Oxford Brookes University holds ‘Highly trusted sponsor’ status which we use to sponsor international students to obtain a Tier 4 student visa to enable them to study with us. As a ‘Highly Trusted sponsor’ Oxford Brookes University is obliged to adhere to the sponsor duties set down by United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) as detailed in their guidance and regulations. For information on these requirements please see the UKVI guidance.

One of the primary duties of a ‘Highly trusted sponsor’ is to monitor the attendance and engagement of students holding a Tier 4 visa and to withdraw sponsorship of students found to be breaching the conditions of their leave. This policy sets out the various processes and systems utilised by Oxford Brookes to appropriately monitor the attendance of the students it sponsors as well as the circumstances under which sponsorship will be revoked.

It is not in the interest of the students concerned, Oxford Brookes University, nor the UKVI 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.

Due to the diverse nature of the different programmes studied at Oxford Brookes, the University has tailored its attendance monitoring methods to fit the level, structure and type of programme being studied. The remainder of this policy details the methods utilised to monitor students’ attendance in accordance with their course of study.

1. **Oxford Brookes International (OBI) students**

   **Enrolment and Re-enrolment**

   - New students: The University requires new students to arrive, enrol in person and attend by week 2 of the semester in which they are due to start. Students who do not meet that deadline will need to defer their place at the University. Where a student fails to enrol by the deadline set, they will be withdrawn and reported to the UKVI within 10 working days.

   - Continuing students: The University requires students to complete the re-enrolment process once per year. This process is to be completed by students via their Personal Information Portal (P.I.P). Where a student does not complete their re-enrolment by the end of week 4, this will be flagged as unapproved temporary withdrawal to be investigated by the University’s Immigration compliance officer or PBS administrator. Students whose unapproved withdrawal is not resolved at this point will then be withdrawn from the course and this exclusion reported to the UKVI within 10 working days.
Registers

- Students on Oxford Brookes International (OBI) courses; University English (MC22/BH13), 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.

- Where a student has missed more than 3 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 Immigration Compliance Officer to report the student.

- Where a student misses 10 individual classes / contact points or more in a semester without a valid reason, the Immigration Compliance Officer will exclude the student and notify the UKVI of non-attendance.

The ‘Tier 4 student check-in process’

- Students studying on a Tier 4 visa are required to complete the check-in process in both semesters 1 and 2 each academic year. Students holding a Tier 4 visa will be contacted via email and informed of the week in which the check-in can be completed in the given semester. The check-in will normally take place in either week 6 or 7 and students will be given a range of locations where it can be completed.

- Students who miss their check-in will be contacted by the University’s Immigration Compliance Officer and given 1 week within which to complete the check-in. If it has not been completed after that week has passed, the students account will be blocked and as a consequence access to specific facilities withdrawn.

- The student and relevant staff members (E.G. Course Administrators & Student Support Coordinators) will then be contacted and given a one week deadline by which to resolve the situation. If the student has still not completed the check-in after that deadline has passed, the student will be excluded and given 10 working days to resolve the situation.

- If on the tenth working day the student has not completed the check-in, the student’s exclusion will be permanent and a report will be sent to the UKVI by the University’s Immigration Compliance Officer on that same day.

2. Undergraduate and Taught masters students

Enrolment and Re-enrolment

- New students: The University requires new students to arrive, enrol in person and attend by week 2 of the semester in which they are due to start. Students who do not meet that deadline will need to defer their place at the University. Where a student fails to enrol by the deadline set, sponsorship will be withdrawn and reported to the UKVI within 10 working days.

- Continuing students: The University requires students to complete the re-enrolment process once per year. This process is to be completed by students via their Personal Information Portal (P.I.P). Where a student does not complete their re-enrolment by the end of week 4, this will be flagged as unapproved temporary withdrawal to be investigated by the University’s Immigration compliance
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- If on the tenth working day the student has not completed the check-in, the student’s exclusion will be permanent and a report will be sent to the UKVI by the University’s Immigration Compliance Officer on that same day.

Assessment Submission and Outcomes

- At the end of each semester, the Immigration Compliance Officer will generate and receive detailed reports highlighting students who have missed assessments as well as students who have failed to pass modules taken.

- Students who have missed assessments or who have failed to achieve at least a re-sit grade in their modules will be investigated to see if non-engagement and a breach of the conditions of their visa has occurred. Investigation will involve direct contact with the student, as well as where appropriate: checks on the mitigating circumstances system, academic staff feedback and also liaison with Course Administrators, Academic Advisors or Student Support Coordinators.

- Following investigation, if a student is found not to have engaged appropriately with their studies and there are no exceptional circumstances to explain the non-engagement, the student will be withdrawn from the course. This withdrawal will be reported to the UKVI within 10 working days.

3. **Students on work placements**

For students studying on a Tier 4 visa while 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. Therefore, when a student is on a work placement, non-attendance will be reported to the UKVI when a student has missed 10 working days.

- 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.
The placement provider must notify their normal contact in the University when a student has missed 7 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 UKVI within a further 10 working days.

4. Research Students (PGR)

- 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.

- Students studying under Tier 4 are required to comply with the Tier 4 check-in process as detailed in sections 1 and 2 of this document.

- 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 Research Degree Sub-Committee (RDSC) Registration and Transfer stages as appropriate and annual RDSC Progress Monitoring in August each year.

- 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.

- 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 Degrees Team.

- Student are required to sign attendance registers at the end of June each year and completed registers must be returned to the Research Degrees Team within 10 working days of the registration point. Attendance will then be recorded on eCSIS.

- 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 Degrees 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 Immigration Compliance Officer will be notified and will report the absence to the UKVI.

- Attendance monitoring will be recorded at the following points in the year:
  - Enrolment and payment of fees in September
  - Check-in with International Student Advice Team (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
5. **Doctorate extension scheme students**

- Students who are granted leave on the Doctorate Extension scheme are required to have regular scheduled contact with their sponsoring institution. Students sponsored by Oxford Brookes will have three points of contact made at four monthly intervals during the course of the year. Failure to adhere to these scheduled contacts without adequate explanation when contacted will lead to a report being sent to the UKVI, sponsorship being withdrawn and the visa being curtailed. Please see below details of the scheduled contacts expected.

  - 4 Months after the start of the Doctoral Extension Scheme: an email will be sent asking for confirmation of whereabouts and current activity. A reply must be received by the Head of the Research Degrees Team within 10 working days of the date the email was first sent. An acknowledgement of the response will be issued and will contain information and a date for the next virtual monitoring point.

  - 4 Months after the first contact point: this monitoring point will be carried out via Skype, Telephone or Google chat, at a time and date previously agreed in the first monitoring email exchange. A date for the last monitoring point will be agreed during the course of this session.

  - 4 Months after the second contact point: an email will be sent to asking for confirmation of whereabouts and current activity. In addition, information must be provided concerning the planned date of departure from the UK, including confirmation of the address and country of final residence. A reply must be received by the Head of the Research Degrees Team within 10 working days of the date the email was first sent. An acknowledgement of the email response will be issued and confirmation of safe arrival at the agreed destination requested.

Alex Lewis, UKBA Compliance Officer & Deputy Head of ISAT

**Approved:**
Academic Enhancement & Standards Committee, 25 June 2014
Academic Board, 16 July 2014