



# **Student Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures**

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# **Student Attendance and Punctuality**

## **Objectives**

1. Harlow College and Stansted Airport College are committed to providing high quality education and training and to student success. To achieve this, we must maximise students' learning opportunities by;
  - Setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality at all timetabled sessions, face to face or virtual.
  - Working in partnership with students and, where applicable, their parents and employers, to ensure good attendance and punctuality, embedding a culture of reliability and commitment.
  - Monitoring and taking action to improve attendance and punctuality where necessary.

## **Scope**

2. This document sets out the principles and practice of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy that applies to all Harlow College and Stansted Airport College students, including those on Higher Education and Professional qualifications. This includes both onsite and online delivery.

## **Summary of College Expectations of Punctuality and Attendance**

3. The College expects 100% attendance and punctuality at all timetabled sessions. This includes online sessions, workshops, compulsory visits and activities, tutorials etc.
4. Attendance of all students will be reviewed after the three and five weeks of the academic year/ apprenticeship start date. Any student who has not achieved at least 90% attendance, and who is unable to provide a full justification, will be at risk of being withdrawn from the College.
5. Attendance will be regularly monitored throughout students' time in learning. Failure to maintain good attendance will be dealt with through the College Student Disciplinary Policy.
6. Students are expected to give a good reason, backed up with evidence, for all absences.
7. Students are expected to provide a reasonable justification for any lateness. Teaching staff have the right to refuse admission to the class or online session to late students. The rules that apply to different areas of the College on lateness will be given to students during induction.
8. Where absences/lateness can be foreseen in advance, the student should notify the College. Appropriate evidence should be provided to the class teacher for the absence to be classed as authorised.

9. For unforeseen absences, such as illness, the student must make contact with the College to notify Central Admin of their absence as early as possible on the first day of absence and every subsequent day unless they are signed off by a doctor for a given period.
10. Upon return to learning after an absence, students must provide evidence of the reason for their absence before authorised absence can be noted in registers.
11. Non-attendance may be dealt with as part of the College's Student Disciplinary Policy and may result in a Stage A sanction, Stage B, Stage C or exclusion.

## **Implementing the Policy - Staff Procedures and Guidance**

12. This document can only cover the most common situations that will occur. Therefore, when the procedures and guidance do not appear to cover a given situation, staff should either use their own judgement to resolve the matter, or consult with their line manager. Any feedback on the suitability of the policy and guidance should be made to the Quality Department. Please note that any reference to registers in this policy relates to the electronic register for both onsite and online delivery.
13. In order for the College to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality it is essential that all registers are marked in an accurate and timely fashion. The staff member responsible for the session must complete the register marking as soon as possible and in all cases by close of play on the day of which the session falls. Failure to do this may result in students missing out on payments from Student Financial Support E.g. Bursary, Bus Passes etc., and in significant inconvenience and distress.
14. Registers are auditable documents and must be maintained in a timely and accurate fashion. Where it is identified that a member of staff persistently fails to mark a register, or marks registers late, they may be subject to disciplinary action. Where registers remain outstanding after 28 days the presumption will be for disciplinary action. In the event of a staff member being off sick the Assistant Academy Manager is responsible for arranging cover and ensuring that the register is completed.
15. Students are normally expected to make medical and other appointments outside of timetabled hours. However, where a student knows in advance that they are unable to attend a lesson, they must report the absence via central administration, and provide evidence of the absence to the nominated person in advance, so that the absence can be noted as 'authorised' in the register. When authorising absences, the nominated member of staff will need to consider;
  - Whether the case is reasonable
  - The number of absences taken by the individual
  - Repetitions of the same justification
  - Whether the justification is backed up by evidence examples of legitimate reasons for absence **might include**;
    - Medical appointments which cannot be made outside of timetabled hours
    - Religious holiday

- Attendance at a funeral
- Severe disruption to the transport network
- Driving test
- Student representatives' meetings
- Responsibilities for caring for a close family member. If this is likely to affect their learning, this should be explored with the student and support offered.

An absence will **not be** authorised for any of the following reasons;

- Holidays
  - Babysitting
  - Driving lessons
  - Birthdays
  - Leisure activities
  - Shopping
  - Full or Part-time work (other than work experience).
16. If the nominated member of staff judges the absence to be legitimate they should change the absent mark to authorised absence in the register.
  17. When the absence cannot be foreseen, the student should advise the College, either by telephone or email on the day of absence. The class teacher is responsible for the register will mark the student 'absent'.
  18. Where no justification for the absence is provided in advance, the member of staff nominated to follow up absences must contact the student, and in the case of 16-19-year olds their parent, guardian or employer to ascertain the reason for the absence as soon as practicable. Wherever possible the student should be asked to attend unless there is a valid reason for non-attendance. The member of staff should record any contact made, discussions, reasons and information and ensure this is communicated to other staff as required, using the absence management tool.
  19. On the first day back in learning, the student is required to provide evidence to support the absence to their class Teacher. Evidence for the absence may be in the form of a note from a parent, carer or guardian (for students under 18), or a medical certificate in the case of absences of 5 or more days.
  20. When the member of staff who marked the student absent next sees the student, they should ask for an explanation for the absence, draw the student's attention to the attendance policy and stress that non-attendance will be followed up and dealt with.
  21. Should a pattern of non-attendance emerge, the teacher should follow this up at the earliest opportunity with the student, recording any information on ProMonitor. The students Learner Mentor must be advised.
  22. If the level of non-attendance is judged to be unacceptable then the College Student Disciplinary Policy should be used to deal with the matter. As the policy states that we expect 100% attendance, anything below this, unless by prior agreement or with valid reason, is unacceptable. It would therefore be appropriate to use the Disciplinary Policy

as soon as problems become apparent, rather than leave the problems to grow without formally tackling them.

### **Students' responsibilities**

You are expected to:

23. Attend 100% of all scheduled classes either in person or online relating to your programme of study as confirmed on your learning agreement.
24. Report any absence due to illness or other reason to the College by 8:45am on the first and every subsequent day of absence (by phone or e-mail).
25. Do everything possible to avoid necessary absences by making medical appointments outside class time unless it is an emergency.
26. Avoid going on holiday during term time.
27. Arrange appointments with careers advisors outside of lesson time.
28. Provide medical evidence for absences of more than 5 consecutive days.
29. Tell us in advance if you know you are going to miss a lesson e.g. attending a University Open Day.
30. On the first day back in learning after an absence, present evidence to support your absence.
31. Comply with our Attendance and Punctuality Policy and associated sanctions if your attendance falls below 90%

### **Staff Responsibilities**

32. All staff are responsible for ensuring the good attendance and punctuality of their students and for dealing with attendance and punctuality issues whenever they occur. There are some specific responsibilities attached to staff; these are outlined below:

#### **The Delivery Staff or those taking class registers are responsible for:**

- a) Accurately completing the register on the day of attendance
- b) Noting in the register any absences and lateness
- c) Following up absence with the student when they next meet
- d) Reporting any persistent issues with students to the AAM or Head of Academy
- e) Promoting good punctuality and attendance through their own behaviour and teaching standards.
- f) In cases of repeatedly absence and/or for prolonged periods of time, this may indicate a safeguarding concern. It is therefore important that staff liaise with the safeguarding team to explore what intervention may be required.
- g) Update Pro-monitor with notes and actions

**The Assistant Academy Manager (AAM) is responsible for:**

- a) Monitoring attendance and punctuality issues at team meetings and taking early action to resolve issues
- b) Ensuring that registers are marked accurately and in a timely fashion and following up on any unmarked registers with individuals in their team
- c) Ensuring that, in the event of a staff member being absent, the register is taken or reallocated on the timetable in instances of long-term absence
- d) Ensuring major changes to timetables are communicated to MIS
- e) Implementing the Policy if required for a Level 1 or Level 2 sanction in relation to poor attendance or punctuality.

**The Head of Academy (HoA) is responsible for:**

- a) Monitoring overall attendance at Team level
- b) Working with the AAM on strategies to improve overall attendance/punctuality for their Academy
- c) Working with the AAM on implementation of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy where a learners attendance or punctuality has escalated over and above a Stage A or Stage B sanction
- d) Authorise a 'Notice to Improve' attendance letter, where required
- e) Implement a 'Notice to Withdraw' letter if attendance doesn't improve.

**Personal Development Coach (PDC) is responsible for:**

- a) Working with the curriculum team to follow up any absences and ascertain reasons
- b) Working with the student to improve absence
- c) Dealing with any personal/pastoral issues that affect poor attendance and punctuality
- d) Liaising with parents or guardians in order to improve attendance and resolves issues
- e) Updating ProMonitor with notes and actions relating to attendance or punctuality.

**How attendance is recorded**

33. A register is taken for every lesson in College including tutorials, GCSE English and maths and functional skills. Teachers mark a register and the data is stored on our information system which also sends the data to our ProMetrix system for visual display at Institutional Level down to Student Level (pending permissions).

34. Students can check their own attendance record by logging onto ProPortal.

**Registers have 4 main marks to report attendance as set out below:**

- **/ for present**
- **O for absent**
- **L for late (after the teacher has begun the lesson)**
- **A for an authorised absence (See paragraph 15 above)**

*NB – Attendance of all students will be reviewed after the first five weeks of the academic year. If at that time you have not achieved AT LEAST 90% ATTENDANCE, and are not able to provide a full justification, you will be withdrawn from the College. Attendance will be regularly monitored throughout your time at Harlow College and Stansted Airport College and if you fail to maintain the required level of attendance you will be dealt with through the Academic Performance Policy and associated policies.*

### **What to do about visits or open days**

35. The College will know the names of students who are going on College trips and visits. However, as a matter of courtesy, students should still inform your teachers in advance of these absences. This will make sure that these events are recorded and will not then affect their attendance record.

### **Reporting on attendance**

36. The College monitors attendance closely and teachers will receive a summary of student attendance. Any absences and late marks will be shown and your teacher will ask students about these.
37. The College strongly recommends that **students check their own records** carefully because attendance rates will be included on all reports about individual student progress and in all references that are written to potential employers, other Colleges or Universities. Students can check this through ProPortal which can be accessed via the Qube (College VLE). If students have a genuine reason for a high absence rate we will comment sensitively about this in any reference. We aim to be fair to students but, in line with our values, if attendance is unsatisfactory for no good reason we will be honest about this. The College's usual practice is to discuss references with students when they are being written.

### **What if attendance is poor?**

38. If attendance rates are unsatisfactory students can expect this to be followed up by their teacher initially and senior staff if required, for example your AAM and/or Head of Academy. Parents/guardians of students aged under 18 are normally contacted if poor attendance becomes a problem. For students being supported by an employer through a programme we may also contact them with absence reports.
39. If students have worries or personal problems that are affecting their attendance, please discuss these with the class teacher or Learner Mentor.
40. Poor attendance may be dealt with as part of the Student Disciplinary Policy or Academic Performance Policy College and may result in a final written warning or exclusion.
41. If a student is absent without sufficient reason for more than 4 weeks, a 'Notice to Withdraw' letter will be sent.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### A What will be accepted as an authorised absence?

Absences will only be authorised if the College know in advance there is a good reason, such as:

- Medical appointments which cannot be made outside of timetabled hours
- Religious holiday
- Attendance at a funeral
- Severe disruption to the transport network
- Driving test
- Student Reps or other College meetings that you are asked to attend
- Responsibilities for caring for a close family member (If this is likely to affect your learning please discuss this with your personal tutor)
- Participation in a significant outside activity e.g. taking part in a regional or national event
- A visit to a University either to attend an open day or for an interview
- A work experience placement where this is a requirement of the course.

### B What are not acceptable reasons for absence?

The following reasons for absence are not generally acceptable:

- Holidays/leisure activities
- Part time employment
- Birthdays
- Driving lessons
- Shopping

### C What about unplanned absence?

In the case of an unplanned absence the College will take into account:

- the number of absences a student has already taken
- repeated absences (especially for the same reason)
- whether evidence of absence can be provided
- whether the College feel it is reasonable.
- any safeguarding concerns where external intervention may be required.

You must tell the College as soon as possible on the day of absence that you will be missing lessons, otherwise we will treat the absence as unauthorised (other than in cases such as an emergency situation involving a family member).

### D What do you mean by 'evidence of absence'?

The following things can be counted as evidence for an authorised absence;

- A letter from a parent/care/guardian (students under 18 only)
- A medical appointment card
- A doctor's certificate (in the case of absences of 5 or more days)
- Driving test notification letter
- An email or letter regarding an interview
- University Open Day confirmation of booking

**E What happens if it snows or if the weather is really bad?**

If the weather is severe the College may shut for health and safety reasons. The College will announce any closures on local radio and on the College website. This would be classified as an Authorised Absence should learning not be able to be delivered online.

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| <b>TRACKING and REFERENCE INFORMATION</b>   |
| <b>Date Approved: July 2020, 14 March 2024 (Standards &amp; Curriculum Committee)</b>   |
| <b>Review Date: every 3 years</b>   |
| <b>Author/Responsibility: Executive Team Member with responsibility for Student Management</b>  |
| <b>Equality Impact Assessment: N/A</b>  |
| <b>List of related policies, procedures and other documents:</b><br>Complaints Procedure<br>Equality & Diversity Policy<br>Student Code of Conduct<br>Fitness to Study Policy<br>Academic Performance Policy<br>Admissions Policy |
| <b>Complaints:</b> If you wish to submit a complaint about the application of this policy or the procedure of it, please send your request in accordance with the provisions of the Grievance Procedure.                          |
| <b>Monitoring:</b> The application of this policy and associated procedure will be monitored by Deputy Principal with Student Management.   |
| <b>Easy reading:</b> To receive this policy/procedure in a different format, please contact: HR Services.   |