

## **061. Student Support, Engagement, and Attendance Policy**

## Student Support, Engagement, and Attendance Policy

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### Purpose

This policy is designed to provide a supportive, structured framework that ensures students at IFG are fully engaged with their studies, maintaining appropriate attendance, and receiving the necessary support to thrive academically and personally. It integrates the Support Through Studies framework to address issues affecting student performance or well-being in a collaborative and empathetic manner.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the [IFG Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#).

### Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled at IFG across all study modes (on-campus, online, and blended learning). It applies to students at all academic levels and accounts for individual needs, including those related to health, well-being, or personal circumstances

### Key Principles

- **Engagement:** Encouraging proactive participation in academic and non-academic activities.
- **Support:** Ensuring students have access to tailored services to help them overcome barriers to success.
- **Monitoring:** Regular monitoring of student engagement through attendance, participation in learning activities, and interaction with academic resources and support staff.
- **Responsiveness:** Providing timely interventions and support for students facing challenges that affect their engagement.
- **Transparency:** Implementing clear processes for monitoring engagement and addressing concerns.

### Educational Delivery

International Foundation Group is situated in Mandeville Place, Marylebone, Central London. Our campus is housed within The School of Philosophy and Economic Science in a large 19th century building.

- Currently all teaching is classroom based with no class sizes exceeding 12 students.
- Teaching in the classroom is supported by an extensive VLE called Pharos which contains various resources including the presentations delivered in the classroom.
- In addition, all students have their own licence to access Perlego, an online library containing in excess of one million books. These are predominantly academic textbooks, but also include some non-academic books which are particularly useful in terms of developing English language skills.
- IFG also has its own online teaching platform which is integrated into Pharos. This is predominantly for students studying online, but has proved useful in recent post-Covid times to prevent disruption to course delivery caused by external factors such as train strikes. Our platform is from Big Blue Button and simulates physical classroom delivery through interactive features, and the capacity to divide classes into smaller groups where appropriate. All online lessons are recorded, and these recordings are available to students on Pharos.
- For some modules, students are encouraged to purchase other textbooks relevant to their course. We help them with this.
- Students are encouraged to share with us any welfare challenges they may have. However, we do not have a qualified mental health member of staff. Therefore, all students have unlimited access to mental health support provided by Togetherall. Students can confidentially and anonymously gain online access to trained mental health counsellors on a 24/7 basis. They can also join online groups of students encountering similar challenges.
- Students have access to informal seating areas outside the classroom and also to a large canteen area on the lower ground floor where they can work outside of class times.

## Student Engagement

IFG is committed to ensuring that all students can fully engage with their studies and achieve their academic potential. Student engagement is a collaborative effort between students, staff, and the institution, underpinned by robust monitoring and timely interventions.

### Student Responsibilities:

- **Attendance and Participation:**
  - Attend all scheduled sessions, including lectures, seminars, tutorials, and practical classes.
  - Engage proactively with online resources and participate in virtual learning environments (e.g., Moodle).
  - Communicate promptly with tutors or supervisors about any absences or challenges that may impact engagement.
- **Academic Contributions:**
  - Submit assignments and assessments on time, requesting extensions only in exceptional circumstances, in line with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy.
  - Actively participate in meetings with academic supervisors, especially during projects or dissertations.
- **Proactive Engagement with Support Services:**
  - Seek assistance from student services, learner support, and academic guidance teams as needed to address academic or personal challenges.

### Teaching Staff Responsibilities:

- **Encouraging Engagement:**
  - Promote regular attendance and active participation in all learning activities.
  - Foster an inclusive environment that supports academic and personal growth.
- **Monitoring Engagement:**

- Track attendance, participation, and submission of assessments.
- Identify early warning signs of disengagement or academic challenges.
- **Interventions:**
  - Notify support services of students who exhibit prolonged disengagement or non-attendance.
  - Provide opportunities for students to discuss challenges and create action plans.

#### Academic Director/Director of Studies' Responsibilities:

- **Student Support:**
  - Meet with students showing unsatisfactory engagement and identify issues affecting their academic performance.
  - Ensure every student has access to personal tutors or primary supervisors.
- **Academic Oversight:**
  - Work collaboratively with teaching staff to address concerns related to engagement and ensure timely intervention strategies.

#### Monitoring and Escalation of Engagement:

- **Monitoring Framework:**
  - Engagement is tracked through attendance records, participation in learning activities, and submission of assessments.
  - Interactions with online platforms and library resources will also be reviewed to provide a holistic understanding of student engagement.
- **Responsive Interventions:**
  - Students facing challenges that impact engagement will be contacted promptly.
  - Early interventions may include informal meetings, referrals to support services, or adjustments to learning strategies.
  - Persistent engagement issues will normally trigger formal reviews under the Support Through Studies framework.

## Attendance and Punctuality

Attendance is monitored using an attendance software provider, Acadly - <https://www.acadly.com/>

Regular attendance is essential for academic success, and IFG is committed to supporting students in maintaining high attendance levels. IFG records attendance for each student for every scheduled class. Consistent participation in classes and examinations ensures students can achieve their full potential and remain engaged with their studies. Attendance records and punctuality also reflect a student's professionalism and commitment to their education.

**Students are required to attend at least 85% of their enrolled scheduled course contact hours.** This threshold reflects rules set by the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) department.

**IFG defines poor attendance as falling below 85% attendance in any given month.** This reflects the threshold set by the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) department.

**Sponsored Students:** IFG does not currently hold a UKVI Student Sponsor Licence. However, if our OfS registration is successful we intend to apply for a licence to sponsor international students. By already monitoring attendance for each class and the procedures, such as warning letters, for poor attendance we ensure that all missed contacts are recorded and followed up and we will therefore be able to fulfil our UKVI reporting duties relating to 10 consecutive contacts and course withdrawals. Where a student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive months, we will withdraw sponsorship due to lack of academic engagement unless there are exceptional and evidenced reasons for the non-attendance.

#### Attendance Requirements:

- Expectation of Attendance:

- All students are required to attend every scheduled session, including lectures, seminars and tutorials.
- There is a clear and proven link between high attendance and academic success; therefore, attending sessions is a core expectation of all IFG students.
- Recording Attendance:
  - Attendance will be recorded at the start of each class using our attendance software provider, Acadly. Teachers are responsible for maintaining an accurate register.
  - Immediate absence alerts are triggered if an under-18 student is absent.
  - Cumulative attendance percentages will be calculated and recorded as part of the student's academic transcript.
- Impact of Non-Attendance:
  - Persistent absences can lead to the following consequences:
  - Exclusion from assessments.
  - Referral to the Support Through Studies process for further intervention.
  - Suspension or withdrawal from the programme if attendance does not improve.

#### Authorised Absences:

- Foreseen Absences:
  - Students must notify the Administrator in advance if they need to miss a session due to foreseeable reasons such as:
    - Attendance at a significant family event.
    - Required court attendance.
    - Religious ceremonies.
  - These absences must be approved beforehand, and students are expected to provide any necessary documentation to support their request.
- Emergency Absences:
  - Emergency absences must be reported as soon as possible. Examples include:
    - Illness or injury.
    - Death or serious illness of a family member.
  - For absences lasting more than two consecutive days, students may be required to provide evidence (e.g., a medical certificate). Failure to provide satisfactory evidence will result in a formal warning.

#### Punctuality Expectations

- Arriving on Time:
  - Students are expected to arrive on time for all classes. Punctuality ensures that lessons can begin without disruption to the class or the individual student's learning experience.
- Late Arrivals:
  - Students who arrive after the scheduled start time will be marked as "Late."
  - If a student arrives more than 10 minutes after the start of the class, the teacher may deny entry until the mid-session break. This is at the discretion of the teacher, and IFG will fully support their decision if made in accordance with this policy.

#### Attendance Monitoring Process

- Weekly Monitoring:
  - Attendance data will be reviewed weekly by the Administrator to identify students at risk of disengagement or falling below acceptable attendance levels.
- Escalation for Poor Attendance:
  - Students with poor attendance will be escalated as follows:
    - Stage 1: Informal warning issued after three unauthorized absences. Students will be contacted to discuss their attendance and provided with an opportunity to address the issue.
    - Stage 2: Formal meeting with the Academic Director if poor attendance continues. This meeting will aim to identify barriers to attendance and agree on an action plan for improvement.

- Stage 3: Persistent or unexplained absences will result in a referral to the Support Through Studies process, where a more formal review and intervention will occur. For future UKVI students this can potentially end in withdrawal of sponsorship if 10 consecutive contacts are missed.

#### Policy on “No Shows”

- Failure to Enrol or Attend:
  - Students who fail to enrol or attend within the prescribed enrolment period will be removed from the college register. For future sponsored students no-shows will be reported to the UKVI. This action ensures compliance with regulatory obligations.
  - Communication confirming non-enrolment or non-attendance will be documented and shared with the student’s file.
  - A failure on the part of any student holding a Student Visa to meet the attendance requirement is likely to place them not only in breach of this Policy but in breach of the UK Government’s Student Visa Requirements, and may lead to withdrawal of sponsorship/Student Visa.

#### Consequences of Poor Attendance

- Warning System:
  - Students will receive warnings for unauthorised absences, with increasing severity as outlined in the escalation process.
  - Formal written warnings will clearly state the potential consequences of continued non-attendance, such as exclusion from assessments or suspension. For international students holding a Student Visa, warnings about potential implications for maintaining their Student Visa will be included in formal written warnings.
- Final Consequences:
  - If attendance does not improve after multiple warnings and intervention attempts, the student may face suspension or withdrawal from the programme, with consequences for students holding a Student Visa including withdrawal/cancellation of their visa.
  - Such decisions will be communicated formally and aligned with the institution’s safeguarding and academic policies.

### Student Support Services

IFG offers a range of support services to address the academic, personal, and emotional needs of students. These services are designed to promote well-being, foster academic success, and provide tailored support for individual circumstances.

#### Available Support Services

- Counselling Services:
  - Directs students to approved external mental health and wellbeing support services. Provides confidential support for mental health, emotional well-being, and personal challenges.
- Academic Guidance:
  - Offers personalised advice on academic planning, study skills, and progression pathways.
  - Provides resources for students to improve time management and assessment preparation.
- Learner and Disability Support:
  - Tailored support for students with disabilities or additional learning needs.
  - Develops individualised learning agreements to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Emergency and Crisis Support:
  - Provides immediate support and assistance where possible for urgent concerns affecting student safety or well-being.
  - Connects students with external resources or emergency contacts as needed.

- Ensure all students are fully aware of the IFG Single Comprehensive Source of Information (SCSI) and how to access it on the IFG website.

#### Tailored Support for Individual Needs

- Support for Disabilities:
  - Reasonable adjustments are made for students with documented disabilities or long-term health conditions.
  - Regular reviews ensure accommodations remain effective and aligned with student needs.

### Support Through Studies Framework

Purpose: To support students whose academic performance, engagement, or well-being is impacted by health, personal circumstances, or behaviour. This process ensures students receive the necessary support while maintaining a fair, transparent, and proportionate response to challenges.

#### Key Principles:

- Support Through Studies is designed to help students remain in their courses wherever possible.
- The process is not punitive and focuses on student well-being and academic success.
- These procedures are designed to support students to complete their course by assisting them in a supportive and flexible manner, and should not be used as an alternative to other procedures such as non-Academic misconduct procedures.
- These procedures can be entered into at any stage, as deemed appropriate by their Personal Tutor with the agreement of a member of the senior management team where necessary
- Decisions made under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of these procedures should be made with the agreement of the student.
- Where there is a failure to agree, the case may be escalated to a further Stage of the Support Through Studies procedures.
- A student referred into Stage Two or Stage Three may, as deemed appropriate, have their case escalated/de-escalated as appropriate into another stage of the procedures
- IFG will apply a risk-based approach to these procedures and may complete risk assessments to support decision-making, including decisions about what stage of the procedures a case should be referred into

#### Stages of the Process:

- Stage One: Emerging or Initial Concerns
  - Informal meeting with the student to identify issues and agree on a short-term action plan.
  - Students may be referred to support services (e.g., counselling or academic advice).
- Stage Two: Continuing and/or Significant Concerns
  - Formal meeting with the Lead Contact and senior staff to review progress and create a detailed support plan.
  - Possible outcomes include temporary interruption of studies or referral to external services.
- Stage Three: Serious or Persistent Concerns (Case Conference)
  - A Case Conference Panel will be convened to review the student's case.
  - Possible outcomes include enhanced action plans, required suspension, or withdrawal from the program.

#### Case Conference Panel Membership:

- Chair: Director of Studies.
- Lead Contact: Designated academic or support staff (e.g. Personal Tutor)
- Additional members as required (e.g., specialist advisors, student representatives).

#### Right to Complain/Appeal:

- A student wishing to make a complaint about the Support Through Studies process should follow the Student Complaints Procedure. The Student Complaints Procedure cannot, however, be used to contest or appeal a decision made under Stage Three (Case Conference) of these procedures;

- Students may appeal decisions made by the Case Conference Panel under Stage Three via an appeals process as follows:
  - Students will be notified of the Stage Three Case Conference decision in writing, and informed of their right to appeal if they wish to request a review of the decision;
  - To request a review of the decision, the student should submit a request via email to the Academic Director no later than 21 days of formal written notification of the decision of the Stage 3 Case Conference Panel, under one or more of the following grounds:
    - a) That there is evidence of significant administrative or procedural error in the Support Through Studies process which affected the Case Conference decision
    - b) That there is evidence of prejudice or bias in the Support Through Studies process, which warrants fresh consideration of the case
    - c) That there is relevant additional or new information which was for valid reasons unable to be considered at the relevant time the Case Conference Panel made its decision, and which warrants further consideration of the case
    - d) That the decision is unreasonable and/or will have a disproportionate negative impact on the student. The reasons why the decision is unreasonable and/or will have a disproportionate negative impact must be clearly articulated and supported with relevant satisfactory evidence, where applicable.
- The Academic Director (or their nominee) shall consider whether the request for a review meets one or more of the above grounds and shall notify the student of the outcome of this consideration in writing, copying in the Lead Contact for the Support Through Studies case, normally within 21 days of receipt of the request.
- Where the Academic Director or nominee finds that the request for a review meets one or more of the grounds, they will review the Stage Three decision of the Case Conference Panel and will either:
  - Determine that the Case Conference Panel should reconvene to consider the request for review and review its decision, or
  - That the decision of the Case Conference Panel should undergo an amendment, or
  - That having reviewed the decision of the Case Conference Panel, the original decision should stand.
- The decision of the Academic Director or their nominee will be final. The student will be notified in writing of the final decision and of their right to take their case to the OIA, and will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter accordingly.



