This policy explains the University’s approach to monitoring the attendance of students on their programmes. This policy also explains how the University carries out its specific obligations for international students who hold a visa under Tier 4 of the points-based immigration system (PBS). References to ‘international students’ in this policy refer to any student holding a Tier 4 visa for whom the University is sponsor.

1. Introduction

1.1. Oxford Brookes University recognises the value of attendance monitoring to help identify students who may be in danger of leaving their course of study. Through early identification of such students, Oxford Brookes has the opportunity to proactively offer assistance and guidance to encourage progression and to avoid potential discontinuation.

Given these significant benefits of attendance monitoring, the attendance of all students, regardless of immigration status or level of study, is monitored via the mechanisms detailed in this policy. It is solely the ‘Tier 4 student check-in’ process detailed at the end of this document which applies only to international students.

1.2. Oxford Brookes University is the sponsor for international students who hold a visa under Tier 4 of the points-based immigration system (PBS). As a sponsor, Oxford Brookes University is obliged to meet the expectations of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) as laid down from time to time in their guidance and regulations. Further information on this can be found on the UKBA’s website: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/

Within these regulations, the UKBA requires sponsors to report any international students who have missed ten ‘expected contacts’. The UKBA has not specified a list of ‘expected contacts’ nor has it defined a minimum period during which these contacts must occur.

Each institution must define and monitor its own contacts. However it is a requirement that once an international student has missed ten expected contacts, Oxford Brookes University must notify the UKBA of that student’s absence within ten working days. This notification will then require the student to return immediately to their home country as their visa will be curtailed.

It is not in the interest of the student concerned, Oxford Brookes University, nor the UKBA to report non-attendance for international students who have ceased to attend their course for some valid reason. This policy, therefore, sets out a procedure for ensuring that in instances where international students are in danger of being reported as non-attending, they are identified, contacted and investigated thoroughly well in advance of exclusion, giving ample opportunity for the situation to be resolved.

2. Undergraduate and Taught Masters Students

2.1. The attendance of students on taught programmes is monitored via the submission of assessed work. Students are excluded from the university and reported to the UKBA where they either miss ten expected submissions or miss all submissions in a single semester (whichever occurs first).
2.2. If a student has missed seven submissions, the relevant Student Support Co-ordinator (or other individual nominated by the Faculty) is notified via the student record system. The Student Support Co-ordinator (or other individual nominated by the Faculty) is expected to make all reasonable efforts to contact the student and to determine the reason for non-submission and offer pastoral and/or academic support and guidance as appropriate.

2.3. Where a student misses all submissions in a single semester, the Student Support Co-ordinator (or other individual nominated by the Faculty) is contacted at the end of the semester via the student record system and allowed ten working days to contact the student. In respect of international students, if the non-submission remains unaccounted for (with reference to the regulations for mitigating circumstances), then the Student Support Co-ordinator (or other individual nominated by the Faculty) will inform the UKBA Compliance Officer so that the UKBA can be notified that the student has missed the expected contacts.

3. Oxford Brookes International (OBI)

3.1. Students in Oxford Brookes International (OBI) studying on University English (MC22), International Foundation Diploma (IFD), Foundation Diploma for Liberal Arts (FDLA), Pre-Masters programmes and the International Summer School will have their attendance monitored via class registers. Registers will be taken daily by the lecturers and attendance will be monitored by the specific Student Support Coordinators and/or Subject Coordinators in OBI.

3.2. Where a student has missed more than three consecutive or 6 individual classes, the Student Support Coordinator and/or Subject Coordinator will phone and send a letter to the student to outline concerns, and to alert them of their attendance responsibilities in accordance with the rules and regulations of their Tier 4 visa. If the student remains absent and does not respond to requests, the matter will be referred to the Student Support and Office Manager who will investigate and if necessary refer the matter to the UKBA Compliance Officer to report the student.

3.3. Where a student misses ten individual classes / contact points or more in one semester without a valid reason, the UKBA Compliance officer will exclude the student and notify the UKBA of non-attendance.

4. Research Students (PGR)

4.1. The attendance of all research students is monitored regularly during the course of each year. All PGR students are required to sign a register which will be completed at the end of June each year.

4.2. International research students will also be required to comply with the two check-points in Weeks 6-7 of each semester as detailed in Section 7 of this document.

4.3. In addition attendance and engagement with the programme for all research students will be recorded at the following stages of the programme: enrolment and the payment of fees in September and January, the submission and approval of the RDSC Registration and Transfer stages as appropriate and annual RDSC Progress Monitoring in August each year.

4.4. A student will be recorded as in attendance where they are engaging with their research, i.e. the threshold for engagement is the equivalent of ‘attendance’ for taught students and is not a statement that academically satisfactory progress is being made. It is, therefore, possible that a student may be ‘falling behind’ for academic purposes but is, nevertheless, still ‘engaged in their programme’ for attendance monitoring purposes.

4.5. Where a student has permission to be away from the University, whilst engaged in fieldwork or other activities associated with their research programme, an email and other electronic communication may be used as evidence of engagement. These communications have to be validated by the student’s Supervisor and confirmation sent to the Research Degree Team.
Completed registers must be returned to the Research Degree Team within ten working days of the registration point. Attendance will then be recorded on eCSIS.

4.6. Students recorded as having missed one of the registration points will be given one further period to re-engage. Once a student has been notified as non-engaged in two consecutive registers, the Research Degree Team will liaise with the Faculty and attempt to contact the student within ten working days. In respect of international students, if the student’s non-engagement remains unaccounted for, the University’s UKBA compliance officer will be notified, who will report the absence to the UKBA.

4.7 Attendance monitoring will be recorded at the following points in the year:

- Enrolment and payment of fees in September
- Check-in with ISAT during Weeks 6-7, Semester 1
- Enrolment and payment of fees in January
- Check-in with ISAT during Weeks 6-7 – Semester 2
- Attendance register at the end of June – co-ordinated by the Research Degrees Team
- Annual Research Degree Sub-Committee Progress Monitoring – August
- Submission and approval of RDSC applications for Registration and Transfer appropriate.

5. Students on work placements

5.1. For international taught students on work placements, either in the UK or overseas, the University remains responsible as the student’s sponsor for monitoring their attendance even though there may be no submission of work during the period spent on the placement. When a student is on a work placement therefore, non-attendance will be reported to the UKBA when a student misses ten working days. (This is the normal reporting expectation for individuals in the UK for employment.)

5.2. The placement provider must notify their normal contact in the University when a student has missed seven working days. The normal contact within the University will notify the Faculty’s Student Support Co-ordinator (or other nominated individual), who should attempt to make contact with the student. If the student’s absence remains unaccounted for after the tenth missed working day, the University will report the absence to the UKBA within ten working days of the tenth missed working day at the placement provider.

5.3. Staff in Faculties who organise work placements must ensure that every placement provider has signed an agreement to inform the University of the student’s absence. The University must not allow students with a visa issued through Tier 4 to attend placement providers who are unable or unwilling to agree to report absences back to the University.

5.4. For home taught students on work placements, either in the UK or overseas, Faculties may adopt their own monitoring processes (including the same process as is required for international students, as appropriate).

6. Reporting

6.1. The University is required to report international students who do not enrol, complete their course early, decide to withdraw or are withdrawn by the University for whatever reason. These processes should not be confused with reporting students for non-attendance, which is separate. Importantly, where a student is reported for non-attendance their enrolment at the University is withdrawn also.

6.2. All cases of international student non-attendance are reported to the UKBA by the university’s UKBA Compliance officer. Once the various investigations mentioned above are concluded it is the responsibility of the Student Support Co-ordinator, OBI or the Research Degree team, as appropriate, to contact the UKBA Compliance Officer and inform them that their attempts to contact the student and identify the reasons for non-engagement have been unsuccessful.
7. The ‘Tier 4 student check-in process’

7.1. As a Tier 4 sponsor, Oxford Brookes must be able to ensure the continuous engagement of international students with their programmes as well as meet a series of additional sponsor duties. As such, in line with the UKBA guidance for sponsors, the University has set two check-points within the Academic year to operate alongside the attendance monitoring policies detailed in the preceding section of this document. All students studying on a Tier 4 visa will be required to complete both check-ins each academic year.

7.2. Students required to check in will be contacted via email and informed of the week within which they must do so. The check-in will take place in either week 6 or 7 and students will be given a range of locations where it can be undertaken.

7.3. Students who miss their check-in will be contacted by the University’s UKBA compliance officer and given one week within which to complete the check-in. If after the week has passed, it has not been done, the student will be blocked. The student and their student support coordinators will then be contacted and given a one week deadline by which to resolve the situation. If after that deadline has passed, the student has still not completed the check-in, the student will be excluded and given ten working days to resolve the situation. If on the tenth working day the student has not completed the check-in, the students’ exclusion will be permanent and a report will be sent to the UKBA by the University’s UKBA compliance officer.

Alex Lewis
UKBA Compliance Officer & Deputy Head of ISAT
Updated June 2013

Updates to D7.2.4 Research Students (PGR), Approved by Academic Board 13 November 2013

1 The block will mean that the student will lose all access to the library and IT facilities such as PIP.