

POLICY NOTE ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

This policy note must be read in conjunction with General Regulation 13 (Attendance, Engagement and Progress) and the Procedure for Dealing with Matters Relating to Attendance, Progress and Engagement.

1. An underpinning principle of the regulatory frameworks for taught awards is that credit is an indicator of the associated expected volume of study, whilst the mark for the module indicates achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
2. Severe and/or persistent cases of non-attendance or non-engagement should be dealt with not by the refusal of permission to sit examinations or permission to sit an examination or by mark penalisation (as was permitted under previous regulations), but by the disciplinary route.
3. Where a member of staff identifies severe or persistent non-attendance or non-engagement they shall refer the matter to the nominated academic colleague in the School (e.g. Senior Adviser etc) for possible action under the Procedures for Relating to Attendance, Engagement and Progress.
4. The University, in common with British Higher Education sector as a whole, is committed to the principle that assessment must be firmly bound to identified learning outcomes. In this context it is not permissible to penalise non-attendance through the deduction of marks which have been awarded for positive achievement of learning outcomes elsewhere in the module. Instead we may actively reward engagement where it demonstrates successful achievement of explicit learning outcomes.

Thus, for example, a module that is taught in part through seminars or tutorials designed for discussion might spell out among its intended learning outcomes some which depend on engagement, the demonstration of which is not possible without attendance. Examples of such learning outcomes might include:

- participation in group discussion, at a minimum through regular listening, at best through regular active participation;
- evidence of ability to organise work schedule;
- sound time-keeping;
- good citizenship.

Any and every contribution to a seminar or tutorial should be assessed where such contributions contribute to the learning outcomes of the module. It is not permissible to set a minimum threshold for attendance before marks will be awarded for engagement, nor to deny marks for achievement of some of the stated intended learning outcomes on the basis that others have not been achieved.

(In some professional and health-related subjects there are published requirements to attend preparatory classes prior to being permitted to undertake assessment, on the grounds of patient safety. These are excluded from this policy.)

5. Where, then, 'academic engagement' is a desired learning outcome of a module, the following principles should apply:

- the learning outcome(s) should be clearly stated and be compatible with Equal Opportunities;
- the assessment and marking criteria should be published;
- up to and no more than 10%* of the available marks might be awarded on the basis of the extent to which the learning outcome(s) have been demonstrated by 'engagement';
- marks are to be positively awarded for demonstration of achievement rather than deducted: a student who does not participate does not receive any of the marks set aside for participation (however that is expressed), i.e. a marks neutral position, whilst a student who is able to demonstrate participation may be awarded some or all the marks set aside for this aspect;
- where appropriate, the level of reward is likely to depend on the quality as well as the fact of regular engagement, e.g. active participation, constructive contribution.
- due allowance should be granted for instances of non-attendance where students present timely and satisfactory explanation;
- appropriate learning and teaching events in which 'academic engagement' might be demonstrated include: seminars, tutorials, group-work, presentations, projects, fieldwork, laboratory and/or practical classes. Lectures should be excluded;
- Module Organisers assessing such learning outcomes must keep accurate records of student engagement.

** If it is desired that marks for the academic engagement should exceed 10% of the total available, a concession request must be made to the Director of Taught Programmes. In these circumstances, Module Organisers are strongly urged to consider including a student's own assessment of his/her participation ("I attended", "I listened", "I contributed") which would then be moderated by the academic assessor.*

Module outlines must clearly state where marks for engagement will be awarded, alongside a description of the learning outcomes that will be assessed via engagement and the criteria that will be used to allocate marks for engagement.

Staff and students should be aware that anonymised marking is not possible where academic engagement is being assessed.

6. To ensure equity, transparency and consistency, Module Organisers who wish to reserve some marks to incentivise engagement are **required**, for all modules taught in or after Semester 1 2007-08, to ensure that this is not done in terms of penalising non-attendance but with reference to explicit learning outcomes and in accordance with the principles outlined in Section 5 above.
7. The Learning and Teaching Committee will undertake an equal opportunities impact assessment and review of those units with explicit learning outcomes around 'academic engagement'.

In summary, the Learning and Teaching Committee:

- **acknowledges** the desire on the part of some Schools to recognise (reward) academic "engagement";
- **accepts** that academic engagement is likely to enhance both the academic experience of the student concerned and that of co-students;
- **reminds colleagues that** severe and/or persistent cases of lack of academic engagement should continue to be dealt with via the University's disciplinary regulations (General Regulation 13);
- **counsels** that Schools give careful thought to equal opportunity considerations (e.g. part-time students, student with family commitments and international students) when setting learning outcomes for 'academic engagement'.