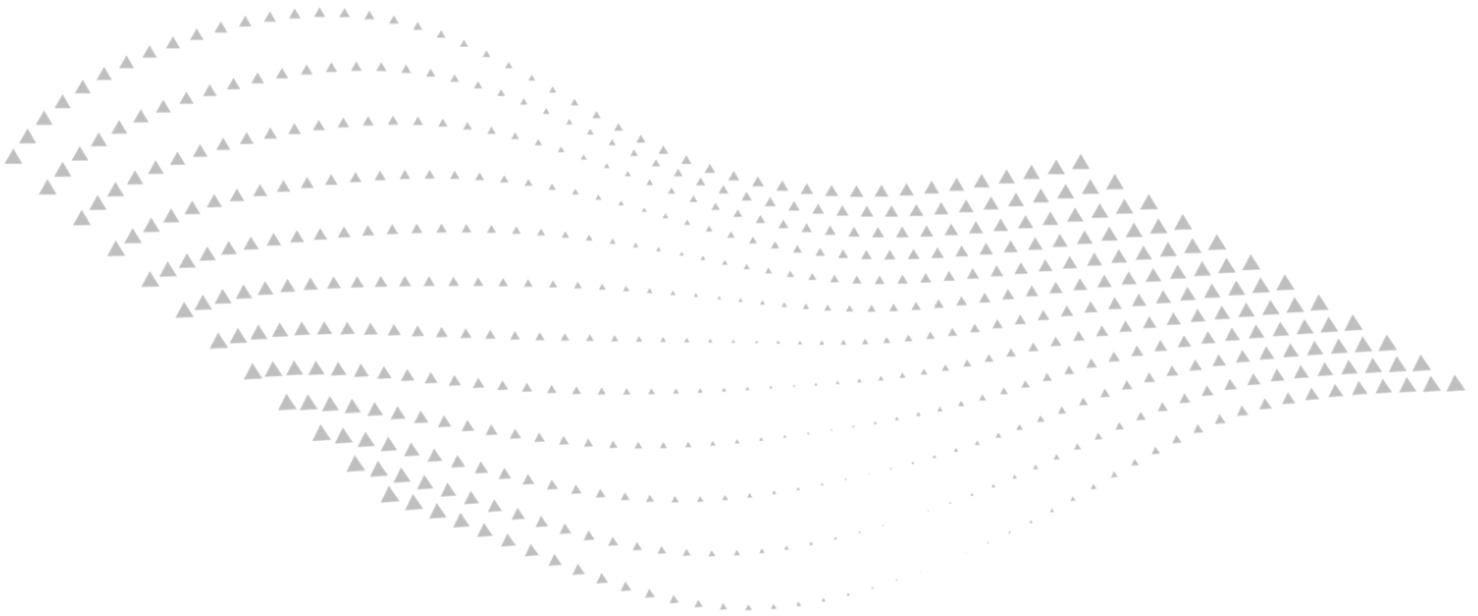


BIMM  
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# Student Engagement Policy



Last approved: September 2023

Approved by: Quality Assurance and Compliance  
Committee

Next review due: September 2027

## **1 Introduction:**

- 1.1 This Student Engagement Policy applies to all students registered on a course at BIMM University, where student engagement is closely monitored to support progression and achievement within a student's course of study and aims to ensure the provision of information, advice and guidance at the earliest opportunity to help overcome any barriers to study, and to ensure that international students meet the conditions of their visas.
- 1.2 Good levels of student engagement are also a requirement of certain external bodies, such as:
- [Student Loans Company](#) (SLC) - a UK public sector organisation that provides loans and grants to students in colleges and universities across the UK;
  - [UK Visas & Immigration](#) (UKVI) - a department of the Home Office that oversees the allocation and monitoring of Student Route Visas granted for educational purposes.
  - Further Education Funding Partners - BIMM University's FE partner sets minimum attendance thresholds for students in receipt of funding.
- 1.3 This policy has the following aims:
- To encourage students to maintain good levels of engagement, thereby making them active participants in ensuring their own achievement;
  - To identify poor engagement and to intervene early to support students who may be struggling with their studies;
  - To maintain levels of attendance in the interests of all students to prevent any adverse impact on learning that involves group and ensemble work;
  - To ensure that all students are given a fair and equal opportunity to achieve the academic aims of their course of study;
  - To ensure that international students meet the conditions of their Student Route Visas and the University meets its Student Sponsor Licence obligations.

## **2 What is Engagement?**

- 2.1 Activities considered as monitored contact points for the purposes of recording engagement are:
- A day of timetabled lessons, lectures, workshops or work placement (when it is an integral and assessed part of the course);
  - A day of assessments or examinations where a student is required to be physically present.
- 2.2 Additional Activities considered as evidence of engagement for the purpose of this Policy are:
- Attending a scheduled online lecture;
  - Submission of assessment via the VLE.

## **3 Engagement Monitoring for all Students**

- 3.1 All students are expected to be in attendance from the beginning of lessons or other learning activities. It is in the first few minutes that tutors introduce the aims and objectives that the session will help students achieve. If a student is late, this will be recorded on the register, and lecturers may, at their discretion, decide to exclude a student from a session where they are very late and / or if their delayed arrival time may be disruptive to the group.
- 3.2 Students are expected to attend all contact points as timetabled and, where this is not possible for unexpected or unavoidable reasons (e.g., illness or bereavement), students should inform their Student Wellbeing Team of the reasons for their absence.

- 3.3 Where the School has been notified by the student, absences of up to six days may be authorised without additional evidence. For absences of more than six days, the student should contact their Course Leader and Student Wellbeing Advisor and provide evidence of the reasons for their absence. In such circumstances, one of the following courses of action may be taken:
- a. Registers are updated to reflect the fact that the student has informed the School;
  - b. Registers are updated, followed up with contact from Student Wellbeing to check on the student's wellbeing;
  - c. The Student Academic Risk Committee (SARC) is advised of any relevant information that could impact on decisions it might take regarding the student in question.
- 3.4 Where a student is repeatedly absent for reasons related to illness or an ongoing pastoral situation, SARC may also consider if the University's Fitness to Study Procedure should be invoked.
- 3.5 In circumstances where a student's absence is expected to prevent them from progressing on their course of study, the Student Wellbeing Team should liaise with the Course Leader and Head of School, and the student should be contacted with recommended options for progression or interruption of studies.
- 3.6 Each Campus has personnel in place to produce regular reports for all students on engagement at monitored contact points. Students are responsible for ensuring they are marked present on class and examination registers when they attend or are late to class. Where lecturers keep attendance records, administrative staff should flag any incomplete or incorrect records to tutors to ensure they are updated as soon as possible.
- 3.7 Engagement recording is still required when students are at a different location on work placements that are a formal part of the course of study. Each School has nominated personnel in place to ensure monitoring of such placements.
- 3.8 Each Campus maintains and acts on its Student Academic Risk Register (SARR), which identifies students whose engagement, in terms of attendance, submission of coursework, presence at examinations and communication with the School has fallen below the expected levels.
- 3.9 Campuses convene a SARC that will meet twice per semester / trimester / term to review the SARR and make decisions on the status of students on the register.
- 3.10 Where a student on the SARR does not respond to a final warning (giving 14 days' notice of withdrawal) issued after normal attempts to re-engage them have failed, the SARC will withdraw the student from their course of study.
- 3.11 Students have the right to appeal against any such decisions via the Academic Appeals Procedure, and students on HE courses have final redress to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- 3.12 Each campus's SARC will receive engagement data from the University's centralised management information systems. Additional information, such as mitigation applications, fitness to study, disability support, tutorial records, or any other pertinent evidence can be considered by SARC in its deliberations. All data presented to and discussions that take place at SARC are strictly confidential. Student names may be used in meetings, but minutes will refer only to candidate numbers.

#### **4 Additional Information for International Students on Student Route/Tier 4 Visas**

- 4.1 It is the University's policy to make students holding Student Route or Tier 4 Visas (SRV/Tier 4) aware that certain categories of low engagement with their course of study, notably attendance, **will** result in the withdrawal of sponsorship or funding. This means that SRV/Tier 4 students may be required to return to their home country in accordance with the requirements of the Immigration Rules and relevant Home Office Guidance.
- 4.2 The University expects all SRV/Tier 4 students to attend all their timetabled classes and be fully engaged with their course. Additionally, SRV/Tier 4 students must abide by all the conditions of their visa including those relating to engagement with their course. Notes on any specific requirements are included below.

#### **5 International Student Attendance Monitoring**

- 5.1 The University has a centralised Attendance Monitoring Policy for all SRV/Tier 4 students studying at the University with the exception of SRV/Tier 4 students studying at Performers College, Essex. SRV students at this College will have their attendance monitored by the local College team against a local College policy with oversight from the Immigration and Compliance Team. This local policy is being followed given the significant performance element of courses delivered by this College.
- 5.2 This policy is fully compliant with the requirements of Home Office Guidance. SRV/Tier 4 students must ensure that they are present at the beginning of each timetabled class when academic staff take the class register. SRV/Tier 4 students on integral and assessed work placements will also have their attendance monitored by the University.
- 5.3 The Immigration and Compliance Team working in conjunction with local Wellbeing and Academic Teams will run weekly attendance reports to identify SRV/Tier 4 students who have missed timetabled classes in accordance with the thresholds detailed in section 7 of this Policy.
- 5.4 The Immigration and Compliance Team will take steps in accordance with this Policy to ensure that students who miss timetabled classes are reminded of the requirements of this Policy and offered appropriate assistance to assist them to maintain a satisfactory level of attendance throughout each academic year.

#### **6 International Student Attendance Monitoring Procedure**

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of academic staff to be vigilant as to the possible absence of international students from their taught sessions, and to ensure that registers are completed accurately. Academic staff must capture on the register the attendance of any SRV/Tier 4 students who arrive late for a timetabled class. If academic staff have concerns about the attendance and engagement of any SRV/Tier 4 student, they should promptly contact the Head of Immigration and Compliance or Lead Immigration and Compliance Officer (Attendance and Engagement) to discuss these concerns.

#### **7 Minimum Attendance/Engagement thresholds for Student Route/Tier 4 students**

- 7.1 All SRV/Tier students undertaking either an undergraduate or postgraduate course at BIMM University must attend a minimum of **70%** of all timetabled classes per calendar week.

- 7.2 BIMM University reserves the right to amend or suspend the attendance threshold specified at 4.0 paragraph 1 in the event of exceptional external circumstances (e.g., public health) or other significant internal operational reasons without prior notice.
- 7.3 Where a Further Education student has not reached 85% attendance of their classroom-based study in any given month, the University will review the reason for the student's absence. The student's record will then be annotated with the reason for non-attendance and the steps being taken to improve the student's attendance.
- 7.4 Where a Further Education student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive months, the University will withdraw sponsorship due to lack of academic engagement, unless there are exceptional and evidenced reasons for the non-attendance (e.g., illness).

## **8 Absence reporting procedures for Student Route/Tier 4 students**

- 8.1 Students who experience minor illness of five working days duration or less are required to inform the Immigration and Compliance Team by email on each day that they are absent. The student should submit their email notification to the Immigration and Compliance Team on the day of each absence.
- 8.2 The student is not required to provide any evidence of their minor illness. This type of absence will be recorded as an Authorised Absence for minor illness.
- 8.3 The Immigration and Compliance Team in conjunction with local Wellbeing colleagues will offer appropriate support and assistance to students who experience repeated bouts of minor illness to ensure that they remain fit to study in accordance with University policy.
- 8.4 Students who are required to attend a job interview are required to contact the Immigration and Compliance Team in advance of their interview date and request an Authorised Absence. When making this request students must provide evidence of their interview in the form of an invitation letter or email.
- 8.5 The Immigration and Compliance Team will issue a written notification approving Authorised Absence requests relating to job interviews.
- 8.6 Students who require a prolonged period of absence of more than five working days duration are also required to request an Authorised Absence.
- 8.7 An Authorised Absence will be granted in accordance with the following criteria:

Category	Allowable Period	Evidence Requirements
Pregnancy and Birth	Up to 4 weeks	Medical documentation
Paternity Leave	Up to 2 weeks	Medical documentation
Minor illness	Up to 5 days	Not required
Sickness or ill-health	Up to 4 weeks, longer periods may require student to intermit	Sick note or other evidence from the student's GP / Consultant or other medical specialist. Evidence must be provided in the English language
Sick relative or dependant <sup>1</sup>	Up to 2 weeks	Reliable 3 <sup>rd</sup> party evidence / medical certificate
Participation in internal BIMM University events, such as showcases	To be determined by the Immigration and Compliance Team and the BIMM University colleague organising the event	Email from BIMM University staff organising event confirming participation of student
Job interview	Up to 2 days	Invitation to attend interview
Severe disruption to student's mode of transport	1 day	Objective evidence of cause of disruption
Other exceptional circumstances	Up to 2 weeks, longer periods may require student to intermit	Reliable 3 <sup>rd</sup> party evidence / medical certificate

- 8.8 To request an Authorised Absence students must email the Immigration and Compliance Team to request a meeting (online, by telephone or in person) to discuss their circumstances.
- 8.9 If following this meeting it is agreed that an Authorised Absence is required, the student will be provided with an Authorised Absence Form and be requested this to complete this and return it by email to the Immigration and Compliance Team along with the evidence detailed at section 5.0 paragraph 6 above.
- 8.10 Upon receipt of an Authorised Absence request the Immigration and Compliance Manager will approve this request and issue the student with written confirmation of this decision and the duration of their Authorised Absence. An electronic copy of their Authorised Absence Form, supporting evidence and approval notification will be retained by the Immigration and Compliance team for audit purposes.

## 9 Attendance Monitoring Procedures for Student Route/Tier 4 students

- 9.1 The Immigration and Compliance Team will use the following procedures to monitor the attendance of all Student Route/Tier 4 students at BIMM University:
- 1) The Immigration and Compliance Team will collate attendance data for all SRV/Tier 4 students for the preceding week of teaching.
  - 2) Commencing in week two of Semester 1 in each academic year all SRV/Tier 4 students with attendance levels below the specified thresholds will receive an email from the Immigration and Compliance Team checking in with them and reminding them of BIMM University's attendance requirements. Students will also be signposted to pastoral

<sup>1</sup> A dependant is classed as a spouse, cohabitee, child, parent, or someone who reasonably relies on the student for assistance if they fall ill, or are injured, or relies upon the student for help, or in making arrangements in the provision of care.

assistance and support available at the University so that they can improve their level of engagement with their course.

- 3) If the SRV/Tier 4 student's attendance has not met the specified threshold in the following week of teaching (Week 2), the Immigration and Compliance Team will email the student and request an explanation for their non-attendance. If no email response is received the student will be contacted by the Immigration and Compliance Team to discuss their attendance.
- 4) If the SRV/Tier 4 students' attendance remains unsatisfactory in Week 3 of teaching the student will be invited to attend a meeting with a member of the Immigration and Compliance team to discuss any issues impacting upon their attendance. The Immigration and Compliance Team will seek to help the student to improve their attendance by acting as a point of contact for referrals to academic staff or local Wellbeing teams for academic and pastoral support, respectively.
- 5) In weeks 4 to 7 of teaching the Lead Immigration and Compliance Officer (Attendance and Engagement) will work with the student in conjunction with local Wellbeing teams to help the student improve their attendance. If no sustained improvement in attendance is recorded at the end of Week 7, the Lead Immigration and Compliance Officer (Attendance and Engagement) will notify the Head of School and Student Wellbeing Manager of the case and request them to meet with the student to discuss their attendance.
- 6) If no improvement in attendance is recorded following the intervention of the College Principal, the student will be issued with a formal written warning by the College Principal to improve their attendance or face the risk of sponsorship of their SRV/Tier 4 visa being withdrawn by BIMM University.
- 7) If the student's attendance does not meet the attendance criteria specified in this Policy in week 8, the student will be referred to the Students at Risk Committee with a recommendation from the Head of Immigration and Compliance to withdraw sponsorship of their SRV/Tier 4 visa or take other actions to improve the student's attendance and engagement as the Committee deems fit.
- 8) In the event of the Students at Risk Committee giving the student a final opportunity to improve their attendance the student will be given a maximum of three further weeks of timetabled teaching to bring their attendance level up to the thresholds specified in this policy.
- 9) If the student fails to meet the attendance threshold specified within this final three-week period BIMM University will withdraw sponsorship of the student's SRV/Tier 4 visa and report this to the Home Office.
- 10) All periods of time mentioned in the policy and procedure exclude periods when the University is closed or when no teaching is timetabled i.e., assessment periods.
- 11) Please note that a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) may not be issued to students needing to extend their visas if their attendance is less than 70%. If this is the case a student may have to repeat as Assessment only or accept a lower award. If there is time for the student to improve their attendance before their visa expires, we will arrange to meet the student to discuss this.

- 12) BIMM University reserves the right to amend or withdraw without prior notice the procedures specified in Section 9 of this Policy in the event of exceptional external circumstances (e.g., public health) or other significant internal operational reasons.

## **10 Transitional Measures**

- 10.1 In academic year 2023/24 BIMM University may adopt measures from time to time to ensure that the operation and implementation of this Policy does not adversely impact upon teaching and learning or the international student experience.
- 10.2 The University reserves the right to reset SRV/Tier 4 student attendance data collection points on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024. In the event of data collection points for data being reset SRV/Tier 4 students will be informed accordingly.

## **Appendix: Higher Education Student Withdrawal Procedure**

At BIMM University, we want our students to get the most out of their studies, and so it is important that we allow every opportunity for re-engagement and ensure staff have done all they can to assist with any difficulties, academic or pastoral, before it is too late. This procedure takes note of the regulations regarding early withdrawal, i.e., within the first 3 weeks of the academic year or HE courses.

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### **School-Initiated Procedure**

This consists of three stages from identifying the first point of non-engagement:

- Stage 1 – Students who have been flagged as not engaged will be contacted via both student and personal email addresses with an offer of support, should they have any questions or difficulties, and requesting a response and improved engagement by a specified deadline.
- Stage 2 – If no response or improved engagement is noted, a final warning will be sent to both student and personal email addresses, expressing serious concern with and outlining the consequences of continued non-engagement. Continued support will be offered, with both Course Leader and Student Support contact details provided, and a response and improved engagement will be requested by a specified deadline. It will be made clear that failure to respond or improve engagement by that date will result in their withdrawal being triggered.
- Stage 3 – If no action is taken or improvement seen on the part of the student after Stage 1 or Stage 2, the student will be sent a letter, both via email and post, signed by the Campus-Dean, advising that their formal withdrawal has been initiated. Students will be given 14 days to respond prior to their withdrawal being finalised. International students on Student Route/Tier 4 visas will only be given 7 days' notice.

Where a student is withdrawn by the College as a result of non-engagement, they will not be entitled to re-apply for entry in the subsequent academic year.

### **Student-Initiated Procedure**

- The student will be required to meet in person with a member of the Student Support Team, who will discuss the financial and academic consequences of their withdrawal (where appropriate) and explore any possible provisions that could be made either to retain them or to facilitate a smooth withdrawal.
- Where possible (and appropriate), the student will be given time to process the information provided in the meeting and invited to return with a completed withdrawal form once they have made a final decision.
- If the student is under 18, written parental consent must be received by the School before the withdrawal is processed.
- The Course Leader/Head of School will need to countersign withdrawal forms where the reason given is that the student is unhappy with the course. In such cases, the Course Leader/Head of School may also contact the student to confirm that all reasonable courses of action have been taken to address issues raised before the withdrawal is processed.

Withdrawal data will be processed centrally and anonymously for the purposes of annual reports.

### **Appealing Withdrawal Decisions**

Where a student has been withdrawn by the College, they have the right to appeal against this decision in line with the [HE Appeals Procedure](#).