

UNIVERSITY CENTRE SOMERSET HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Relevant to students studying on a programme validated by University Centre Somerset, Pearson or The Open University.

Students enrolled with any other partner university should refer to that university's policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. As a Tier 4 Student Route Sponsor, University Centre Somerset (UCS) part of University Centre Somerset College Group (UCS College Group) is duty bound under the terms of its sponsorship licence with the Home Office to “ensure that sponsored students are academically engaging throughout the period of leave for which the students are being sponsored”.

1.2. We also have the duty to ensure that all students are academically engaging to ensure appropriate use of public money through the appropriate distribution of tuition fee loans and maintenance loans by Student Finance England to those actually on programme.

1.3. The term engagement is used to describe the ways in which a student interacts with their programme of study and may include, but is not limited to:

- Attendance at lectures, seminars, tutorials
- Assessment activities
- Undertaking fieldwork / work placement
- Use of learning resources
- Submitting essays, assignments, attending examinations

1.4. The policy sets out engagement parameters, how engagement is monitored and possible actions that might result from lack of engagement. It also forms part of our safeguarding duties, in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our student body.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This Policy applies to all our student body but specifically relevant to students who are sponsored by UCS at UCS College Group for a Student Route Tier 4 Visa and forms part of the compliance documentation for our Sponsorship licence.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1. UCS at UCS College Group is fully committed to supporting students studying to succeed and thrive during the learning experience with us. We aim to create an environment where all students can fulfil their full potential.

3.2. We expect students to engage with their programme of study in line with the guidance set out in their course handbook. UCS aspires to all students achieving 100% attendance, in line with the published Terms and Conditions and UCS College Group Positive Behaviour Policy & Behaviour Management Procedure.

3.3. This policy will refer to minimum levels of engagement. This should not be considered the minimum level that will achieve a passing grade, but the minimal level before which support interventions and further actions will be considered.

3.4. Students requiring a visa to study in the UK, sponsored by UCS have the same level of commitment from UCS to support them in their studies as all other students. However, it is necessary to acknowledge the specific requirements of our sponsor

licence to monitor engagement and that ultimately non-engagement may lead to the withdrawal of visa sponsorship and reporting to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

4. MONITORING ENGAGEMENT

4.1 We will monitor academic engagement using a range of measures and will make these data available to course leaders and those staff whose role it is to support sponsored international students at UCS. All information will be processed and stored in line with our Privacy Notice <https://www.btc.ac.uk/the-college/about-us/policies/data-protection/>

4.2 We will use the following methods as the main data sources for monitoring engagement:

- Enrolment: Include identity, document and visa check confirming right to study in the UK. If this is not completed within 10 days of the enrolment period ending The Home Office will be informed
- Attendance records for all taught sessions both in person and online
- Attendance at tutorial sessions
- Assessment: Completion of required assessment components, marks achieved and progression decisions
- Use of the LRC
- Interaction with Academic and Support staff
- Engagement with UCS processes – (see UCS HE Extenuating Circumstances Policy)
- Where applicable, attendance at and engagement with the requirements of work placements
- During periods of work placement contact with the student will be maintained via the Course Leader who will ensure the work placement provider is aware of the requirements for attendance monitoring under the Sponsorship Licence
- If resident in UCS accommodation, presence at that accommodation.

4.3 Any term time planned absence from UCS must be agreed in advance via your course tutor and approved by the HE Registrar via ucsadmissions@ucscollegegroup.ac.uk at least two weeks in advance. Evidence to support a planned absence may be requested to comply with our sponsorship duties and OFS expectations.

5. DEFINING LOW LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT - LEVEL 5 AND BELOW

5.1. Students at this level are required to attend a minimum of 15 hours of daytime (08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday) classroom-based study per week. Attendance at these sessions will be monitored via class registers. Registers will be taken daily by the tutors and attendance will be monitored by the specific Course Leader. Where the student has not reached 85% attendance of their classroom-based study in any given month, UCS will review the reasons for absence and initiate support as appropriate.

5.2. Following those interventions, where a student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive months, UCS will withdraw them due to lack of academic engagement

unless there are exceptional and evidenced reasons for the non-attendance (e.g. illness).

6. DEFINING LOW LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT - LEVEL 6 AND ABOVE

6.1. Undertaking the robust monitoring methods as outlined in section 4 above, means that early intervention strategies can be initiated to support students who are facing issues with engagement.

6.2. Examples of expected contacts to include:

- Attending formal academic or pastoral care activities such as lecture, seminar, tutorial, practical
- Test, examination or assessment
- Appointment with the Wellbeing Team or other pastoral support personnel
- Submission of coursework

6.3. Where a student misses a 5th missed consecutive contact without reasonable explanation this must be reported to the HE Registrar by the Course Leader. The HE Registrar will follow up by seeking to contact the student and offer support.

6.4. Support may include, but is not limited to, working with the HE Student Engagement Officer, input from the Course Leader to formulate a re-engagement action plan which may include additional tutorial support.

7. ACTION TO BE TAKEN IF LOW LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT ARE IDENTIFIED

7.1 If the period of non-engagement extends to 10 missed contacts and there has been no reasonable explanation and / or contact with the student for sponsored students then a non-engagement report will be submitted to the UKVI and the Student Route Visa will be cancelled in accordance with the Home Office Sponsorship Guidance, for non-international students, they will be withdrawn from the programme.

7.2 For international students if a student fails to comply with the actions set out in a re-engagement plan then UCS will consider whether Sponsorship be withdrawn, or further opportunities given to engage. This will be implemented and reviewed on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that compliance with the Sponsorship Licence is always maintained.

8. REVIEW OF POLICY

8.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years, or when there are changes to OFS or Home Office requirements by the SMT Policy Review Group prior to sign-off by SMT.