

Attendance and Engagement Policy for Students in Receipt of US Federal Loans or Studying in the UK under a Student Route Visa

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1.0	New policy to reflect changed modes of delivery and revisions to compliance with UKVI and USDE expectations	Emma Burchfield (Academic Registrar)	2 nd February 2022	21 st February 2022	February 2023

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1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to:

- I. All students studying at the Royal Veterinary College on a Student Route Visa issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).
- II. All students studying at the Royal Veterinary College who are in receipt of a US Federal Loan from the United States Department of Education (William Ford Direct Loans Programme).
- III. "All students" includes students enrolled on taught undergraduate courses (e.g. BVetMed, BSc, FdSc), taught postgraduate courses (e.g. MSc) and postgraduate research programmes (e.g. MRes, MPhil, PhD) and students undertaking modules at the RVC as part of a collaborative partnership or exchange, including Study Abroad programmes.

1.2 Why do we monitor attendance and engagement with studies?

We are required to demonstrate to UKVI and the United States Department for Education that students enrolled at the RVC who are part of their schemes are adequately engaged with their studies.

1.3 When do we monitor attendance and engagement?

For taught courses, we monitor attendance and engagement during term-time. Term dates for taught courses are available on our [intranet](#). Holiday/vacation periods are not subject to attendance and engagement monitoring.

For postgraduate research programmes, there are no set term-dates, as educational activity will vary according to project and project stage. Your supervisor will agree a schedule of supervisory meetings, educational activity and vacation periods with you. Holiday/vacation periods are not subject to attendance and engagement monitoring.

1.4 Attendance and engagement expectations

Our [General Regulations for Study and Award](#) set general expectations for all students to engage fully with their programme by attending scheduled teaching/accessing online learning materials/engaging with supervisors as appropriate to their course.

For students on a Student Route Visa and students in receipt of a US Federal Loan, there are additional attendance and engagement expectations as follows:

- I. Students on taught courses/modules - to maintain an overall attendance and engagement level of at least 50% of contact points within a term.
- II. Students on postgraduate research programmes - to maintain an overall attendance and engagement level of at least 50% of contact points within a six-week period.
- III. For students on Study Abroad Programmes – to maintain a minimum of monthly contact with their RVC tutor while overseas.
- IV. For students with dissertation/project activity – to maintain a minimum of monthly contact with their dissertation/project supervisor.
- V. For students on research field trips - to maintain a minimum of monthly contact with their RVC tutor/dissertation supervisor.

- VI. For all students - to ensure that they are absent for no more than two consecutive contact points without authorisation.

2. Process

2.1 Monitoring attendance and engagement for students on taught courses of study

Weekly course attendance will be monitored via the taking of registers with student signatures for timetabled events, including lectures, seminars or directed learning sessions. Wherever possible, we will monitor physical attendance in small group sessions such as directed learning sessions or labs as these activities cannot readily be engaged with via digital means.

For interns and residents on the MVetMed course, engagement will be monitored by supervisors in the clinical environment with alert to the Graduate School of any unauthorised absence.

For students on IMR rotations, course engagement will be monitored by supervisors and rotation leads in the clinical environment with alert to the Course Support administrator of any unauthorised absence.

Submission of assessments and taking of examinations will also be used to demonstrate continued course engagement.

2.2 Monitoring attendance and engagement for students on postgraduate research programmes

The Graduate School will monitor attendance at supervisory meetings and scheduled training events using PGR Manager.

Additionally, supervisors must inform the [Research Degrees Officer](#) if they have been unable to contact their student within any six-week period of expected educational activity.

2.3 Monitoring engagement for students on Study Abroad Programmes Overseas

The RVC tutor will inform the Course Support administrator if they have been unable to contact their student within any six-week period of expected educational activity while overseas.

2.4 Monitoring engagement for students with dissertation/project activity

The dissertation/project supervisor will inform the Course Support administrator if they have been unable to contact their student within any six-week period of expected educational activity.

2.5 Monitoring engagement for students on research field trips

The RVC Tutor/dissertation supervisor will inform the Course Support administrator or Graduate School as appropriate if they have been unable to contact their student within any six-week period of expected educational activity.

2.6 Absence and other difficulties

Students may be unable to attend timetabled teaching events or other scheduled contact points for good reason – for example, sickness or bereavement. It is important that we know, in advance wherever possible, when students are unable to engage with their studies so that we can provide additional support to assist future engagement.

For students on taught courses, further information is available in the General RVC Handbook on Learn under the section “Absence and other difficulties”. Students should use the relevant forms with to inform the RVC as soon as possible if they are unable to engage with their studies.

All other students should use the procedures outlined in the relevant Code of Conduct (for postgraduate research students, interns and residents) to let the appropriate team know as soon as possible of requests to be absent from study.

RVC staff approving absences for students must make the Course Support Administrator or Graduate School as appropriate aware of the approved absence so that it can be accounted for when assessing the students’ engagement with their studies.

2.7 Deferral of assessment or examinations

Students may be unable to submit assessments or take examinations for good reason – for example, sickness or bereavement. It is important that we know, in advance wherever possible, when students are unable to engage with their assessments so that we can provide additional support to assist future engagement.

Students should follow the “Deferral of Assessment” procedure as outlined on their LEARN course pages (taught course students) or relevant Code of Conduct (for postgraduate research students, interns and residents) to let the appropriate team know as soon as possible of requests to be absent from study.

2.8 Consequences of non-attendance or non-engagement

In the first instance, students who do not meet the attendance and engagement requirements will receive a letter inviting them to contact the Graduate School (postgraduate research students, interns and residents) or Course Support administrator (all other students) within three working days. The student will be reminded of the importance of remaining engaged with their studies and the student referred to other teams as necessary to provide further support to enable future engagement (e.g. their tutor, the Advice Centre or Study Skills teams).

Students who do not respond to this invitation will be required to meet with the Academic Registrar, or their delegate, to account for both their non-engagement and lack of response. If the student is unable to adequately account for their non-engagement and/or provide sufficient assurance re: future sustained course engagement they will be referred to Student Performance and Development to discuss their future studies and continued enrolment at the RVC.

Any student who fails to respond to the meeting request may be withdrawn from their course/programme at the RVC.

Any student studying at the RVC on a Student Route Visa who fails to make contact with the RVC for a period of 60 days will be withdrawn from their course/programme. RVC sponsorship of their studies will be withdrawn, UKVI informed and the student’s visa curtailed, resulting in the requirement for the student to leave the UK. Withdrawal of sponsorship of a Student Route Visa may adversely impact *any* future entry to the UK or UK visa application.

For students receiving US Federal Loans who fail to meet our attendance and engagement expectations without good reason, the RVC will inform the US Department of Education that the student has not met attendance requirements and any loan funds due for return will be

reverted to them. Failure to meet the attendance threshold may also result in the student being withdrawn from the course/programme and UKVI informed where appropriate (according to UK immigration status) as described above.

3 Confidentiality and record keeping

3.1 Confidentiality

We will limit the sharing of individual students' attendance and engagement data to those necessary to monitor course/programme engagement and as required for audit purposes by either UKVI or US Federal Loans. We may report aggregate and anonymised engagement data to relevant RVC committees or external bodies as required by law.

We will limit the sharing of individual students' absence or deferral requests to those necessary to consider the requests, action the outcome or provide the required support to assist student re-engagement. We may report aggregate and anonymised absence or deferral data to relevant RVC committees or external bodies as required by law.

3.2 Record keeping

Student engagement data and absence records will be held securely until one year after student exit from the RVC.

4. Partner institutions

4.1 What is a partner institution?

In order to provide educational and other student experiences the RVC may partner with other Higher Education Providers (HEP) or organisations. Examples of these include joint and franchised degree programmes and partnerships with veterinary practices to provide clinical training.

4.2 How is attendance monitored between partner institutions?

The RVC has a responsibility to support our partners to fulfil their UKVI Student Route Visa sponsorship and US Federal Loan duties. Therefore if a student undertaking study at the RVC fails to meet RVC course/programme/module engagement requirements as outlined above we will inform the partner institution so that they can consider next steps and further action.

We also ask that our partners who help us deliver educational experiences for RVC students share course/programme/module engagement data on request and alert us if they believe that an RVC student undertaking educational activity with them is not engaging with study so that we can consider if further intervention or action is required.

5. Further information and support

5.1 RVC and RVCSU support services

The RVC understands that studying in the UK may be challenging, particularly for international students. We want students to feel confident and supported so that they can fully engage with their RVC studies and successfully complete them. We have a range of services and teams as listed below to provide this support. Resources and appointments can also be accessed from the [Student Hub on LEARN](#)

- I. The [Advice Centre](#) provides general advice on student issues, counselling and mental health support. They also have a dedicated International Student Advisor and a Disability Advisor.
- II. The [Study Skills team](#) support students to maximise their learning by finding effective techniques that help them to success in their university life.
- III. [Student Success Coaches](#) provide coaching support from RVC alumni to help students deal with specific issues or acquire new coping skills.
- IV. Student tutors/supervisors provide pastoral support and sign posting to key information and services.
- V. The [Chaplaincy](#) offers non-judgemental support to deal with issues that arise through work or study.
- VI. [Report and Support](#) allows students to report a variety of issues and access appropriate support as part of our commitment to a providing a safe and inclusive community.
- VII. The [RVC Students' Union](#) provides support independent of the RVC and has dedicated welfare and international reps