

# Attendance and Participation Policy 2026/27

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## Alternative Format, Support and Information

If you need this document in an alternative format or have any questions about its content, please see the contact options below.

### How to Contact Us:

- **General Queries:** For questions about this document, please [Contact Us](#).
- **Call:** +44 (0) 300 303 5303 (England)  
+44 (0) 2980 323 722 (Northern Ireland)  
+44 (0) 353 1 678 5399 (Republic of Ireland)  
+44 (0) 131 226 3851 (Scotland)  
+44 (0) 2920 020 354 (Wales)
- **Current Students:** Contact via [StudentHome](#)
- **Welsh-speaking Students:** Rydym yn croesawu cyswllt yn y Gymraeg. Welsh-speaking Students and Learners may speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170.

### Summary of Significant Changes since last version:

For changes made following the latest review of this document, please refer to the [change log](#) and for previous versions see the [Attendance and Participation](#) landing page.

## Introduction

The Open University is committed to providing high quality learning opportunities for our students and expects regular attendance and active engagement in your studies to support your learning experience.

As a distance learning student studying with The Open University, attendance means interaction with our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform and study materials, attendance at tutorials, completion and submission of assignments, and attendance at exams.

For some students, in-person attendance may also be required, such as going to residential or day schools, or fulfilling placement requirements of your course. Your attendance is measured by monitoring participation and engagement with these activities, as outlined in [Section 3.4](#).

This policy sets out:

- the attendance expectations for your course at The Open University as a distance learning institution.
- how we will monitor, record and report on your participation and engagement.
- the actions that we may take if you do not meet the attendance requirements of your course, and compliance implications.

Throughout this document, The Open University will be referred to as “**We**”, “**Us**”, or “**Our**” and students will be referred to as “**You**” or “**Your**”.

## Scope

The policy applies to Students of The Open University:

- Undergraduate Students
- Postgraduate Taught Students
- Students on a work-based placement (e.g. PGCE (Wales), Nursing or Social Work qualifications). Please note there will be additional attendance expectations as set out in your course information.
- Microcredential Students
- Students in Secure Environments (SiSE)

All other students and learners are not covered by this policy. If you are uncertain as to whether this policy applies to you, or you need any help, please [contact us](#).

Postgraduate Research (PGR) students should refer to the [Academic Engagement and Attendance Policy](#).

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out our expectations of your attendance, the implications of unsatisfactory attendance, and how to access support if circumstances are impacting your ability to participate.
- 1.2 For students who are in receipt of statutory funding, we are required to monitor your participation and engagement with your studies to comply with our responsibilities to the [Student Loans Company](#) (SLC) and other external funding bodies. They require us to promptly notify them if your attendance does not meet the requirements for continued funding.

## 2. Policy Principles

What you can expect from us

- 2.1 We are committed to providing high quality learning opportunities and believe that active participation and engagement with your studies will enable you to achieve the best results.
- 2.2 We will signpost you to appropriate information advice and guidance if you tell us you are experiencing difficulties participating in study.
- 2.3 We will ensure that we comply with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and any other statutory duty or obligation. To do this, we will make reasonable adjustments to support any student who tells us they have a disability, long-term health condition, mental health condition or are neurodivergent, including Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) affecting their studies, in line with our [Student Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#). Section 5 below has further information on support available.

- 2.4 We will automatically collect data about your use of module websites and other study-related OU websites, your participation in learning activities including accessing your module materials, and your completion of assessment activities including all assignments and exams. We will use this data to measure your participation and engagement, to determine if you are meeting attendance requirements.

We will be transparent about how this attendance data is recorded, stored, acted upon and shared. For more information see our [Student Privacy Notice](#).

### **Our expectations of you**

- 2.5 We expect you to actively participate in your studies. This means taking part in activities that are required as part of your course including engaging online with your module materials, attending any compulsory events (online or in-person), and submitting assignments on time.
- 2.6 Where activities are compulsory such as attendance at residential schools or completion of assessed work, you must inform your tutor of any sickness or absence that means you will be unable to complete the activities as scheduled. See Section 5 for details of the support available if you are struggling to participate in your studies.
- 2.7 It is your responsibility to manage your study time effectively based on publicised expected study hours per week for your module(s). The actual study hours may vary from student to student, based on an individual's knowledge, experience, approach and ability to study.
- 2.8 Please speak with your tutor or [student support teams](#) if you are struggling to engage with your studies, or if any absence or exceptional circumstances are affecting your ability to engage. This will enable us to provide you with appropriate advice and support. You can also find information about the support and resources available to you via the [Help Centre](#).

2.9 As outlined in the [Conditions of Registration](#) Section D1, and the [Student Charter](#), you have agreed to our standards of academic conduct and academic integrity. If you attempt to misuse any of our student engagement measures (as listed in section 3.4 below) in a way that breaches these standards, this will be considered an act of dishonesty, and we will follow the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#) section 2.4.4.

### **3. Monitoring attendance**

#### **How we record and monitor attendance**

- 3.1 Regular attendance is required for you to continue to be entitled to funding from the Student Loans Company (SLC) or other external funding bodies. It will also help you achieve the best outcomes for your study.
- 3.2 We will automatically monitor your participation and engagement with your course, as detailed in Section 3.4. This participation and engagement data does not include any information or details about the content of discussions you have, for example details of discussions with your tutor or student support teams.
- 3.3 We collate this data to determine whether we are satisfied you are attending and participating in your course and studies. Your tutor and student support teams will make use of participation data to help inform the support they provide to you.
- 3.4 We determine your attendance by monitoring your participation and engagement with a combination of the following activities:
- Module website (for example downloading or viewing content, completing activities)
  - Submission of assessment (for example Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs), Interactive Computer Marked Assignments (iCMAs))
  - Marking of assessment, with the score meeting the required threshold and the submission being genuine
  - Submission of End-of-Module Assessment (EMA)
  - Exam attendance

- Recorded attendance at a tutorial or learning event (for example day school, residential school, laboratory day school), either virtual or in-person
  - Recorded attendance at an in-person work placement
  - Use of online library resources
  - Contact with the library relating to your studies
  - Individual Support Session (ISS) attendance
  - Contact with the Computing Helpdesk relating to your studies
- 3.5 Although the use of books, printed materials and downloaded PDFs are a valuable part of your learning, we cannot measure your engagement with these resources as part of our monitoring processes.
- 3.6 If you are a student who is using printed or other offline materials as a form of agreed reasonable adjustment, this will not be automatically measured as part of our standard monitoring processes. However, if you are actively participating in your course in other ways as outlined in [Section 3.4](#), this will usually be sufficient to meet our requirements. If you are unable to participate in line with the activities in Section 3.4 due to a disability or other additional requirement, or have any concerns about how your attendance and participation will be monitored, please speak to our [student support teams](#).
- 3.7 If you are following our Students in Secure Environments (SiSE) Programme or studying with restrictions or license conditions in the community, you will be required to follow the guidance of your nominated contact. Participation may include scheduled study hours, classroom-based activity, individual and peer learning activity, and/or limited online VLE interaction, recorded by your nominated contact, and shared with us. If we are uncertain about your levels of engagement, we will approach your nominated contact in the first instance to confirm. More information is available in the [Students Studying in Secure Environments Policy and the Supporting Students Subject to Legal License, Restriction, Condition or Orders Policy](#).

## **4. Reporting your attendance to external funding bodies**

- 4.1 If you are in receipt of, or have requested tuition fee or maintenance funding, we are required to monitor and confirm your attendance to the Student Loans Company (SLC). By confirming your attendance to the SLC, this enables them to release tuition fee funding to us; this is known as 'Attendance Confirmation'. Where applicable, we will also confirm registration to the SLC to enable them to release maintenance funding to you; this is known as 'Registration Confirmation'.
- 4.2 The earliest point that we will confirm your attendance is the first time you become liable for your tuition fees for your first module within each seasonal academic year. For more information on when this may be for you, see the Fee Rules that apply to you, available on our [Fee Rules](#) page. At this point, we will complete checks to ensure your course meets the eligibility requirements for funding. If these requirements are met, and you are engaging sufficiently with your studies in line with the measures listed in [Section 3.4](#), we will inform the SLC of your attendance.
- 4.3 Once these checks are complete, the SLC will release the tuition fee funding to us, and the maintenance funding to yourself where applicable.
- 4.4 The SLC releases tuition fee funding to us in instalments throughout the academic year, subject to your continued satisfactory attendance. If your maintenance funding is also paid in instalments, you will need to demonstrate continued attendance throughout the academic year for further maintenance funding to be released by the SLC to you.
- 4.5 Where applicable, we may be required to report your attendance to other external funding bodies so that they can release tuition fees to us or maintenance funding to you.

### **If we are unable to confirm participation**

- 4.6 If you are not fulfilling the attendance requirements of your course, and you are in receipt of maintenance funding, we will contact you by email to advise that it appears that you are no longer studying. We will include any details of actions required, including respective timeframes.

- 4.7 If you believe we have inaccurately measured your participation, you must [contact us](#) to discuss your circumstances. You will be signposted to additional support, if required.
- 4.8 If you do not resume your study engagement within the timeframe provided in our communication to you, we will inform the SLC that you have suspended your studies. The SLC will suspend your maintenance payments as a result of this. They will send you a letter confirming this change and your revised funding eligibility, including any adjustments in relation to overpayment.
- 4.9 If you resume your study engagement or can demonstrate that you have been engaging satisfactorily with your studies, we will inform the SLC accordingly, so that your funding can be resumed. You will receive all outstanding instalments and any future instalments as applicable, subject to continued satisfactory participation.
- 4.10 If your module was paid for using funding from the Student Loans Company (SLC) and you do not participate in your studies at all, or you stop participating but do not follow the deferral process outlined in the [Changing Your Study Plans Policy](#), your registration may be cancelled.

## **5. If you are struggling to participate in your studies**

### **Support**

- 5.1 You are encouraged to make use of the information and support available on the [Help Centre](#) about managing your study time effectively, developing study skills, accessing physical and mental health support, and making use of adaptations to enable you to fully engage with your course.
- 5.2 If you have concerns about your ability to engage with your studies, or experience difficulties while studying that affect your participation or progress, you should speak with your tutor or our [student support teams](#) in the first instance. They can advise of further information, advice and guidance within the University to support you with your studies. If there is a need for you to pause or stop your studies, we will explain the options available to you and any associated study implications. To understand any implications on your funding entitlement, contact our [student support teams](#).

- 5.3 If any part of your study or your assessments have been negatively affected by an exceptional situation outside of your control, the [Special Circumstances Policy](#) may apply.
- 5.4 If you experience difficult personal circumstances that affect your behaviour or interactions with others in The Open University community, or raise concerns about health, safety and wellbeing (your own or others'), and these difficulties affect your ability to attend and engage with study, we may ask you to engage with the [Fitness to Study](#) policy. This gives us the opportunity to understand your circumstances and explore how we can support you.
- 5.5 If you have a disability or become disabled at any point during your studies, and this impacts your ability to engage with your studies, there are a number of standard and specialist adjustments we can make. We encourage you to tell us about any disability or support needs at any point in your studies, so we can work together and make sure you get the right support at the right time. More information is available on the [Help Centre](#) and in the [Student Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#).

### **Change of study plans**

- 5.6 We recognise that personal circumstances may impact your study plans and mean you need to study at a pace that suits your needs. Sometimes changing your module and/or qualification to a different subject or taking a break from your studies may be the right thing to help you engage more fully and achieve a successful outcome in the future. Our modules and qualifications are designed to be flexible in the way you can study with us, however it is important that you follow the correct processes to make changes to your study options, and that you are aware of any short-term and long-term financial impacts associated with these changes. The [Help Centre](#) and [Changing Your Study Plans Policy](#) have more information on the process you need to follow.

## **6. If you stop attending**

- 6.1 If you are unable to continue to participate with your studies and therefore need to stop attending your course, you should seek advice and support from your [tutor and/or student support teams](#) in the first instance (see [Section 5](#)). Sometimes, changes to your circumstances mean that despite best efforts, the best thing for you is to defer or withdraw from your studies.
- 6.2 It is your responsibility to tell us that you want to defer or withdraw from your studies as outlined in the [Changing Your Study Plans](#) Policy. This will enable us to give you information about your fee liability and take any appropriate action relating to your SLC funding. It is important that you tell us you want to stop your studies as soon as possible, to ensure you do not receive further funding that you are not entitled to.

### **Impact on maintenance funding**

- 6.3 Unsatisfactory participation will impact your funding entitlement. If you stop participating in your studies, we will inform the SLC of your last recorded date of attendance, based on the activities detailed in [Section 3.4](#), and any remaining maintenance payments will be suspended.
- 6.4 If you have received maintenance funding for a period of study that exceeds your last recorded attendance date, the SLC will consider you to have been overpaid for this period.
- 6.5 Any overpayments you have received will be recovered from you by the SLC or may be deducted from future payments made to you if you return to study.

### **Impact on Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

- 6.6 If you receive Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) paid directly through the Funding Authority and we determine that you have stopped participating in your studies, your DSA payments will be suspended, as you will no longer be meeting the criteria for receipt of these funds. Any costs incurred for support that is provided to you after we have determined you have stopped participating in your studies may not be covered by your DSA and you may be held personally liable for these costs.

## Impact on bursaries and scholarships

6.7 If you are in receipt of a bursary or scholarship from other independent sources, these may have their own attendance requirements. If your circumstances change or you stop participating in your studies, it is your responsibility to inform the provider of your bursary or scholarship as soon as possible.

## 7. Queries, complaints and appeals

7.1 If you have a query or a concern with any aspect of how we apply this policy, you are encouraged to [contact us](#) promptly so that we can try to put things right. If you feel we have not responded appropriately to your query or concern, you can raise a complaint or appeal using the [Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).

## Related Policies and Legislation

The following policies and pages are related to attendance and participation, and may provide additional information, advice and support:

- [Changing Your Study Plans Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#)
- [Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Conditions of Registration](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1995 \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2004](#) and Section 75 of the [Northern Ireland Act 1998](#) for Northern Ireland
- [Equality Act 2010](#) for England, Scotland and Wales
- [Equality and Diversity Statement](#)
- [Fee Rules](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Student Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#)
- [Safonau'r Gymraeg \(Welsh Language Standards\)](#)

- [Special Circumstances Policy](#)
- [Student Charter](#)
- [Student Protection Plan](#)

## **Feedback**

If you have any feedback on this policy, please email [student-policy-compliance@open.ac.uk](mailto:student-policy-compliance@open.ac.uk).

## **Charity Statement**

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.

## **About this Document**

### **Summary of significant changes since previous version**

- References to the Accessibility Policy replaced with the new Student Reasonable Adjustments Policy.
- New paragraph 4.10 added to explain that your registration may be cancelled if your module was paid using funding from SLC and you do not participate in your studies at all, or you stop participating without following the deferral process outlined in the Changing Your Study Plans Policy.
- General updates made throughout the document to improve clarity, readability and consistency, with no substantive changes to content.

## **Document Information**

Version number : Version 1.0

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