

Harper & Keele

VETERINARY SCHOOL

Academic Engagement Policy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Harper & Keele Veterinary School wishes to support the academic success of its students. The School considers that academic success is most effectively achieved through full engagement in all scheduled teaching sessions other learning activities and supervisory meetings. The arrangements for monitoring of attendance and engagement are in place for three main reasons;

- To support the academic success of Vet School students.
- To support confirmation to the Student Loans Company for the purpose of releasing Tuition Fee Loan payments, and the triggering of maintenance payments to students across the year.
- In the case of overseas students who are subject to the requirements of a Tier 4 visa, the sponsoring institution is obliged to monitor the engagement of sponsored students with a view to curtail visa sponsorship where engagement with their course is considered insufficient, in line with the Home Office’s current guidance. It is essential that regular attendance and active engagement are maintained. Attendance requirements, monitoring and reporting for Tier 4 students are set out separately in the Vet School Tier 4 Visa Sponsorship Policy.

2.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the term “Engagement” can be assumed to include:

- Physical attendance at timetabled sessions delivered in-person such as lectures, tutorials and practical classes

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- On-line attendance at live-streamed face-to-face sessions such as lectures and tutorials
- The accessing of on-line learning materials such as Guided On-line Active Learning (GOAL) resources, recorded lectures and any other learning resources which students have been specifically directed to by module tutors.

The term “period of absence” applies to a single continuous period of absence of up to one full day. For example, one missed session within a day constitutes a single period of absence, as does a whole missed day. An absence of 3 days in succession constitutes 3 periods of absence.

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to students studying with the Harper & Keele Veterinary School who are not subject to the requirements of a Tier 4 visa. It sets out the School’s expectations of its students in terms of engagement, how the School will support students to engage with their studies, and the consequences should a student’s level of engagement fall below the expected level.

3.2 This policy covers engagement with timetabled sessions, including but not limited to, lectures, tutorials and practicals, as well as engagement with on-line learning materials, formative and summative assessments and both Extra Mural Studies (EMS) and clinical placements.

3.3 The timely submission of coursework is also considered a critical element of engagement with the programme. The consequences of missing course work submission deadlines are outlined in the Assessment Regulations which can be found on the Vet School Key Information page [<https://www.harperkeele.vetschool.ac.uk/study/key-info/>]

3.4 This Policy contains information regarding;

- Student responsibilities
- School responsibilities
- How engagement will be recorded and monitored
- How non-engagement will be escalated.

3.0 Student responsibilities

3.1. Students are expected to take responsibility for the following:

- Their own learning by engaging fully with the variety of learning activities.
- Notify the School when they are absent. Students who are unable to attend any taught session due to an unforeseen circumstance (e.g. illness) should notify the School Office by telephone before 8.30 on the morning of the absence and complete an absence form within 5 working days from the end of the period of absence which can be found online via e-vision within the Vet School Student Portal. They must include information detailing how they plan to make up for the missed learning opportunities.
- Notifying the School in advanced of any planned absence via a Leave Request Form which can be found online via e-vision within the Vet School Student Portal. The School wishes to reassure students that staff will be as flexible as possible when considering any request for leave where there are reasonable grounds for absence.
- To provide the School with any required supporting documentation. Guidance on acceptable types of documentation can be found in Annex 1.

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- Providing information on their request/notification on how they plan to make up for the missed learning opportunities. This information can be provided via the absence/leave requests forms.
- Ensure that all attendance is logged on their Record of Attendance via the student portal and to make sure that entries made on this document are correct and up-to-date, and that medical certificates and absence forms are completed and submitted as required.
- Ensure they check their School email account daily for any notifications regarding engagement. This may include invitations to see a member of staff.
- Raising any concerns they have about their ability to engage with any aspect of their studies with their Personal Academic Tutor at the earliest opportunity to enable appropriate support options to be discussed.

4.0 School Responsibilities

4.1 The Harper & Keele Veterinary School will take responsibility for the following;

- Ensuring appropriate systems and processes are in place to collect and monitor engagement, and escalate where required.
- Recording and monitoring student attendance at timetabled sessions in a timely manner.
- Reviewing engagement data and contacting those students where their attendance or engagement is of concern.
- Ensuring appropriate systems and processes are in place for students to notify the School of non-attendance.
- To respond to absence and leave requests in a timely manner.
- Confidential and secure handling of any supporting material submitted as part of absence requests.
- Identifying and addressing any emerging concerns regarding individual student's engagement with any aspect of their studies.
- Providing guidance and support to improve engagement, referring to student support services where appropriate.
- Escalating any persistent episodes of non-engagement as set out in this policy.
- Informing relevant external bodies if the required thresholds for engagement are not met. This would include the Student Loans Company, and in the case of Tier 4 students, the Home Office.
- Annually review guidance for students to ensure information is clear

5.0 Attendance at timetabled sessions

5.1 Attendance at all timetabled sessions is compulsory.

5.2 An electronic or paper register will be taken at the start of each timetabled session. Where paper registers are taken, attendance will be recorded on the electronic register within five working days

5.3 Where an absence is identified and the student has not completed the required documentation, the School Office will contact the student via email to request the form. If this is not submitted within 5 working days of the email, the absence will be classed as unauthorised.

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5.4 In the case of absence due to illness, students may self-certify for a period of up to 5 days. This may be a single consecutive 5 day period, or a cumulative total of 5 days during the academic year. Any further absences will require medical evidence, for example a GP letter or certificate. Once a student self-certifies for 5 days, whether consecutive or not, they will be sent an e-mail from the School Office reminding them of the necessity of supporting any further absences with medical evidence.

5.5. If absence is due to period of self-isolation in line with Government guidelines in force during times of a local or national response to a pandemic or similar, the requirement for medical evidence to support authorisation of absence after 5 days may be waived.

5.6 Students who need to request leave in advance of any taught sessions should initially speak to their personal tutor to inform them of their planned absence and discuss how they will be able to make up for any missed sessions. They should then complete a leave request form, which can be found on-line via e-vision within the Vet School Student Portal at least 2 weeks before the session is due to take place. They must include information detailing how they plan to make up for the missed learning opportunities.

5.7 Any absence which is not supported by the relevant documentation will be classed as unauthorised.

5.8 Any student with an unauthorised absence will be sent an e-mail from the School Office explaining that if they accumulate three or more unauthorised periods of absence they will be progressed onto the formal stages of managing engagement.

6.0 Engagement with on-line learning resources

6.1. Cohort engagement with on-line learning resources will be routinely monitored by module leaders using engagement analytics for the relevant on-line platforms. Where individuals are noted to be not engaging with materials on a regular basis, the student's Personal Tutor will be notified.

6.2 Where evidence of lack of engagement with on-line learning materials is noticed by a Clinical tutor on more than one occasion, the student's Personal Tutor will be notified.

6.3 Any Personal Tutor who is notified that one of their tutees is not engaging with on-line learning materials will schedule a 1:1 meeting with the student within 10 working days to discuss reasons for the lack of engagement and to identify any specific barriers to engagement that the student may be facing. They will agree an action plan to support the student to improve their engagement, and a timescale in which to review the action plan.

6.4 If at the review date the student's engagement with on-line resources has not improved, they will be escalated to Formal Stage 1 (see section 9.3).

7.0 Engagement with Extra Mural Studies (EMS)

7.1 Arrangements for monitoring engagement during EMS are set out in the Placement handbook.

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7.2 Any Personal Tutor who is notified that one of their tutees is not engaging with their placement materials will schedule a 1:1 meeting with the student within 10 working days to discuss reasons for the lack of engagement and to identify any specific barriers to engagement that the student may be facing. They will agree an action plan to support the student to improve their engagement, and a timescale in which to review the action plan.

7.3 If at the review date the student's engagement with their placement has not improved they will be escalated to Formal Stage 1 (see section 9.3).

8.0 Engagement with assessments

8.1 Summative assessments.

Engagement with and completion of assessments is vital in order to successfully pass the course. Any consequences and penalties associated with non-engagement with summative assessments, including coursework, examinations and practical or clinical skills assessments, are set out in the Assessment Regulations which can be found on the [Vet School Key Information page](#).

The dates of all summative assessments will be published at the start of the academic year. Students are expected to ensure they are available for all written and practical examination dates, including the summer resit period.

8.2 Formative assessments.

8.2.1 Formative assessments are a key element of the student's learning journey. Individual completion of formative assessments associated with a particular module will be routinely monitored by module leaders. Where individuals are noted to have failed to complete 3 or more formative assessments the student's Personal Tutor will be notified.

8.2.2 Any Personal Tutor who is notified that one of their tutees is not completing formative assessments will schedule a 1:1 meeting with the student within 10 working days to discuss reasons for the lack of engagement with the formative assessments and to identify any specific barriers to completion that the student may be facing. They will agree an action plan to support the student to improve their completion of formative assessments and a timescale in which to review the action plan.

6.4 If at the review date the student's engagement with formative assessments has not improved they will be escalated to Formal Stage 1 (see section 9.3).

9.0 Formal stages of managing student engagement

9.1 The first formal stage of managing engagement is designed to be supportive not punitive. It seeks to ascertain any underlying reasons for the students lack of engagement, and to offer support to overcome these.

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9.2 Students will be escalated to the formal stages of managing engagement if one of the following occurs;

- The student has 5 or more periods of absence in an academic year.
- The student has 3 or more unauthorised periods of absence in an academic year.
- The student fails to submit medical evidence after the 5th day of self-certification
- The student self-certifies on more than three separate occasions during the academic year
- The student exceeds 3 periods of absence during a term

9.3 Formal Stage 1.

9.3.1 Students who are escalated to the first formal stage will be required to attend a meeting with their Year Lead, who will discuss the student's record of attendance, highlight the contents of this policy and agree an action plan with the student, including and targets and conditions with a timeframe. This will include a review of the student's engagement with on-line learning materials and formative assessments. The Year Lead will schedule a review meeting with the student at the end of the period agreed.

9.3.2 The student will receive an e-mail confirming the targets and conditions that were agreed along with any agreed deadlines. A copy will be retained on the student's electronic record and the student's personal academic tutor will be notified.

9.3.3 The Year Lead will meet with the student to review the targets and conditions on the deadline date.

9.4 Formal Stage 2. Health and Conduct Committee

9.4.1 Students will be escalated to Formal Stage 2 if:

- They fail to attend the formal Stage 1 initial meeting or review meeting
- The student fails to adhere to the conditions or meet the targets set out in the outcomes of the Stage 1 meeting
- The student has ongoing unauthorised periods of absence.
- The student has ongoing authorised periods of absence to a level which makes it difficult for them to progress or succeed in their studies.
- The student continues to display a lack of engagement with on-line learning resources and formative assessments. The student fails to engage with EMS or clinical placements.

9.4.2 Students at Formal Stage 2 will be invited to attend the Harper & Keele Veterinary School Health and Conduct Committee. The Committee will consider the student's case including any mitigating circumstances. The membership and processes of the Health and Conduct Committee are set out in the Vet School [Fitness to Practise Policy](#).

9.4.3 The outcome will depend on individual circumstances and could include:

- Refer to Occupational Health (committee will reconsider once Occupational Health report is submitted)
- Continuation on programme
- Continuation on course under supervision (this may include conditions for their continued enrolment)
- Leave of Absence

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- Recommendation of withdrawal
- Referred to Fitness to Practise
- Referred to Fitness to Study

9.4.4 The student will be notified of the outcome within 5 working days of the committee meeting.

10.0 Appeal Process

10.1 Students have the right to appeal any decision of the Health and Conduct Committee or the Fitness to Practice Committee as set out in the Vet School [Fitness to Practise Policy](#).

10.2 Students have the right to appeal any decision of the Fitness to Study Committee as set out in the Health and Wellbeing Policy.

11.0 Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Appeals made under the policies set out under Section 10.0 represent the completion of the Universities internal procedures. When the process is exhausted and the student has been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter by their host University according to the relevant policy, students who remain dissatisfied may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education, which provides an independent review of student complaints.

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Annex 1. Types of Evidence

Evidence	Notes
<p>Self-Certification</p>	<p>To self-certify an eligible claim, students need to tick the 'I am self-certifying' box on the e-Vision submission screen. The student statement should state clearly the dates in question.</p>
<p>Medical Evidence About the Student Only. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Certificate or 'Fit Note' signed by the medical practitioner whilst the illness or incident was affecting the student • Other medical evidence such as certificates of attendance at surgery or hospital • A doctor's written opinion given after receiving the student's permission to release information 	<p>The evidence should relate to the student and be provided by a medical practitioner, registered with a recognised professional body. The evidence must include the dates of the affected period.</p> <p>It may also be useful for the practitioner to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on expected recovery time, if applicable • If difficulties are chronic or likely to be persistent, information on the likelihood of future serious episodes.
<p>Evidence relating to someone other than the student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written evidence from an independent professional • Other dated evidence related to the reason for absence 	<p>If the absence is due to the illness of another person, medical information about them should not be submitted. Independent evidence should be provided of how that person's illness has affected the student. For example, they may have seen their GP or a counsellor or may have discussed their circumstances with Student Services. They could also have provided practical assistance to the other person such as accompanying them to medical appointments and be able to provide a parking ticket or similar practical evidence.</p>
<p>Documentary evidence</p>	<p>This refers to evidence that may reasonably be expected to be available in light of the circumstances of the claim, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Death Certificate (if the claim relates to bereavement). If unavailable, an Order of Service or an alternative form of evidence. • Information from the police (if the claim relates to a crime) • Information from the court or another professional body (if the claim relates to legal proceedings or another official process)

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Letter of Corroboration from a Professional Person	This evidence may arise as a result of an official process, as with the evidence listed above The letter must be from an independent person who does not have a personal relationship with the student. The letter should be on the relevant official letterhead or, if provided by email, the address of the author should be visible to ensure the origin can be determined.
Other appropriate evidence	It is acknowledged that circumstances may arise which cause the student to be absent for which none of the above categories of evidence are available. The general principle is that evidence should be independent and auditable.