Policy & Procedure	Student Attendance and Progression Procedure
Policy Area	Student Life and Skills
Version Number	03
Approving Committee	SMT
Date of Approval	27 August 2019
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	23 August 2016
Date of Review	21 August 2019
Responsible Senior Manager	Assistant Principal Student Life and Skills

History of Amendments

Date	Version/Pages/Sections Affected	Summary of changes
January 2017	Version 01. Section 2.	Insertion of Long Term Absence
June 2017	Version 02. Section 2.	Further guidance on procedure for notification.
August 2019	Version 03x, ALL	Review of arrangements for self-certificate and authorised absence

Policy Statement

This procedure sets out the requirements in relation to student attendance and progression.

Students are expected to take responsibility for own learning which includes attending classes regularly, punctually and making a commitment to undertake coursework, assignments and assessments to an agreed timescale and standard.

The policy is based on the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Guidance published June 2019 for Session 2019-20

(http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd092019/SFCGD092019_Fund_management_and_audit_information_2019-20.pdf)

Equality Statement

The College is committed to providing equal opportunities to ensure its students, staff, customers and visitors are treated equally regardless of gender reassignment, race, religion or belief; disability; age; marriage and civil partnerships; pregnancy and maternity; sexual orientation; sex.

Please note this document is available in other formats, to request another format please email info@wcs.ac.uk

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Student Attendance and Progression Procedure

1. Student Attendance

Good attendance and punctuality are key factors in progress, attainment, successful outcomes and employability. The College expects students to attend their timetabled classes, to be punctual and to make good progress in coursework and assessment.

2. Absence

The College recognises that a student's personal circumstances may impact on their attendance, punctuality, progress and achievement. The student may become unwell or have difficulties in attending due to wider circumstances.

The student, where possible, should engage with the College during periods of absence by maintaining regular contact with relevant staff. Where this is not possible, a representative (e.g. family member) may keep the College advised on the progress of the absence.

Described below is how the College records absence, absence types, the responsibilities of students and staff, and intervention measures.

2.1. Absence (Recorded on register as mark 'A')

The student will be marked absent if they do not attend a timetabled class and there is no agreed appropriate alternative register mark. This shall be the default mark for non-attendance and consider by the College to be an unauthorised absence.

2.2. Authorised Absence (Recorded on register as attendance mark 'X')

Authorised-absence is a short-term absence agreed between the student and a member of curriculum staff on the basis it is:

- a reasonable request,
- will not adversely affect progress,
- is usually no more than **one** teaching week (or the equivalent) in any given instance, and

- the frequency of such requests by the student is not deemed by the College to be excessive

Examples of authorised-absences include:

- Bereavement
- Caring responsibilities – as agreed through the 'Student Carers Personal Support Plan'
- Community Service
- Funeral
- House move
- Ill health, or ill health of child or dependent
- Jury Duty
- Medical or dental appointments for self, or a child or adult who is dependent on the student
- Religious Holidays (but not other holidays)
- To attend an appointment where scope is limited for the student to this schedule outside timetabled classes (e.g. children's hearing, court, driving test, interview, social work, Students' Association event)
- Other appropriate reason as agreed by the curriculum staff member

2.3. Self-authorised Absence Certificate (Recorded on register as attendance mark 'C')

An unplanned or emergency absence may be covered using a 'Self-authorised Absence Certificate'. Each certificate covers up to one full day of absence.

A certificate can be submitted in advance of the absence, or after the absence has occurred; but must be submitted before the funding period cut-off date off date. Click **here** for funding payment period dates. Due to system limitations, a certificate cannot be submitted on the day of absence (on this date, the attendance register is assigned to the subject lecturer to allow for the mark-up of attendance, progress and results).

The number of Self-authorised Absence Certificates allocated to a student is determined by the mode of study (e.g. full time, part time) and the duration of the course in weeks (e.g. 36 weeks).

36-weeks, full-time - allocation of Self Authorised Absence Certificates shall be as follows:

- Up to 5 certificates may be used in Block 1
- Up to 5 certificates may be used in Block 2
- Up to 5 certificates may be used in Block 3

There is no 'rolling forward' allowance – the maximum of 5 self-certificates ends at the corresponding block date end

For a student studying a course shorter than 36 weeks they would have access to 0.4166 certificate allocation per week of study, this should be rounded up to the nearest whole number. Based on the duration of their programme.

- Link to Self-authorised absence certificate request form - https://webapps.westcollegescotland.ac.uk/studentinfo/home/selfcert

  Username: studentNumber@live.wcs.ac.uk

  Password: college network logon password

2.4. Short-term Medical Absence (Recorded on register as attendance mark 'D')

A short-term medical absence shall be no more than **two** consecutive teaching weeks. Each instance must be covered by a medical certificate and be posted into the secure box at Student Advisory Services.

Processing shall be completed by MIS Online Services within ten working days from the date of submission. The attendance mark for the covered dates will be updated to show the value 'D' on the attendance register(s). MIS Online Services will notify the Student Funding Department of the update where a date falls outside of the payment period cut off.

Note: handwritten amendments or annotations on documentation cannot be accepted.

2.5. Long-term Medical Absence (Recorded on register as attendance mark 'D')

A medical absence greater than **two** consecutive teaching weeks will be considered as a long-term medical absence. This will become a managed absence with the requirement for regular dialogue (see section 2.6).

The student is responsible for ensuring medical certificates are submitted to cover the date range of the absence.

Note: handwritten dates or annotations on medical certificates cannot be accepted.

2.6. Management of Long-term Absence

If an absence exceeds **two** consecutive teaching weeks, it will become a long-term absence. This section applies to **ALL** forms of long-term absence, including long-term medical absence.

It is the responsibility of the student (or their representative) to engage with the College and to keep the CQL (or their nominee) informed of the progress of the absence and, as appropriate, to complete and submit agreed work on time.

It is the responsibility of the CQL (or their nominee) to continuously review the absence, set work where appropriate and maintain effective communication throughout the absence.

Where practical, the CQL (or their nominee) shall keep the student advised of the work currently being undertaken, facilitate support via the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), as well as any other appropriate means. The extent to which this is practical will depend upon the type of learning required. These supportive measures are likely to be less effective when the learning is experiential (i.e. skill acquisition), or where group work plays a significant contributory factor.

The CQL (or their nominee) should also consider the effect of the absence on progress and achievement. Although not prescriptive, the following are likely to be the characteristics and consequences associated with sustained periods of absence:

- Missed learning opportunities
- Missed experiential learning, including placement activities
- Missed opportunities to undertake group work, project work and networking opportunities
- Missed assessments, including remediation

The College would hope to support the student through their absence, however, as time progresses, it may become necessary to consider withdrawal from the course. This is most likely to occur when progress cannot be sustained, or is not being sustained.

2.6.1. Interventions

If an absence **is less than** three consecutive teaching weeks and the student has returned to college, an attainment action plan will be developed and agreed, noting how and when any outstanding work [including assessments] will be achieved, and review dates agreed.

If an absence **is three consecutive teaching weeks or more**, where appropriate, the student should be invited for a review meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to review the absence, current progress and how best to support a return. The student should be advised that he/she can be accompanied to the meeting.

Outcomes of the meeting will be either Option 1, Option 2 or Option 3:

Option 1

a) An attainment action plan is agreed, noting how and when any outstanding work [including assessments] will be achieved, and review dates agreed, and

b) The student returns to the College on an agreed date.

Option 2

a) The curriculum team are of the view that the absence is not adversely impacting progress, and

b) A continuation of the absence is agreed and the next review date is set.

Option 3

a) The student is notified that a withdrawal is being considered - the grounds for consideration of withdrawal should be provided;

b) The student is given the opportunity to present any relevant mitigating circumstances within 5 working days;

c) The CQL is responsible for making a reasonable and fair decision based on the information presented.

Important actions for intervention

The notification of the meeting should be sent by both email and letter

The correspondence should clearly reflect the reason for the meeting

The opportunity to be accompanied should be made clear

After the meeting the outcomes should be confirmed by letter

The letter, in the cases of withdrawal, should be signed by both the CQL and Head of Sector, and sent to the student's home address within 10 working days. The letter shall include the effective date of withdrawal – which shall be the last date of attendance (including certificated medical absence) and result for completed units should be input as soon as possible

- Notes of the discussion for either option should be taken and retained in line with GDPR.

2.7. Holidays during College term time

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Guidance stipulates that the Student Funding department cannot make payments to students for holidays during term time. The exceptions are as follows:

- Religious holidays should be recorded by the CQL (or their nominee) as an Authorised Absence.
- Campus or College closure or significant disruption resulting from an event such as adverse weather or industrial action shall be centrally recorded on all affected attendance registers as 'H' by the MIS Enhancement Manager or Head of Student Services.

2.8. Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave

While the College wishes to support those students requiring maternity, paternity or adoption leave, it cannot offer the same conditions as it offers to its staff. There is no statutory entitlement for students to receive payment for maternity leave, and long periods of absence are linked to lack of curriculum progress. If a student is likely to be absent for a period of any longer than 3 weeks, a student progress meeting must take place (Section 2.6). Additional guidance is available in the College's Student Pregnancy and Maternity Guidance.

2.9. Unacceptable levels of attendance

Unacceptable levels of attendance will be managed through the College's Student Behaviour Policy.

3. Care-experienced students

Our college is a Corporate Parent to Care-experienced students up to 26 years of age – but we also recognise the need for support extends beyond our statutory duties.

We define Care-experienced as: 'anyone who has been, or is currently, in care or from a looked-after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings, such as residential care, foster care, formal kinship care (e.g. living with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, other family member), looked after at home with a supervision requirement'.

We recognise the particular challenges faced by many of our Care-experienced students and the impact that barriers can have on attendance, progress and outcome.

The Directorate for Student Life and Skills offers all Care-experienced students a 'Named Contact' at each campus. The 'Named Contact' is an information conduit for the student, curriculum team, support services, the Student Funding Department, other Corporate Parents and external services.

The CQL (or their nominee) will develop, agree and maintain an Attainment Action Plan through discussion with the student and their 'Named Contact'. This will take into consideration the student's wider personal circumstances, any reasonable adjustments, support requirements and other relevant factors to best ensure positive learning experiences, improve life-chances, sustained progress, successful outcomes and onwards progression. The requirements and responsibilities of the student will also be captured within the plan. The plan will be reviewed at regular intervals in partnership with the student.

4. Student Punctuality

Punctuality is an important aspect of employability and, as our courses are designed to prepare students for future employment or to support students currently in employment, it is expected that students will attend class on time.

Student punctuality will be recorded on registers and this information may be used when asked to provide references. Persistent late-coming and/or leaving early, for no legitimate reason, will be dealt with under the College's Student Behaviour Policy.

Some students, due to their disability or wider personal circumstances, may have lateness and/or leaving early approved as a reasonable adjustment on a case by case basis. This includes students who are Care-experienced or carers. If a student requires an adjustment, they should raise the matter with their CQL (or their nominee e.g. Guidance Tutor). An Achievement Action Plan will be devised and regularly reviewed as part of a learning agreement should the arrangement be more than short-term.

5. Student Progress

Curriculum teams will continuously monitor student progress and achievement. Students can expect to be given regular feedback. Students may also monitor their attendance and achievement using MyDay (mobile app or website).

Action should be taken by the curriculum team, at the earliest opportunity, where it becomes clear that a student is not progressing satisfactorily or not fully engaging with their studies. A meeting should take place between the student and the curriculum team to establish reasons. If the student is being supported by a college support service, the CQL (or their nominee) should ask a representative from the service to attend the meeting. An attainment action plan should be drawn up which will detail any support requirements and responsibilities. This plan should be reviewed at regular intervals and action taken as appropriate.

Where it is clear that the student is not making every effort to achieve, the matter should be dealt with under the College's Student Behaviour Policy. This includes attending but not progressing.

5.1. Consideration for progression and engagement

Curriculum teams should ensure that they have made suitable, reasonable adjustments to enable continuation of learning for the student. The team should consider:

- How accessible are learning resources and other materials to support continued participation
- The appropriateness of communication methods, for example, via social media platforms

- Whether all reasonable adjustments have been made to ensure the student has the opportunity to continue engaging in learning

Curriculum Teams should consider whether the student has:

- Kept up to date with learning by obtaining lecture notes, online resources or other learning materials from college staff
- Demonstrated that they have engaged in independent study to keep up to date with their learning
- Handed in assignments or classwork
- Continued to meet their learning objectives
- Engaged with the college in any other way which demonstrates that they are continuing to participate in their studies

6. Student Funding Department

Timeous input and updating of attendance marks is critical in ensuring that students receive payment of funds on the expected date.

The Student Funding Department will use system generated reports on register attendance data to make payments to students in arrears, as follows:

- Reporting and implementation of week 1 and 2 attendance data takes place on the Tuesday of week 3 to ensure payment reaches the student's bank account by Friday of week 3.
- Students will receive an email notification on the Tuesday of week 3 if payment is being withheld

The Student Funding Department will not run another full attendance report after a reporting period has passed, therefore it is essential that if an attendance mark is updated after the Monday of week 3, the staff member updating the attendance notifies StudentFunding@wcs.ac.uk with the Student Number and date(s) affected by update.

The Student Funding Department are the end users of registers for reporting purposes only and cannot make updates to registers.

Notifications of updated attendance before midday on the Wednesday will be processed as a priority to best ensure that payment reaches the student's bank on the expected date.

Notifications received after midday on the Wednesday will result in a delay in payment.

7. Register Attendance Marks, Use and Impact on Funding

Value	Description	Impact on funding	Staff
A	**Absent** - see Section 2.1	*Student Funding will withhold payment*	*Lecturer*
P	**Present** – used to record the student as in attendance	*No impact*	*Lecturer*
L	**Present but Arrived Late** – used to record that the student arrived after the start time	*No impact*	*Lecturer*
E	**Present but Left Early** – used to record that the student left before the end time	*No impact*	*Lecturer*
S	**Self-Directed Study** – used to record the student as undertaking self-directed study (e.g. VLE or research)	*No impact*	*Lecturer*
X	**Authorised Absence** – see Section 2.2	*No impact if the mark is entered before the Student Funding Department run their report. If the mark was updated after, the Curriculum Staff member must email Student Funding Department with the student number and dates to be reviewed. Payment may be delayed.*	*Lecturer, Guidance Tutor, CQL*

Value	Description	Impact on funding	Staff
D	**Medical Certificate** see Section 2.4, 2.5	*No impact if the mark is entered before the Student Funding Department run their report. If the mark was updated after, MIS Online Service must email Student Funding Department with the student number and dates to be reviewed. Payment may be delayed.*	***MIS Online Services***
C	**Self-authorised Absence Certificate** – see Section 2.3	*No impact if the mark is entered before the Student Funding Department run their report. If the mark was updated after, this will not be detected. The student must then contact the Student Funding Department to request a re-check of the attendance data.*	***Student***
H	Exceptional Event that closes a campus or limits normal college activity (e.g. adverse weather, industrial action)	*No impact*	***MIS*** *(bulk update by Senior Staff)*
	BLANK – the register has not been completed	*Student Funding will withhold payment if this is an attendance register*	***Lecturer***

Equality Impact Assessment

West College Scotland

Name of policy/procedure/decision:

Student Attendance and Progress Procedure – A Student Guide.

Provide a brief summary of the aims of the policy/procedure/decision and main activities:

This Guide sets out the requirements in relation to student attendance and how to report and record absences. It also outlines requirements in relation to student progress.

Assessed By: Clare Fraser   **Date:** 23 August 2016

This stage establishes whether a policy, procedure or decision will have a differential impact <u>from an equality perspective</u> on people who share protected characteristics or whether it is "equality neutral" (i.e. have no effect either positive or negative).

The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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1. Who will benefit from this (students/staff/stakeholders)? Is there likely to be a positive impact on people who share protected characteristics, and if so, how? <u>Or</u> is it clear at this stage that it will be equality "neutral"? I.e. will not have a differential impact on any equality group/s?

Good attendance is a highly relevant factor in student attainment. The College recognises that there will be instances where 100% attendance is not possible, and this Guide should benefit all staff and students in understanding the processes which should be followed.

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2. Is there likely to be an adverse impact on people who share protected characteristics? If so, who may be affected and why? <u>Or</u> is it clear at this stage that it will be equality "neutral"?

It is not likely that this Guide will have a negative impact on people who share protected characteristics. The reason for this is that the Guide anticipates that personal circumstances may affect attendance and makes reasonable allowances for this.

For example, students may self-certify for religious holidays, medical appointments, antenatal appointments and caring responsibilities. This should reduce the potential for negative impact on people as a result of their religion or belief, disability, and/or pregnancy and maternity. Gender is also relevant in terms of self-certification, as it is known that more female students than male students are primarily responsible for childcare.

References are made throughout the Guide to ensure that accommodation is made for students with disability. For example, the Guide notes that lateness may be approved as a

reasonable adjustment on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, the Guide states that the curriculum team should make reasonable adjustments for students whose attendance has been affected by his or her disability in order to accommodate their attendance.

3. What action will you take to ensure that you are monitoring the impact of this Procedure?

Any complaints about the implementation of this process will be monitored. We also monitor student retention and achievement rates with reference to protected characteristics and take action to address potential equality issues.