Guidance Document on Attendance Monitoring and Reasonable Diligence 2015/16

Please read this document alongside the Code of Practice on Student Attendance and Reasonable Diligence.

1. As part of its responsibilities as a Home Office Tier 4 Sponsor, the University is required to monitor the attendance of all Tier 4 visa students across 10 pre-defined contact points. The University identifies these contact points across an academic year or period of study.

2. Attendance for each of the 10 contact points must be recorded in BIRMS Attendance Monitoring for all Tier 4 students. If a student misses a contact point, further information to explain the circumstances must be provided in the 'Notes' page.

3. Registry, in consultation with the PBS Practitioners Group, will propose the start and end date for each of the 10 contact points (or 12 monthly contact points for PGRs for which attendance must be recorded for 10) before the start of each academic year. Bespoke contact point dates can be set up for individual programmes with non-standard or longer term dates. PBS Practitioner members will seek approval from their Institutional Compliance Group representative to confirm the contact points.

4. It is the responsibility of staff in Colleges to identify the type of contact (e.g. lecture, seminar, lab, supervision meeting, coursework submission, examination) that will be used for their students for each of the 10 contact points and what evidence (e.g. register, exam paper, GRS2 supervision record) will be retained, and how, to confirm that the contact point has been met or action taken for missed contact points.

5. It is the responsibility of the University to monitor attendance for students who hold a Tier 4 visa on a year abroad, year in industry or any other type of work placement. Bespoke attendance monitoring arrangements will need to be agreed in advance for these students, as well as for students on collaborative/Joint programmes who will be studying at a partner institution, either in the UK or overseas, for a specified period of time during their programme of study.

6. Tier 4 students who may need to leave the UK during term-time (at any time for PGRs), either for personal, medical or academic reasons (e.g. working on their dissertation in their home country), must request permission by completing an Authorised Absence form which must be approved by an appropriate academic member of staff. A maximum of eight weeks will be granted during which time the University will remain the immigration sponsor. Any travel overseas during term-time or at any time for PGRs, without seeking the appropriate permission will be deemed unauthorised absence and may result in reasonable diligence procedures being initiated.

7. Attendance Monitoring requirements are underpinned by the Code of Practice on Student Attendance and Reasonable diligence. The Code of Practice applies to all students and sets out the University's expectations for attendance and reasonable diligence and its link to academic progress. For PGRs this should be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice on Supervision & Monitoring Progress of PGRs.

8. The revised Code of Practice has re-defined the definitions of student attendance and reasonable diligence to a sufficiently broad and high level, therefore enabling discipline specific application across Schools and Colleges. A School may initiate reasonable diligence proceedings where a justifiable cause for concern regarding attendance has been raised by an academic member of staff, e.g. the Personal Tutor, Academic Tutor, Welfare Tutor or Module Leader, PGR supervisor. This may not necessarily relate to teaching sessions where a register is kept but may instead be based on other interactions with the student.

9. Therefore, reasonable diligence procedures can be initiated for a Tier 4 student who has met all their contact points, but where justifiable cause for concern regarding attendance and/or academic progress has been raised by a member of academic staff.

10. If the outcome of the reasonable diligence procedure is that the student is required to withdraw from their programme of study or research, the University will be required to report the withdrawal of immigration sponsorship to the Home Office.

11. Students may appeal against the decision of the University Progress and Awards Board as detailed in the Code of Practice on Academic Appeals Procedures.

12. Students may appeal on the grounds that there were circumstances unknown to the School which affected a student's ability to attend and/or complete coursework and consequently contributed to the decision against which the appeal is being made and the student can present good reason for these circumstances not having been made known to the School or on the grounds that that there was an administrative irregularity or failure in procedure giving rise to a reasonable doubt as to whether the decision would have been different if it had not occurred.

13. A Tier 4 student who had been withdrawn from their programme of study or research on the grounds of failure to show reasonable diligence would not be able to appeal on the grounds that they had met all their contact points, provided that reasonable diligence procedures as set out in the Code of Practice had been followed correctly at each stage of the process.