

D1. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (INCLUDING POSTPONED CLASSES)

Purpose and scope

1.1 This section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations (CAPR) explains the importance of attendance at class and participation in the wider College life, what the College does to monitor and support attendance and the student responsibilities in this regard.

1.2 These regulations apply to all registered students of the College, and to any action taken on or after 1 October 2016 regardless of the date of the event giving rise to the action.

1.3 These regulations do not apply in the following circumstances:

(a) A student has interrupted their studies or withdrawn from their programme of study

(b) A student has had specific alterations made through an IGRAS (Integrated Guidance Report on Access Support) statement.

NOTE: Tier 4 students should read this policy alongside the International Students policies. They set out specific requirements for attendance relevant to holders of Tier 4 visas and the responsibilities of the College as a highly trusted sponsor for international students. The Tier 4 Visa Compliance Team are the only College staff who are authorised to give visa advice. Any visa-related queries should always be referred to these teams in the first instance.

Definitions

1.4 'Attendance' means a student's physical presence in the learning environment for the entire scheduled session.

1.5 'Participation' means a student devotes academically acceptable levels of time and energy to study and to the use of available resources to enhance their learning inside and outside scheduled sessions – for example, contributing to discussions in seminars and preparing work for tutorials.

Introduction

Overview

1.6 The College is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students. The College recognises that in the majority of cases progression and achievement are strongly correlated with attendance. Therefore its policy is to do everything to support and promote excellent attendance for all.

1.7 Attendance and participation are part of every student's commitment to the academic community. Their attendance is not only important for their own progression and achievement but forms an important part of the success of other students. This policy ensures that all students can expect excellent attendance and participation from all others on their programme.

1.8 The College recognises the investment that students make when they decide to pursue a programme of Higher Education. As a responsible institution, it is the College's duty to monitor

attendance and to act promptly on non-attendance, so that it can support students in completing their programmes of study.

Principles

1.9 Attendance is a key part of student retention, progression, achievement and employability. Regular attendance and academic achievement are closely linked. Students should attend all their timetabled lectures, seminars and tutorials and take responsibility for their own learning.

1.10 Students who actively participate in their learning by attending classes regularly are more likely to:

- (a) enjoy a rewarding experience in which their knowledge, skills and abilities are developed;
- (b) have a great degree of focus and engagement with their programme of study;
- (c) successfully complete their modules and programmes;
- (d) achieve higher grades; and
- (e) build work patterns appropriate for their time after leaving the College.

1.11 To support this, it is important that the College:

- (a) provides guidance on why attendance is important;
- (b) supports and encourages students to achieve their full potential in their studies and in developing lifelong skills;
- (c) enhances the overall learning environment by encouraging active participation through regular attendance in all areas of study;
- (d) raises awareness among all learners and staff of the importance of regular attendance, participation and punctuality;
- (e) promotes a culture where excellent attendance and punctuality are the norm;
- (f) uses attendance and participation as a key factors it takes into account when reviewing a student's commitment to, and performance in, their academic studies and in developing an appropriate response to specific concerns about performance; and
- (g) intervenes when a student's attendance or participation is causing concern.

Student's responsibilities

1.12 Students are responsible for:

- (a) ensuring they are aware of any specific attendance-related requirements on the programme (e.g., attending all practical sessions), particularly those on programmes accredited by professional bodies;
- (b) attending all learning and teaching sessions associated with the programme;

- (c) arriving on time for all timetabled lectures, workshops and tutorials and staying for the whole session;
- (d) ensuring they record their attendance appropriately;
- (e) notifying the College in advance that they expect to be absent from timetabled learning and teaching sessions;
- (f) notifying the relevant staff member about any unplanned or unforeseen absences and providing medical certificates or other evidence to explain their absence if necessary; and
- (g) making themselves aware of the importance of regular attendance.

NOTE: In line with UK immigration law, the College will make a report to the UKVI if an international student holding a student visa is absent for more than ten (10) working days without authorisation or, in the case of research students, fails to attend ten (10) scheduled supervisions.

1.13 Unsatisfactory attendance may include:

- (a) failure to attend regularly without providing a satisfactory reason for absence to the appropriate member of staff; or
- (b) persistent late arrival to, or early departure from, learning and teaching sessions.

Students who are persistently absent because of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence.

NOTE: Students are expected to arrange routine dental and medical appointments outside timetabled hours.

Reasons for absence

These are examples (not meant to form a complete list) of reasons commonly accepted by academic Departments:

- Bereavement – death of close relative or ‘significant other’ such as a long-term partner.
- Short-term illness or accident of a nature that, in an employment context, would lead to absence on sick leave.
- Evidence of a long-term health condition worsening.
- Significant worsening of any adverse personal or family circumstances including childcare problems.

These are examples (not meant to form a complete list) of reasons commonly refused by academic Departments:

- Holidays, moving house and planned events.
- Financial issues.

- Lack of awareness of submission dates or times and examination dates or times.
- Misreading the timetable or misunderstanding the requirements for assessments.
- Poor time management.
- Doing paid work, except in special cases for part-time students.

Procedures

Notifying the College of absence

1.14 A student should request approval from the College in advance if they expect to be absent from timetabled learning and teaching sessions. They should do this by email to their module leader for the appropriate modules (this should be copied to the Student Hub on studenthub@gsmlondon.ac.uk).

1.15 The module leader will reply within five (5) working days. The College does not usually authorise absences other than in exceptional circumstances.

1.16 A student who has been unavoidably absent from a session should submit a Self-Certificate of Absence form including appropriate evidence of the absence.

Attendance and participation interventions by the College

1.17 If a student's attendance falls below the required level, it will be referred to the appropriate level of intervention.

(a) Level 1: If a student's attendance falls below the required level (80% of sessions), initial intervention is via a supportive text message or email from the College or Department reminding the student about the importance of attending timetabled teaching sessions and highlighting support services for students who may have difficulties.

(b) Level 2: If a student's attendance continues to fall below the required level, level 2 intervention is via a supportive telephone call from the Student Advisory team to identify any difficulties that the student may be having and to offer support. Students who do not report any difficulties are reminded that the College expects them to attend all timetabled teaching sessions.

(c) Level 3: If a student's attendance does not improve following level 1 or level 2 interventions, students will be invited to an interview with their personal tutor. This interview is designed to ensure that students can discuss any problems of an academic or personal nature that they may have, in a safe and supportive, face-to-face environment. Personal tutors will want to ensure that students leave these meetings with an agreed action plan in place.

(d) Level 4: If a student's attendance does not improve following a level 3 intervention, they will be invited to a compulsory interview with their Head of Department. This interview is usually more formal and focuses on students making a clear commitment to re-engage with their studies, seeking support with any difficulties they may have or interrupting their studies. Heads of Department will

ensure that the student leaves this meeting with an agreed action plan in place and that notes will have been taken.

(e) Level 5: If all previous attempts to improve attendance have failed or the student has failed to engage with the process, the matter will be referred by the Head of Department for action under the Termination of Registration procedures.

College discretion

1.18 Based on its knowledge of a student's performance and welfare, a Department may not wish to escalate its interventions from a particular level to the next, even when a student does not significantly improve their attendance. As long as these reasons are properly documented, the Department is not formally required to escalate its actions unless the student holds a Tier 4 visa.

1.19 Based on its knowledge of the student and the student's previous responses to supportive interventions, a Department may want to escalate its interventions more quickly. If so, the Department may decide to move directly to levels 4 or 5, where intervention is more formal.

Student with disabilities and long-term health conditions (see also Fitness For Study policy)

1.20 Students with disabilities and long-term health conditions are, as far as possible, expected to attend all their timetabled teaching sessions.

1.21 If a student with a disability or long-term health condition finds they are unable to attend teaching sessions due to short-term ill health, they should notify the College. Their absence can then be properly authorised.

1.22 If a student with a disability or long-term health condition finds it impairs their ability to fully attend timetabled teaching sessions, they should seek support from the Learning Support and Wellbeing Team. Review and action planning can then take place.

NOTE: Students or staff should not regard an IGRAS that says "absences should be viewed sympathetically" as meaning that students have a permanently authorised absence in place.

Postponed classes

Postponed In advance

In this case, the College knows ten (10) or more working days in advance that a scheduled class activity will not take place and the academic staff member involved is not on sick leave.

College responsibilities	Student responsibilities
Before postponing a class, make significant attempts to arrange cover or alternative learning opportunities.	Ensure that the College has up-to-date contact information, including postal address, email address and mobile phone number.
Provide as much notice as possible when classes need to be postponed.	Ensure familiarity with this policy and know how to check for information about postponed classes.

Inform the Student Hub.	
Use a suitable way of informing students of postponement, such as GSM Learn, email, phone text, notice.	Regularly check email, GSM Learn and other advertised sources for up-to-date information.
Provide notes or other information that will help students, either to replace a scheduled event or to prepare for a rescheduled class.	Make every effort to attend re-scheduled teaching sessions and use any other learning materials provided.
Reschedule, or make other suitable arrangements as soon as possible and normally within 24 hours of postponement, if possible.	

Postponed at short notice

In this case, it is known only at very short notice that a scheduled class activity will not take place or the academic staff member involved is on sick leave.

Academic staff responsibilities	Departmental responsibilities
Speak directly with a relevant member of staff within the Department, notifying them of a postponed class at the earliest opportunity.	Take details of affected classes from the academic member of staff, along with any other instructions that need to be given to students.
If possible, provide details of all classes and any other appointments that are to be postponed.	Notify students of cancellation using suitable means. These include notification via GSM Learn, phone text or email or all these. If notices are posted on seminar-room doors, they must be taken down by the end of the same day.

Advice and support

1.23 Advice for students on attendance and participation, and the associated lower-level College rules, is available from their Programme Team or the GSM London Students' Union (gsmadvicentre@gsm london.ac.uk).

1.24 Advice for staff on attendance and participation is available from their nominated Academic Policy Partner.

Fees

1.25 No additional fees or charges are associated with this policy.

Legal and regulatory context

1.26 These regulations are about the terms on which the initial relationship between the student and the College has been set up. Therefore, while there is limited legal context specifically on attendance and participation, this policy has taken account of the principles of contract law that apply to relationships between students and higher-education institutions.

1.27 The College may not be bound by the principles in paragraph 1.26 and this policy alone may not provide the procedure to meet all of these principles, some of which may be met by other College policies and procedures. The College uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

Enforcement, monitoring and review

1.28 If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce this policy, their refusal must be reported to the Academic Registrar, who will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.

1.29 Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how this policy is interpreted and applied.

1.30 The annual report must include statistical data on attendance, and on the number of interventions; the outcomes, Departments and programmes from which they originate; the length of the process; and the equality characteristics (including sex, disability and ethnicity) of students at each level of intervention.

1.31 Every three (3) years, the College must review this policy to ensure that:

- (a) it remains up to date and continues to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;
- (b) areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, or professional bodies have been addressed; and
- (c) opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.

Schedule:

Responsible Officer: Head of Student Support and Engagement

Approved by: Board of Directors and Academic Board

Version: 1.0

Date: 1 October 2016

Monitoring and Review Body: Faculty Board

Effective From: 1 October 2016

Next Scheduled Review: June 2019