



Further Education Attendance Policy For Students

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If you would like this document in an alternative format, please contact student support (fenella@blackmountainscollege.uk)

1. Context

1.1 Regular attendance is essential to your success at college. Attending your classes regularly and arriving on time gives you the best opportunity to:

- achieve your qualification;
- develop your knowledge and skills;
- make progress towards your goals;
- take part in practical and work-related learning;
- receive support from your tutors and college staff;
- build positive relationships with other learners and staff; and
- progress to employment, further study or your next step.

The College is committed to helping you attend regularly. If something is affecting your attendance, we want you to tell us so that we can work with you to find appropriate support.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- generate a positive approach to the maintenance of a student's attendance whilst engaged in College learning activities.
- provide clear guidelines to students, parents and carers on the student attendance policy
- set out expectations, monitoring procedures, and the actions taken when attendance becomes a cause for concern at Black Mountains College

2. Policy

2.1 The Further Education Student Attendance Policy forms part of a range of policies that set out:

- what the College expects of its Students through the Code of Conduct.
- the action to be taken in the event of a breach of the Code of Conduct through the Student Disciplinary Policy and / or the Student Substance Misuse Policy or the Fitness to Study Policy.
- financial support available to students through Financial Contingency Funds

- 2.2 The College will apply its Attendance Policy with professional judgment, considering personal and extenuating circumstances, and will make reasonable adjustments as required by the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.3 The College will exercise its' rights under this policy based on principles of fairness, transparency, the need to listen to all parties and the need to reach a decision in a timely fashion.
- 2.4 The College can determine to withdraw students where it has reason to believe it cannot be sufficiently persuaded it can carry out their Safeguarding Duties to the College.
- 2.5 The Student Entitlements and Code of Conduct will be digitally signed by all Students as part of the Enrolment and Induction processes.
- 2.6 **Attendance** means the time spent participating in all recorded College activities, for example lectures, workshops, work placement remote learning events and tutorials - students are expected to achieve 90%.
- 2.7 Consistent attendance at college is essential for student engagement, success and achievement and for those students qualifying for financial support such as Educational Maintenance Allowance, Welsh Government Learning Grants and Student Support Funds. Financial assistance is directly related to attendance on a term-by-term basis and may be withdrawn or deemed repayable if a student fails to attend regularly.
- 2.8 In all cases it is the responsibility of members of staff and the student to comply with the policy and the procedures within the policy. Both staff and students should be fully aware of the implications of failure to comply with the policy. Referral to studentsupport@blackmountainscollege.uk for further signposting where appropriate.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 In Wales, Section 3 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 states that a child is a person who is aged under 18.
- 3.2 For the purposes of the management of Further Education student absences, Black Mountains College will interact with parents and carers for any student up to their 18th birthday where there is unexplained absence that is impacting on a student's ability to achieve.

4 Procedure

4.1 Responsibilities and Expectations

4.1.1 Students

- All students are expected to attend all timetabled classes, practical sessions, tutorials, and other required activities.
- All students are expected to achieve a minimum of 90% attendance each term.
- Students are expected to arrive in class on time and be ready to learn.
- Students are expected to remain in class for the full duration of the lesson unless you have permission to leave.

- Students are expected to follow the College's absence procedure for reporting absences. Students must report their first day and any subsequent absences through the Student Learner Hub via Moodle and inform their tutor if the absence is known in advance or will be long-term (more than one day).
- Absences due to illness longer than 5 working days require a medical certificate. This applies to both in person and remote learning. Guidance on Leave of Absence is in Appendix 1.
- Students expecting prolonged absenteeism are advised to speak with their Tutor, the FE Lead, or Student Support Coordinator to discuss the possibility of alternative study arrangements and student support.
- Students must engage with their tutor or other college staff when attendance concerns are raised.
- Students must take responsibility for improving your attendance when this is identified as a concern, including following action plans where required.

4.1.2 The College will:

- record attendance accurately
- monitor attendance regularly
- identify learners whose attendance or engagement is causing concern
- contact learners when appropriate
- seek to understand the reasons for absence
- provide or signpost appropriate support
- review the effectiveness of interventions
- apply attendance procedures consistently and fairly
- take account of individual circumstances when deciding on further action.

4.2 Student Procedure for Attendance Reporting

4.2.1 If you are unable to attend college, you should notify the College as soon as possible and follow the absence reporting arrangements provided for your programme. You should:

- report your absence promptly via the Learner Hub;
- give the reason for your absence;
- provide any evidence required where appropriate; and
- keep your tutor or relevant college contact informed if the absence is likely to continue.

4.2.2 You should not assume that an absence is automatically authorised simply because you have reported it.

4.2.3 If you do not attend and the College has not received an appropriate explanation, we may contact you to check that you are safe and well and to establish the reason for your absence. We may also ask you to discuss your attendance with your tutor or another member of staff. Where appropriate, we may offer support to help you return to regular attendance.

- 4.2.4 If you believe your attendance has been recorded incorrectly, speak to your tutor or the relevant programme team as soon as possible. You should provide any information that may help the College check the record.

4.3 Attendance Monitoring

The College uses attendance information to identify learners who may need support. A student's attendance will be reported on using some of the parameters set out in Estyn guidance:

% attendance	Judgement	Action	Responsible Person
0-69	Serious	Formal meeting & begin withdrawal	Meeting: Student Support & FE Lead Withdrawal: Student Journey
70-79	Cause for concern	Learner at risk review, higher level intervention. Targeted support and management	FE Lead or Student Support Coordinator
80-84	Unsatisfactory	Formal intervention and action plan	Tutor
85-89	Adequate	Tutor establishes reasons and monitors	Tutor
90+	Good	N/A	N/A

The attendance monitoring processes will begin with immediate effect once a student's attendance drops below 90%. Attendance reporting will be undertaken on a regular basis.

Rapid deterioration or patterned absences may also provide reason for College intervention, regardless of overall percentage.

The College will always consider the circumstances behind your attendance, the pattern of absence and whether you are engaging with support.

Stage 1: Awareness and Identification (85-89%)

- Students with attendance under 90% are flagged
- Tutor has awareness and early identification of learners who may be at risk of dropping below 85%
- Tutor look to establish reasons where appropriate, discussing any barriers with learner

Stage 2: Tutor Intervention (80-84%)

- Formal attendance conversation with tutor
- Cause for absences identified
- A short-term attendance improvement plan is agreed
- Learner may be referred to Student Support where appropriate

Stage 3: Higher Level Intervention (70-79%)

- Formal intervention required between the learner and Further Education Lead (and parent if under 18).
- Welfare, safeguarding, ALN, finances, travel or other support are considered
- Individual action plan produced and followed up in writing
- Warning issued to highlight further poor attendance will require the learner to be withdrawn from the course.
- Referral to Student Support, and fitness to study considered where necessary.

Stage 4: Disciplinary Action (0-69%)

- If above stages have been unsuccessful, the College must move to Disciplinary Action and begin the disciplinary process.
- Correspondence regarding the disciplinary process sent to the learner via email (and to parents if under 18).
- If exceptional circumstances are identified, the learner should meet with Student Support to discuss and implement any adjustments possible.
- In cases where the learner has missed 4 weeks' or more in a row of College, the withdrawal process must begin automatically.
- Should the learner be deemed unable to continue the course due to a high number of classes and assessments missed, the withdrawal process must begin.

Persistent Lateness

Students will be marked as late if they arrive at a lesson within 30 minutes of the start time. After 30 minutes, the learner must be marked as absent for that session. If a tutor identifies that a student is persistently late, the tutor will arrange to meet the student to discuss the reasonings and identify a support plan where appropriate. In the event that a student is missing a considerable amount of lesson time due to lateness, the above process will begin.

Fitness to study

If a Tutor or Student Support identifies health issues or personal circumstances that genuinely prevent a student from attending college, the Further Education Lead and Student Support will arrange to meet with the student together to assess the student's fitness to study and make recommendations to external agencies for relevant support.

Non-Engagement

For students who do not attend for 4+ weeks, and do not respond to any attempts at communication by BMC, the above stages will be attempted first, after which BMC will begin the withdrawal process. The learner will be contacted via phone and email in attempt to communicate and will receive an email detailing their withdrawal where necessary.

For students who do not engage with an attendance improvement plan, the above process will be followed which may result in disciplinary action being taken, or withdrawal from your course.

5. Contacting you

We may contact you or your emergency contact if:

- your attendance falls below a College threshold;
- your attendance is declining quickly;
- you have repeated unexplained absences;
- you are regularly late;
- you are missing particular subjects or sessions;
- you have missed an important assessment or practical activity;
- you have not followed the absence reporting procedure; or
- we are concerned about your wellbeing, safety or engagement.

We will not wait until your overall attendance reaches a particular percentage if there is a reason to be concerned.

6. Reasons for Absence

We recognise that there can be many reasons why a learner may find attending college difficult. These might include:

- health or wellbeing;
- caring responsibilities;
- transport difficulties;
- financial pressures;
- family circumstances;
- additional learning needs;
- difficulties with the course or learning environment;
- work commitments;
- housing or other practical difficulties; or
- other personal circumstances.

If something is affecting your attendance, please speak to your tutor or another member of College staff. You will not be disadvantaged simply because you tell us that

you are experiencing difficulties. Where appropriate, we will work with you to identify support.

7. Safeguarding and Welfare

If your absence causes the College to have concerns about your safety or wellbeing, we may contact you or other appropriate contacts in accordance with College safeguarding and welfare procedures.

Attendance monitoring is therefore also part of the College's wider responsibility for learner wellbeing and safeguarding.

8. Privacy and Information Use

Your attendance information will be used for legitimate educational, safeguarding, support and administrative purposes.

Information will be handled in accordance with the College's privacy and data protection arrangements.

9. Monitoring & Review

This policy was approved by the Senior Management team. The policy is reviewed annually. The review date is September 2027.

Appendix 1 - Attendance guidance for Students receiving EMA and WGLG

Punctuality

If you are late to a lesson and the register has already been taken, it is your responsibility to ensure at the end of the lesson that you have been marked as attending. You can only be marked as present if you have been there for most of the lesson. If you are regularly late for lessons, then your EMA or WGLG payments may be stopped.

Attendance

It is vital that all timetabled sessions and course-related activities, such as field trips and work placement, must be attended and all work completed for you to receive your weekly and bonus payments.

Absence from College due to illness

Students must contact the College through the Learner Hub via Moodle by 9.30am each day of absence. Absences of more than five days require a medical certificate and EMA is not paid for periods of sickness lasting more than 2 weeks. Regular absences are not acceptable and may lead to loss of payment.

All students must contact the Course Tutor on return to ensure that they are given the work that they have missed during their absence.

Regular single-day absences are not acceptable and will be challenged. They will also affect EMA and WGLG payments.

Absence from College due to other reasons

Authorised absences must be approved and accompanied by evidence giving sufficient notice [at least 48 hours] to your tutor and EMA Advisor. An authorised absence counts as a positive attendance and will not affect your EMA or WGLG payment; however, high levels of authorised absences will be targeted for investigation, and further supporting evidence may be required. Authorised absences include:

- Medical appointments which cannot be made out of college hours
- A visit to a university or employment interview
- Work placement as part of the course and for which there is no payment
- Attendance at a wedding or funeral of close family members
- Attendance at a probation meeting
- A driving test (practical, but not theory), but not driving lessons
- Student Forum/Course Review Meeting
- Severe disruption to transport
- Full-time care responsibilities

Unauthorised absences include:

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- Holidays – these should be taken outside term time
- Part or full-time work that is not part of the course
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or family celebrations
- Looking after siblings
- Driving lessons and theory driving tests

This is not an exhaustive list; it only provides guidance.