



Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

This policy is based upon the expectation that students should be present for ALL timetabled teaching and learning sessions or scheduled supervisions. It outlines the procedures related to recording, monitoring and responding to student attendance records.

A robust attendance policy responds both to the expectations of validating bodies and the College's own desire to proactively support individual student's wellbeing and academic success. It also enables the College to meet the reporting requirements of external regulatory bodies.

Section 2 of the policy relates to students enrolled on a Higher Education theology course, or part of a course, at Spurgeon's College. Section 3 relates to students enrolled on other courses, or parts of courses, at Spurgeon's College.

2. Higher Education Theology Courses

2.1 Recording Attendance of Taught Students¹

Recording student attendance is the process by which data is collected weekly and entered onto a summary database.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Registrar in conjunction with the Academic Director to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to record and monitor the attendance of all taught students.

The attendance of all taught students in timetabled lectures and seminars is recorded on a weekly basis during term time by the use of **electronic registers** which tutors complete in their teaching sessions. This may be supplemented by recording attendance at a variety of additional attendance points (e.g., pastoral group meetings, individual appointments with staff etc.) This will provide

¹ Students on UG programmes; internally validated programmes; Part 1 MA, MTh programmes

evidence of a pattern of activity which can help the College to ascertain whether the aims of this policy are being met.

2.2 Recording Attendance of Postgraduate Research Students²

It is the responsibility of the Senior Registrar in conjunction with the Academic Director to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to record and monitor the attendance of all research students.

Attendance points for Postgraduate Research students will be recorded as appropriate for their programme of study.

2.3 Monitoring Attendance of Taught Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research Students³

Monitoring student attendance is the analysis of the data to identify causes for concern and initiate appropriate responsive action.

Attendance for all students is monitored informally by tutors on a continuous basis in order to pick up concerns as soon as possible. The aim is to ensure that students understand their responsibility in the learning process and remain engaged with staff in a positive way so that the process goes forward effectively and obstacles are overcome constructively. Tutors should alert the programme leader if a student is absent from classes for the first two weeks of a semester. On a formal basis attendance is monitored through the production of **attendance reports** that provide the attendance percentages for each student. These attendance reports draw on the electronic registers completed by tutors on Moodle and are produced by the VLE Administrator twice per semester. These reports highlight attendance figures that fall below 80% and show where a pattern of absence across units raises concerns about a student's wellbeing.

The mid-semester attendance report will be sent to pastoral tutors by the VLE Administrator so they can follow up any concerns through informal conversations with the student concerned. Where serious ongoing causes for concern are identified, the pastoral tutor will consult with the Director of Postgraduate Studies (Dir PGS) or the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Dir UGS), as appropriate. Tutors will keep a record of informal conversations by completing an Attendance Intervention form.

The end-of-semester attendance reports will be sent by the VLE Administrator to the Dir PGS or the Dir UGS (as appropriate) who will follow up any attendance concerns according to these guidelines:

² MPhil, DMIIn and PhD students; MA and MTh Part 2 students

³ See for example the University of Manchester's expectation that the attendance of Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research students is monitored: Regulation XX – Monitoring Attendance and Wellbeing of Students <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=1895>

- **Taught Students⁴**

- Students whose overall attendance for any unit has fallen below 50% will be asked to make an appointment to see the Dir PGS or the Dir UGS.
- Students whose overall attendance for any unit has fallen between 50% and 70% will be asked to explain their pattern of attendance by email or by appointment.
- Students whose overall attendance for any unit has fallen between 70% and 80% will be sent an email reminding them of the College's expectation that they should be present for all timetabled teaching and learning sessions.

NB For attendance purposes Research Seminars are considered equivalent to a unit for Part 1 Taught Master's students.

- **In-service Master's students**

- Students who have not attended the agreed Residential Study Days (4 over a 2 year period in Part 1) and ALL agreed Supervision meetings will be required to meet with the Dir PGS.

- **Taught Master's students Part 2**

- Students who have not attended ALL agreed Supervision meetings will be required to meet with the Dir PGS.

- **MPhil, DMin, PhD students**

- Students who have not attended at least one Research Colloquium per year and ALL agreed Supervision meetings will be required to meet with the Dir PGS.

Any taught student whose attendance for a whole unit falls below 80% may be asked by the Dir UGS or Dir PGS to produce additional work to ensure they have the opportunity to reach their potential in their studies. This is not to be understood as a punitive measure but rather expresses practically the College's commitment to the student's well-being and academic success. For this reason these measures may be applied to both authorised and unauthorised absence (see section 5 below). Such additional work is set at the discretion of the Dir UGS / Dir PGS taking into account an individual student's profile and may take a number of forms including, for example:

- Completing tasks related to the sessions missed (e.g., through using the Online version of the unit) ;
- Listening to audio recordings and video recordings of lectures missed (where available) and providing evidence of engagement with the material;
- Attending a 1-1 tutorial with the unit tutor;

⁴ Students on UG programmes; internally validated programmes; Part 1 MA, MTh programmes

- Providing an evidence-based account of the steps taken to catch up on missed work.

Students who fail to comply with such requirements should note that the Academic Director will issue a formal warning to the student and may report this to the Examination Board. The Examination Board may refuse the opportunity for referred assessment in the case of students who have failed a unit following unsatisfactory attendance.⁵

Repeated patterns of absence in more than one semester may lead to a variety of actions including:

- the recommendation that the student produces a plan to improve their attendance in consultation with the learning support department (or pastoral tutor);
- a referral to the College's chaplaincy service;
- the recommendation that the student applies for an Interruption of Studies;
- the issue of a formal warning letter outlining consequences of further unacceptable absences;
- in the case of ministerial students attendance records will be considered as part of the College's commendation processes.

A student who is refused permission by the Examination Board to take any form of assessment or progress on the grounds of unsatisfactory attendance may submit a request for verification of the records on which that decision was based within 15 working days in accordance with the College's Verification and Appeal Procedure. According to the same Procedure, a student who is not satisfied with the outcome of the verification process may appeal against the decision within 15 working days of being notified of that outcome.

2.4 Authorised and Unauthorised absence

The procedures in section 4 above underline the College's expectation that all students should attend every timetabled teaching or learning session or required supervisory session. However, the College recognises that situations arise which lead to unavoidable absences. For this reason the College distinguishes between "authorised" and "unauthorised" absences.

⁵ 'If an Examination Board has documented evidence that, (a) a student's work or attendance or both have been unsatisfactory, and (b) the student has been formally warned of the unsatisfactory work or attendance but has not shown significant improvement acceptable to the Board, then the Board has the right to refuse referred assessment.' *Faculty Annotated UG Regulations v.5.1 September 2014, para 21; Faculty Annotated PGT Regulations v.5.1 November 2014, para 21.*

2.4.1 Authorised absence

An absence may be recorded as authorised in the following circumstances:

- Personal illness / health problems (including planned operations);
- Close bereavement;
- Serious personal difficulties;
- Serious pastoral issue in placement church;
- Care issues (which could not be predicted or planned for);
- Exceptional and unpredictable circumstances (e.g. major unforeseen disasters);
- Significant conference attendance or mission activity recommended or agreed by the Principal or one of the Vice Principals of the College;
- Parental leave;
- Jury duty;
- Territorial Army sign up.

Authorised absence will only be recorded if:

- For unexpected absence the student conveyed their apologies before 8.30am by email or telephone call to the College Reception on the day of absence;
- For planned absences permission has been gained from the Principal or one of the Vice Principals as far in advance as possible.

2.4.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence will normally be recorded as unauthorised in the following circumstances:

- Family celebrations;
- Holidays;
- Paid employment;
- Extra-curricular activities (e.g., sports and leisure activities; pursuing hobbies);
- Conference attendance or mission activity which is not recommended or approved by the Principal or one of the Vice Principals of the College;
- Avoidable practical issues (routine traffic delays, over sleeping, non-essential appointments).

Unauthorised absence will always be recorded if the student fails to take the initiative to inform the College of unexpected or planned absences.

2.5 Part attendance at timetabled teaching sessions

The procedure in section 4 above may also be applied to students for whom there are repeated entries of late arrival or early departure. The College recognises that situations arise which lead to unavoidable lateness or early

departure (for example, catastrophic events, personal difficulties, medical appointments or sudden sickness). Students who arrive for a teaching session more than 5 minutes late will receive a late mark; students who arrive later than half way through a teaching session will receive an absent mark. Students who leave teaching sessions early (e.g. at the half time break) will receive a Part-Attendance mark. Reasons for lateness or early departure, where given, will be recorded by tutors.

2.6 Internal Procedures

To report absence students need to complete the “Notification of Absence” form available on Moodle. On submitting this form a copy will be sent to the Reception team and to the student’s pastoral tutor. The Reception team will populate the Moodle attendance records (and thus notify relevant teaching staff of the student’s absence). This process supports the College’s aim to monitor effectively student well-being by alerting relevant staff immediately of relevant information about absences.

Students need to be aware that the College has an obligation to report on non-attendance to some external bodies for reasons relating to professional development, funding or visa requirements. Confidentiality regarding non-attendance cannot therefore be assumed.

2.7 Online students

Online students are not normally required to attend College. However, their engagement with the unit material as a whole is measured by the completion of a learning journal. Online students’ learning journals need to evidence rigorous engagement with at least 80% of the unit material in order for them to achieve the credits for a unit. Unsatisfactory Learning Journals will need to be resubmitted in line with the University regulations. The learning journal is therefore considered to measure an online student’s “attendance” to the unit content in the same way as taught students’ physical attendance is measured. In this way there is a parity in expectations for all students, which expresses the College’s concern for the academic success of all its students.

3. Other Courses

3.1 Counselling

Counselling students are expected to attend at least 80% of the taught sessions. Their attendance is recorded on a paper register which they are required to sign for each attendance.

The tutors also keep a record of their attendance so that this can be monitored and any patterns and concerns about attendance can be picked up early.

Students are expected to contact the Counselling tutors preferably by phone (but email is also acceptable) by 8.15 a.m. on the day of the session if they are unable to attend.

The policy with regard to authorised and unauthorised absences is as in **section 2.4** above.

If a student fails to attend without authorisation in more than two sessions they will be contacted by their personal tutor to ascertain the reason, so they can be supported in their learning.

The policy with regard to part attendance is as in **section 2.5** above.

3.2 Equipped to Minister

It is the responsibility of the Equipped to Minister (EtM) Course Director to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to record and monitor the attendance of all taught students on the EtM course.

The attendance of all taught students at timetabled lectures for EtM will be recorded at the start of each teaching day on a printed register at the registration desk.

These registers will then be kept by the College as the definitive record of the student's attendance. In the case of a query regarding a student's attendance at an EtM teaching day the physical register will be referred to. If there is no record of the student signing in at the start of a teaching day on the register then they will be considered to have not attended.

Non-attendance may result in the student becoming ineligible for either a module certificate or the course certificate.

Each module of the Equipped to Minister course allows students to gain a certificate of attendance and participation. The certificate requires the submission of two assignments and at least **50% attendance**.

After satisfactory completion of eight modules and assignments students are eligible for a Spurgeon's College Certificate of Achievement which is an internally validated Spurgeon's award. A certificate requires at least **50% attendance** for each module attended and at least **two-thirds attendance** over all eight modules.

Students who have successfully completed the assignments but have not met the attendance requirements to receive a certificate will normally be required to pay and attend the module lectures again. Once they have met the attendance requirements outlined above a certificate will be issued.

3.3 Other Courses

Specific requirements may apply to students on other programmes and courses which may in due course be developed.

Document control box			
Title	Attendance Policy		
Date approved	July 2018	Implementation date	July 2018
Next review date	tbc		
Version			
Approving body	Governors		
Quality Code consulted	B3, B4, B5		
Member of staff responsible	Vice-Principal: Academic Director		