

Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Guidance

Introduction

As a Student Sponsor, Imperial College London is responsible for ensuring that it meets UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) engagement monitoring requirements for all students sponsored under the student visa route. UKVI expects Student Visa Sponsors to monitor student engagement with the University and report to them via the Sponsor Management System (SMS) if a student is no longer in attendance. Failure to monitor student engagement is likely to result in sanctions against the University, which could lead to the revocation of the student sponsor licence.

Scope

This guidance applies to all students with a Student Visa sponsored by Imperial College London. This includes students studying on full-time and part-time attendance modes. It applies to all time spent under Student Visa including time spent writing up or away from the University, on a placement or study abroad year and on external study leave for research purposes. This guidance outlines the basic monitoring requirements for Student visa holders and does not replace departmental or faculty attendance procedures.

Procedures

It is acknowledged that the level, nature and timing of contacts between a student and the University will differ according to their discipline and programme type. It is the responsibility of each department to develop its own engagement monitoring plan and to ensure that this is followed. This process will be outlined in the Departmental Student Visa Attendance Monitoring Plan, which will be reviewed periodically by the Visa Compliance Team. Departments will be asked to provide a spreadsheet or report to the Visa Compliance Team every term showing how engagement has been monitored.

Attendance Period and Frequency

To show a student's engagement with their studies, the contact points must be spread across the academic year and include those which indicate the student's presence on campus. No more than 2 'electronic' engagement points (e.g. contact by email) can be used as evidence in one academic year and these should not be used consecutively.

Attendance Contact Points

Examples of expected contacts include:

- a lesson, lecture, tutorial or seminar;
- laboratory work
- confirmation of a supervisory meeting

- a test, examination or assessment board;
- PhD progress review
- a meeting with a personal tutor;
- a research-method or research-panel meeting, writing-up seminars or doctoral workshops;
- an oral examination (viva);
- an appointment with a welfare adviser or international student adviser;
- submitting assessed or unassessed coursework;
- an interim dissertation, coursework or report;
- registration with the University or department

This is a non-exhaustive list and departments should seek advice from the Visa Compliance Team about the suitability of other types of contact.

Part- Time Students

UKVI introduced the part-time visa route in January 2018 for courses at level 7 or above on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Students who hold this type of visa are required to have 10 contact points per year. It is acknowledged that due to the nature of some of the part-time courses these contacts may be clustered around certain dates when students are expected to be in attendance at the University or that a number of them may be remote.

For part-time postgraduate research students, the minimum number of contact points is 5. Please ensure that they are distributed across the academic year.

Enrolment

All Student visa holders are required to enrol online each academic year and to provide visa documentation to satisfy UKVI right to study checks as well as Imperial enrolment checks. Any evidence to confirm their visa status in the UK will be logged and stored on the University's database in accordance with UKVI requirements. Students must complete all parts of enrolment with the University within three weeks of the start date of the programme. Failure to do so without first seeking authorisation from the department in conjunction with the Visa Compliance Team could lead to withdrawal.

Recording Engagement Information

The University is subject to compliance auditing by UKVI and is required to keep evidence showing that Student Visa holders engagement monitoring has taken place and that any concerns about engagement have been investigated.

Departments are responsible for keeping a record of student engagement including details of contact points and where appropriate information about missed attendance points and what action was taken to confirm their status. This information should be clear and easily retrievable.

Records can be kept either on paper or electronically. They must be easily accessible in case of a UKVI audit and should be available for Student Visa holders up to a year after they have completed their programme.

Year Abroad and Work Placements

The University will continue to monitor student's engagement while they are undertaking a work placement or a year abroad. Departments are required to put in place processes to monitor these students, which may require confirmation of engagement from the host institution or remote contact with the student.

Study Away from the University

The University is required to fulfil its sponsor duties for Student Visa holders when they are away from Imperial. This includes students that are undertaking study at a Partner Research Institution (PRI), undertaking a split PhD or on field work. Time away should be authorised by the department and a plan of how attendance will continue to be undertaken during the period away from the University should be agreed.

Where Postgraduate Research students are undertaking field work the External Study Leave form should be completed and returned to Student Records. For any other types of study away from University should be reported directly to the Visa Compliance Team. Any changes to a student's status while away from University (i.e. student withdraws from the Study Abroad scheme) should be reported to the Visa Compliance Team immediately.

Writing Up

UKVI regulations allow the University to sponsor postgraduate students who are writing up a dissertation or thesis. If a student resides in the UK whilst writing up, there must be regular contact with their supervisor and their contact details (including telephone numbers) must be kept up-to-date.

Where a student chooses to write up their thesis/ dissertation in their home country, the University will inform the student that their sponsorship will be withdrawn and a notification will be made to UKVI.

Vacation Periods

Students will not normally be allowed to be absent during designated teaching and examination periods. During the vacation periods, there is no requirement for undergraduate students to be present at Imperial. However, postgraduate taught students are expected to continue to engage with their studies over the summer as this is not a vacation period for them.

Postgraduate Research students do not have predetermined leave time and are entitled to 8 weeks of annual leave throughout the year, which supervisors must authorise and keep a record of. Students taking agreed annual leave are not required to be engaged with the University.

Non-Engagement

Non-engagement and absences must be recorded and acted upon where applicable. The University is required to report to UKVI within 10 days any student who is no longer in attendance at Imperial.

Where a student has missed three expected contact points and there are no mitigating circumstances, or where there are other concerns regarding a student's absence, this should be raised with the Visa Compliance Team.

Interruption of study

In some exceptional circumstances where the well-being of a student may be adversely affected by a visa cancellation, the University can permit an interruption for up to 60 days. Absences of up to 14 days can be authorised by the department as an authorised absence. Any absence of 15 to 60 days must be authorised by the department and follow the University procedure for formally requesting an interruption of study.

If an interruption of up to 60 days is approved, the student must still be able to complete their programme within their existing period of leave.

Reporting Students to UKVI

Reporting engagement concerns to the Visa Compliance Team will not result in an automatic report to UKVI. The Visa Compliance Team will always seek agreement from the student's department before taking any action to interrupt or withdraw a student from the University.

Further Information

For further support and advice on engagement monitoring requirements, please contact the Visa Compliance Team at visacompliance@imperial.ac.uk

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