

University of Cambridge logo

Document cover sheet

Title	Academic Engagement and Attendance Policy for Taught and Research Students
Purpose	Sets out the university position with regard to students' course attendance
Owner	EQPO
Contact within EQPO	Jane Clare
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Academic Engagement and Attendance Policy for Taught and Research Students

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Context

The Department of Education has issued guidance to all HEIs regarding attendance management, mandating that every Higher Education Provider should have a published, auditable attendance policy to satisfy its own governance processes. Payment of funding from the Student Loans Company (SLC) is conditional on confirmation that a student is attending and undertaking their course. Postgraduate students funded by UKRI are required to be resident in the UK for the majority of their studies, and any time spent overseas should be for the purposes of fieldwork.

For the purposes of this policy, and to meet the Department of Education’s criteria, attendance is defined as *participation in a course by a student, including, but not limited to, teaching face-to-face or blended study, or in the case of research students, work undertaken in laboratories, libraries and other university facilities.*

Residency and keeping term

The collegiate university’s approach to managing student attendance is predominately through:

- a) residence requirements, whereby students are required to reside within university precincts during term-time (a three-mile radius of Great St Mary’s Church for undergraduates and a ten-mile radius for postgraduates); and
- b) ‘keeping term’ which requires students to be in residence for three-fourths of the whole of each term reckoned from the first day of Full Term¹.

Students agree to abide by these requirements on matriculation and failure to meet either could result in being withdrawn from the course. Postgraduate students who need to spend time away from Cambridge must apply to ‘work away’². Students who have exceptional

¹ [Statutes and Ordinances, p. 177, 2023-2024 edition](#)

² [cop research 2024 to 2025.pdf](#)

reasons for not complying with condition a) or b) can seek permission from the relevant authority³.

Note: Part-time students are not bound by these requirements, so methods of maintaining contact are devolved locally. For Postgraduate Research Students there is an expectation of attendance in Cambridge of 45 days per year, spread over the year. The University does not offer part-time undergraduate Tripos courses.

Teaching

The vast majority of university teaching is offered in person, save where there is pedagogical benefit to delivery via an alternative method. Students are expected to attend and participate in in-person sessions wherever possible.

Additionally, undergraduate college teaching (via supervision) is regarded as an essential element of Cambridge teaching and of students achieving their degree. The terms of undergraduate admission advise students to 'pursue your studies diligently as advised by your College Director of Studies and your Tutor. You may be prevented, subject to applicable appeal procedures, from continuing your course at the University if your academic performance is judged by your college to be unsatisfactory.'

Since members of the university are permitted to attend any lecture (Health and Safety considerations permitting) attendance at lectures is not routinely monitored (although some courses may keep records for this purpose). However, individual student engagement is monitored using a variety of contact points including:

- arrival and induction events
- lectures, seminars etc
- submission or presentation of work
- examinations
- engagement with the course's Moodle site
- supervision reports
- module selections, or dissertation title submissions/approval
- meetings with supervisors/course directors/programme leads.

(This is not an exhaustive list and not all activities will apply to all courses.)

Postgraduate Research

Postgraduate Research students are expected to complete their research in Cambridge, with approved periods spent elsewhere to:

- (i) carry out fieldwork or another activity integral to their research project;
- (ii) complete an internship (which can be integral or non-integral to their research);

³ Colleges have authority to determine residency requirements; for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee consider applications for the Conditional Allowance of a Term, where students, for good reason, have not been in residence for three-fourths of the whole term,

(iii) write up their thesis.

Due to the nature of postgraduate research, attendance at lectures, laboratories or other study areas is not monitored. Individual student engagement is monitored using:

- arrival and induction events
- lectures, seminars etc
- submission or presentation of work
- examinations
- supervision reports (PFRS)
- meetings with supervisors/course directors/programme leads.

(This is not an exhaustive list and not all activities will apply to all courses.)

Lack of engagement

When a student fails to engage efforts are made to contact them personally and through their college. Consideration is then given to whether the student can be supported to engage and continue their studies or whether a period of intermission or a withdrawal is more appropriate. In some cases it may be necessary to invoke the university's [Procedure to Support and Assess Capability to Study](#).

Requirements for students sponsored for a student visa

Separate arrangements are in place for recording and reporting the academic engagement of students sponsored for a student visa for Home Office compliance purposes, managed by the International Student Office (ISO). The Home Office requires that the university does not continue visa sponsorship where a student is not actively and consistently following their course of study and they cannot be supported to re-engage as expected. The process to withdraw visa sponsorship would normally occur following a formal change to the student's status at the conclusion of the appropriate university procedure as outlined above.

Help and Advice

Taught programmes: the [Education Quality and Policy Office](#) can advise on methods of engagement

Research programmes: the [Postgraduate Research Office](#) can provide advice and guidance

Visa sponsorship requirements: the [International Student Office](#) provides guidance on the arrangements for engagement monitoring for Student visa purposes.

The following may provide further related guidance where issues with student engagement arise:

Course type	Changes in circumstances	Residence requirements
Courses under undergraduate arrangements (Tripos, LLM, MAST, MBA, MCL, MFin, MMus, and PGCE)	EAMC guidance	Statutes and Ordinances - Residence and Precincts of the University

Other programmes (MPhil, MRes, MEd, MSt, Diploma in Economics, Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International Law)	Changes to student status	Terms of Study/Residence
Postgraduate Research programmes (PhD, CPGS, EdD, MD, MAcc, MArch, MEng, MMath and MSci)	Changes to student status	Terms of Study/Residence