme, please see the [Student Sickness and Absence Procedure](#), which outlines what you should do to inform and seek approval from your academic unit of your absence.

Other than where you have notified your academic unit of an absence, students are expected to attend all scheduled elements of their programme of study and engage with the material provided on the University's Virtual learning Environment system (Canvas) or other University on-line resource.

#### 3.2.1. How engagement will be monitored

Student attendance at Present in Person (PiP) teaching sessions is normally monitored through fixed smartcard scanners on entry to lecture theatres, laboratories and classrooms. You are responsible for ensuring that your attendance is recorded at any PiP sessions by scanning your smartcard each time you enter a classroom with a scanner.

When you scan your smartcard, this data becomes available to relevant University employees to allow colleagues to identify sessions where students have attended or been absent. Action reports will be run on a monthly basis and where individual attendances have fallen below the programme minimum level, students will be sent communications to notify the student of the Academic Unit's concerns.

Where your programme of study includes some remote learning or directed learning (such as for dissertations/projects), your engagement will be monitored in your use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform (Canvas) or other on-line system regarding your participation with online teaching provision, assessment submission and related activities.

If you are studying on a taught programme (UG or PGT), engagement is normally monitored via specific events, at a minimum of one event or contact point per week throughout each semester.

Your academic unit will normally determine an appropriate engagement threshold for your programme of study. This is typically attendance at a minimum of 50% of scheduled sessions for both Home and International students (however, please see [Additional information for International Students](#), below).

#### 3.2.2. Data storage and protection

Attendance data from all smartcard swipes is recorded in the Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS) and retained securely for a period of two years (the academic year in which the monitoring takes place, plus one year). The data is stored primarily for the purposes of Engagement Monitoring and in order to comply with the [purposes of this policy](#).

The use of your personal data is subject to the provisions set out within the Student Privacy Notice. Any personal attendance data recorded in SAMS should not be used or shared for any purposes beyond the provisions set out in the [Student Privacy Notice](#), unless there is an identified necessity to do so (in line with the General Data Protection Regulations).

In individual disciplines, it is sometimes necessary to disclose attendance data for the purposes of professional references, where this information is explicitly requested. In these circumstances, your attendance data may be used to inform general statements about your engagement on the programme. This information will be shared with you in advance of being disclosed to third parties.

### 3.3. PGR students (including Professional Doctorates)

Following your registration and collection of your smartcard, engagement of PGR students is monitored through records of confirmed meetings with your supervisor or supervisory team, where there are no taught modules. For full-time students carry out research, you should meet with your supervisor or supervisory team at least ten times per year, ensuring that there is a gap of no more than ten weeks between meetings. For part-time students, you should discuss and agree the number of formal interactions with your supervisory team, ensuring that there is a gap of no more than ten weeks between meetings.

You must record your meetings in NUSReflect throughout the 12 month cycle, up to the submission of your thesis.

In addition to regular supervisory meetings, key stages of your programme should also be recorded on NUSReflect. This includes (but is not limited to) milestones such as Induction, Project Approval and Annual Progress Reviews. For any periods of Outside Study supervisory meeting will need to continue to be recorded to monitor engagement.

If you expect to be absent from the University, you must obtain approval through one of the following routes:

- Completing the '[Student Notice of Absence Form](#)' (for holidays or sickness leave);
- Record your [change of circumstance](#) by completing an 'Outside Study Request', if you are planning to undertake Primary Research away from your normal location of study (for example, for fieldwork, data collections, study visits to other libraries/archives/industrial units). You should also complete this form if you are planning to write-up your thesis or complete any corrections from home;
- Requesting an 'Interruption of Studies' through [NUSReflect](#).

Your Graduate School will undertake a confirmed meeting record check at least every three weeks. If, during such checks, the Graduate School notes that you do not have a confirmed meeting recorded within the previous eight weeks, you will be sent a notification email to request that you take action to ensure that you are complying with engagement requirements.

### 3.4. Additional information for International Students

If you are an international student and you hold a Student Visa, you should be aware that the University is obliged to follow certain protocols if you fail to engage with your programme of study without good cause. This includes reporting to the Home Office (UK Visa and Immigration service) any students who fail to meet the minimum engagement threshold.

If you are a PGR student holding a Student Visa, you are expected to have regular contact with one member of your supervisory team at least ten times per year (approximately once per month), with gaps of no longer than eight weeks between meetings. This includes any periods of 'extended submission', 'pending submission' (writing-up) or 'under examination' if you continue to reside in the UK.

If you are a PGR Occasional student holding a Student Visa, you are expected to report to your Graduate School on a monthly basis to demonstrate engagement.

Where students are located on work placements or field trips as part of the programme of studies, they are expected to have regular attendance at the placement and the school will make contact at least monthly with both the student and the employer to monitor engagement.

If you are a Sabbatical Officer holding a Tier 4 Student Visa, you are expected to have regular (at least once per month) one to one meetings with your line manager for the duration of your period of office. Any extended periods of absence from the University may be reported to the Home Office.

### 3.5 Additional information for 1<sup>st</sup> Team Athletes with sporting commitments (*added for guidance January 2025*)

1<sup>st</sup> Team athletes students can be requested to attend fixtures on Wednesday afternoons, which may necessitate you having to leave Newcastle early in the morning, thus missing scheduled morning classes.

Requests for absence for this purpose are considered generally 'reasonable' but will be subject to the discretion of your Academic Unit and the specific activities that have been scheduled. To assist with this:

- If you are a 1<sup>st</sup> Team athlete within performance sports clubs you should let your Degree Programme Director or Senior Tutor know that you may need to request support for absence for some away fixtures, at the start of the year.
- Sports Services will send a list of performance clubs and their respective 1<sup>st</sup> Team playing members and fixtures electronically to all School Managers. Academic Unit work closely with Sports Services to check lists are up to date.
- For each requested absence, you should submit an *online [Student Notice of Absence Form](#)* in the normal way, indicating clearly the reason for your absence and the sport represented. Your request should be submitted at least 5 days prior to the date of the specific away fixture.
- The designated person in your Academic Unit will consider the request and advise you of their decision in the normal manner.
- Whilst support should not be withheld unreasonably, academic unit decisions will take account of the cumulative impact of several periods of absence (which may affect the same module / session each time); and the implications for the attendance record of international students who are subject to immigration / visa compliance requirements.
- The approach may vary depending on the programme of study. It should be noted that programme commitments would normally take priority, and support for absence may not always be possible.

The decision of the Academic Unit will be final.