Student Engagement Monitoring
Guidelines 2020/21

Principles

Data on students’ engagement with their studies, for UG and PGT students, is currently being collected through iLancaster for timetabled in-person and synchronous online teaching events.

Responsibility for engagement monitoring rests with the student’s primary academic department (the ‘administering’ department for the degree). Responsibility for following up on non-submission of coursework remains with the department owning the relevant module.

For 2020/21, the primary purpose of gathering data on students’ engagement is pastoral. We want to identify those students who may be experiencing difficulties engaging with their studies. Unlike in previous years, we need to recognize that enforcing attendance will be problematic under current circumstances. This is not intended to provide detailed analytics around performance or specific areas of weakness in engagement, but is focusing on overall engagement with an emphasis on wellbeing and student retention. We cannot monitor attendance on each module, we are simply monitoring whether students are engaging, in the widest sense, with their studies. Communications with students about their non-engagement should be supportive, seeking to understand the challenges they are facing and to help identify interventions that can aid re-engagement. We do not want to see threats to SAC as would ordinarily be the case.

- The engagement monitoring admin site allows identification of any students who have not attended one or more timetabled event. https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/itpi/engagement/#/

- The existing attendance monitoring policy in MARP is to be suspended for the 20/21 academic year

- This guidance equally applies to home and international students irrespective of visa position. In addition to this action, the visa team will consider separately any students with a current visa
Guidelines and Process

All Students

- Students who have not engaged in one of the metered contact points for five consecutive days should be contacted (template 1)

- If after a further 3 days they are still not engaging they should be followed up with a further communication and contact made will the college wellbeing team so see if they are in contact with the student (template 2)

- If they remain with no engagement after a total of 10 days, and there is no ongoing support from the college wellbeing team, the case should be escalated by contacting the central wellbeing services. Central services should not divulge what the difficulties are, but that they are working with the student. In addition, they should be sent a further communication. (template 3)

- Where there are wellbeing issues / concerns services should support the student to help return to engagement or consider alternatives such as intercalation

- Where no issues and engagement does not resume action should be taken to deem the student to have withdrawn.

- Functionality exists within the site for departments to email students – individually or collectively – directly from the site. A record will be kept of that communication within the site, and there is an option to send a copy of any emails to the sender’s own email inbox.

Visa Students (this should exceptional, as they should be picked up earlier by the above processes)

- Students who have not engaged in one of the metered contact points for twenty consecutive days will be contacted by the visa team and reminded of their compliance responsibility and unless they provide good cause for their continued absence we will report them to the Home Office

- If after a further week they are still not engaging they will be contacted a second time and informed that once their lack of engagement reaches 30 days we will report them to the Home Office and that will start the process of a visa curtailment

- If no engagement reaches 30 days they will be recorded on the SMS (Home Office database) as not engaging and that will trigger the processes towardscurtailment. The student will be contacted and informed of that and will simultaneously be referred to SAC for formal exclusion / termination. If that referral reveals exceptional circumstances and the student is permitted to continue the SMS note will be retracted.
Template letters for communication with students

Letter 1

Dear xxx

Our records show that you have not recorded your attendance at any timetabled in-person or online teaching events during the five days. If you have attended but have not been able to record your attendance because of a technical difficulty, please contact ISS support to resolve the issue.

We appreciate that things are difficult at present, and I am contacting you to ask whether you are experiencing any difficulties or issues that are affecting your ability to engage with your studies. If so, please do get in touch with me so that I can help you to try and resolve them.

In addition, there are many services available at Lancaster to support you: further details are available here.

The University’s self-certification system is not currently available: if you are, or have been, ill please let me know so that I can update our records. If you are self-isolating, have suspected COVID-19 symptoms, or have tested positive for COVID-19, you need to let the University know by reporting this on Connect Lancaster.

I do hope to hear from you soon. In the meantime, I will continue to monitor your engagement and will contact you again if your record shows no further engagement.

Yours sincerely
xxx

Email address:

Letter 2

Dear xxx

I wrote to you a few days ago about your lack of recorded attendance at any timetabled in-person or online teaching events during the previous week.

We are concerned that you have still not engaged with your teaching, either in-person or online and that you have not been in touch with me. It is vital that you engage with your studies and do not fall behind. Continued absence could affect your academic performance. If you have questions or problems about the academic work, please let me know. If, alternatively, it is because you are experiencing difficulties at this time, you should either let me know or contact one of the following avenues for support available here.
I do hope to hear from you soon. In the meantime, I will continue to monitor your engagement. If you do not re-engage with your studies, or reach out for support, we may need to conclude that you have decided to withdraw from your studies this year.

Yours sincerely

xxx

Email address:

Letter 3

Dear xxx

I have written to you several times about you lack of engagement and I have not heard back from you. Our records now show that you have not recorded your attendance at any timetabled in-person or online teaching events during the last two weeks.

We are still keen to help you, and do hope that you will reach out. If that does not happen in the next few days we will have no option but to conclude that you have decided to withdraw from your studies.

To remind you, there are many services available at Lancaster to support you: further details are available here.

Yours sincerely

xxx

Email address: