

Code of Practice on HE Student Engagement and Reasonable Diligence

1. Introduction

1.1 As part of University College Birmingham's (UCB) vision to be seen as a leading provider of transformative, career-focused education in the West Midlands (as detailed in our [Learning and Teaching Strategy](#)) we strive to create a positive learning environment where all learners are supported to achieve their academic and career goals.

1.2 Research and data from both within UCB, and the wider higher education sector, has shown that increased engagement from students with university resources has a positive impact on the probability of greater academic success and achievement (*Foster and Siddle, 2020; Summers, Higson and Moores, 2020; Clifft-Hindley, 2021*). Therefore, the purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide a structured approach towards creating an environment that promotes success, achievement, and opportunities for our students, based on support, mutual decision making, and timely intervention.

2. Scope

2.1 This Code of Practice aims to establish an institutional framework for our approach towards ensuring students actively engage with the University and its resources in order to have a positive impact on their studies. The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures displayed in Section 9.

2.2 This Policy will use "student" to refer to all undergraduate, taught postgraduate students and HE apprentices who are enrolled and registered at UCB. FE students, including Sixth Form learners and FE apprentices, should refer to the [FE Student Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures](#).

2.3 Students undertaking a programme of study that is subject to fitness to practise and PSRB attendance requirements will be bound by the additional specific requirements for that programme as stated in the relevant [Code of Professional Conduct and Fitness to Practise](#). These professional requirements will often supersede this Code of Practice as a requirement of registration. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of attendance requirements of their programme of study, this can be found in induction materials and/or on Canvas.

2.4 For the purposes of this policy, UCB's expected engagement will be defined as:

- Attendance to all on-campus and online timetabled lectures and sessions as well as any placement/work experience/apprenticeship requirements.
- Frequent engagement with learning resources, including: the Athens online library, university facilities and virtual learning environment (VLE), which is currently Canvas.
- Communication with academic members of staff, the Student Engagement team within UCB and other relevant staff.
- Successful completion of all individual tutorials.
- Timely submission of assessed work.

2.5 Further to the above expectations, the responsibilities of students and of UCB can be found in the [Student Charter](#).

3. Responsibilities of the University

3.1 UCB will endeavour to create an environment that provides students with an opportunity to perform to their maximum potential. This Code of Practice recognises that there are many single or combined factors that may affect engagement, and that it is important to identify and understand these factors to intervene and provide adequate support.

3.2 To enable this UCB will,

- Ensure sufficient advice and guidance is available to students online and through direct contact, and that staff are able to effectively signpost to support services.
- Monitor student engagement to identify students who may be experiencing challenging situations which affects their ability to progress on their programme and make supportive interventions at the earliest opportunity – particularly making contact with students displaying what the University considers low engagement based on factors outlined in 2.4.
- Take appropriate steps to bring to the attention of students the possible consequences of low engagement, and the requirement for students to demonstrate satisfactory engagement with their programme of study – including the potential to result in withdrawal under the [Student Higher Education Withdrawal Policy](#) or other applicable sanctions if studying a programme listed in the [Code of Professional Conduct and Fitness to Practise](#) (if applicable).

4. Responsibilities of the student

4.1 Students are expected to engage with all elements of their programme and each of its constituent parts, including compulsory placements/work experience where appropriate.

4.2 All expectations of students and staff can be found in [The Student Charter](#) as well as definitions of reasonable diligence that are outlined in [Academic Regulations Part 2](#). For the purposes of engagement for this Code of Practice, these expectations include, but are not limited to:

- Attending a minimum of 80% of scheduled lectures and timetabled sessions, whether scheduled in person or online (some programmes require higher levels of attendance so please ensure you check your local requirements).
- Accessing module materials weekly as these materials coincide with lecture delivery.
- Indicating to the Disability and Neurodiversity Support team or relevant staff member any reasonable adjustments required that UCB will need to be aware of when organising and planning the delivery of the programme in line with the [Policy on on Reasonable Adjustments and Alternative Assessments](#).
- Monitoring their student email account to ensure essential information from UCB is received in a timely manner.
- Notifying UCB at the earliest opportunity of any pre-existing or new condition or circumstance, which may affect engagement with the programme and submitting requests for recognition as per the [Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances](#).
- Apprentices: meeting the obligations of their contract of employment to meet the requirements of their off the job learning.

4.3 If a student is unable to engage with their programme as set out in part 4.2, they should get in contact with their academic team to access support as soon as possible. Where this relates to attendance, students should report their absence, if possible, as described in Section 6.

4.4 Students are also encouraged to access appropriate support independently, which can include:

- Support from the Wellbeing team or Student Assistance Programme
- Support from the Student Engagement and Success team
- Financial support via the UCB Hardship Fund
- Information, advice or guidance from the Guild of Students

5. Recording and Measurement of engagement

5.1 Engagement will be recorded and monitored by UCB and stored in accordance with UCB's Data Protection Policy. This will enable academic and support teams to undertake a proactive approach to identifying students that may require support. All data protection resources, including the Data Protection Policy, can be found at <https://www.ucb.ac.uk/about-us/data-protection-resources-gdpr/>.

5.2 Records regarding students' engagement information will be stored in the UCB Portal which is visible to students. This includes notifications sent to students about their engagement and any contact made to students by the Student Engagement and Success team regarding the students' engagement. Academic teams are encouraged to use this information when undertaking tutorials and add comments to avoid any duplication of effort and ensure an effective record of how the students are supported.

5.3 Students will be able to view their engagement within the UCB Portal, by accessing the 'My Dashboard' tab. Further details about how we use learner analytics can be obtained by contacting the Student Engagement team at studentengagement@ucb.ac.uk.

5.4 UCB normally expects **minimum attendance of at least 80%** of all taught elements unless specific expectations have been provided (for example, by academic teams or Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies) or a student has recognised extenuating circumstances as stated in the [Policy on HE Attendance](#). In addition to a student's attendance score, the relevant academic department and the Student Engagement and Success team will consider a student's level of engagement with the university through components defined in point 2.4 of this Code of Practice.

5.5 Where a student is studying fewer than 3 modules a semester, for example; project/dissertation module only, satisfactory engagement will be determined by:

- Attendance 80% or above
- Successful completion of all individual tutorials.
- Submission of assessed work.
- Attendance to compulsory placement/work experience.

5.6 Where a taught student is undertaking a work placement that does not require them to attend campus more than 1 day per week, or utilise the VLE, satisfactory engagement will be determined by:

- Attendance within their given placement, as recorded by the Placement Tutor or on placement supervisor.

- Contact with the Placement Tutor as agreed between the student and the Placement Tutor.
- International students are also required to complete the HIRED monthly questionnaire and submit their monthly payslips.

5.7 Where a student falls below these expectations, they will follow an escalation process as set out in section 7 of this document.

6. Reporting absence

6.1. UCB recognises that unforeseen circumstances may arise that may influence a student's engagement. Students' welfare and interests are always in the forefront of decision-making for both academic and support teams within UCB, meaning that support options will always be the first point of call when managing engagement concerns.

6.2. If a student is unable to attend on-campus or online teaching, they must report their absence via email to the Attendance Team (attendance@ucb.ac.uk) and include any reason for the absence as specified in the [HE Attendance Policy](#). The student should also notify their academic team that they will miss the session as a courtesy.

6.3 If a student is not able to engage with campus or online resources or satisfy another aspect of 'good engagement' as set out in 2.4 of this document, then they must notify their academic team and/or the Student Engagement and Success Team as soon as they can to access support and address any barriers to engagement.

6.3. If an apprentice is absent, they must report to their employer as per their procedures and UCB their reason for absence.

6.4. If a student believes that an unforeseen event may affect the completion of any assessment, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the academic team at the earliest opportunity. The student should also notify the University by applying for the consideration of Extenuating Circumstances, as per the [Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances](#).

6.6. Where an absence may have a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress, or where absence levels are already of concern, the University may decide that continuation of studies may not be in the best interest of the student at this point– this could lead to procedures in accordance with the [Student Higher Education Withdrawal Policy](#).

7 Engagement monitoring escalation procedure

7.1 UCB will always act in the best interest of the student to strive towards maximising achievement and success, attempting to intervene as early as possible if there are concerns that a situation may be detrimental to a student's welfare, future career ambitions, or financial bearing. Every effort will be made to avoid having to initiate the formal engagement escalation procedure. The engagement monitoring escalation procedure should be seen as a supportive process to help the student re-engage with their studies.

7.2 If engagement is below expectation (as detailed in section 5) for two teaching weeks the Engagement monitoring escalation procedure will come into effect. **This process is outlined in a process flow diagram in Figure 1 at the end of this document.**

Stage 1.

1. All students will receive an automatic alert every two weeks of term based on their engagement score based on their past two weeks engagement – these are categorised into: Low, Average, High and Resource Alert (for students who have been engaging but not accessed any online resources). These scores are based on data inputs outlined in section 5 of this document.
2. If a student's engagement score is 'low' then Stage 2 proceedings will begin.
3. Students who persistently present with 'average' engagement scores may also be subject to stage 2 proceedings if their progression on their course is deemed to indicate they may need more support.

Stage 2.

1. The student will be contacted by the Student Engagement and Success team to assess the situation and offer support. The team will offer support, opportunities for one-to-one coaching appointments and signposting to any relevant services to help reduce barriers to engagement. The student will be reminded of this Code, this engagement escalation procedure, and potential consequences for low engagement in a supportive manner.
2. The Head of Department for the student's programme (or their nominee) will be notified of the contact with the student via the engagement comments on their Portal Dashboard.
3. If the student's engagement has not improved after a further 5 working days, the student has not responded, the student has not provided an explanation for their current engagement, and agreement with UCB has not been made, Stage 3 proceedings will begin.

Stage 3.

1. The academic Head of Department (or their nominee) will contact the student to request a formal meeting. The student will be invited to bring a friend to the meeting. If a friend does attend the meeting, they shall be for support only and may not normally answer questions for the student.
2. Reasons for under-engagement will be discussed, with consideration given of ongoing support needs and whether the student has experienced extenuating circumstances that require recognition. Actions to be taken to improve engagement will also be discussed, and agreed upon by the student and staff, to ensure continuation of studies is in the student's best interest – this is called a 'Progress and Performance Plan' (PPP).
3. If the academic Head of Department (or their nominee) decide that a PPP will not be beneficial to the student, deferral or withdrawal options may be discussed.
4. A Progress and Performance Plan must include consequences of continued low engagement – including if a student improves for a period of time and then declines. This plan will be valid for the remainder of that academic year.
5. The academic team determine the outcome of this formal meeting and make appropriate records, including details of the PPP on the student's dashboard on the UCB portal and

relevant teams, such as Disability and Neurodiversity Support team, will be notified of any extenuating circumstances that require recognition.

Stage 4.

1. If the student does not respond to the Stage 3 meeting request within 5 working days or does not follow the steps agreed within the meeting with the academic team through the PPP, a formal letter will be sent to the student explaining that withdrawal proceedings will now begin due to lack of engagement as per the [Student Higher Education Withdrawal Policy](#).
2. The academic team will record the decision to withdraw on the student's dashboard on the UCB portal.

7.3 The Progress and Performance Plan will indicate the consequences of low engagement following its implementation – for example, if a student's engagement improves along with the Plan but then drops after a period of time. This would normally be constituted by a return to any of the stages previously reached, depending on the progress of the student in regard to the PPP or, if continued poor engagement has had a detrimental effect on a student's academic progress the University may decide that continuation of studies may not be in the best interest of the student at this point and will escalate to Stage 4.

7.4 A student may appeal against the Stage 4 decision of the process via the [Assessment Appeal Procedure](#) as per the [Student Higher Education Withdrawal Policy](#). Students are encouraged to contact the Guild of Students for independent guidance on the Assessment Appeal Procedure if required (guildinfo@ucb.ac.uk).

7.4 UCB reserves the right to withdraw a student from a programme or suspend any maintenance loan where their level of attendance and academic progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory as detailed in the [HE Attendance Policy](#).

7.5 If a student has any queries regarding their engagement, they should contact the Student Engagement team at studentengagement@ucb.ac.uk.

8. Consequences of poor engagement/attendance

8.1 Low engagement can have a negative effect on a student's ability to learn and achieve – academically, personally and professionally.

8.2 As per the escalation procedure outlined in section 7 of this document, low engagement can result in withdrawal from a student's academic programme, the consequences of which are outlined in section 1.5 of the [Student Higher Education Withdrawal Policy](#).

8.3 Low attendance and, therefore, low engagement can constitute a breach of a student's Visa conditions which can result in a decision to withdraw a student's Visa by UKVI, resulting in withdrawal from their academic programme, deportation and restrictions on future access to the UK.

8.4 Low attendance and, therefore, low engagement can have financial implications for students. If a student is in receipt of a Student Loan from Student Finance England (SFE), the UCB Cost of Living Allowance or other forms of financial support – they will be subject to terms and conditions which stipulate certain levels of attendance to be eligible to receive this support. For example, the [Cost of](#)

[Living Allowance Terms and Conditions](#) stipulates attendance scores of 80% or more to receive the allowance. This and other forms of financial support may be withdrawn if student falls below an acceptable level of engagement.

8.5 Low engagement may have consequences for students on apprenticeship programmes, for example; students may be placed on a break in learning. Apprenticeship students should check their local expectations to ensure they understand the consequences of low engagement with their apprenticeship.

8.6 On occasion students may have raised an appeal associated with an assessment. Cases are reviewed on an individual basis. Good attendance and engagement help provide a fuller picture as to a student's commitment which could shape a panel's decision where a balance of considerations is made in light of the basis of appeal.

9. Related policies and documents

[Assessment Appeals Procedure](#)

[Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances](#)

[Cost of Living Allowance Terms and Conditions](#)

[General Student Regulations](#)

[HE Attendance Policy](#)

[Reasonable Adjustments and Alternative Assessment Policy](#)

[Student Higher Education Withdrawal Policy](#)

[Student Charter](#)

10. References

Ed Foster & Rebecca Siddle (2020) The effectiveness of learning analytics for identifying at-risk students in higher education, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45:6, 842-854.

R. Clifft-Hindley (2021) [Differences in Attainment by Level](#).

Robert J. Summers, Helen E. Higson & Elisabeth Moores (2020): Measures of engagement in the first three weeks of higher education predict subsequent activity and attainment in first year undergraduate students: a UK case study, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*.

Figure 1 - if you need a PDF, screen-reader friendly version of this image [click here](#)

