

# Academic Engagement Policy

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## Scope

1. This Policy is for all students who are attending Northeastern University London (the University) on a Student Visa. For the purposes of this Policy, 'student' shall refer to these students only.
2. Students or learners who are not on a Student Visa should follow their respective attendance policies:
  - 2.1. [Undergraduate Student Attendance Policy](#)

## Introduction

3. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and study points as required by Northeastern University London (the University). Students must be fully academically engaged in order to successfully complete the full programme of study. The University monitors the engagement of all enrolled students. The University considers a student academically engaged if they are actively and consistently following their programme of study.
4. This Policy sets out how the University supports students to engage fully with their studies, what the University expects of students in relation to engagement with their programmes, how it will monitor that engagement, and what it will do where students are not engaging.
5. The University has a responsibility to its students and to external bodies to ensure that students are attending and studying, so as to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements, and the University's requirements.
6. This Policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes taught or delivered by the University.

## Compliance With the Policy

7. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has clearly stated in the Student Sponsor Guidance that, where the student fails to re-engage with their studies within 60 days of the first contact regarding their academic engagement, the University must withdraw sponsorship except in exceptional circumstances.
8. For the purposes of this Policy, any student who has not reached 70% academic engagement of key events (study contacts points) without approval shall be regarded as having unsatisfactory engagement with their programme.

9. Exceptional circumstances must be very rare, for example, a serious illness or injury. However, the University still expects that the student informs the University as soon as they possibly can.
10. Where a sponsored visa student fails to meet the minimum requirements as set out in this Policy, the University will record on the student's file the reason for the lack of academic engagement, any evidence (if applicable) and the steps taken to ensure the student re-engages with their study.

## Definition of a Study Contact Point

11. A 'study contact point' for the purposes of academic engagement monitoring constitutes an engagement by the student at any single timetabled activity within a one-week period of timetabled activities.
12. Timetabled activities include lectures, seminars, and tutorials as published by the Timetabling Department. Any activity that is not timetabled and, therefore, will not appear on students' Individual Student Timetables, will not be considered and recorded as a study contact.
13. A timetabled week or a standard teaching week is defined as Monday to Friday. Students' timetabled activities will be shown in CELCAT. All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students should have access to CELCAT.
14. Examples of a study point contact:
  - 14.1. Registration with the University
  - 14.2. A lecture, tutorial, seminar or lab session
  - 14.3. Study visits or any trip outside the University
  - 14.4. Confirmation of a supervisory meeting
  - 14.5. An examination
  - 14.6. An oral examination (including viva)
  - 14.7. Submitting summative or formative coursework
  - 14.8. In interim dissertation, coursework or report
  - 14.9. Any in person or online progress review with a member of faculty (Collections) or member of professional staff
15. Some study contact points are not in CELCAT and attendance is not recorded in CELCAT, but they are recorded in other systems such as CANVAS, etc. but may not appear in CELCAT attendance registers. Some of these activities are referred to as teaching events.

## Monitoring Academic Engagement

16. The University uses CELCAT for timetabling and academic engagement monitoring. Registers are generated through CELCAT, based on timetabled events. The Visa Team monitors individual student academic engagement on a weekly basis.
17. The Student Welfare Policy sets out how the University will monitor all students' attendance and engagement, and the interventions that will be made to support students experiencing difficulties. Where necessary, the Student Welfare Policy will run in parallel with the Student Engagement Policy so as to ensure that students are supported while at the same time ensuring compliance with UKVI requirements.

## Academic Engagement Record Keeping Process

18. A register is generated weekly by the Visa Compliance Officer (VCO). These registers are saved in a Google drive folder for all Student Visa students. Any student with lower than 70% academic engagement is identified and noted in an Excel spreadsheet and contacted via email. A response from the student is also recorded on the spreadsheet and in Quercus in the form of comments.

## Academic Engagement Monitoring Process

19. The Visa Compliance Office (VCO) monitors student academic engagement on a weekly basis. The following actions are expected when a lack of academic engagement is identified:
  - 19.1. STAGE 1 will be triggered where a student has less than 70% academic engagement in the consecutive two weeks.
  - 19.2. STAGE 2 will be triggered where a student has less than 70% academic engagement in the consecutive four weeks or a demonstrable pattern of non-academic engagement causing concern.
  - 19.3. STAGE 3 will be triggered where a student has less than 70% academic engagement in the consecutive six weeks or a demonstrable pattern of non-academic engagement causing concern.
  - 19.4. STAGE 4 will be triggered if the student fails to improve academic engagement following Stage 3. Sponsorship will be withdrawn, and the student will have seven days to appeal against the Stage 4 decision.

### Stage 1

20. The student will be contacted via email if they have less than 70% academic engagement in consecutive two weeks or a demonstrable pattern of non-engagement causing concern.
21. The student will be asked to provide a valid reason and evidence (where necessary) via email. If a response is received via email, no further action is required.
22. Where no response is received, the student will be telephoned by the VCO and a Stage 1 Declaration will be emailed to the student for their completion.

14  
days

## Stage 2

23. If the student has not responded to Stage 1 or has less than 70% academic engagement in consecutive four weeks or a demonstrable pattern of non-engagement causing concern, then the student will be invited to attend an engagement hearing with the Visa Compliance Officer (VCO) and Deputy Head of Registry (Student Records) (DHR(SR)).
24. If the student attends the meeting and the University is satisfied with the student's reasons and the evidence provided, then the student's absences will be considered as authorised absence. The DHR(SR) will ensure that the authorised absence is correctly recorded. A verbal warning may still be issued to the student, but no further action is required.
25. If the student attends the meeting but fails to provide valid reasons or evidence, then they will be asked to read and sign the Stage 2 warning.
26. If the student fails to communicate and attend the meeting, then they will be telephoned by the VCO and the case will progress to Stage 3.

28  
days

## Stage 3

27. If the student has not responded to Stage 2 or has less than 70% academic engagement in the consecutive six weeks or a demonstrable pattern of non-academic engagement causing concern, then they will be invited for a meeting with the Head of Visa Compliance (HVC) and Academic Registrar.
28. If the student attends the meeting and the HVC and Academic Registrar are satisfied with the student's reasons and the evidence provided, then the student's absences will be considered as authorised absence. The Academic Registrar will ensure that the authorised absence is correctly recorded. A verbal warning may still be issued to the student, but no further action is required.
29. If the student attends the meeting but fails to provide valid reasons or evidence, then they will be asked to read and sign the Stage 3 warning.

42  
days

30. If the student fails to communicate and attend the meeting, then the HVC will telephone the student, inform a member of Executive Committee, and the case will progress to Stage 4.

#### Stage 4 (Withdrawal of Sponsorship)

49 days
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31. As the student has failed to communicate or respond at Stage 3, and no additional insight regarding the student's situation has been obtained, the student sponsorship will be withdrawn and reported to the UKVI.
32. The student will be given seven calendar days to appeal against the withdrawal decision. Appeals against the withdrawal decision are made via email to [Appeals](#), and must include the grounds for appeal.
33. If the student appeals and the appeal is upheld by the University, then the student will be allowed to continue their studies subject to UKVI approval.
34. If the appeal is upheld but the UKVI refuse to reinstate student's sponsorship, then the University may assign a new CAS to the student so that they can make a fresh application from their home country (provided the remaining programme length is more than six months or the student cannot complete their remaining programme from overseas). The student must leave the UK within 60 days from the date of withdrawal of sponsorship.

### Evidence for Absence

35. A student who is absent through illness or any other extenuating circumstances for more than three days must notify the University via the [Leave of Absence Form](#) and provide appropriate evidence. The Academic Registrar will review the information and will authorise the absences where appropriate. Where the absences are not authorised, the student's absences will be recorded and the VCO will follow the Academic Engagement Policy.

### Academic Engagement During Dissertation Period

36. Normally, there are between three to five supervised study points during the dissertation period.
37. Supervised study points are recorded and monitored for the students writing their dissertation.
38. Stage 2 warning process will be triggered should the student fail to attend the first monthly study point.

39. Stage 4 withdrawal process will be triggered should the student fail to attend the second monthly study point and fail to establish any contact between the Stage 2 and Stage 4 time period.

## Short-Term Off-Campus Academic Engagement

40. The University recognises that exceptional circumstances, such as personal or close family member health situations, may impact students' ability to engage in any learning activities on campus for a short period of time.
41. Students may apply to the University to request off-campus learning for a short period of time and must consult with the Visa Team as soon as they are aware of the situation so they can be supported.
42. Requests for the short-term off-campus academic engagement will be considered in the following circumstances:
  - 42.1. Serious short-term illness or accident that may affect the student's ability to attend on campus (medical evidence is required)
  - 42.2. Bereavement (death of a close family member - a death certificate or medical evidence is required)
  - 42.3. An accident abroad that may affect the student's ability to return during the term time (medical evidence is required)
  - 42.4. Any other exceptional circumstances that may affect the student's ability to attend the University in person for a short period of time. Such circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis (official documentation relevant to the event is required, which may include court or legal papers)
43. Please note, all evidence submitted must be provided in English. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that supporting evidence is accompanied by certified translations. In exceptional circumstances, such as a bereavement, the student should submit their request as soon as possible and the application will be reviewed in anticipation of the receipt of the supporting evidence. The evidence supplied will be stored securely, on the student's file, and only relevant staff will have access.
44. The Visa Team will carefully look at the student's application before making a decision. If the circumstances are deemed valid by the Visa Team, and the student's supporting evidence is approved, the student will be allowed academic engagement off-campus for a short period of time. Normally, a two-week period will be granted and if more time is required,

the student will need to speak to the Visa Team regarding an extension to their short-term off-campus period.

45. If the circumstances are not deemed valid by the Visa Team, the student will be notified of the outcome and the rationale behind the decision. It is essential for the University to maintain a record of student engagement to remain compliant with the sponsor licence agreement and in order to do this, the University will require evidence to support the application. The evidence submitted will be stored on the student's file, in Quercus, with restricted access. Only staff that need to review the application for approval will be able to access the documents. The information will remain confidential.

## Support to Study Policy to Re-Engage Students

46. The University has a [Support to Study Policy](#) in place to ensure students are provided with full support and advice for academic re-engagement as per their individual circumstances and according to the Support to Study Policy.

## Study Deferral Request

47. The University must notify the UKVI and withdraw sponsorship where a student has deferred their studies for more than 60 days, unless exceptional circumstances as set out in the UKVI Policy guidance related to academic engagement "Changes to student circumstances table" apply.

## Study Deferral - Exceptional Circumstances A

48. The University may continue to sponsor a student who has deferred their studies for up to a maximum of 60 days providing the University feels confident that it can continue to carry out its sponsorship duties and the student will be able to complete their programme within their existing period of leave. If the University considers the student will not resume their studies after 60 days, the University will withdraw sponsorship.

## Study Deferral - Exceptional Circumstances B

49. In exceptional circumstances, such as serious illness or injury, the University may continue to sponsor a student for longer than 60 days, providing the student can still complete their programme within their existing period of leave when they resume their studies. It is for the University to decide whether it is prepared to continue sponsoring a



student during a deferral and has the documentary evidence to support this decision to the UKVI compliance officers.

## Spring Semester Abroad (Double Degree Students - London, Boston)

50. The double degree programme students may go to another Northeastern University campus to study and then return to Northeastern University, London to complete their remaining undergraduate degree programme. The University will continue to comply with its sponsorship duties, including academic engagement monitoring, while students are studying abroad since they remain under its sponsorship"

## Version History

<b>Title: Academic Engagement Policy</b>				
<b>Approved by: Academic Board</b>				
<b>Location: Academic Handbook/ Policies and Procedures/ Academic Policies and Procedures</b>				
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Proposed Next Review Date</b>
3.0	November 2022	December 2022	Head of Visa Compliance	May 2024
2.0	July 2022	August 2022	Head of Visa Compliance	May 2024
1.0	March 2021	March 2021	Visa and Immigration Compliance Manager	April 2023
Referenced documents	Undergraduate Attendance Policy; Support to Study; Leave of Absence Form			
External Reference Point(s)	Student Sponsor Guidance, Document 2: Band 2 – Study at a higher education provider at RQF 6 (SCQF 9/10 and equivalents), RQF 7 (Taught and Research) (SCQF 11 and equivalents), and RQF8 (SCQF 12 and equivalents)			