

Attendance Policy

Supplementary to the *Taught Degree Regulations*.

This document should be read in conjunction with the *Taught Degree Regulations*.

Contents

1. Scope.....	3
2. Why does the School monitor attendance?	3
3. What are the attendance requirements?	4
3.1 What does that mean for me?	4
3.2 Minimum attendance thresholds	5
3.3 Penalties	5
4. Research Students	6
5. Language Year Abroad Students.....	6
6. Tier 4	6
7. Summary of key points	8

1. Scope

Student attendance and engagement is at the heart of the School's function. The current degree regulations include an overall guide to the principles of reasonable attendance whilst this document seeks to expand on this and provide further information about how attendance is managed across the School and how the School uses attendance data to support students.

2. Why does the School monitor attendance?

The School has a duty towards maintaining the welfare of our students as well as various duties imposed on us by external bodies who facilitate the running of the School.

In all matters, our primary concern is for our students, their welfare and their success. In an increasingly competitive world, we want to ensure that our students can get the best out of their time with us and have the best chance possible of leaving us with a well-respected qualification and a wide range of knowledge, both related and unrelated to their final degree.

It is important that the School does all it can to promote a positive learning experience for all students. By supporting and enabling students to attend classes to the required standards, we are helping to ensure that students receive the teaching that they are entitled to and acquire all the relevant knowledge to succeed in their chosen programme of study. Students who attend well, typically achieve well so it is vitally important to our core operations that we offer support readily and in good time. Collecting and monitoring attendance data allows us to do this, ensuring that students receive an excellent dynamic learning experience as well as being supported throughout their studies and empowered to achieve.

By monitoring attendance we can identify times where we may need to offer support to our students. Analysing patterns of attendance can allow us to pick up problems at an early stage. By keeping an eye on attendance levels, we can sometimes see an indication that a student might be going through a difficult time (they've missed a week of classes when they normally never miss a single class) and can reach out to the student to try and offer support if needed.

Students who attend consistently and to a high level not only increase their own chances to learn well and succeed in their course of study, but they also help to improve the learning experience for all students on a course. Being able to share ideas, discuss key issues and learn collaboratively, students acquire a range of new skills to increase their ability to learn and prepare them for the world after study. By monitoring attendance levels, we can identify situations where this rich learning environment is threatened by low attendance and can then try to remedy the situation to improve the quality of learning for all.

For some external bodies, continued high attendance is a condition of the services or opportunities that are offered. For students receiving student loans, these are typically dependent upon the student continuing to engage with their studies to a satisfactory level. Unsatisfactory attendance can lead to cancellation of student loan provision and withdrawal from studies.

Tier 4 international students are subject to a visa condition which requires them to engage fully with their studies. Visa students are expected to make their studies their main priority whilst in the UK and so must be able to show that they are committed and fully engaged with their programme of study. By monitoring student attendance we are able to identify situations where students may need support to help them continue with their studies or re-engage with their studies after a short break for reasons beyond their control. We are also required to report to the Home Office about visa holders who are not complying with the terms of their visa. Such reporting is never undertaken lightly but still remains a requirement of our licence to sponsor international students to study with us.

3. What are the attendance requirements?

The [Taught Degree Regulations](#) currently in effect regarding attendance are:

8. Attendance Requirements

8.1 Normal expectation of attendance

In order to benefit fully from their studies, students are expected to attend all relevant and/or required classes for the module, which may include lectures, tutorials, seminars, language classes, practical classes and any other taught sessions.

8.2 Attendance requirements for students repeating a module

Students who are repeating a module must meet the normal class attendance requirements as if taking the module for the first time.

8.3 Minimum attendance thresholds

Some modules may set minimum attendance thresholds for the module which must be met. This is often the case for language modules.

8.4 Authorised absence

Exceptions to attendance requirements will only be made where a student can demonstrate that they have mitigating circumstances in line with the School's Mitigating Circumstances Policy. This will result in their absence from class being designated as authorised.

8.5 Unauthorised absence and penalties

Programme Convenors will inform the appropriate Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching of the relevant Faculty or Faculties of students who fail to meet the attendance requirements. The Associate Dean(s) for Learning and Teaching will review each case and decide what further action should be taken. They may recommend to the Head of Registry and Quality that permission for a student to take the final assessment for a module should be withdrawn (this would use up one of the rights of re-assessment). For students who persistently fail to meet the attendance requirements, the Associate Dean(s) for Learning and Teaching may recommend to the Head of Registry and Quality that a student's programme registration should be terminated.

3.1 What does that mean for me?

We expect that students will make every effort to attend all scheduled and required elements of their studies. This includes timetabled activities, lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials, supervisory meetings, exams and any other activity which may be specified as required or mandatory during their studies.

We recognize the fact that students may have other commitments outside of their studies, however, it is our expectation that students will make reasonable effort to arrange any external commitments to fit in around their studies. We also acknowledge that, from time-to-time, situations may occur which prevent students from attending classes to the expected level.

In some cases, Students are able to request that absences be considered as authorised absences if they satisfy the published criteria and can provide suitable evidence. Details of situations covered by the authorised absence principle can be found in the Mitigating Circumstances Policy (<https://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/degreeregulations/file114936.pdf>).

Absences which are not or cannot be considered as authorised, but which are an unavoidable part of life (such as minor ailments) will not be approved as authorised absences or accepted as grounds for mitigating circumstances for assessment but can be considered in a wider attendance context. If a student is unable to attend for a short duration of time for such a reason, they should still inform the School so that a record can be made of the reason for non-attendance which can be taken into account when assessing student attendance levels and to prevent students being unnecessarily penalised for events beyond their control. We will also consider these absences when assessing student attendance if there appears to be a pattern of non-attendance or if the frequency/duration of non-attendance raises a concern and it is felt that additional support should be offered.

3.2 Minimum attendance thresholds

As specified in the regulations, some modules specify minimum attendance thresholds for successful completion of the module. These are applied in conjunction with the general attendance regulations and must be met by any student on such a module. The overall expectation is still that a student will attend all required elements of their studies but students must consider the requirement that if they are unable to attend, they cannot fall below the specified minimum attendance criteria. Minimum attendance thresholds may be specified to comply with accrediting professional body requirements and so should be seen as the minimum standard required, not as the target to reach.

3.3 Penalties

As it is in the interest of students to attend and engage fully with their studies, we do not expect to have to apply penalties to students based on low attendance. However, provisions are in place to enable appropriate action to be taken in situations where students are not engaging with their studies. These actions are balanced to be proportionate to the severity and implications of non-attendance.

Action is taken on a case-by-case basis and each case is assessed on its own merits to determine the level of appropriate action to be taken. As referred to in the degree regulations, penalties could include the recommendation that permission for a student to take the final assessment for a module should be withdrawn (using up one of the rights of re-assessment) or the termination of a student's registration from their programme of study. Such sanctions would be pursued when it is deemed to be an appropriate course of action for the level of non-attendance demonstrated.

Cases of termination would occur when a student's attendance and subsequent communication (or lack of) effectively constitutes a withdrawal from the course. This is equally applicable for Tier 4 sponsored students who do not engage with their studies or in communication with the School in which case the termination of registration and withdrawal of sponsorship are a statutory requirement for us to carry out in line with the Home Office regulations for student sponsorship.

4. Research Students

Students on postgraduate research programmes will still be subject to attendance monitoring under a different process to that detailed above. Because of the difference in expected engagement and the nature of course delivery between taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and research programmes, there are elements of the attendance policy which cannot be applied to research students as they appear above.

Research students will be required to "sign in" with the Doctoral School at 53 Gordon Square every three weeks from the first week of term (week 1, week 4, week 7 etc.). This allows us to offer a point of support to research students and a regular contact point to allow any issues or concerns to be raised.

For students on approved periods of fieldwork we would expect them to "check in" every three weeks by remote means (Skype or email would be acceptable examples of suitable contact).

These "check in" points will be in addition to any contact or meetings with assigned supervisors which are also considered as mandatory for attendance purposes.

5. Language Year Abroad Students

Students undertaking a language year abroad are still expected to meet the attendance requirements applicable to students at SOAS. In addition, students on a year abroad will also be subject to the regulations of their host institution for the period of their study abroad and so would be subject to whatever monitoring processes are in place at the host institution.

A host institution may specify a lower required attendance level than the home institution but students will be expected to maintain the academic standards they would demonstrate at home. Students will be expected to report back any periods of significant non-attendance experienced during their year abroad and we may liaise with host institutions to obtain data about our students' attendance during their year abroad.

6. Tier 4

Students studying with us who have Tier 4 visas are subject to compulsory attendance monitoring as referred to above. Although this is a requirement placed upon us by the Home Office, we treat this as an opportunity to support our international students rather than trying to catch them out. In addition to the general attendance monitoring undertaken for all students, there is an additional requirement to report to the Home

Office in cases where a Tier 4 student misses 10 consecutive scheduled contacts or in cases where student attendance is so low that the student runs an increased risk of being unable to complete their programme of study within the time granted for their visa. Checks of consecutive missed contacts are conducted twice a year in line with the details found in the Tier 4 Processes and Procedures ([link to follow](#))

7. Summary of key points

- 1) Students are expected to attend all relevant and/or required classes for the module, which may include lectures, tutorials, seminars, language classes, practical classes and any other taught sessions.
- 2) Where students are unable to attend classes they should notify the School. This should be done as an authorised absence request for eligible cases or as a general notification for absences ineligible for authorisation.
- 3) Deliberate attempts to circumvent the attendance policy are likely to be investigated and could lead to appropriate action being taken which could include the application of an appropriate penalty.
- 4) Students repeating a module or year of study are expected to maintain the same standards of attendance as a student studying the same element for the first time unless appropriate written permission has been granted to the student by the School in writing.
- 5) As stated in the regulations, students are expected to attend all required activities. In addition to this requirement, students need to be aware of any applicable minimum attendance thresholds for their modules of study. Failure to meet minimum attendance thresholds could lead to the student being ineligible to fully complete their degree or programme of study.
- 6) Students should notify the school of non-attendance within a reasonable timeframe of the absence taking place and should do so in writing, by email or via the Student Information Desk (SID) and should include evidence where possible.
- 7) Where student attendance is below the level expected and no explanation has been provided, the School will seek to contact the student and signpost the student towards possible sources of support to improve their level of engagement.
- 8) Students wishing to arrange a sanctioned period of non-attendance should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place with their faculty before the period of absence begins. Failure to make appropriate arrangements could lead to termination of registration.
- 9) Tier 4 students will be subject to the standard attendance monitoring process for their level of study (taught or research) as well as twice yearly checks on consecutive attendance points as detailed in the Tier 4 Processes and Procedures.
- 10) Attendance monitoring procedures will continue to apply to students on approved periods of fieldwork. Students on a language year abroad are expected to be monitored by their host institution but should update SOAS of any significant changes or periods of non-attendance.

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