Learner Attendance Policy

Policy details

Policy Title	Learner Attendance Policy
Current Revision	
Policy Owner	Sam Gunnarsson, Assistant Principal Learner Experience
Linked Policies	Responsible at Study Policy, Fit to Study Policy.
Relevant Legislation	

Approval and Review

Approval	Via College Executive Board

Date of Issue	August 2024
Next review due	August 2026

Equality

The College will comply with all statutory duties in respect of The Equality Act 2010 and its Protected Characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. The college will work within the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and any subsequent enactments or modifications.

Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out at the drafting stage for new policies and where existing policies are reviewed and updated.

Sustainability

The college will comply with all statutory duties in respect of sustainable development by seeking to improve the long-term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities. This needs to be done in ways which promote social justice, equality of opportunity and which enhance the natural and cultural environment while respecting its limits.

Welsh Language

The College will comply with its Welsh Language Scheme, which is a statutory document, in all of its activities. This includes conducting Welsh Language Impact Assessments for all new and revised policies and initiatives.

Our commitment to being a Trauma Informed Organisation

The College is committed to transforming into a trauma-informed institution where safety, collaboration, choice, trust and empowerment are central to our culture and practices, ensuring the wellbeing and resilience of all learners and staff. We prioritise the wellbeing of all, fostering positive relationships and experiences which develop and uphold the resilience of learners and staff.

Our commitment to becoming an Antiracist Organisation

Our approach will tackle racism on many levels. We will engage all members of our College community to support transformational change.
We are determined to tackle racial discrimination in all its forms and will be referring to the Race Relations Act 1976 and to achieve the actions set out in the Black Further Education Leadership Group (BFELG) 10 Point Plan.
We are committed to making sure that our College is inclusive. We want the experience of studying and working here to be positive and welcoming for everyone, of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.
We understand that this is the responsibility of all of us and we expect everyone to play an active part.

Guidance for staff

1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 The Learner Attendance Policy has been developed as part of The College Merthyr Tydfil's commitment to providing a supportive learning environment. This enables learners who have chosen to study at the college achieve to their full potential.

1.2 The college recognises the investment that learners make when a they enrol on a programme of study or training. We will ensure appropriate processes are in place to monitor attendance and offer support in response to absenteeism, so that learners have the opportunity to reach their full potential and successfully complete their course.

1.3 The Learner Attendance Policy applies to all full time and part learners across the college.

2. The policy requires:

2.1 All learners to attend their timetabled sessions associated with their programme of study. Examples of timetabled sessions include workshops, salons, tutorials, lectures, laboratory sessions, rehearsals, placements and field trips. Attendance may also be required at additional activities outside of the usual timetable, e.g. support sessions, competitions and catch up sessions.

2.2 All learners to be provided with a timetable of scheduled teaching and learning sessions.

2.3 Learners should arrive on time for classes and remain for the duration of the session. If there is a genuine reason for being late or needing to leave early such as, the learner is a Young Carer, they have a medical appointment or there is an issue with transport, the learner must inform their tutor, provide an appointment card / medical letter or produce a Student Pass. Punctuality features in our Responsible at Study Policy and shows learners are Respectful and Ready to learn.

2.4 Staff must ensure that registers are marked at the start of the class and closed by the end of the timetabled session taking place. Staff who are unable to mark the register during class contact should ensure they complete the register by the end of the day. In the event of a field trip, sporting event or any other off-site activity, registers must be completed within 24 hours.

2.5 All learners are able to access their attendance record via tutorials and OnTrack.

2.6 Course/personal tutors will discuss attendance with learners during tutorials using OnTrack. Any areas of concern will be recorded on the learner's electronic Individual Learning Plan (e-ILP) for monitoring purposes, and targets set as and when required.

2.7 Absences are unauthorised unless the learner submits an Authorised Absence form to the course/personal tutor prior to a planned period of absence. (Appendix 2)

2.8 Learners must contact their course/personal tutor before 9am on the first day of an unplanned absence to notify them of the reason they are unable to attend class, and when they plan to return.

3   Authorised Absence

3.1 Authorised absence is defined as unavoidable absence arising from:

- Sickness or injury which is sufficiently serious to make college attendance impossible or unsafe (Medical note is produced).
- A medical appointment which cannot reasonably be attended outside course hours.
- Civil responsibilities, such as Jury Service.
- A visit to a university open day or career related interview.
- Attendance at a college representative meeting.
- Attendance at a funeral or wedding of a close relative.
- Participation in a recognised religious holiday.
- Attendance at a probation or other external agency meeting.
- Attendance at a national event arranged by NUSW.
- Representation of the college at a sporting event.
- Interview/audition for drama/music schools and or scholarship.
- National or International college approved trip/visit.
- Exam attendance.
- Family Holiday (providing permission has been sought, learner attendance is over 90% and no more than 10 Holiday days within an academic year).

3.2 Learners are required to seek consent from their course/ personal tutors for authorised absences prior to a planned sporting event, educational visit or field trip.

3.3 Authorised absences are recorded on the register as E (explained) or M (Medical). It is important to note that an authorised absence will not have a negative impact on the learner's overall attendance rate. Evidence will be required from the learner and provided to the tutor.

4. Unauthorised absences

4.1 Any unauthorised absences will be recorded by the tutor on the register as A.

4.2 The following MUST NOT be used as Authorised – these are an Absence Mark:

- Sickness or injury (No medical note produced)
- Minor transport difficulties
- Driving lessons
- GP/Dentist/Hospital appointment (Can be amended to authorised absence if proof of appointment is shown)

5. Punctuality

5.1 Learners arriving more than 10 minutes late for a class and without an appropriate reason, will be marked as being late and will be recorded in the register with an L. Learners will be admitted into sessions, however the tutor should discuss the late attendance at the end of the session and provide some catch up work.

6. Support for learners with emerging attendance issues

Where a learner's attendance falls below the college's expectations of 90% within one month, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

- Tutors will set targets to encourage and support regular attendance and to address any concerns on On Track Pastoral.
- College staff may contact the learner or the parent/legal guardians of learners under the age of 18 to seek an explanation for the unsatisfactory attendance.
- Medical evidence will be requested for repeated periods of illness.
- Course/personal tutors will agree with the learner an attendance improvement target and document via OnTrack Pastoral
- Learners facing financial hardship that is impacting on their attendance will be supported to apply for additional funds via the colleges Financial Contingency Funding [FCF] and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).
- Where appropriate, the learner will be referred to Learner Support and Inspire to ensure additional support is provided.
- Persistent absenteeism may lead to learners being withdrawn from their programme, if they are not engaging with the support offered or communicating with their staff.

7 Learner Responsibilities

Learners are responsible for:

7.1 Carrying and displaying Learner ID ~~smart~~ cards at all times.

7.2 Attending all timetabled classes including personalised learning support sessions.

7.3 Arriving on time for class and remaining for the duration of the session.

7.4 Seeking consent from their course/personal tutors for any planned absence before the event.

7.5 Contacting their personal/course tutor on the first day of absence, for example in the case of illness. Contact by telephone or e-mail should be made before 9am on the first day of absence. On return, the learner must also provide the college with evidence of the reason for absence.

7.6 Notifying the course/personal tutor of a prolonged absence so that work can be set and provided.

7.8 Monitoring their own attendance targets via e-ILP and OnTrack.

7.9 Notifying the Learner Services regarding any loss of EMA/Welsh Government Learning Grant within 4 weeks of the absence. Issues relating to unmarked registers should be discussed with the course/personal tutor in the first instance.

8 Role of the Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officers are available to support learners and college staff to promote attendance, establish positive working relationships with learners and staff and to be proactive in addressing potential, emerging attendance concerns. They will do this by:

- Working closely with Heads of Division, Pastoral / Course tutors and support teams within the college.
- Acting as a key contact for learners and will call learners each day when they are absent and not notified their Pastoral / Course tutor.
- Contacting parents/carers regarding attendance, including written correspondence when required.
- Providing attendance reports for Heads of Division.
- Identifying and working with individuals and groups of students where attendance is below college expectations.
- Developing strategies to promote punctuality and regular attendance of all students.
- Taking and logging initial calls to the attendance line every morning from 8am.

9 Tutor responsibility

Personal/course tutors are key staff to develop and promote positive relationships with the learners in their groups, to know their learners and understand their

challenges. Learners are more likely to engage in College and have regular attendance if they are able to identify a 'safe and approachable adult' they are able to speak to.

Tutors also have a contractual duty and adhere to the Education Workforce Code of Practice and Welsh Government Audit requirements, including:

9.1 To meet with the Attendance Officer on a fortnightly basis to discuss any attendance concerns and agree actions moving forward to offer the learner support to improve their attendance.

9.2 Raising awareness of the Learner Attendance Policy and Procedures.

9.3 Reminding learners of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

9.4 Recording attendance on a register before the end of every working day. In the event of an off-site activity, registers must be completed within 24 hours or as soon as practicably possible where there are exceptional circumstances.

9.5 Authorising absence in accordance with the college Learner Attendance Policy.

9.6 Monitoring the attendance of learners with attendance below the intervention trigger of 90%.

9.7 Referring and signposting learners to the appropriate welfare support services as appropriate.

9.8 Discussing attendance with learners during tutorials and during OnTrack progress review meetings.

9.10 Ensuring attendance is marked appropriately on the registers and that evidence is provided by the learner and kept on file for all periods of authorised absence and illness, for EMA and Welsh Government Learning Grant.

9.11 Discussing with the learners tutors any retrospective alterations made to marked registers that may impact on a learner's eligibility to receive financial support based on attendance.

9.12 Learners are withdrawn within four weeks of their last attendance using the online form.

10 Heads of Division are responsible for ensuring that:

10.1 All full time and part time learners have access to a course/personal tutor.

10.2 There is a register in place for **all timetabled events –** and Student Records are informed of any amendments either via e-mail srhelpdesk@merthyr.ac.uk or contacting the Timetable Administrator (Ex: 6059) to make an appointment.

10.3 All teaching staff maintain an accurate record of learner attendance through use of the college register system.

10.4 Course/personal tutors regularly review learner progress including the monitoring of attendance and that appropriate action is taken to ensure that the learner remains engaged.

10.5 In the case of tutor absence, learners are informed at the earliest opportunity of alternative arrangements for the class.

10.6 Attendance and marking of registers is monitored and reviewed during course and divisional team meetings. Heads of Division will need to ensure that registers are marked appropriately during the absence of staff.

11. Promoting Excellent Attendance

11.1 All learners will sign the Learning Agreement at the start of their course agreeing to follow the Attendance procedures.

11.2 Parents and Guardians of those learners under 18 will be given a copy of this Learner Agreement along with information on how they can support excellent attendance.

11.3 All College staff will reinforce the importance of excellent attendance throughout the year.

11.4 Information on weekly attendance should be discussed in Divisional meetings and linked to a programme of rewards which will be in place throughout the year to support excellent attendance. This system of rewards will be based within each department and will culminate in an overall prize for attendance.

11.5 Anyone with 100% attendance for a term will receive a postcard home.

11.6 Any learners whose attendance falls below 90% should receive an immediate postcard; this should also be sent to their parent/guardian.

11.7 Attendance reports will be produced for individual course\personal tutors in each division on a weekly basis and should be reviewed in divisional meetings monthly. It is expected that course tutors and personal tutors will provide information on the reasons for course attendance in readiness for these meetings.

11.8 Staff will develop strategies to engage learners in useful activities to enable them to achieve their potential and develop skills for employability and progression; this will be used as a tool to improve attendance.

11.9 Each division will celebrate the learner of the group and attendance of the group at Christmas, Easter and the end of year; certificates will be made available for this.

11.10 The College will provide a variety of support functions ie wellbeing, attendance officers, safeguarding, financial, careers and support for learning, to enable learners to maintain strong attendance.

Appendix 1

The following table outlines the marks that tutors must use to record attendance on the registers:

Register Attendance Marks

Mark	Mark Description	Attendance Type	Notes/Examples
/	Present	Present ✔	Attendance of session
X	College Authorised Absence	Present ✔	e.g. Snow / power cuts / strikes / fire drills / safety / tutor absent
L	Late	Present ✔	Late start or early finish (>10 minutes)
P	Work Placement	Present ✔	Work placement / Sport events / Visits
A	Absence	Absence ✘	Any un-planned absence from session / sick
E	Individual Explained Absence	Planned Absence ✔	Planned absence notified to tutor – Requires evidence
M	Medical	Planned Absence ✔	Medical absence approved - Requires evidence
V	Present	Present ✔	Temporary mark used only in the first 2 weeks while Timetables are being created/amended.

Appendix 2

Name: _____

Learner's Signature: _____

Programme/Course: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Authorised Signature: _____

(To be signed by Course/Personal Tutor)

Date approved:

Approved by:

Review date:

Responsible Manager:

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment				
Protected Characteristic	**Positive Impact**	**Neither positive or negative**	**Negative impact**	**Comment**
Disability	x			It is intended that this policy will have a positive impact on those who have a disability, and ensure the appropriate support has been provided at the correct time.
Gender Reassignment	x			It is intended that this policy will support any learner going through gender reassignment whose behaviour or progress is compromised by this process as a result of absences, medication or any other complications.
Marriage or Civil Partnership		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Pregnancy and Maternity	x			It is intended that this policy will support learners who need additional support or reasonable adjustments, alongside any other concerns, whilst they are pregnant.
Race		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Religion or Belief	x			It is intended that this policy will have a positive impact on religion and belief, if their absence have been affected through religious observance.
Sexual Orientation		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group.
Sex (Gender)		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group
Age		x		It is not envisaged that this will have either a positive or negative impact on this group