

Academic Programme Engagement Framework

2020-2021

Summary

This framework outlines the institutional approach to managing students' engagement in their programme of study with a view to supporting them to achieve, succeed and develop skills. It sets out the levels of non-engagement at which the University requires supportive interventions to be put in place. Additionally, it defines practices and tools for identifying students at risk of disengagement from their studies and outlines the University support available to students.

Glossary of Terms

Programme engagement is defined as participation with activity across the academic experience, particularly attending scheduled teaching, submitting to assessment and accessing learning resources.

Attendance [at timetabled sessions] is a subset of the broader concept of engagement and should be viewed as a measure to help understand participation in academic life.

Purpose

Regular engagement with programme activity and academic achievement are closely linked. Students who engage fully with their academic programme of study are more likely to enjoy a rewarding experience in which core skills are developed and they feel part of their learning community.

This framework sets out the institutional approach to managing student's engagement with their programme of study. The approach centres on supporting students to succeed, achieve and maintain high levels of wellbeing. Retention of students is a strategic priority for the University and every effort should be made to support students to engage, and where necessary, to effectively reengage with their studies. To this end, we will monitor and manage engagement within a supportive and pastoral environment to assist students in managing their wellbeing and academic progression.

This approach also supports the University's responsibilities for accurately reporting student registration status to external bodies, including:

- Higher Education Statistics Agency
- Home Office - UK Visas and Immigration
- NHS Business Services
- Office for Students
- Student Loans Company
- Teacher Regulation Agency

Scope

This framework applies to students on undergraduate, PGCE and postgraduate taught programmes. Postgraduate research programmes are subject to Graduate School policies.

Taught students on a Tier 4 student visa are additionally subject to the University's 'Attendance Monitoring Policy – Tier 4 students.'

This framework references:

- Appendix 7 of the Academic Regulations – Procedures for the Submission of Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances
- Appendix 9 of the Academic Regulations - Interruption Policy
- Appendix 10 of the Academic Regulations – Repeat Year Policy
- Appendix 16 of the Academic Regulations – Fitness to Study Procedures
- Appendix 23 of the Academic Regulations – Role of a Student's Friend in Academic Conduction Procedures
- Appendix 26 of the Academic Regulations – Student Withdrawal Procedures

1. Key principles

- 1.1 There are five key principles to note in the management of students' engagement with their programme of study:
 - 1.1.1 Students are ultimately responsible for their own learning and progress. The University strongly recommends they attend all teaching sessions and practice placements scheduled in their timetable to ensure they receive the maximum benefit from their programme.
 - 1.1.2 Students are encouraged to make full use of the wide range of specialist University services available to them.
 - 1.1.3 Students who make satisfactory academic progress without high levels of attendance are not subject to disproportionate departmental interventions however engagement should be actively encouraged, with support and guidance offered.
 - 1.1.4 The Equality Act will be adhered to throughout the management of students' academic engagement and reasonable adjustments put in place where appropriate.
 - 1.1.5 Following appropriate intervention, students who continue to fail to engage and put their academic standing at risk may be withdrawn from the University. Subsidiary points appear like this.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Faculties and academic departments are responsible for:

2.1.1 Responding to programme engagement matters in line with this Framework

2.1.2 Publishing Academic Programme Engagement Policy(s) that:

- Define attendance requirements and monitoring patterns
- Vary appropriately by discipline and programme structure
- Note where programmes cover more than one department or faculty
- Sets out specific module or programme attendance requirements
- Designate which teaching sessions are mandatory in order to comply with attendance standards specified by professional statutory or regulatory bodies e.g. Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), General Medical Council (GMC), Health Care Professions Council (HCPC), Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) or similar organisation

2.1.3 Ensuring students are aware of local Academic Programme Engagement Policy(s)

2.1.4 Using University systems available to effectively monitor student attendance and engagement

2.1.5 Timely monitoring of attendance and engagement data

2.1.6 Effectively identifying when a student's attendance and engagement has reached a level for concern, providing early intervention to help the student to get back on track and using a supportive approach that makes use of the expertise available within Catalyst.

2.1.7 Timely reporting of non-engagement concerns to enable the suspension of bursary and scholarship payments if criteria is not met

2.1.8 Adhering to the Equality Act 2010; making reasonable adjustments where necessary and appropriate

2.2 Students are responsible for:

2.2.1 Participating with learning and teaching opportunities offered by their department(s)

2.2.2 Managing their commitments around their timetabled sessions

2.2.3 Ensuring they are familiar with the academic programme engagement policy for their programme

2.2.4 Engaging with the method of attendance recording used by their department(s)

- 2.2.5 Making full use of the university's specialist support services available to students
- 2.2.6 Following the process for reporting absence as set out in the APEP if they expect to be absent from a taught session or absent for several days
- 2.2.7 Working with staff to make arrangements for continuing to engage in their studies during any absence, using resources such as blackboard, lecture capture etc
- 2.2.8 Making themselves aware of all attendance requirements
- 2.2.9 Tier 4 students are additionally responsible for complying with the International Office's 'Attendance Monitoring Policy – Tier 4 students.'

3. Supporting students

- 3.1 The University provides a variety of services to support students during their time at university. Departments should actively promote the opportunity to seek advice and assistance from University support services.
- 3.2 Catalyst is the base for the majority of support services and is a single point of contact for:
 - Accommodation
 - Campus Life
 - Money advice
 - Wellbeing and counselling
 - Inclusion and Specific Learning Difficulty Team
 - Transitions Team- Thinking of Leaving
 - Learning Support and UniSkills
 - Chaplaincy
- 3.3 Policy advice in relation to changes to a student's registration (including application for mitigating circumstances, interruptions of study and readmission) can be sought from Academic Registry.
- 3.4 Further details on all of these services, including how to contact them, can be found on the Students Homepage (edgehill.ac.uk/students/) under 'Supporting You.'

- 3.5 Student Services have published a toolkit to support staff to support students. This toolkit provides a single resource which can be used by all university staff to increase knowledge, understanding and confidence, in order to help students maximise their academic potential.

edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/supporting-staff-to-support-students

4. Tools to Support the Management of Programme Engagement

Attendance monitoring

- 4.1. The Qwickly attendance recording tool is a plugin which is easily added to any module or programme area of the Blackboard VLE. It enables the recording of students' attendance for each of their modules or programmes and provides real time attendance information via Blackboard.

Please contact the Learning Services, Learning Technology team
LTDSupport@edgehill.ac.uk for assistance or support using Qwickly.

- 4.2 The Tableau system provides a dashboard-style overview of the attendance data recorded within Qwickly. Data is updated weekly and is aggregated to show an overall attendance pattern for each module/programme.

- 4.3 The data can be further drilled down to view the attendance percentage for each student. Access to Tableau is restricted to a limited number of colleagues within each faculty and department.

Queries should be directed to departmental Tableau users.

- 4.4 Enhanced View of Student Data (EVSD) is a project to enable personal tutors to use the Quercus student records system as a single source of information about students. For the purposes of attendance, it should be used in conjunction with other tools described here.

- 4.5 Information available within Quercus includes:

- Admissions data- such as educational history, qualifications on entry and protected characteristic indicators. Such information is useful for tutors prior to meeting a student as they could indicate requirements for specific support.
- Assessment data- up to the last confirmed assessment period available. This information supports tutors when talking to students about their grades or when considering their path to an overall degree classification.

- Personal tutor meeting notes- tutors are encouraged to record personal tutor meeting notes in Quercus, using departmental note types, locked down to each area. Having all information in one place enables transparency between personal tutors (who may change) and provides continuity of support for students.

The Student Experience Team lead on this project and can be contacted for support and training sesystems@edgehill.ac.uk.

Engagement monitoring

- 4.6 Blackboard (VLE) has several built-in tools providing data insights into student engagement with their module or programme. Access to the various levels of data is dependent on role, and this may impact on your ability to analyse the information.
- 4.6.1 Course reports- these are a key area of engagement information and provide different views of a student's online participation within their module/programme. Data is only available for the previous 180 days.
- 4.6.2 Retention centre- this monitors, and provides alerts to, a pre-defined set of criteria which can be tailored to the module, programme or department requirements. For example, it can provide the percentage of programme activity per student against the programme average
- 4.6.3 Performance dashboard. This provides an overview of student's online participation including last programme access and number of days since last programme access
- 4.7 Engage2Serve will provide a single source for Catalyst services, bringing together previously separate systems delivering functionality around appointments, events, enquiries and case management.
- 4.7.1 It will provide a 360 view of an individual student's engagement across the multiple Catalyst teams, helping to identify and support at risk students. The system will be continually developed to provide data to inform relevant interventions and support.
- 4.8 Using a combination of the data in these systems provides context and information to help departments build a picture of student engagement in a specific programme. It is important to use a combination of these tools - using each in isolation will not provide a complete picture of a student's

engagement. Departments should also include assessment results when determining a student's overall engagement profile.

- 4.9 At designated points in the year Academic Registry undertakes census checks to ensure that central records remain accurate. The census complements ongoing work departments undertake to monitor attendance and engagement and does not replace local systems for tracking student engagement. If a student has 'never attended' they should be reported as such in the census return.
- 4.10 The University will continue to develop attendance and engagement monitoring systems and associated guidance for use.

5. Local Academic Programme Engagement Policies

- 5.1 Codification of programme engagement management is best placed at a local level rather than a homogenous approach for the institution. Approaches for managing student engagement need to vary to account for differences in organisational and programme structures, professional requirements and specific attendance requirements. Locally set Academic Programme Engagement Policies (APEP) provide the detail required by this overarching framework. APEPs may be at faculty, department or programme level, as determined to be most appropriate.
- 5.2 Local Academic Programme Engagement Policies should:
 - 5.2.1 Set clear expectations of students about attendance and engagement with their studies
 - 5.2.2 Detail the process by which attendance and engagement will be monitored
 - 5.2.3 Define the monitoring patterns for attendance for each programme
 - 5.2.4 Identify intervention trigger points for each level of non-engagement
 - 5.2.5 Identify where a programme's intended learning outcomes, module or student status has a specific attendance requirement, and the potential consequences for non-attendance
 - 5.2.6 Define the process students should follow to report absence

- 5.2.7 Identify the staff member(s) or role that leads on matters and processes pertaining to programme engagement
- 5.2.8 Comply with the university's policy management handbook
- 5.2.9 Be easily understood and accessed by students
- 5.2.10 Use the designated template

6. Managing Student Engagement

6.1 The University recognises that for students to wholly realise their academic potential, develop skills and knowledge and ultimately succeed with their studies, they need to fully engage with opportunities offered by their programme and department(s). In keeping with this, the University will monitor both student attendance and academic engagement to identify students at risk of under-achieving and failing and provide supportive interventions.

6.1.1 The University defines engagement activity as:

- Attendance at classroom-based study, lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical or studio-based sessions, workshops, group work, presentations, or occasional sessions where visiting speakers are invited to present
- Attendance at clinical, sandwich, professional practice or work placements
- Submission of coursework and/or attendance at an examination
- Meeting or communicating with a member of staff on a course related matter
- Engagement with supervision/mentoring
- Engagement with the virtual learning environment, including accessing lecture capture
- Studying overseas as part of an Erasmus exchange or study abroad programme
- Representing the students' union at a course board or similar meeting

Levels of non-engagement

6.2 There are three levels of unsatisfactory programme engagement:

- 6.2.1 Emerging concern- student attendance and/or engagement may be irregular or there is a pattern giving rise to concern
- 6.2.2 Sustained- student attendance and/or engagement are continuously below the expected level set by the department, or a significant contact point is missed
- 6.2.3 Significant- the student has disengaged from their studies or the action plan (reached at level 2) has not been adhered to

Discretionary practices

- 6.3 It is recognised that variations in discipline and structures may necessitate different practices to those normally employed and therefore discretion is retained for academic areas to:
 - 6.3.1 Case manage students using the levels sequentially or bypass levels where non-engagement is identified immediately to be sustained or significant
 - 6.3.2 Convene a faculty-led progress support panel
 - 6.3.3 Facilitate a phased return to study

7. Procedures for Managing Unsatisfactory Engagement

Level one – emerging concerns about attendance and/or engagement

Student attendance and/or engagement may be irregular or there is a pattern giving rise to concern

- 7.1 A designated member of academic staff, personal tutor or their nominee should contact the student for an informal discussion using any/all available channels of communication. This is to:
 - 7.1.1 Inform the student that their lack of attendance and/or engagement is a cause for concern
 - 7.1.2 Identify any underlying cause for concern for non-attendance and/or engagement, or health and wellbeing
 - 7.1.3 Provide support to resolve any issues

- 7.1.4 Refer them to appropriate university support services
- 7.1.5 Suggest the student consider university processes such as exceptional mitigating circumstances, interruption or repeat year
- 7.2 The designated staff member should email the student, summarising the advice and guidance, setting a deadline for review.

Level two – sustained non-attendance and/or engagement

Student attendance and/or engagement are continuously below the expected level set by the department, or a significant contact point is missed.

- 7.3 Departments should contact the student in writing, explaining that their non-attendance/engagement has been recorded as sustained and:
 - 7.3.1 Be clear that a response to the communication is required
 - 7.3.2 Where appropriate, provide relevant support and/or referral to university support services
 - 7.3.3 The department should invite the student to a level two progress support meeting with their programme leader or their nominee, attendees may also include:
 - The student's personal tutor
 - Representative(s) from the department(s)
- 7.4 At the meeting, academic staff should explore any issues preventing the student from attending and/or engaging and offer academic and personal support. The meeting should:
 - 7.4.1 Establish an action plan for future attendance and/or engagement requirements
 - 7.4.2 Set out the consequences of failure to adhere to the plan and deadline for review
 - 7.4.3 Refer to appropriate university support services
 - 7.4.4 Consider university processes and procedures to support the student, such as exceptional mitigating circumstances, interruption or repeat year
- 7.5 If a student fails to attend the meeting, it should proceed in their absence. A summary letter should be sent to the student within five working days of the meeting taking place.

Level three – significant non-attendance and/or engagement

The student has disengaged from their studies or the action plan (reached at level 2) has not been adhered to.

- 7.6 The student is at risk of being withdrawn and so the department should escalate the formal process. A direct discussion with the student is now essential, using any/all available channels of communication.
- 7.7 A departmental progress support panel should be convened. Attendees may include:
- Head(s) of department(s) or senior academic (or their nominee), who will act as Chair
 - Personal tutor
 - Representative(s) from the department(s)
- 7.8 Where the Chair feels it appropriate, relevant University support services may also be invited to attend the meeting. This may include, but is not limited to, an appropriate representative from:
- Inclusion (Student Services)
 - Transitions (Student Services)
 - Wellbeing (Student Services)
 - Specific Learning Difficulty Support (Learning Services)
 - Academic Registry
- 7.9 The following information should be provided to the student in writing:
- 7.9.1 The date, time and location of the meeting
- 7.9.2 A summary of the concerns raised about the students' attendance and/or engagement with their studies
- 7.9.3 Details of who will attend the meeting
- 7.9.4 Information about the student's right to be accompanied by a friend, as detailed in Appendix 23 of the academic regulations – the role of a student's friend in academic conduct procedures.
- 7.9.5 A copy of this framework and the local academic programme engagement policy
- 7.10 If a student fails to attend this meeting, it will go ahead in their absence. The student should make all reasonable endeavours to attend the meeting. If, for

good reason, the student cannot attend, the meeting may be rearranged subject to approval by the Chair.

7.11 The meeting will consider all relevant information, including, but not limited to:

7.11.1 The student's attendance and engagement records

7.11.2 Any individual circumstances related to the student

7.11.3 Underlying cause for concern for non-engagement or health and wellbeing

7.11.4 Student support requirements

7.11.5 The impact of the student's non-attendance/engagement on their studies

7.12 The panel should deliberate in private. In deciding the outcome, they will consider the circumstances and context in each case. The list of outcomes below is not exhaustive:

7.12.1 Agree what the student and University will do to bring their attendance and/or engagement to an acceptable level

7.12.2 Establish an action plan for future attendance and/or engagement requirements, with a deadline for review

7.12.3 Refer them to appropriate University support services

7.12.4 Consider University processes and procedures to support the student, such as Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances, Interruption or Repeat Year

7.12.5 Refer the student to Student Services under the Fitness to Study Procedures

7.12.6 Recommend the student receives a final warning from the head of department

7.12.7 Recommend to the head of department to withdraw the student, this may be instigated if:

7.12.6.1 A student has never attended

7.12.6.2 A student has completely disengaged

7.12.6.3 A student's lack of attendance or engagement means that they could not realistically recover their position.

- 7.13 The student must be notified in writing of the panel's decision within five working days of the meeting taking place.
- 7.14 Once it has been established that a student should be withdrawn, the department must action this no later than 10 working days after the decision. This is to ensure the University charge the correct tuition fee, and students do not receive funding they are not entitled to.

8. Annexe one- template for Programme Engagement Policy

Template for Programme Engagement Policy	
Applies to:	Insert department / faculty name(s) <i>You may wish to have more on than PEP per academic area if there is a need for approaches to vary significantly.</i>
Policy owner:	Insert name(s) owner of policy. <i>This should be the person(s) responsible for implementing the policy.</i>
Effective from:	DATE
Engagement requirements	
<p>In this section:</p> <p>Outline the expectations of students in respect of engagement with their programme. List programmes which have attendance requirements, for example to meet professional body regulations, and define what these are.</p>	
Attendance monitoring patterns	
<p>Outline how student attendance on programme will be monitored, for example, whether all teaching sessions will be monitored or particular lectures/ seminars (per module) will be prioritised.</p>	
Trigger points for each non-engagement level	
<p>Define what the area determines are the trigger points for each level of non-engagement:</p> <p>Level 1 Engagement concern- INSERT HERE Level 2- Sustained non-engagement- INSERT HERE Level 3- Significant non-engagement – INSERT HERE</p>	
Process for student reporting absence	
<p>Outline how and to whom students should report their absence from a scheduled teaching session.</p>	
Process for assessing programme engagement	

Outline how the data collated from attendance monitoring will be used to assess the programme engagement of individual students. This should include how students will be tracked and monitored in order to support their (re)engagement and wellbeing.

Outline what other data sources will be referenced to assess engagement. For example, submissions of assignments, accessing Blackboard.

Endmatter

Title	Academic Programme Engagement Framework
Policy Owner	Head of Student Experience
Approved by	Learning and Teaching Committee
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Date for Review	June 2021