

## Section 11: BIMM Institute Student Engagement Policy

### Introduction:

BIMM Institute closely monitors student engagement in its various forms 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.

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 Tier 4 Visas granted for educational purposes.
- Further Education Funding Partners – some of BIMM Institute's FE partners set minimum attendance thresholds for students in receipt of funding.

### 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.

### Policy:

Activities considered as monitored contact points for the purposes of recording engagement are:

1. A day of timetabled lessons, lectures, workshops or work placement (when it is an integral and assessed part of the course);
2. A day of assessments or examinations where a student is required to be physically present.

Students are expected to attend all such 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 Support Team of the reasons for their absence.

Where the College 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 Support Officer 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 College,
- b. Registers are updated, followed up with contact from Student Support 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.

Where a student is repeatedly absent for reasons related to illness or an ongoing pastoral situation, SARC may also consider if the Institute's Fitness to Study Policy should be implemented.

In circumstances where a student's absence is expected to prevent them from progressing on their course of study, the Student Support Team should liaise with the Course Leader and Head of Education, and the student should be contacted with recommended options for progression or interruption of studies.

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 tutors may, at their discretion, decide to exclude a student from a session where they are very late and if their delayed arrival may be disruptive to the group.

Each College 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 tutors keep attendance records, administrative staff should flag any incomplete or incorrect records to tutors to ensure they are updated as soon as possible.

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 College has nominated personnel in place to ensure monitoring of such placements.

Each College 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 college has fallen below the expected levels.

Colleges convene a SARC, as a sub-committee of its College Management Team (CMT), that will meet at least termly to review the SARR and make decisions on the status of students on the register.

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.

Students have the right to appeal against any such decisions via the BIMM Institute Complaints & Appeals Procedure, with final redress to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

### **Use of attendance and examination data and confidentiality:**

Each College's SARC will receive engagement data from BIMM Institute'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.

### **Additional Information for International Students on Tier 4 Visas:**

This policy is applicable to all BIMM students, whether considered home, EU or international. However, it is BIMM's responsibility to ensure that international students on a Tier 4 visa are aware that certain categories of low engagement, notably attendance, may result in the withdrawal of sponsorship or funding, and/or their being required to return to their home country. Notes on any specific requirements are included below.

#### **Tier 4 students with poor attendance/engagement levels:**

Due to the additional requirements of our license, Student Support teams will log all absences of students studying under a Tier 4 visa agreement. Should a student under this visa be absent from any monitored contact point, they are required to inform BIMM of the reason for this within 7 days. The Student Support team will monitor attendance on a fortnightly basis and request formal notifications of any absences where none are received.

BIMM's Tier 4 Compliance Team will also be informed of any absences on a monthly basis. Where students miss 10 consecutive monitored contact points (as defined above), BIMM will curtail their visa, resulting in their withdrawal from the course.

#### **Reporting Absence**

Information on how students can report absence and the possible outcomes BIMM will apply to such instances can be found above. Students on Tier 4 Visas are strongly encouraged to contact student support immediately with regard to any absences to help avoid any potential complications.

#### **International Tier 4 students with extended absences:**

When a student on a Tier 4 visa becomes aware that they will not be able to resume their studies after 60 days, they must contact Student Support immediately. In these circumstances, if it is agreed between Student Support and the Tier 4 Compliance Team that a student is deferred or permanently withdrawn, sponsorship (as defined by UKVI) will be withdrawn.

In exceptional circumstances, such as serious illness or injury, BIMM may continue to sponsor a student for longer than 60 days providing this is agreed with both Student Support and the Tier 4 Compliance Team within relevant deadlines set by UKVI and the student can still complete their course within their existing visa when they resume their studies.

## Appendix: Higher Education Student Withdrawal Procedure

BIMM Institute understands and values the importance of student engagement. For students to get the most out of their studies, it is important BIMM follows a process to 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 non-starter policy regarding withdrawal within the first 5 weeks of the academic year. However, students should note that withdrawal within the first 5 weeks will still mean they are responsible for paying the initial 25% of tuition fees. All finance issues should be discussed with a member of the finance team as part of the withdrawal process.

### College-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 BIMM 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 BIMM and personal email addresses, expressing serious concern with and outlining the consequences of continued non-engagement (withdrawal, loss of student finance, council tax exemption, etc.). Continued support will be offered, with both Course Leader and Student Services 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 College Principal, advising that their enrolment is at risk and that the College has triggered their formal withdrawal. Students will be given 14 days to respond prior to their withdrawal being finalised. International students on Tier 4 visas will only be given 7 days' notice.

### 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 College before the withdrawal is processed.
- The Course Leader/Head of Education 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 Education 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 via the Complaints & Appeals Procedure outlined in the Academic Development and Quality Manual: <http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/>.

This withdrawal procedure works in conjunction with the BIMM Student Charter, the BIMM Student Code of Conduct, the BIMM Bullying & Harassment Policy and the BIMM Fitness to Study Policy.

For full access to BIMM's Academic Regulations and Policies please see the following link to BIMM's website: <http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/>.