Student Engagement in Learning Policy Guidance:

Use of Attendance Monitoring Data for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy seeks to deliver a high quality student experience to support learning in that "targeted strategies will be implemented to improve the engagement and attainment of students groups identified through data analysis". Use of student engagement, attendance and attainment data can inform and instigate strategies for success.

1. Use of Attendance Data

Across the Higher Education sector it is recognised that attendance data is one indicator of students' engagement with their programme. Attending taught elements of a programme allows students to engage in curriculum content, to work with other students and staff and to foster a sense of academic belonging. Fig 1 shows other engagement indicators such as assessment hand-in and other touchpoints (such as engagement with learning materials on the VLE) as vital inputs for success whilst acknowledging the differences in programmes and student backgrounds. These other engagement indicators formed the basis of the Student Engagement in Learning Policy and the expectation is that staff will engage with all forms of student engagement in learning data as outlined in the policy.
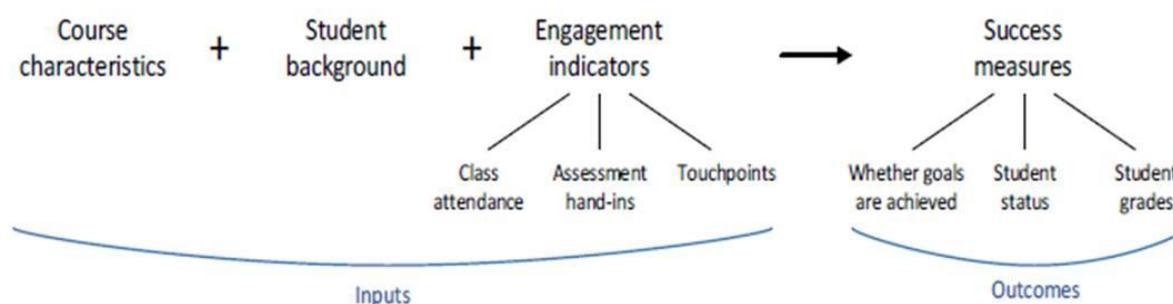

Fig 1. Inputs and outputs in Student Engagement in Learning (Bradberry and D'Antin, Southampton Solent University. Student Retention:A New Challenge for HE Administration, Conference Report, p9, June 2017)

Monitoring student attendance is intended to be supportive and any resulting procedures, processes and communications need to be designed to help early identification of students at risk of non-continuation or non-completion.

The University Approach to Attendance Monitoring (appendix 1) allows "**programme teams to define an acceptable level of attendance, based on individual circumstance**" (section 1.2). It is anticipated that programmes will define their own expected levels of attendance based on their programme requirements, and the mechanisms for offering support.

Given the use of attendance data is relatively new for CCCU, monitoring the data every one to two weeks would be advised. However, there are certain times in the academic year when it would be particularly helpful to review attendance and when students may be at greater risk of non-engagement. For example:

- At the start of a programme

- Immediately following extended breaks where students have not been regularly attending (eg week 23 (week 2 of semester 2, the first teaching week)), or after an assessment week or placement

The University Approach to Attendance Monitoring (appendix 1) states that "Attendance will also be monitored by percentage of attendance over any period of time and number of consecutive sessions missed."

Below are some **suggested** levels of attendance and intervention which programmes may choose to adopt, however it is strongly recommended that programme teams agree their approach to attendance monitoring together with programme administrators/FDOs. The levels suggested below are not intended to cut across exisiting practices or professional requirements.

- 80-100% attendance of their scheduled sessions - desired level of attendance, contact at discretion of programme team

- 51-79% attendance of their scheduled sessions – lower than expected level of attendance, supportive contact required from Personal Academic Tutor

- 0-50% attendance of their scheduled sessions – significantly lower than expected level of attendance, directed to Personal Academic Tutor/Programme Director/Head of School

2. **Communication around attendance**

As stated in the University Approach to Student Attendance Monitoring, where a student's attendance is lower than expected, the progamme team will contact the student (in accordance with their agreed approach). It is important that the initial contact is supportive and takes into account an holistic view of the student's situation. A sense of belonging, particular to their academic subject, can be key to student retention which is why contact from the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) is preferable, and to consider phone contact as opposed to email. If email is used, two exemplars can be found in appendix 2 which gives a sense of the supportive tone that should be adopted.   A meeting with the PAT gives the opportunity to explore whether there are other factors that need to be considered. The PAT may want to review other data in order to gain a fuller picture (as shown in fig 1 and the Student Engagement in Learning Policy), for example engagement with VLE or with assessment activities.

Initally, there may be technological or procedural reasons as to why a student's attendance is lower than expected. For example:

- Pending Changes to Study that could distort a student's attendance data (this occurs at the beginning of each semester)

- Whether the student's IST is functioning

- Whether the student's Smart Card is functioning.

It is important to note that there may be reasons where a student's attendance may lower than expected, for example where there is justifiable cause for absences already communicated e.g. long term illness, unavoidable short term issues.

Appendix 1

CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

THE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Introduction

At the heart of the University's Strategic Framework 2015-2020 and the Student & University Partnership Agreement is the core principle of students as Partners in Learning.

Students are asked to 'take responsibility for managing their own learning: actively engaging in their programme and supporting their student representatives to help create meaningful dialogue and impactful change'.[1]

The University's approach to student attendance is part of a wider strategy of student engagement, . The University's approach seeks to empower students to make informed choices and decisions, taking responsibility for their own learning and engagement.

Attendance at timetabled sessions is a fundamental and essential part of the student learning experience. Research has shown that regular attendance and academic achievement are closely linked and we are committed to supporting student success at Christ Church, as well as identifying students who need support at an early stage. Early identification of lower than expected attendance can be a key indicator of where additional support may be required, and will help us to put measures in place to help ensure our students continue their studies and achieve their potential.

The University expects all students to attend their timetabled teaching activities. For most students, these will be shown in their Individual Student Timetable (IST). All undergraduate and post-graduate taught students should have an IST.

Our approach at Christ Church is 'No swipe, no recorded attendance'. If a student does not 'swipe in' to a timetabled activity with their smartcard, their attendance will not be recorded.

Operational Guidance

1. Requirements regarding student attendance

1.1 The University expects students to attend 100% of their timetabled teaching activities. However, the University understands that, in exceptional circumstances, student absence may occur (see section 7).

1.2 The University's approach to monitoring attendance allows programme teams to define an acceptable level of attendance, based on individual circumstance. If attendance falls below the acceptable level the programme team will contact the student to discuss issues which may be affecting the student's ability to attend. The programme administrator would normally contact the student in the first instance and, if attendance levels do not improve, the process is escalated.

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[1] Student & University Partnership Agreement, 2015 – 2021.

1.3 Students are either in attendance or absent. The University recognises that students may be absent for a number of reasons. Please see section 7.

2. Professional Regulations

Attendance requirements associated with Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Body (PSRB) regulations will apply to students on relevant programmes. This includes all placement requirements.

3. Partner Institutions

There is an expectation that the University's Approach to Attendance will normally apply to all students at partner institutions. Attendance requirements for students at a partner institution will be set out in writing in the Collaborative Agreement(s) with that partner. Policy variation may be permitted if detailed in the Collaborative Agreement(s) with that partner, but must offer a student at that partner institution an experience equivalent to that of University-based students. Procedural variation in terms of attendance monitoring systems may be permitted, but all partner institutions will be expected to have an appropriate process or system in place for recording student attendance.

4. International Students with Tier 4 visas

International students covered by Home Office Tier 4 visa requirements have additional obligations in terms of attendance. The University has a statutory duty to comply with the stipulations of the Home Office under the terms of its Tier 4 licence which requires the accurate tracking of attendance of students subject to visa restrictions (see Appendix A: Immigration Compliance Procedures).

5. Registering at Timetabled Sessions

Electronic Registering

5.1 Students should use their University Smartcard to 'tap' into each class or activity using the electronic reader inside the room or a handheld reader where necessary. If a student loses their Smartcard, they may obtain a replacement from any i-zone at our campuses.

Manual Registering

5.2 If a student does not have an IST, they are still expected to attend each session, but will be expected to engage with local arrangements for registering attendance.

6. Lateness

Students should refrain from being late or leaving timetabled classes and activities early without good reason. Students 'tapping in' to teaching activities 15 minutes after the start of the timetabled activity will be registered as late. This will not affect their attendance record.

7.   Notification of Absence

7.1   Students are expected to notify the University in advance, if they will be absent.

7.2   From October 2017, students will be able to send a notification to their programme administrator via a web interface which appears as a mobile app on a smartphone. This notification will populate their individual record in the TDS system.

7.3   Absences for the following reasons may not be considered a prompt for intervention or referral for support (unless they become persistent):
- Jury Service
- Health-related
- Job interview (related to learning)
- Bereavement
- Extra-curricular University event
- Caring responsibilities
- Lost smartcard
- Reservist activity
- Professional requirement
- Transport difficulties
- Other

8.   Monitoring of Attendance

8.1   Individual student's attendance will be monitored by their module and their programme*.
        * In the TDS system, the terminology of 'subject' is used, rather than 'programme'.

8.2   Attendance will also be monitored by percentage of attendance over any period of time and number of consecutive sessions missed.

8.3   With reference to 1.2, where a student's attendance is lower than the level expected, the programme team will contact the student to arrange a meeting. This will also be an opportunity to explore whether there are contributing factors influencing the student's attendance, which require further support. At the meeting, actions to improve attendance will be discussed between the student and programme team.

8.4   If attendance does not improve, follow up activity will take place with the student to seek to bring the attendance up to an acceptable level and/or to refer the student to a range of support services. This may include referral to the Personal Academic Tutor, programme administrator, Student Support, Health and Wellbeing, Finance, and Accommodation.

9.   Assumed Withdrawn

The University will make every effort to support and retain our students, and a range of students' engagement with their studies would be considered. If, despite repeated efforts, the student is deemed to have withdrawn from the University, they will be referred to the Assumed Withdrawn process. The Assumed Withdrawn process is not part of the University's Approach to Attendance but a separate process.

Appendix 2

Exemplar Email Template 1

Dear <name>

We have noticed that there is no record of your attendance at any of your timetabled sessions so far, so I am just emailing you to check that everything is OK.

If you have been attending, your Smartcard may not be working or there may be problems with your timetable, if so please contact the izone <link> so we can get this sorted for you. If you have changed the modules you are studying please get in touch with <link>

We want to make your time at Canterbury Christ Church University as positive as possible, so please do not hesitate to contact me or your Personal Academic Tutor if you have any issues you wish to discuss.

Kind Regards,

Programme Adminstrator

Cc PAT

Exemplar Email Template 2

Dear <name>

I am your Personal Academic Tutor and I am here to help you settle into University and your programme.

We have noticed that there is no record of your attendance at any of your timetabled sessions so far, so I am just emailing you to check that everything is OK.

If you have been attending, your Smartcard may not be working so please contact the izone <link> so this can get this sorted for you.

If you haven't been attending, please get in touch with me so I can support you. Perhaps you need help with your timetable or with Blackboard. If you have been feeling unwell or have other worries or concerns then please let me know.

We want to make your time at Canterbury Christ Church University as positive as possible, so please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any issues you wish to discuss.

Kind Regards,

Personal Academic Tutor

NB As attendance levels alter you may wish to include

- *links to Student Support, Health and Wellbeing*

- *Referral to Programme Director*

- *Referral to Head of School*