

Attendance and Engagement Policy

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Please note that as a student of the Buckinghamshire New University and studying with the BCNO Group, your studies are subject to the policies and regulations of the University. In some cases the policies have been amended to make them specifically relevant to the BCNO Group and the requirements of the General Osteopathic Council. If you require further guidance please contact the Quality Manager. (quality@eso.ac.uk)

BCNO recognises that there is an obvious strong link between student attendance/engagement and student success, and therefore actively supports and encourages students to participate in learning sessions and to engage with learning activities. In order to do this, BCNO monitors levels of attendance and engagement:

- Students are encouraged and supported to fully engage with their studies so that they acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed
- Monitoring engagement and attendance can identify students at risk of withdrawing from, or failing, their course, and enable support mechanisms to be put in place.

An erratic pattern of attendance/engagement can be an early indication of problems that may lead to underachievement, failure to progress, or withdrawal. Early identification of, and timely intervention with such students, enhances retention and wellbeing.

BCNO has a duty to monitor the attendance and engagement of its students to fulfil its legal obligation to inform relevant external agencies of their registration status.¹

2.0 Applicability and Scope

This policy applies to all students.

3.0 Responsibilities

Ownership of this policy lies with the Academic Registry.

¹ This includes students in receipt of financial support and, for sponsored EU/international students, BCNO's compliance with the requirements of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) as a Tier 4 / Student Route licence holder.

4.0 Definitions

- **Attendance:** The presence of the student during the scheduled teaching, clinical or learning activity for the entire session (including remote attendance for online live sessions);
- **Engagement:** Active participation by the student with their studies (attendance or distance-based) and use of resources to support their learning, including:
 - Attendance of scheduled learning and teaching sessions and activities – both in-person classes and online.
 - Active contribution to personal and group tutorials, lectures and seminars.
 - Use of library facilities and other learning resources.
 - Engagement with and submission of assessment tasks set.
 - Attendance at examinations or time-constrained assessment activities.
 - Attendance at arranged Personal Tutor meetings and with Welfare Support where necessary
 - Attendance during clinical, practical and observation sessions
 - Responding in a timely manner to formal communications from BCNO, such as letters, emails (to the BCNO student address), text messages and telephone calls.
- **Student Visa:** A UKVI visa sponsored by the BCNO Group under the Student Route (prior to January 2021 entry, known as 'Tier 4').
- **Scheduled teaching and learning activities include, but are not limited to:**
 - Lectures, seminars and tutorials (online and in person)
 - Project and dissertation supervision meetings
 - Practical classes, demonstrations and workshops
 - Presentations and performances
 - External visits
 - Clinical sessions, including observations.

5.0 Policy

BCNO expects students to:

- Attend and/or engage in **all** scheduled learning and teaching activities forming part of their programme of study.
- Attend punctually and for the full duration of all such activities;
- Make full use of the available resources to support their learning;
- Complete both formative and summative assessment tasks at the first opportunity.

Students are expected to participate in their learning, to take responsibility for their own development and through such engagement demonstrate a positive attitude to their studies.

BCNO will monitor students in order to identify those whose attendance and engagement raises concerns that they may be experiencing difficulties. Attendance of Tier 4 (and additionally for BCNO, from September 2021, students sponsored under the UKVI Student Visa Route) students is subject to additional monitoring to meet the requirements of the UKVI (see point 9.0).

- Where attendance and/or engagement levels raise concerns, BCNO will take appropriate steps to provide support. The initial focus will be on support and wellbeing for the student. There are specific monitoring arrangements for students with a student visa. See point 9.0.
- If attendance and/or engagement levels raise concerns, communications designed to

encourage students to re-engage with their studies will be sent either via the SEAtS system or by Academic Registry.

- Following all interventions and the exhaustion of a Fitness to Study process, enrolment may be withdrawn, and students will be reported, as applicable, to the validating University partner, Student Loans Company (SLC), the UKVI, and any other relevant public bodies, to meet BCNO's professional and statutory reporting duty.

BCNO will treat any deliberate attempt by a student to circumvent this policy, e.g. by asking another student to register on their behalf – extremely seriously. Any such attempt may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

6.0 Methods of recording attendance

Physical attendance at classes is recorded using an App based system known as SEAtS. Blue tooth enabled Beacons will be positioned within classrooms at Boxley and within the Clinic locker room area and students will log into the app to then be identified by the app to be registered as present. Students can register their attendance up to 30 minutes before the start of the session so, if the session starts at 10am, attendance can be registered from 9.30am. From 10.01am attendance will be recorded as late. When late attendance is recorded, the system notes how late the student was, so we can monitor the actual time you were present in the class.

Where students are unable to use the SEAtS app within Boxley classrooms, a dedicated tablet will be available to students to register their attendance. However, students should endeavour to use the app on their phones in the first instance.

For attendance at Clinic, students should use their phones to register attendance. If, for any reason, students cannot use their phones, they must immediately report to the main Clinic Reception where staff will register attendance into the app. A paper record will be kept in the event that the SEAtS app is unavailable.

Failure to engage with the SEAtS app will result in an absence being recorded for the student. Students will not be permitted to have their attendance corrected should they fail to engage with SEAtS.

Students must not register attendance for another student. Where this occurs, disciplinary action may be taken.

- BCNO will monitor student attendance and engagement using SEAtS Software and may also draw upon the following records to inform an overall profile for a student:
 - Submission of assessment tasks as recorded on the BCNO's Student Records System
 - Engagement with the BCNO's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), e.g. accessing of materials and participation in discussions on-line
 - Interaction with Personal Tutors and Student Welfare OfficersUsage of the BCNO Library and other learning resources, e.g. borrowing of books, and accessing e-books or journal articles.
- All data will be held and processed in accordance with the BCNO's Data Protection Policy and GDPR. Additionally, data submitted to SEAtS will fall within the data protection and GDPR policy of the company and which is available to view on the Learning Zone.
- Where attendance and/or engagement levels raise concern, BCNO will intervene in accordance with the process for the monitoring procedure outlined in point 8.0 below, which triggers communications with the students concerned. An additional intervention procedure will operate for students sponsored under a student visa - see point 9.0.

7.0 Communicating with students

All communications will be by email to the student's ESO or BCOM email account. Any notice of pending withdrawal will also be sent by recorded post to the student's term-time and permanent home address as recorded on the BCNO's Student Records System.

8.0 Attendance and Engagement: monitoring procedure

BCNO receives and considers summary data relating to student attendance and engagement at the termly Student Inclusion, Welfare and Attendance Committee (SIWAC). Data is measured against an engagement benchmark rate of 80 per cent (to and above which all students should aim to consistently achieve) as well as an internally set margin range below this level that triggers interventions. Targeted strategies to address any concerning patterns of engagement within cohorts are agreed or referred to another committee if necessary. Specific student cases of concern are also discussed with further follow up agreed where necessary. Additionally, a specific report on student engagement levels is made for students sponsored under a student visa with any necessary action (e.g. reporting to the UKVI) advised and relayed to the Senior Management Team.

Ongoing monitoring throughout the year:

Intervention one	<p>The first intervention stage will focus on providing support where necessary and to ensure the wellbeing of students. The initial manual or automated communication sent by BCNO will be prompted by engagement levels that show concerning patterns and/or which fall short of an internally set margin range below the engagement benchmark rate over a two-week period. Where engagement causes a concern, students will be sent an email by Academic Registry requesting the student to attend either an in-person meeting or a Microsoft Teams meeting. The first intervention meeting will be held with Academic Registry and the Student Welfare officer so that engagement levels can be discussed and any signposting to support provided. Personal Tutors will be copied into correspondence for their information. Students will be advised at the meeting that a review of their engagement level would be made following one further full week (Monday to Friday) of studies.</p> <p>Students who fail to attend the meeting without a reasonable excuse for not doing so or who do not agree an alternative date and attend this, will be referred immediately to Intervention Stage three. Immediate referral to Intervention Stage three may also occur if this appears to be warranted.</p>
Intervention two	<p>After the further one full week of monitoring, and where records continue to demonstrate concerning patterns and/or do not show an improvement that meets the internally set margin range, a second automated or manual email communication will be sent alerting the student of continued low engagement. The email will point out the BCNO's concern and advise of the potential consequences of non-attendance/engagement. Immediate referral to Intervention Stage three may also occur if this appears to be warranted.</p>
Intervention three	<p>Following a further one full week monitoring period, a student whose engagement continues to be of concern and/or still does not show improvement to meet the internally set margin range, will be instructed by Academic Registry to attend either an in-person or Teams meeting along with the Student Welfare Officer to address attendance and engagement on their programme. Academic Registry will note what was discussed and agreed in the meeting and send the student a summary of this. Academic</p>

Registry will advise the student that a final review on engagement levels will be undertaken following one further full week of classes and will set out the expected level of improvement needed.

Intervention four After the one-week review period, a student who did not attend an arranged meeting with Academic Registry and/or fails to meet the remedial steps as agreed with them without good reason, will be informed and decided by the Academic Registrar, that either a Fitness to Study Process is being considered or that a recommendation for withdrawal is being made.

A student who is being recommended for a Fitness to Study process or recommended withdrawal will have 10 working days to respond in writing to the Academic Registry. All responses must be supported by evidence which may include:

- Evidence of their attendance and engagement with their studies;
- Acknowledged intention to engage with their studies;
- Evidence of exceptional circumstances as a reason for their lack of attendance or engagement.

The Registry Manager or nominee will assess responses received. Where a response is accepted, the student's Fitness to Study status or withdrawal will be set aside and they will be informed in writing. Where the response/evidence is not deemed satisfactory, the Registry Manager or nominee will continue with the Fitness to Study process or withdrawal.

9.0 Additional attendance monitoring for students sponsored under a Student Visa

We will also monitor students sponsored under a student visa as described above. However, we will also undertake additional monitoring to ensure we meet the requirements of our UKVI Sponsor License.

For students with a student visa, we consider each timetabled day as a 'contact point' which, if attended, shows a student is engaging with their course. International students who are sponsored by us for their student visa and who fail to attend 10 consecutive contact points will be reported to the UKVI. Such reporting will ordinarily mean that the student's visa will be cancelled. This may lead to the student's deportation. Students may also be interviewed at a UK border and refused re-entry to the UK after a trip abroad. Visa renewal applications may also be declined due to poor attendance. The ESO will also report to the UKVI where:

- Students do not enrol or re-enrol by the latest date advised
- BCNO stops sponsorship of the student visa for whatever reason
- Anything occurs that suggests the student is breaking the conditions of their permission to stay in the UK, such as working in breach of their conditions
- BCNO or the validating University partner withdraws the student
- BCNO suspects that a student is not a genuine student.

10.0 Absence or non-engagement

The only acceptable evidence in the case of non-engagement (including absence) is valid third party, independent, documentary evidence; or, in the case of illness, a self-certification form for the first 7 days of illness.

Medical The most common source of disruption to studies is illness or accidents. Students should email a self-certification form (downloaded from the VLE SEATs area) to clinicabsence@eso.ac.uk (Clinic sessions) and / or boxleyabsence@eso.ac.uk (Boxley / online classes) for the first 7 consecutive days (including weekends) of illness. In the event that the illness lasts longer than 7 consecutive days the student must provide either a fit note from their doctor or a formal letter from their counsellor or other healthcare practitioner confirming the reasons for the absence

	and providing specific dates of the absence and where possible an expected date of return.
Non-Medical	Students should provide to clinicabsence@eso.ac.uk (Clinic only) or boxleyabsence@eso.ac.uk (Boxley classes only) detail of the reason for the absence and corroborating evidence of some kind (eg crime reference number if the victim of crime, death certificate or letter from funeral director for bereavement, etc.). If students are not sure how to provide evidence of their circumstances, they should discuss the matter with Academic Registry.

International students with a Student Visa are entitled to apply for an authorised absence provided they are able to supply the correct supporting evidence. If their request is approved, it means they may not be reported to the UKVI for poor attendance, provided that 10 contact points have not been missed.

Students must note that if they do not submit a self-certification form (and sufficient documentary evidence following 7 days of sickness absence), or do not supply documentary evidence of a non-medical problem, the absence(s) will not be recorded as authorised.

Online classes

It should also be noted that online live broadcasted classes must be engaged with at the time of the session in order for attendance to be recorded – watching a recording of a live class would be marked as absent. Recorded only sessions will be marked as attended provided the recording is viewed within one week of the date the recording was posted.

11.0 Missed Examinations or Assignment Submissions due to mitigating circumstances

Where sudden illness affects assessment (e.g. deadlines not being met, students being too unwell to sit exams) students should apply for mitigating circumstances to be taken into consideration. For both Buckinghamshire New University or University of Plymouth enrolled students, and in relation to coursework assignments, students may alternatively apply for a short submission extension and should contact Academic Registry in this regard, who will guide students on the completion of a form for this purpose.

For any process outlined above, students must first contact the Academic Registry for guidance before submitting a form. Mitigating Circumstances applications must be made via Academic Registry.

12.0 Raising Awareness

Students should be made aware of the policy via the following means:

- During Induction.
- Informal communications and updates.