

Student Engagement and Attendance Policy

NOTE: Supporting documents will be developed over the course of a pilot across Academic Year 2025-2026, ready for Academic Year 2026-2027 University-wide adoption of standardised monitoring procedures.

1. Background

- 1.1** This policy replaces the former policy on Student Attendance, which was approved by the Senate on the 17th March 2015. This Policy on Student Engagement and Attendance should be read in conjunction with the accompanying [*Procedures for Monitoring and Supporting Student Engagement and Attendance.*](#)

2. Overview

- 2.1** At Heriot-Watt University, we are committed to delivering a transformative educational experience that places student success at the centre of our mission. We strive to support every student to achieve their full potential, whilst also fostering a learning environment where educators are empowered to promote student success. We work in partnership with our students, encouraging them to take an active role in their learning and academic journey. Our goal is to create a responsive, inclusive, and supportive academic environment where every student can thrive with a clear & continuous message to students that engagement is important and linked to academic achievement.
- 2.2** We recognise that sustained engagement is strongly linked to academic achievement. Therefore, we actively monitor patterns of participation to identify when a student may be experiencing difficulties. Significant changes in engagement or ongoing disengagement can signal underlying challenges - prompting timely, meaningful interventions and the provision of appropriate support.

3. Scope

- 3.1** The policy applies to all students enrolled in Foundation, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate-Taught programmes at Heriot-Watt University, studying on campus in Dubai, Edinburgh, Malaysia, Orkney, and Scottish Borders. Additionally, the overarching principles relating to engagement and attendance apply to students undertaking a Heriot-Watt programme at a partner organisation.
- 3.2** Specific attendance and engagement requirements for postgraduate research students are outlined in the [University's PGR Code of Practice](#).
- 3.3** Specific attendance and engagement requirements for students learning wholly online will be developed at a later date.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1** Heriot-Watt University is committed to creating a learning environment that encourages and supports student engagement. Engagement is recognised as a multifaceted concept encompassing:
- 4.1.1** Attendance at, and participation in, scheduled learning activities (e.g., lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, laboratory & studio sessions).

- 4.1.2 Interaction with digital learning platforms and resources.
- 4.1.3 Engagement in, and submission of formative and summative assessment.
- 4.1.4 Involvement in academic discussions and collaborative projects.
- 4.1.5 Utilisation of support services and resources.
- 4.1.6 Providing feedback on the student experience through student voice activities including surveys.
- 4.2 Students are expected to engage actively with their studies to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their courses and programmes. The University is dedicated to providing timely and appropriate support to address any challenges encountered, recognising that various factors may impact a student's ability to engage.
- 4.3 The University will actively monitor the engagement of all students within the scope of this policy for the purposes of supporting students to achieve their academic goals.
- 4.4 The University will consider flexibility in engagement and attendance requirements for students where appropriate, including making reasonable adjustments for disabled students/students of determination, in line with its responsibilities. More information on this can be found in the [*Procedures for Monitoring and Supporting Student Engagement and Attendance*](#).
- 4.5 Engagement data will be collected through various means and collated into the Student Engagement Dashboard. Access to this data will be restricted for privacy and GDPR compliance. Examples of data points collected include:
 - Canvas logins, materials access and activity times
 - Canvas assessment submissions
 - Mitigating Circumstances
 - Temporary Suspension of Studies
 - Student Record Holds (for example finance or late enrolment holds)
 - Attendance monitoring data undertaken by JISC system
- 4.6 Engagement data, in any form, is not credit bearing so cannot be used towards summative or formative assessment grades. For clarity, participation in quizzes or Canvas exercises can be made credit bearing where this is clearly communicated in Course Handbooks.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1 **Schools within the University are responsible for:**
 - 5.1.1 Clearly communicating engagement and attendance expectations to students through programme handbooks, course materials, and digital platforms including Canvas.
 - 5.1.2 Tracking engagement and attendance on campus and online for all centrally timetabled teaching events using only University approved systems.
 - 5.1.3 Signposting students exhibiting signs of disengagement to relevant support services.
 - 5.1.4 Encouraging active student engagement through well-designed activities on Canvas.
 - 5.1.5 Ensuring that attendance and engagement requirements for programmes accredited by PSRBs, or employers in the case of Graduate Apprentices, are

incorporated into courses and communicated to students, e.g. this may require additional monitoring of learning, teaching, practice and assessment activities.

5.2 Registry and Academic Support (RAS) Directorate are responsible for:

5.2.1 Monitoring the Student Engagement Dashboard and coordinating communication with, and support of, disengaged students.

5.2.2 Engaging with Academics over concerns to address concerns of student disengagement.

5.3 Procedural guidance for cases of low engagement, or non-engagement, is provided in the University's *[Procedures for Persistent Disengagement: Reframing Engagement Support](#)*.

6. Statutory Requirements

6.1 UK Visa Requirements for International Students:

The University has a requirement to record the attendance of students studying at the Scottish Campuses on a Student Visa issued by the UKVI and this is covered by a [separate process](#).

6.2 Dubai Visa Requirements for International Students:

There are currently no compliance regulations on attendance for International Students at the Dubai Campus.

6.3 Malaysia Visa Requirements for International Students

The University has a duty to record the attendance of international students on its Malaysia Campus for international students and therefore attendance is expected at a minimum of 80% to ensure compliance with the regulators and authority (Ministry of Higher Education and Immigration Malaysia).

6.4 UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (2024 edition) expects institutions to have in place policies and procedures for student engagement, including attendance. The University's alignment with the UK Quality Code will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland as part of its Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review.

7. Approval Pathway

1. **Endorsed** by LTAOC, April 2025
2. **Approved** by UCLT, 11th June 2025