

Policy & Procedure	Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure
Policy Area	Student
Version Number	04
Approving Committee	SMT
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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
June 2020	Version 04 Section 1-5, 7	Shift to attendance and student engagement

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 2020 for Session 2020-21

(http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd082020/SFCGD082020_Fund_management_and_audit_information_2020-21.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 Engagement Procedure

West College Scotland operates an attendance and engagement policy that is designed to support our students. Continued financial support from Bursary, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Childcare funding is not based on attendance alone but a combination including continued engagement, progress and conduct.

1. Student Attendance and Engagement

Colleges are not expected to operate a 100% attendance requirement. Bursary awards should be made on the basis of students continuing to engage appropriately in their studies, this should be continuously monitored by the course team. Where a register mark is deemed to show a student is no longer continuing to engage appropriately student funding payments maybe withheld.

Examples of student engagement in the wider context include (but are not limited to) situations where the student has:

- Maintained contact with relevant college staff and has explained the reasons for absence and the steps they are taking to engage.
- 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.

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

2. Absence

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

The student is expected to engage with the College during periods of absence by maintaining regular contact with relevant staff. The student is expected to take responsibility and ownership with the support of the College where wider circumstances impact on attendance, engagement or achievement.

The college will seek to jointly agree with the student a personal support plan as appropriate, around the student's personal circumstances that may impact on their attendance at College.

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

2.1. Absence, student is NOT engaged in study or progressing (Recorded on register as mark 'A')

The student will be marked absent if they do not attend a timetabled class, with no engagement or appropriate progression and there is no agreed appropriate alternative register mark. This shall be the default mark for non-attendance and considered 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

Emergency absence should be notified as soon as possible to the student’s lecturer to avoid an absence mark being recorded.

2.3. 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. If your absence is longer than one week and is for medical reasons, then you should take a photograph of your Medical Certificate and send this to OnlineServices@wcs.ac.uk . Please include both sides of your medical note and include your Student Reference Number in your email. Do not write on your Medical Certificate. Where possible, please send this from your Student Email Account.

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.

2.4. 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 Curriculum Quality Leader (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, a Student Personal Support Plan (appendix 1) 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) A Student Personal Support Plan (appendix 1) 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, we 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 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 a Student Personal Support Plan (appendix 1) 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. Unacceptable attendance and engagement

Attendance and engagement 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 and engage in their study.

Student attendance and engagement will be recorded on registers and this information may be used when asked to provide references. Persistent lack of engagement and poor attendance, for no legitimate reason, will be dealt with under the [College's Student Behaviour Policy](#). **CQLs will be provided with a weekly report on students who may be present but their engagement is deemed to be at an unsatisfactory level. (Recorded on register as mark 'PN') (also not section 5)**

Some students, due to their disability or wider personal circumstances, may have approved reasonable adjustment in relation to their attendance and engagement 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). A Student Personal Support Plan (appendix 1) 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](#)).

Student progress refers to how well a student has progressed in their learning from their starting point. This is important because the way we track students and set targets for them influences teaching and learning practice in the classroom, contributes to lecturer's judgements of student performance and is used to judge whether a student is performing well or not.

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 representation

from the courses 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. A Student Personal Support Plan (appendix 1) 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 the student is not making every effort to achieve, the [College's Student Behaviour Policy](#) should be considered. 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, course team must record evidence of discussions with the student and the support which has been offered/put in place :

- 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 can 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 student is NOT engaged in study or progressing - see Section 2.1	<i>Student Funding will withhold payment</i>	Lecturer
PE	Present and Engaging – used to record the student as in attendance and engaged in study (physical or virtual)	<i>No impact</i>	Lecturer
AE	Absent and Engaging - – used to record the student as undertaking self-directed study	<i>No impact</i>	Lecturer
PN	Present but not engaging or progressing – used to record a lack of engagement/progression – flag for additional guidance support – weekly report to CQLs	<i>No impact</i>	Lecturer
X	Authorised Absence – see Section 2.2	<i>No impact if the mark is entered before the Student Funding Department run their report.</i>	Lecturer, Guidance Tutor, CQL

Value	Description	Impact on funding	Staff
D	Medical Certificate see Section 2.4, 2.5	<i>No impact if the mark is entered before the Student Funding Department run their report.</i>	MIS Online Services
H	Exceptional Event that closes a campus or limits normal college activity (e.g. adverse weather, industrial action)	<i>No impact</i>	MIS Enhancement Manager (global update)
	BLANK – the register has not been completed	<i>Student Funding will withhold payment</i>	Lecturer

Appendix 1 - STUDENT PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

The **Student Personal Support Plan** should be completed by the student, their Course Leader or Guidance Tutor. The student may want to invite others to assist in the formation of their plan (e.g. family member, Carers Advisor, Social Worker, student rep). A copy of the plan should be retained by the student and the Course Leader/Guidance Tutor. This is a sensitive document and must be held in secure location. On expiry, this document must be disposed of through secure waste.

Student
Number

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Academic
Year

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Campus

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Date

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Course Leader

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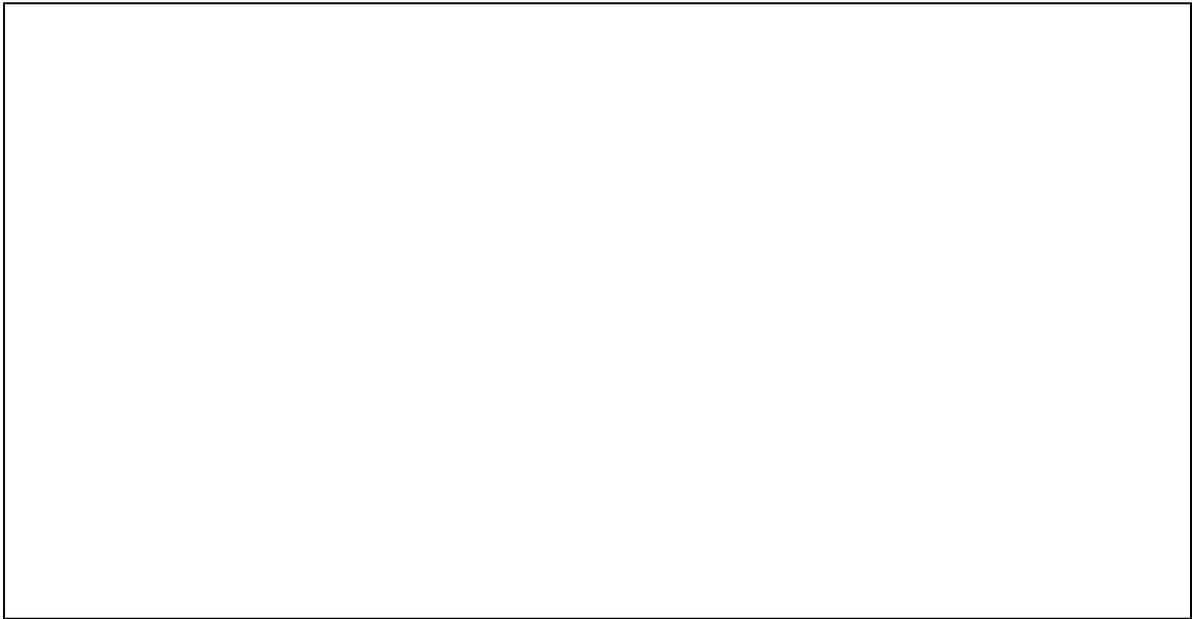
Guidance
Tutor

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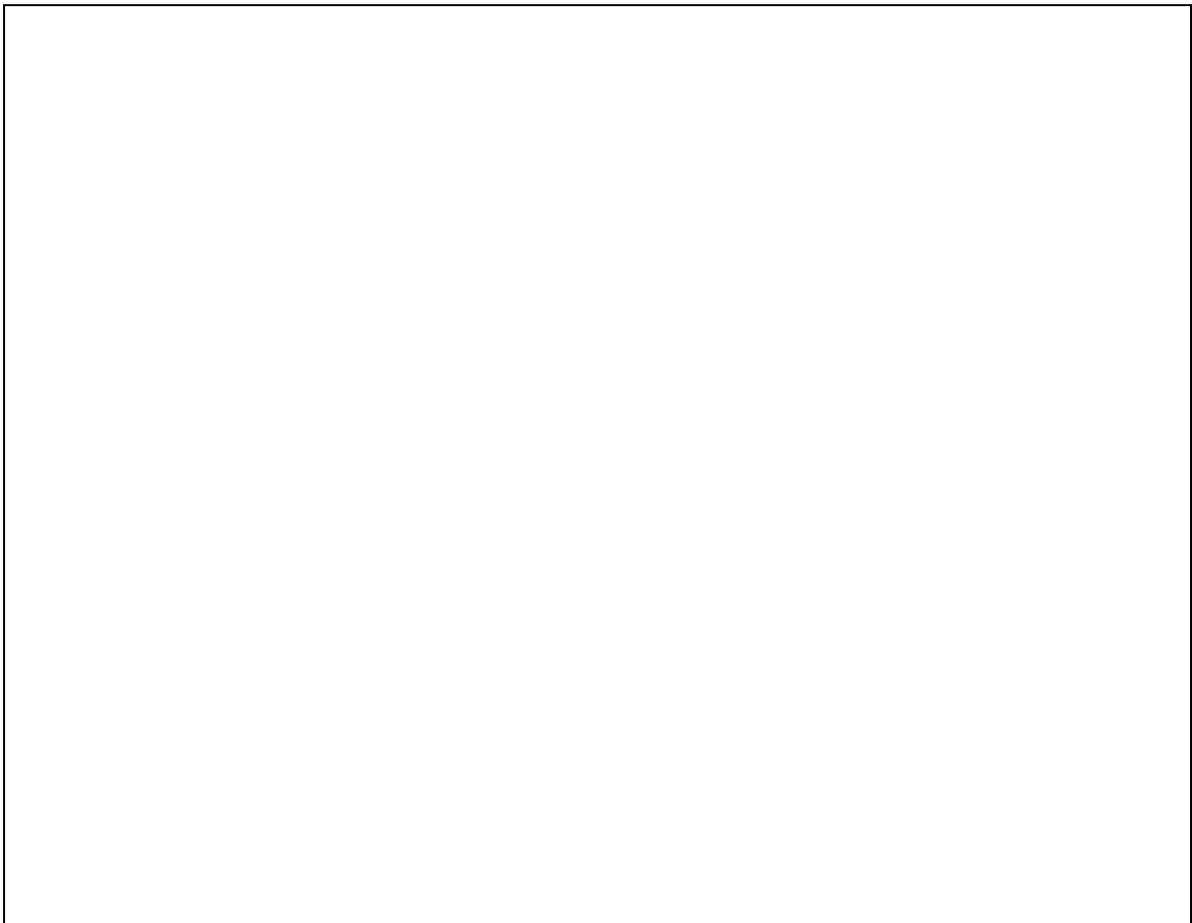
1. Briefly describe how the student's engagement has had an adverse impact on their studies (e.g. attendance, timekeeping, wellbeing, coursework, assessment or any other factors)

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2. Arrangements requested by the student to support the student in their studies:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write down any requested arrangements to support their studies.

3. Arrangements approved by the Course Leader / Guidance Tutor to support the student in their studies:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write down any approved arrangements to support their studies.

4. Has the student been made aware of other support services?

- Students Association Carers Officer
- Student Counselling Service
- Sanctuary
- Student Counselling Service
- Student Wellbeing Advisor
- Enabling Services

Other: _____

Plan Review Dates

The purpose of this is to ensure the plan is being followed and achievable, providing to amend if necessary. Failure to follow this support plan may result in a student disciplinary procedure. The student should speak to their Course Leader or Guidance Tutor if their situation changes or if any issue arises between review dates. The following dates will be set by the Course Leader or Guidance Tutor to ensure that the plan remains current and should be set at on a regular basis to ensure support plan is being followed:

Date 1: _____ Date 2: _____ Date
3: _____

Student signature	Date	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse;"><tr><td style="width: 15px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 15px; height: 20px;"></td></tr></table>							
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Course Leader signature	Date	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse;"><tr><td style="width: 15px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 15px; height: 20px;"></td></tr></table>							
.....									
The agreed expiry date of this document shall be (if not superseded before):	Date	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse;"><tr><td style="width: 15px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 15px; height: 20px;"></td></tr></table>							

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy/procedure/decision: Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure

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:** 5 September 2019

This stage establishes whether a policy, procedure or decision will have a differential impact from an equality perspective 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.

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? Or 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.

2. Is there likely to be an adverse impact on people who share protected characteristics? If so, who may be affected and why? Or 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.