

International Student Attendance Policy

1. This policy outlines the mandatory attendance requirements for students who have been issued a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) by Birkbeck to study a full-time programme. It does not apply to international students who hold a non-Student visa¹ immigration status.
2. The Office for Students (Birkbeck's regulatory body) indicates in its [guidance](#) that full-time programmes of study should require the student to attend for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks during the year.
3. Students who are issued with a CAS are in the United Kingdom primarily for the purpose of education and must therefore attend and engage with their studies to the full extent. In practice, this means students must actively and consistently follow their programme of study, attending all sessions in their timetable. It is expected that the majority of this attendance should be in person / on campus.
4. Students are responsible for ensuring that their attendance is registered at their session. They can do this by using their Student ID card to swipe into the classroom, by confirming attendance via a paper register, or by logging into an online session via the Join Live Session link in their My Birkbeck timetable or Moodle.
5. Within this policy, the term 'attendance' is used to indicate participation in timetabled events. 'Engagement' is used to indicate participation in non-timetabled events and academic activities, normally during Non-Standard Teaching Periods, defined below. Students sponsored for Student visas are expected to abide by the College's Student Engagement and Attendance Policy in addition to the requirements laid out in this policy.
6. Birkbeck's Student Visa Sponsor Licence Authorising Officer is the College Secretary and Clerk to the Governors. He delegates to the Academic Registrar the operational responsibility for ensuring appropriate policy, process and communications is in place to support attendance for students who have been issued a CAS by Birkbeck.
7. Within Registry Services the International Student Administration Team (ISA) implements the attendance requirements and other provisions of this policy and be supported by International Student Coordinators in each School. ISA will use a number of different data sources to identify students who require further action, including eRegisters, Research Track and Moodle logs. Where ISA is unable to obtain sufficient data, or if additional information is required, the academic department will be contacted. The Executive Dean of each School appoints the International Student Coordinator who is the primary liaison point with Registry Services.

Taught Programme Requirements

8. Taught programmes are defined as Bachelor's and Master's degrees, Graduate and Postgraduate Diplomas and Master's of Research (MRes). Note that the following MRes programmes have a 120 credit research module and as such these are monitored using the Postgraduate Research Requirements: MRes Chemical Research, MRes Global Infectious Diseases, MRes Psychology and MRes Structural Biology
9. Students are expected to attend all timetabled classes and scheduled engagements within the teaching terms. Students who fail to attend at least one in-person scheduled teaching activity each teaching week will be contacted in line with the thresholds in Appendix 1. Examples of teaching activities include attendance at laboratory sessions, seminars, exams, registration sessions and submission of assessed or non-assessed coursework.

¹ 'Student visa' is the current term for the student immigration route, but for the purpose of this policy it is also used to include students sponsored on the previous Tier 4 route.

10. 'Teaching terms' within Birkbeck are defined as Autumn and Spring terms. If three-term teaching is in place, then the Summer Term is also defined as a 'Teaching Term'.
11. The definition of term time will depend upon the level of study undertaken. Undergraduate students (including those studying Graduate Diplomas) and Postgraduate students studying Postgraduate Diplomas, with the exception of PG Dip Analytical Bioscience, will use the published term dates to define their term time, excluding departmental reading weeks. Postgraduate taught students (those studying Master's degrees and PG Dip Analytical Bioscience) and research students are deemed to be in term time throughout the calendar year, excluding Christmas and Easter breaks and departmental reading weeks, until they have completed all elements of their programme of study.
12. Students who fail to meet the minimum engagement and attendance requirements will be contacted by ISA. Details of the actions that the College will take in these circumstances are laid out in Appendix 1 and 2.
13. Should the position be reached where the College contemplates withdrawing a student's visa sponsorship, this will be subject to review and decision by the Academic Registrar, or their nominee, and the relevant Executive Dean, or their nominee, of the School in which the student is registered.
14. If 60 calendar days have passed without the student's engagement or attendance at the College, they will have their visa sponsorship withdrawn and their student record will be terminated. The 60 day period can commence from the first day of the student's academic year and then at any point throughout the year. A series of interventions and communications will be sent to students prior to withdrawal to seek their attendance or engagement, including signposting to the necessary support services. These are outlined in the Appendices below.

Non-Standard Teaching Periods

16. During teaching periods where alternative teaching and learning activities take place, students will be required to maintain engagement with the College. Examples of such periods are work placements, field trips, study abroad modules or intercollegiate study. An appropriate form of engagement will be determined for each case and may include regular meetings with academic tutors or other College staff, attendance at exams or timetabled optional events, and submission of coursework.
15. During a period of retake or reassessment, the standard programme progression rules contained in the Common Award Scheme (CAS) Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study permit students to study a reduced number of credits. Students taking a reduced credit load are permitted to continue with Student visa sponsorship during this time, as they continue to be registered on a full-time programme. However, there must be scheduled attendance requirements in each term during this period to enable continued visa sponsorship, in accordance with the requirements in paragraphs 7-8 of this Policy. Students undertaking reassessment or retaking a module who do not have attendance requirements, are not entitled to visa sponsorship.

Taught Student Dissertation Periods

16. The College accepts that there will be minimal teaching points during a student's dissertation period. However, the underlying principle is that all students should have an academic engagement at least once every 60 calendar days. Engagement for students who are in a dissertation period with no taught elements will be based on the student's regular contact with a relevant member of the academic School, including emails, meetings with dissertation supervisor, submission of written work and attendance at exams.

Authorised Absences

17. Students can request a period of authorised absence for a maximum of 60 calendar days, provided the absence does not result in an extension to their expected programme completion date. During this absence, neither attendance nor engagement is required. Approval for this period of absence will require

the agreement both of a relevant academic member of staff, for example the Course Director or Personal Tutor, and approval from ISA. Requests for authorised absences can be submitted via the International Students area in Moodle and should normally be submitted before the absence.

Postgraduate Research Requirements

18. For students who are enrolled on a postgraduate research programme, attendance will be monitored via supervisor meetings and seminars. A minimum of three events should take place per term and the expectation is that at least two of these are in-person meetings.
19. There may be a lower frequency of supervisory meetings or reduced teaching requirements after the end of the summer term, (July to September), as well as during the Writing Up period. However, the underlying requirement is that all students have an academic attendance at least once every 60 calendar days.
20. The MRes Research programmes outlined in paragraph 8 are monitored using the postgraduate research attendance requirements outlined in this section. All other MRes programmes in the College use the taught attendance requirements (minimum one session per week).

Off-Campus Study

21. Off-Campus Study is defined as any period where a student is required to be away from the Bloomsbury campus as part of their programme and Student visa sponsorship continues. This can include compulsory field trips, study at overseas institutions or work placement or essential research work outside the UK, such as archival visits. Full requirements for students undertaking study at overseas institutions and work placements can be found in Appendix 3.
22. Off-campus periods of one academic year or longer, will result in the College withdrawing Student visa sponsorship. The College will consider a new period of Student visa sponsorship when the student is ready to resume their research at the College campus.
23. Full requirements for students undertaking study at overseas institutions and work placements can be found in Appendix 3.
24. Research students who undertake Off Campus Study must continue to meet the relevant attendance requirement (three per term). However, the requirement for that contact to be in-person, set out in paragraph 16, will not apply. Students on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes who undertake work placement are expected to continue to attend all other scheduled teaching sessions during a period of Off Campus Study, unless there is a mandatory requirement for the student to be away from Campus, for example attending a fieldtrip.
25. Off-Campus Study Request forms, or Work Placement Agreement forms, are available from the International Students Area of Moodle, and must be submitted after obtaining an approval from the relevant supervisor(s) and a minimum of 15 working days (i.e. three weeks) before their intended departure date.
26. The agreed Off-Campus study period and the relevant details, including the location of Off-Campus study and expected return date, will be reported to the Home Office in accordance with the Student Sponsor guidance. The student must report their return both to their academic department and to ISA by the agreed date so that the Student visa sponsorship can continue. The student must inform their academic department and ISA if they cannot return by the agreed date to determine if another return date to determine if another return date can be agreed in advance.

Appendix 1 – Taught Students - Actions taken where minimum attendance not met

The following table outlines the actions taken where there has not been in-person attendance for consecutive weeks.

Stage	Consecutive teaching weeks of absence (in-person events)	Action
One	2	Student is sent email by Registry Services notifying them of missed timetabled events. Academic Department informed and meeting with Registry Services/Department will be required if another week missed.
Two	3	<p>A meeting between the academic Department and the student is recommended by ISA. The purpose of the meeting is to remind the student of their external visa obligations and to be signposted to relevant academic and student support services as appropriate. This can be an in person or online meeting which the student must attend.</p> <p>The student may bring a supporter with them. The supporter may not be a legal representative and is not permitted to represent the student or speak on their behalf.</p>
Three	4	Student is sent a further email by Registry Services notifying them of missed timetabled events. Registry Services will investigate and document whether appropriate support and intervention measures have been put in place in accordance with the Departmental and College's policies and procedures, including consideration of mitigating circumstances.
Four	5	<p>Final warning email by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered.</p> <p>The student may bring a supporter with them but not a legal representative. The supporter is not permitted to represent the student or speak on their behalf.</p>
Five	6	The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study.

Appendix 2 Postgraduate Research Students - Actions taken where minimum attendance not met

The following table outlines the actions taken where there has not been academic attendance for consecutive scheduled events.

Consecutive missed events	Action
1 - Amber	<p>Student is sent email by Registry Services notifying them of missed events. Academic Department informed and meeting with Registry Services staff/Department will be arranged. The purpose of the meeting is to remind the student of their visa obligations and to be signposted to relevant academic and student support services as appropriate.</p> <p>The student may bring a supporter with them. The supporter may not be a legal representative and is not permitted to represent the student or speak on their behalf.</p>
2 - Red	<p>Registry Services and the Department will investigate and document whether appropriate support and intervention measures have been put in place in accordance with the Departmental and College policies and procedures, including consideration of mitigating circumstances. A range of academic and student support services may be engaged as appropriate to support the student.</p> <p>Final email warning issued by Registry Services and a second and final meeting offered. The student may bring a supporter with them. The supporter may not be a legal representative and is not permitted to represent the student or speak on their behalf.</p>
3 - Final	<p>The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study.</p>

In addition to the action outlined in the table above, all students are required to have at least one attendance event or engagement every 60 calendar days. If a student does not engage after 30 calendar days then ISA will contact the relevant International Student Co-ordinator to confirm if any contact has taken place. If no contact has taken place, then a warning email will be sent to the student within 15 calendar days.

Consecutive days without an attendance event	Action
30	ISA contact International Student Co-ordinator to confirm if contact has taken place
45	Email alert sent to student informing them of non-attendance. Next attended event must occur within next 15 calendar days.
60	The Academic Registrar withdraws the student's visa sponsorship and terminates student record for their programme of study.

Appendix 3 – Study at Overseas Institutions and Work Placements

Study at Overseas Institutions

Where a programme permits a student to spend time studying at another educational institution, Student visa sponsorship will continue provided the following requirements are met:

- a. the total time spent at the overseas educational institution does not exceed two terms in length, and
- b. the student engages in line with the Off-Campus Attendance Requirements table below.

Please note, it is not anticipated that postgraduate research students will undertake formal study at overseas institutions and any students in this situation should contact ISA for advice.

Work Placements

International students who have Student Visa sponsorship are permitted to complete a period of work placement, provided the following requirements are met:

- Placement does not constitute more than 50% of the total length of the course
- Placement is an assessed and integral part of the course

The student must complete a Work Placement Agreement, which must also be signed off by the placement provider and returned to ISA, prior to commencing the placement.

Attendance During Placement

In addition to attendance at taught sessions, students on a work placement are required to meet with a relevant academic on a regular basis, outlined in the table below.

Students who are not attending Birkbeck modules at the same time as engaging in a work placement will be required to attend academic meetings more regularly.

Off Campus Attendance Requirements

	Term Time: Attending Work Placement and Studying Birkbeck Modules	Term Time: Attending Work Placement Only	Summer Months: Postgraduate Students (taught or research) Attending Work Placement
Frequency of Academic Meetings	Once per term	Fortnightly	Minimum once every 60 days

International students who have a Student visa can also complete work which is not assessed as part of their academic course. This could be a short-term role, a work placement or internship. They can undertake this work in line with their allocated 20 hours per week permitted under their visa conditions. No attendance monitoring is required as part of work that is not assessed as part of their course.