Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 15 - Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance

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1.   Introduction

1.1   This Code should be considered when there is unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance on the part of a student. Staff should also consider whether the difficulties the student is having may mean that addressing problems under a different procedure may be more appropriate. As such, staff should also consider consulting the following:

1.1.1   Health Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedures (HWSSP) – Exeter and Penryn Campuses

1.1.2   Guidance on Supporting Students with Mental Health Difficulties

1.1.3   Fitness to Practise Procedures

1.2   If a Faculty (or delegated School) believes, at any point throughout this procedure, that it may be appropriate to refer a student to one of the procedures listed above, these should initially take precedence over this Code. If a student is referred to one of the procedures above, action under this Code may be suspended. For those instances where Health Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedures are enacted, students will receive appropriate support for the affected areas of academic work. If further

progress, engagement or attendance issues should arise subsequently which are not related to those difficulties already being addressed by the Health Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedures, these should be handled under the Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance procedure.

1.3   For further advice on which procedure should be applied, academic colleagues with concerns about a student's unsatisfactory engagement, progress or attendance should in the first instance contact the relevant (taught or postgraduate research) support team, who may escalate queries as needed to:

1.3.1   The Student Cases Office on 01392 722202 or at Student Cases Mail

1.3.2   Taught programmes: The Education Policy Team

1.3.3   Postgraduate research programmes: Doctoral College Quality Development Team

1.3.4   Where the concerns in question point to a matter which the Health Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedures or Fitness to Practise Procedures might be best placed to address please also see the contact points for advice listed in those procedures in the first instance.

1.3.5   Where there are queries with regard to the monitoring of students with visas please contact the Immigration Compliance team for advice – Visa Advice.

1.4   Ordinance VI stipulates that students who are registered on programmes of study leading towards the awards of the University shall be required to be in attendance during academic terms, to be present at classes, and other assigned academic activities including examinations, to attend all key contact points that may be applicable to their status, to submit work when required, and otherwise to fulfil the academic requirements of their programme of study as stipulated by the academic unit concerned. A student who fails to satisfy these requirements may be reported to the Faculty (or delegated School) concerned.

1.5   This Code of Good Practice sets out the procedures through which unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance for all students (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) should be handled.

1.6   A flow diagram outlining the overall process has been provided to support the procedure outlined below and can be found in Annex 8: USPEA Process Flowchart.

2.   Principles

2.1   Concerns about student progress, engagement or attendance must be communicated with the student as early as possible in order for them to address the concerns in a timely manner.

2.2   Concerns should also be clearly outlined at each stage, with clear, achievable targets set for students to enable them to return to satisfactory progress and engagement or attendance with their study.

2.3   There should be an ongoing, supportive and informative conversation with students about their progress, engagement or attendance.

2.4   Concerns with a student's progress, engagement or attendance may be best picked up in discussion with a member of staff, whether they are in academic, wellbeing or professional services job families.

2.5   The Faculty (or delegated School) will look to ensure that where it might be appropriate for the University to offer extra support to a student, the student is made aware of that. However, should it be determined that a warning is no longer appropriate, a record should be added to the student's file to this effect.

2.6   Warnings should be issued early enough to enable further action to be taken in good time. This may mean, for example, giving the student enough time to attend and not miss another contact point, or where there is a reasonable expectation that they can submit any required work.

2.7   Prior to warnings being sent, the person preparing the letter should consult with the relevant Welfare Team and the student's Pastoral Mentor or Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor) or Supervisor /Pastoral Tutor (PGR) as appropriate, to check

whether they are aware of any circumstances that should pause the initiation or escalation of this procedure.

3.   Responsibilities

3.1   Responsibilities may be delegated at each stage as per Appendix 1. No further delegation of authority may occur unless explicitly specified within this document. Each stage of the policy must be considered by an independent member of staff who has had no previous involvement with the case.

4.   Identifying unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance

4.1   **Taught Students**

4.1.1   Unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance is usually identified when a student has not submitted assessments or engaged in scheduled academic activities.

4.1.2   **'Attendance'** encompasses the activity of being present, whether on campus or on-line, at scheduled synchronous learning, teaching and other activities as required by the module and/or programme. This **may** include:

a. Physical attendance at face-to-face scheduled teaching and/or other learning events as required by the programmes (e.g. lectures, seminars, laboratory sessions, tutorials, fieldtrips and examinations).

b. Virtual attendance at synchronous teaching and/or other learning events as required by the programmes (e.g. video conferencing of live sessions, synchronous participation in an online forum and on-line examinations.

4.1.3   **'Engagement'** encompasses the activity of engaging with, and participating in guided independent or group study activities, assessment and feedback, and any other activities required by the module and/or programme. Such activities **may** include:

a. Submitting formative and/or summative assessment;

b. Accessing and/or interacting asynchronously with online learning materials, including viewing recap recordings and completing tasks in virtual learning environments;

c. Undertaking placements or study abroad; or

d. Attending meetings with their Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor).

4.1.4 Engagement has been defined differently from attendance because not all forms of engagement require students to be present, either physically or virtually, at a particular time and place.

4.2 **Postgraduate Research Students**

4.2.1 Unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance is usually identified when a student has not met the requirements laid out under Responsibilities of Students in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Code of Good Practice - Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students, as specified in the Faculty (or delegated School)'s own Code of Practice or as identified by their supervisory team where agreements specified in the supervisory agreement have not been met, and might arise from supervisory termly progress review meetings.

4.2.2 **Unsatisfactory progress,** engagement or attendance may be identified when a student's progress is considered as part as of the Annual Monitoring Review process as set out in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 7: Code of Good Practice: Annual Monitoring Review, or as a result of action under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Statement of Procedures: Periods of Registration and Changes to Registration for Postgraduate Research students, relating to an unsuccessful application to upgrade from MByRes or MPhil to Doctoral Study, late application to transfer to continuation status, or where a programme extension is requested.

4.2.3 '**Attendance**' encompasses the activity of being present, whether on campus or on-line, at scheduled learning, training and other research activities as required.

This may include (but is not limited to):

a. Virtual attendance, to monthly (or pro-rata) supervisory meetings, research seminars, training, etc.

b. Physical attendance on campus a minimum of once per month (or pro-rata for part-time) for students who are registered on a campus-based programme (i.e., not a Distance Learning Programme).

c. Physical attendance at fieldwork or laboratory sessions.

4.2.4 '**Engagement**' encompasses the activity of engaging with and participating in any other activities required for successful completion of your research programme. Such activities may include (but are not limited to):

   a. Submitting work to your supervisory team for review in the timeline defined in the supervisory agreement;

   b. Attending training relevant to your research degree, as agreed with your supervisor and in your Training Needs Analysis;

   c. Completing/refreshing PGR Mandatory Training Courses within the specified timeline;

   d. Undertaking data collection; or

   e. Attending meetings with Pastoral Tutors.

4.2.5 Engagement has been defined differently from attendance because not all forms of engagement require students to be present, either physically or virtually, at a particular time and place.

4.3   Students holding Tier 4/Student visas

4.3.1 This policy also applies to all International Students who hold a Tier 4/ Student visa to study at the University of Exeter.

4.3.2 The University will monitor attendance and engagement in line with current Home Office guidance to identify Tier 4/ Student visa holders who are failing to attend or adequately engage with their studies by recording academic interactions within a programme which provide evidence of attendance and academic engagement.

4.3.3 A student holding a Tier 4/ Student visa who is failing to meet required engagement levels in accordance with the International Student Attendance and Engagement monitoring processes, and as defined in the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 29: Taught Student Attendance and Engagement Policy (and where fitness to study issues are not involved), will be referred to this Code of Good Practice for initial action or escalation of action. These policies detail the timeframes as to when non-attendance may trigger a warning or escalation of action under this policy.

5.   Stage 1: Initial Warnings

For Tier 4/Student Visa holders, please refer to section 4.3 of this policy, the International Student Attendance and Engagement monitoring processes and the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 29: Taught Student Attendance and Engagement Policy before action is taken.

5.1   Appropriate members of staff in Faculties (or delegated Schools) as outlined in Appendix 1 should initially warn students informally about any concerns with their progress, engagement or attendance. Concerns may also arise as a result of other formal review processes such as at an Assessment Progression and Awarding Committee (APAC) or via the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) for PGR students: it may be appropriate to decide to issue an initial warning following such a review.

5.2   Before and initial warning letter is sent, the person preparing the letter should consult with the relevant Welfare Team and the student's Pastoral Mentor or Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor) for taught students or their Supervisor/ Pastoral Tutor for PGR students as appropriate, to check whether the student is in contact and if they are aware of any circumstances that should pause the initiation of this procedure.

5.3   To constitute an initial warning a record must be kept and the initial warning letter must be sent to the student concerned (see template letter within Annex 1: Stage 1 Initial Warning), outlining the concerns, required improvements and the steps which may be taken by the Faculty (or delegated School) should improvements not be made. This must be sent by a relevant staff member (see Appendix 1).

5.4   In discussion, students should be invited to explain if there were any circumstances, which were unavoidable, which prevented them performing satisfactorily, and of which they could not reasonably have informed the Faculty (or delegated School) any earlier. Students should be made aware that if they choose not to disclose any pertinent information at this stage, the Faculty (or delegated School) is unlikely to be able to give due consideration to it later.

5.5   A meeting will not always be necessary in order to issue an initial warning, however, the student should be provided with an opportunity for a meeting should they request one.

Faculties (or Delegated Schools) should ensure that the principles of this policy are reflected in all warning letters to students.

5.6   All communications to the student should reference a student's options as per the 'Concerns and Appeals' section below.

5.7   The initial warning letter must include details of the unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance as well as the Faculty (or delegated School)'s expectation of improvement, providing clear timeframes within which improvement should be demonstrated. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should further set out the potential consequences if there is no adequate improvement in performance and/or attendance, including reporting to UK Visas and Immigration where appropriate.

5.8   Warnings should be issued early enough to enable further action to be taken in good time. This may mean, for example, giving the student enough time to attend and not miss another contact point, or where there is a reasonable expectation that they can submit any required work.

6.   Stage 2: Final warning

For Tier 4/Student Visa holders, please refer to section 4.3 of this policy, the International Student Attendance and Engagement monitoring processes and the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 29: Taught Student Attendance and Engagement Policy before action is taken.

6.1   If concerns about unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance are not satisfactorily addressed following an initial warning, or if further concerns about the student arise within 12 months of receipt of the initial warning (excluding any period of interruption), the student should be issued with a final warning (templates available within Annex 2: Stage 2 Final Warning - Taught students and Annex 3: Stage 2 Final Warning - PGR students).

6.2   Before a Final Warning letter is sent, the person preparing the letter should consult with the relevant Welfare Team and the student's Pastoral Mentor or Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor) for taught students or their Supervisor/ Pastoral Tutor for

PGR students as appropriate, to check whether the student is in contact and if they are aware of any circumstances that should pause the escalation of this procedure.

6.3   Final warnings may be issued by the persons outlined in Appendix 1.

6.4   Final Warnings should not be issued by the person who issued the initial warning(s) or would be responsible for handling the case under Stage 3.

6.5   The student will be provided with the opportunity of a meeting, with the member of staff who issued the Final Warning, where they can explain if there are any circumstances, which were unavoidable, and which prevented them from complying with the terms of their initial warning or which led to further unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance and of which they could not reasonably have informed the Faculty (or delegated School) any earlier.

6.6   Final warning meetings must not be conducted by the person who would be responsible for handling the case under Stage 3. This meeting need not take place before the warning is issued, however, should it be determined that the warning is no longer appropriate, a record should be added to the student's file to this effect.

6.7   Faculties (or Delegated Schools) should ensure that the principles of this policy are reflected in all waring letters to students. All communications to the student should reference a student's options as per the 'Concerns and Appeals' section below.

6.8   A final warning may also be issued to a student as a condition of allowing them to progress (e.g. following failure at an APAC for taught students or if concerns about progress are raised via AMR for PGR students), providing that a record has previously been kept of prior warnings.

6.9   The final warning letter must include details of the unsatisfactory progress, engagement or attendance as well as the Faculty (or delegated School)'s expectation of improvement, providing clear timeframes within which improvement should be demonstrated. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should further set out the potential

consequences if there is no adequate improvement in performance and/or attendance, including reporting to UK Visas and Immigration where appropriate.

6.10   Final warnings should be issued early enough to enable further action to be taken in good time. This may mean, for example, giving the student enough time to attend and not miss another contact point, or where there is a reasonable expectation that they can submit any required work.

7.   Stage 3: Pro-Vice Chancellor of Faculty's Action

For Tier 4/Student Visa holders, please refer to section 4.3 of this policy, the International Student Attendance and Engagement monitoring processes and the TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 29: Taught Student Attendance and Engagement Policy before action is taken.

7.1   If a student's progress, engagement or attendance remain unsatisfactory following issue of a final warning, or if further concerns about the student's progress, engagement or attendance are picked up within 12 months of receipt of the final warning (excluding any period of interruption), the persons listed in Appendix 1 (the signatory), will write to the student to invite them to a meeting to let them know that they will be reporting them to the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, as appropriate (template available within Annex 4: Stage 3 Meeting request).

7.2   Before a Stage 3 meeting request letter is sent, the signatory should consult with the Welfare Team and the student's Pastoral Mentor / Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor) for taught students or their Supervisor/ Pastoral Tutor for PGR students as appropriate, to check whether the student is in contact and if they are aware of any circumstances that should pause the escalation of this procedure.

7.3   The signatory of the Stage 3 letter must not have dealt with the case previously and must not have been a signatory in any Stage 1 or 2 warnings, in order that they can form an impartial judgement of the case to date.

7.4   Students will be invited to explain if there are any circumstances, which were unavoidable, which prevented them from complying with the terms of their final

warning and of which they could not reasonably have informed the Faculty (or delegated School) any earlier. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should ensure that there is reference to the principles as defined in Section 2 of this policy in all waring letters to students.

7.5   All communications to the student should reference the '<u>Concerns and Appeals'</u> section below.

7.6   Following this meeting, where action is required that involves a recommendation to the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, the Stage 3 signatory will write to the student to confirm the action that has been taken (template available within Annex 5: Stage 3 Meeting Outcome).

7.7   The signatory shall complete the Student Report Form (see Annex 6: Stage 4 Student Report Form) and will send the report form along with all supporting documentation and evidence to the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, as appropriate. A full copy of the report and supporting documentation should be retained within the Faculty (or delegated School).

7.8   Actions which require approval by the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, include recommendations to repeat part of or the entire programme of study, the requirement to withdraw from the programme and/or the University, the suspension or curtailment of funding, or the withdrawal of sponsorship of a Student/Tier 4 visa.

7.9   If the outcome of the Stage 3 meeting does not involve a recommendation to the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, the Faculty (or delegated School) may take actions that may include a decision that the case may:

7.9.1   be referred back to Stage 2 with a warning letter to be reissued with clear expectations laid out which, if unmet, may result in referral to Stage 3 again.

7.9.2 be held at Stage 3 where any further concerns about progress, engagement or attendance which arise within 12 months of the student's receipt of the outcome of the meeting with the PVC, will result in the student being referred to Stage 4: Dean's Action.

8. Stage 4: Dean's Action

8.1 Upon receipt of the Stage 4 Student Report Form (see Annex 6) and other supporting documentation, the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research (or appropriate nominee who is impartial to the case) will either confirm the Faculty (or delegated School)'s decision or will reject it.

8.1.1 If the Faculty (or delegated School)'s recommendation is **confirmed**, the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, will write to the student, copied to the Faculty (or delegated School) and Student Records, to inform them of the outcome (template available in Annex 7: Stage 4 Dean's Action Outcome).

8.1.2 If the Faculty (or delegated School)'s recommendation is **rejected**, the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research (or nominee) will return the Student Report Form (see Annex 6: Stage 4 Student Report Form) to the Faculty (or delegated School) and recommend a course of action. That course of action will depend upon the circumstances of each case.

9. Concerns and Appeals

9.1 Should a student have any concerns about the application of the Code of Good Practice – Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance at any stage, they should raise this within ten working days of receipt of the letter, either in person or in writing with the Faculty (or delegated School): the Faculty (or delegated School) must ensure that a timely response is provided.

9.2 Students in receipt of a Stage 2 (Final) or Stage 3 (PVC of Faculty's) warning should note that should they choose not to attend the meeting this shall not delay reporting them to the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, as appropriate.

9.3   Appeals against Dean's Action:

9.3.1 A student who wishes to appeal against a decision made under Stage 4: Dean's Action may do so. Appeals must be submitted on the appeals form and will be managed via the University 'Procedures Relating to Student Academic Appeals'. In the light of the number of opportunities provided in the Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance procedures for the student to raise previously unknown factors, including any procedural irregularities, and with a view to a speedy resolution, the appeals process will proceed immediately for consideration at Faculty level.

10.   Further Support for Students

10.1   Faculties may also wish to direct a student towards student support services to address any problems they may have been having which may have contributed towards concerns about their progress, engagement or attendance.

10.2   Students may also contact the Students' Guild for students on Exeter campuses, or the Students' Union (the SU) for students on the Cornwall campuses, for advice should they wish to discuss their warning with someone outside of their Faculty (or delegated School).

11.   Timescales

11.1   It is expected that concerns about progress or engagement, including absences will be addressed promptly.

11.2   Any initial or final warning, or any decisions or recommendations made by the Faculty (or delegated School) in the student report form (see Annex 6: Stage 4 Student Report Form) (if upheld by the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of PGR, as appropriate) would remain in force for a period of twelve months (excluding any period of interruption) from receipt of the last warning letter or action of the Dean for Taught Students or Dean of PGR, meaning that any further concerns about the progress, engagement or attendance of a student who has previously received a warning or who has been subject to Dean's action within the last year may be escalated to the next level immediately.

11.3   Faculties (or delegated Schools) may choose to employ the system as a monitoring tool for taught students who repeat parts or all of their programme of study. This means that a Faculty (or delegated School) may issue an initial warning as part of the agreement to allow a student to repeat.

12.   Reporting and Monitoring

12.1   Faculties (or delegated Schools) must keep records of warnings issued and will supply the Education Policy Team and Doctoral College Quality Development Team with data on warnings issued upon request of the relevant Deans. Copies of the letters student to students by the Faculty under stage 2 and 3 should be shared with the Education Policy and/or PGR Quality Development Team at the time of sending.

12.2   The Education Policy Team and Doctoral College Quality Development Team will maintain a system by which to monitor any Dean's Action and report annually to the Education Board or Board of Postgraduate Research, as appropriate.