UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND REASONABLE DILIGENCE

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Code of Practice on Student Attendance and Reasonable Diligence

1. Preamble

1.1 This Code of Practice applies to all Registered Students, including those on undergraduate programmes, postgraduate taught programmes and postgraduate research programmes. It covers all modes of study including full and part-time students, Students on distance learning, collaborative provision programmes, and placements. The term 'Student' will be used throughout the Code.

1.2 This Code of Practice sets out the University's expectation for attendance and reasonable diligence. The Code outlines standard practice for attendance, whilst recognising discipline specific requirements that may result in levels of attendance being applied and monitored to a greater or lesser extent depending on the demands of the programme, for example for programmes with professional requirements. The Code sets out the process to be followed when a Student is found to be showing a cause for concern in relation to attendance or reasonable diligence.

1.3 Students undertaking programmes of study or research that are subject to fitness to practise requirements, and who fail to show reasonable diligence, will be dealt with in accordance with Regulation 8 and the Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees.

1.4 This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Section 7 of the University Regulations;
- Code of Practice on Personal Tutoring and Academic Feedback;
- Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring of Progress of Research Students;
- Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees;
- Code of Practice on Suspension from Study on Health Grounds;
- Code of Practice on Primary Appeals Procedures; and
- The Student Charter, which outlines the responsibilities and entitlements of Students.

1.5 In the case of Students studying abroad or on placement, and who are not demonstrating reasonable diligence, the School will follow the steps set out in this Code of Practice.

1.6 Where there are significant concerns over the welfare of a Student, a member of staff in the School should contact Student Services immediately.

2. Expectations

2.1 All Students are expected to show reasonable diligence in relation to the learning and teaching to be undertaken for each module studied, and to the programme of study or research for which they are registered. Reasonable diligence is to be determined by the School taking into account programme specific requirements and the standards reflected in this Code of Practice.

2.2 Section 7.8 of the University Regulations requires that all Students are actively engaged with their programme of study and research for its full duration. Failure to show reasonable diligence in relation to learning and teaching shall be defined by the School in relation to programme requirements. In the absence of specific programme requirements, failure to show reasonable diligence shall be defined in accordance with Regulation 7.8.1 (c). Schools will normally take into account the following:

2.2 .1 Absence from teaching sessions at which a record of attendance is kept, or that contravene the attendance requirements set out in programme and module specifications. This will normally equate to more than 30% of recordable teaching sessions. However this may vary according to the requirements of the programme. Examples of interaction may include attendance at lectures, small group teaching sessions, laboratory or practical classes, field trips and personal tutorials, in addition to any other events or meetings arranged by the School in connection with the programme of study or research.

2.2 .2 Failure to submit formally assessed work which is required by the module description or programme specification.

2.2 .3 Failure to adhere to the requirements and timescales for improved attendance and diligence after a formal written warning has been given by the Head of the School (or nominee).

2.2 .4 Failure to register for modules to the required credit value for the programme of study or research (appropriate to the level and stage of learning and teaching required by the programme).

2.2 .5 Failure to report to the Head of the School (or nominee) an absence of more than ten consecutive University working days during an academic session.

2.2 .6 For Students undertaking research, failure to comply with the responsibilities of research students as set out in Section 6 of the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring of Progress of Research Students.

2.3 A School may also initiate reasonable diligence proceedings where a justifiable cause for concern has been raised by an academic member of staff, e.g. the Personal Tutor, Academic Tutor, Welfare Tutor, Supervisor or Module Leader.

3 Timescales

3.1 In the interests of the Student, a School should engage in reasonable diligence procedures at the earliest opportunity. This enables the Student to take steps to engage with their programme and also allows sufficient time for applying the reasonable diligence procedure.

3.2 Schools will identify a suitable cut off point for pursuing reasonable diligence in accordance with the teaching structure of their programme.

3.2 .1 Recommendations to withdraw from a module or programme as a result of failure to show reasonable diligence will not normally be made after the end of semester 2.

3.2 .2 For Students undertaking postgraduate research programmes, reasonable diligence procedures may be invoked at any time, and in accordance with the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring of Research Students.

3.3 In considering whether to invoke the reasonable diligence procedure, Schools should take account of the timescales involved in reporting any recommendations for withdrawal to the University Progress and Awards Board. This enables a Student to lodge an appeal against the decision to be heard before the main summer examination period.

4. Monitoring of Attendance

4.1 Schools will maintain a record of attendance as appropriate to the requirements set out in this Code of Practice and those required by the programme specification. This may include records of attendance at small group teaching sessions, laboratory or practical classes, field trips and personal tutorials, in addition to any other events or meetings arranged by the School in connection with the programme of study or research. For Research Students this should be in accordance with the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring of Progress of Research Students.

4.2 Individual Schools shall determine the methods of monitoring satisfactory attendance, including the University's obligations to monitor the attendance of Students in accordance with their visa requirements.

4.3 Individual Schools shall determine the requirements for attendance and reasonable diligence and will monitor accordingly. In addition to standard attendance defined by the programme other requirements may include but are not limited to the completion and submission of academic work for assessment or comment, and attendance of examinations, tests or other forms of assessment. For Research Students this should be in accordance with the Code of Practice on Supervision and Monitoring of Research Students.

4.4 Schools must take appropriate steps to draw attention to the need for Students to demonstrate reasonable diligence by achieving satisfactory attendance with regard to their programme of study or research. Such notification should also indicate that failure to show reasonable diligence may result in the imposition of penalties and sanctions, as set out in this Code of Practice. Schools should also ensure that Students are aware of the sources of advice and support available to them both from the University and the Birmingham University Guild of Students and that this is published through a variety of means.

4.5 In the case of Joint Honours programmes of study, the lead responsibility for undertaking monitoring and recording resides with the School taking primary responsibility for the programme of study. Where modules are taken outside of the Home School, the module owning School must report any concerns to the Home School as soon as possible.

4.6 If a School considers that a more stringent definition of attendance or reasonable diligence than is provided by this Code of Practice is appropriate, either in relation to particular modules or to a programme of study or research, then this must be clearly set out in the relevant module description and/or programme specification. For example, it may be appropriate to have stricter definitions in the following circumstances:

4.7 .1 where group assessments are included in the module and/or programme of study or research, since absence and/or unsatisfactory academic performance could prejudice the performance of other Students.

4.7 .2 where there are health and safety considerations.

4.7 .3 where the attainment of core knowledge is essential for later study on the module and/or programme of study or research.

4.7 .4 where attendance and satisfactory academic progress is a requirement of a professional, statutory or regulatory body.

4.7 .5 where a satisfactory level of professional competence in interacting with others is a requirement of the programme of study or research.

4.8 For Students found to be failing to show reasonable diligence as set out in Regulations,

programme or module specification, or this Code of Practice, the procedure found in Section 5 of this Code should be applied. The Student is expected to continue attending the programme during an investigation.

5. The First Stage

5.1 Any Student whose attendance and/or academic progress, having been monitored by the School, is deemed to be a cause of concern should be informally warned by the School at an early stage.

5.2 The reasonable diligence procedure is a serious matter but, in the first instance, lack of reasonable diligence may be dealt with by the School on a more informal basis.

5.2 .1 Where it is determined that there is sufficient evidence to support a cause for concern, the School should write to the Student to request that they attend a meeting with their personal tutor, research supervisor, or another academic member of staff determined by the School. Another member of University staff may also be present at the meeting. Where Students are overseas or on distance learning programmes, suitable alternative arrangements should be made, for example a discussion by telephone.

5.2 .2 The Student will have 5 working days to confirm their attendance at the meeting or seek to rearrange the meeting at an appropriate time.

5.2 .3 The Student may be accompanied to the meeting by a 'friend' defined as a member of staff of the University, a Student of the University, or a Sabbatical Officer of the Guild of Students.

5.2 .4 The meeting is to discuss and/or review the options available for the Student to make improvements to their attendance and/or diligence. The Student should be given the opportunity to present any extenuating circumstances that may have had an adverse effect on their attendance and/or diligence.

5.2 .5 If the Student does not attend or seek to rearrange a meeting with their personal tutor, research supervisor and/or other academic member of staff, the Student will be sent a reminder prior to the case being referred on to the Second Stage if no appropriate contact has been made.

5.2 .6 Following the meeting a letter should be sent to the Student setting out the key points raised at the meeting, the reasoning behind the decision and the action the student is required to take to achieve reasonable diligence. This letter will serve as a record of the meeting and a copy should be retained by the School.

6. The Second Stage

6.1 If, following the informal meeting, the School judges that the Student's attendance or reasonable diligence continues to be unsatisfactory and that the action identified for improvement at the informal meeting has not been complied with, the Head of the School (or nominee) will send a formal written warning to the Student that clearly sets out the requirements and timescales for improved performance, as determined by the School.

7. The Third Stage

7.1 The School will refer the case of the Student for consideration by the Board of Examiners where the Student has not complied with the requirements and timescales for improvement

following the formal written warning from the Head of School or nominee.

7.2 The Board of Examiners for the Student's programme of study will be convened or, if no meeting is possible or scheduled, the Chair of the Board may take Chair's action, consulting as appropriate, and according to the procedure specified in the Board's Terms of Reference. If the Chair has had any prior involvement with the Student in question, the case should be handed over to the nominated deputy. For students on postgraduate research programmes, a School Progress Panel will take the place of the Board of Examiners.

7.3 If the Board of Examiners decides to impose a sanction, it shall ensure that it is proportionate to the circumstances of the case. The possible decisions are as follows:

7.3 .1 to require the Student to withdraw from the programme of study or research;

7.3 .2 to require the Student to continue on the programme of study or research, subject to conditions of an academic nature that are deemed appropriate, such as regular meetings with the Personal Tutor or specific study skills sessions. Failure to follow these requirements will result in immediate referral again to the Board of Examiners;

7.3 .3 to permit the Student to continue on the programme of study or research unconditionally.

7.4 The decisions of the Boards of Examiners will be ratified by the University Progress and Awards Board. For students on postgraduate research programmes, the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel will take the place of the Progress and Awards Board.

7.5 All warnings and sanctions will remain on the Student's record throughout their academic career and are transferred year-to-year and in the event of a transfer between programmes of study or research.

7.6 In order to monitor the implementation of the requirements to show reasonable diligence across the University, the Progress and Awards Board will receive an annual report from the Registry that summarises the cases heard under this Code of Practice.

8. The Right of Appeal

8.1 A Student may appeal against the decision of the University Progress and Awards Board as detailed in the Code of Practice on Primary Appeals Procedures.