

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 Route 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, such as the:
 - 2.1. [Undergraduate Student Attendance Policy](#).

Introduction

3. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and study contact 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.

Compliance With the Policy

6. 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.
7. 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.

8. 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.
9. 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

10. 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.
11. 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 point.
12. 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.
13. Examples of a study contact point include:
 - 13.1. Registration with the University
 - 13.2. A lecture, tutorial, seminar or lab session
 - 13.3. Study visits or any trip outside the University
 - 13.4. Confirmation of a supervisory meeting
 - 13.5. An examination
 - 13.6. An oral examination (including viva)
 - 13.7. Submitting summative or formative coursework
 - 13.8. In interim dissertation, coursework or report
 - 13.9. Any in person or online progress review with a member of faculty (Collections) or member of professional staff
14. Some study contact points may not be recorded in CELCAT but they are recorded in other systems.

Monitoring Academic Engagement

15. The University uses CELCAT for timetabling and academic engagement monitoring and may refer to other record keeping systems, as needed. Registers are generated through CELCAT, based on timetabled events. The Visa Team monitors individual student academic engagement on a weekly basis.
16. 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 Academic Engagement Policy so as to ensure that students are supported while at the same time ensuring compliance with UKVI requirements.

Academic Engagement Monitoring Process – Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Programmes

17. This section of the Policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes taught or delivered at the University.
18. The Visa Compliance Office (VCO) monitors student academic engagement on a weekly basis.
19. A register is generated weekly by the Visa Compliance Officer (VCO). These registers are saved in a shared drive folder for all Student Visa students. Any student with two, four, or six consecutive weeks, or a demonstrable pattern, of academic engagement below 70% is identified and noted in a spreadsheet and contacted via email. A response from the student is also recorded on the spreadsheet and in Quercus in the form of comments.
20. The following actions are expected when a lack of academic engagement is identified:
 - 20.1. Stage One will be triggered where a student has less than 70% academic engagement in the consecutive two weeks.
 - 20.2. Stage Two 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.
 - 20.3. Stage Three 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.
 - 20.4. Stage Four will be triggered if the student fails to improve academic engagement following Stage Three. Sponsorship will

be withdrawn, and the student will have seven days to appeal against the Stage 4 decision.

Stage One (14 days)

21. 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.
22. 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.
23. Where no response is received, the student will be telephoned by the VCO and a Stage One Declaration will be emailed to the student for their completion. No further action is required.

Stage Two (28 days)

24. If the student 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 an Academic Advisor, who will advise from an academic support perspective.
25. 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. This will be reported to Registry, who 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.
26. 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 Two warning.
27. 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 Three.

Stage Three (42 days)

28. If the student has not responded to Stage Two 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 and Immigration Compliance (HVIC) and the Lead Academic Advisor or a senior member of Registry.
29. If the student attends the meeting and the HVIC and Lead Academic Advisor are satisfied with the student's reasons and the evidence provided, then the student's absences will be considered as authorised absence. This will be reported to Registry, who 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.

30. 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 Three warning.
31. If the student fails to communicate and attend the meeting, then the HVIC will telephone the student, inform a member of Executive Committee, and the case will progress to Stage Four.

Stage Four - Withdrawal of Sponsorship (49 days)

32. As the student has failed to communicate or respond at Stage Three, and no additional insight regarding the student's situation has been obtained, the student sponsorship will be withdrawn and reported to the UKVI.
33. For information about appeals against the withdrawal decision, please refer to the section on Appeals.

Academic Engagement Monitoring Process - Research Degree Programmes

34. This section of the Policy applies to all research degree programme students on a Student Route Visa at the University.
35. Research students are required to attend all scheduled study contact points. It is expected that all students will travel to the University to engage with their research or for any face-to-face learning sessions, including supervisory meetings, training courses, or any other study contact points. Remote engagement of any scheduled study contact point will only be permitted where a request has been made and approved, including during the writing-up period.
36. If a student is unable to attend a scheduled study contact point, they must notify the University and obtain authorisation as per this Policy. The University reserves the right to withdraw a student's visa sponsorship and withdraw them from the program in case of non-compliance with this Policy.

Research Away from the University

37. If a graduate research student plans to conduct research or collect data away from the University for more than four weeks, they must make an application for Authorised Research Leave. In-person engagement is not expected for students who are on authorised Research Leave. Monthly confirmation of engagement via electronic means such as email and Zoom is acceptable during this period.

Engagement Monitoring Period

38. Research degree programme students will be subject to this Policy starting from the point of registration until the date they are advised by Registry that they have been awarded a qualification or they are withdrawn from the programme.

Term/Off-Term Time Period

39. Research degrees are considered run continuously and are not confined to the teaching semesters. However, there will be no monitoring of engagement during the Christmas or Easter break or during any other bank holidays.

Stage One (30 days)

40. Students who are absent without authorization for consecutive 30 days across the duration of study or have a demonstrable pattern of non-academic engagement causing concern will be asked to attend a mandatory Academic Engagement hearing with the Director of the Graduate Research School and the Visa Compliance Manager. The student will be required to present evidence or a valid reason related to their absence. It is at the discretion of the Director of the Graduate Research School and the Visa Compliance Manager to determine if the evidence or reasons provided are valid and acceptable.
41. A warning shall be sent in the first instance to the student's official University e-mail address and, in some circumstances, the student's personal email address and recorded term-time and home address by the Visa Compliance Team.
42. During the meeting, academic engagement (including attendance) will be discussed and reviewed in detail to determine if the absence can be authorised and/or if the student can successfully complete their program by the expected end date.
43. 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 absences. The timetabling manager will ensure that the authorized absence is correctly recorded. A verbal warning may still be issued to the student, but no further action is required.
44. If the student attends the meeting but fails to provide valid evidence to explain their absences, then they will be asked to read and sign the Stage One warning.
45. If the student fails to communicate and attend the meeting, then the case will progress to Stage Two.

Stage Two (50 days)

46. Students who are absent without authorization for consecutive 50 days across the duration of study or have a demonstrable pattern of non-academic engagement causing concern will be asked to attend a mandatory Stage Two - Academic Engagement Hearing with the Head of Visa Compliance and the Director of the Graduate Research School.
47. In the event of unauthorised absences, the student will be invited to attend a mandatory Academic Engagement Hearing. The University will send a warning email to the student's official University email address and personal email address, as well as attempt to contact the student via phone.
48. If the student attends the hearing and provides satisfactory evidence for their absences, the absences will be considered authorised, and the Timetabling Manager will ensure they are recorded as such. The student may receive a verbal warning, but no further action will be required.
49. If the student attends the hearing but fails to provide valid evidence for their unauthorised absences, they will be moved to Stage Three – Withdrawal of Sponsorship.
50. If the student fails to attend the hearing or communicate within the given deadlines, the case will progress to Stage Three – Withdrawal of Sponsorship.

Stage Three - Withdrawal of Sponsorship (within 60 days)

51. At the withdrawal stage, the University will withdraw its visa sponsorship and remove the student from their enrolled programme if they have 50 consecutive days of unauthorised absence or demonstrate a pattern of non-academic engagement that causes concern. For research degree programme students, there will be no academic engagement monitoring during the Christmas or Easter break or any other bank holidays.
52. For information about appeals against the withdrawal decision, please refer to the section on Appeals.

Appeals

53. 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.
54. The student should send an email to the HVIC fully explaining their grounds for appeal, such as lack of engagement with the procedure and students are expected to provide evidence to support their appeal.

55. The HVIC will review the appeal with one member of the Executive Committee, other than the Executive Committee included at Stage Three of the procedure, and a designate from the Office of the Provost (for students on the Double degree programme only).
56. The appeal can be dismissed or upheld. This decision is final.
57. 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.
58. 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.

Absence Reporting

59. A student who is absent through illness or any other extenuating circumstances must notify the University as soon as possible via the [Absence Reporting Form](#) and provide appropriate evidence. In the event that a student's engagement falls below the required standard, reported absences may be taken into account where the VCO is satisfied the absence was reported in good time and appropriate evidence was provided. Where the VCO is not satisfied with the reason for absence, then the VCO will follow the relevant Academic Engagement Monitoring Process.
 - 59.1. Evidence may take various forms; but must be independent and sufficiently detailed to support the narrative provided by the student.
 - 59.2. Evidence needs to be in English, or translated by a professional translator if not in English.
 - 59.3. Acceptable forms of evidence to support a student's reported absence are:
 - 59.3.1. Medical Evidence from a UK provider (e.g hospital note, medical certificate, note for a health care worker, formal notification of a hospital or clinic appointment).
 - 59.3.2. Evidence of transport cancellation or delays.
 - 59.3.3. A report from Student Support and Development or Residence Life in support of your absence.

- 59.3.4. A Police note.
 - 59.3.5. Notice of death or marriage.
 - 59.3.6. Notice of Jury Service.
 - 59.3.7. Student Support and Development or Residence Life report in support of your absence.
- 59.4. Evidence not accepted includes:
- 59.4.1. Overseas doctors note while you are based in London.
 - 59.4.2. Photos of an injury or medication.
- 59.5. Circumstances which will not result in an authorisation of absence includes, but is not limited to:
- 59.5.1. Oversleeping or missing a bus/train.
 - 59.5.2. Demands of employment.
 - 59.5.3. Personal travel, such as holidays.
 - 59.5.4. Missing a teaching event where reasonable prior notice had been given of a change to the timetable.
60. Where a student has a significant illness or other extenuating circumstance, which will mean that they will be absent for more than one week of teaching, they should take the following steps:
- 60.1. Complete an [Absence Reporting Form](#).
 - 60.2. Notify the [Visa Team](#).
 - 60.3. Notify course leader(s).
 - 60.4. Seek advice to ensure that they remain compliant with the conditions of their visa and are able to keep up with their studies.

Academic Engagement During Dissertation Period

- 61. Normally, there are between three to five supervised study contact points during the dissertation period.
- 62. Supervised study contact points are recorded and monitored for the students writing their dissertation.
- 63. Stage Two warning process will be triggered should the student fail to attend the first monthly study contact point.

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

Short-Term Off-Campus Academic Engagement

65. 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.
66. 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.
67. Requests for the short-term off-campus academic engagement will be considered in the following circumstances:
 - 67.1. Serious short-term illness or accident that may affect the student's ability to attend on campus (medical evidence is required).
 - 67.2. Bereavement (death of a close family member - a death certificate or medical evidence is required).
 - 67.3. An accident abroad that may affect the student's ability to return during the term time (medical evidence is required).
 - 67.4. 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).
68. 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.
69. 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.

70. 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

71. The University has a 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

72. 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

73. 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

74. 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)

75. 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 because they remain under its sponsorship.

Version History

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