THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCKINGHAM

Attendance and Engagement Procedures:

MB ChB Phase 1 and other campus-based taught courses

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Version History

Version	Approved	Revisions made	Date

Purpose

This procedures document accompanies the FMHS Attendance and Engagement Policy and outlines expectations for absence reporting, authorisation and monitoring for campus-based teaching on taught courses within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS). The policy provides guidance on the different types of absence and how these should be reported, and any notice periods that apply. It also outlines the principles of monitoring absence and supporting students to improve their attendance as well as referral into the concerns process where appropriate.

Joining the Course

Where a student fails to meet any of the induction or registration milestones indicated in the Attendance and Leave policy, the Faculty will initiate contact with the student and attempt to establish whether they still wish to join their course. If so, a plan should be agreed to facilitate this, which may include deferring to the next intake. Failure to follow the agreed plan may result in withdrawal from the programme.

Collection and Storage of Attendance Data

After the start of the course, attendance records will normally be collected for each scheduled activity that takes place during the relevant session.

- Attendance data may be collected using various manual or electronic means (e.g. paper register, scanning of ID cards or release of a QR code). The specific collection method used will depend on the location of the activity and on the number of students but all methods will require students to have their ID cards with them or for the student to be logged into their University account and the attendance data will be processed by the curriculum team into a single repository on the student records system.
- Students in attendance are responsible for engaging with the attendance recording process at the time it is requested, it is unlikely to be possible to add a name to the register retrospectively.
- Students not in attendance are expected to request or report absence as indicated below before the relevant session begins. The approved absence data will be matched to the data collected in the classroom within the student records system to indicate that such absences are authorised.
- Where a student is missing from a scheduled learning session and does not have an approved absence (see below), the absence will be recorded in the student record system as unauthorised.
- Student attendance records will be monitored weekly during term time and, based on the information available at the review point, students will be allocated one of the categories in the Attendance and Engagement policy.
- Students allocated to categories other than the satisfactory category will be notified of their status and will be supported and escalated if necessary as indicated below.
- Attendance levels can change on a daily basis and therefore any communications referring to these should include the time period being referred to (e.g. term, year) and state that they are correct at the time of writing.

- Student attendance and engagement data will be recorded on the student records system and retained for the duration of a student's studies with the University and may be retained for 6 years following departure from the University.

Absence Reporting and Authorisation

Students are required to attend 100% of teaching activities and absence outside of scheduled holiday periods is not generally permitted. There is no entitlement to "annual leave" from the course during term time but the Faculty recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where it would be reasonable for students to be absent from the course and in such cases, absences may be authorised. Students must demonstrate professional attitudes and behaviour during the programme that are consistent with the high standards expected of healthcare professionals and this includes reporting of absence due to illness or other exceptional personal circumstances.

- Students should report all absences in a timely manner by completing the Exceptional Absence request form or sickness notification form on the VLE.
- Once submitted by the student, absence requests will be logged within the Student Record System and processed in line with UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- All absence requests will be reviewed and will either be approved, not approved or marked as pending for a short period should further information be required.
- All absences will require evidence in order to be authorised, with the exception of sickness absences where students may self-certify sickness of up to 5 working days in duration.
- A student who fails to request or report absences in line with expectations will be considered to have taken unauthorised absence and may be referred to the concerns process.

The criteria for authorisation of absence are outlined in the appendix, with reasons falling into two main categories: planned exceptional absences and unforeseen absences.

Planned Exceptional Absences

If a student needs to be absent from the course during term time for exceptional reasons (e.g. to attend a medical appointment or represent the University at an event), students may request exceptional absence. If such circumstances arise, students should submit an exceptional absence request form at least 14 days in advance of the proposed absence including reasons for the need to be elsewhere on the requested date(s). Requests must be supported by evidence.

- Exceptional absence is NOT additional holiday entitlement and should only be requested where absence cannot reasonably be avoided.
- Exceptional absences cannot be approved during summative assessment or resit periods.
- Individual requests must be made for each period of absence, it is not possible to include a series of non-consecutive dates within one request.

Requests for exceptional absence during teaching weeks that are submitted within the 14 day timeframe will be reviewed by the Professional Development team and will be either approved or rejected before the proposed absence date.

- Each request will be considered on an individual basis and decisions will be made using the criteria stated in the appendix as a guide and, where necessary, at the discretion of the Professional Development and Conduct lead.
- Decisions on whether or not to approve exceptional absence requests may take into account the number of absences already recorded or approved for the student, the timing within the year or programme, the teaching activities planned for the day(s) being requested and/or the contents of any support plans or learning agreements in place for the student. Where appropriate, advice may also be given as to how the proposed absence might be mitigated or avoided.

The Faculty reserves the right to refuse requests for absence or to request further information. If an exceptional absence request is rejected, a reason will be provided and the student may resubmit the request with further detail and/or evidence if they wish.

- Exceptional absence requests that are submitted retrospectively or within 14 days of the absence date will not be approved unless it is clear from the evidence provided that the circumstances were of a nature that was incompatible with the expected timeframe (e.g. where the request is to attend a funeral that is due to take place within 2 weeks).
- If a request is rejected but the student takes the time off anyway, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and deemed as evidence of unprofessional conduct and a professionalism concern will be raised where appropriate.

Unforeseen Absences

Unforeseen absences may be authorised in situations where they are unavoidable (e.g. sickness, personal emergency) and where they are notified at the earliest opportunity. Students in such situations should report their absence using the exceptional absence request form in most circumstances or using the sickness notification form for illness. Unforeseen absences should normally be notified on the first day of absence before the relevant activity begins.

- Where a student is unable to access the absence form, typically in an emergency situation, the absence should be reported directly to the School by email (fmhs-ProfessionalDevelopment@buckingham.ac.uk).
- Where it is impossible for a student to report on the first day of absence (e.g. due to being hospitalised), students should report at the first possible opportunity (normally no later than 3 days after the first day of any period of absence) and provide explanation of the reasons which prevented them notifying their absence earlier.
- Late notification of absence, without good cause, will only be permissible in exceptional circumstances. If late notification of absence is not accepted this will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded.

Examples of unforeseen exceptional absence categories and their approval criteria can be found in the appendix. Further details about sickness absence and compassionate leave are described below.

Sickness Absence

Students will be able to 'self-certify' sickness absence for up to one week (five working days) during teaching periods by completing a self-certification sickness form before the first missed teaching session begins. They will normally be able to re-join their studies immediately after they have recovered.

- Sickness refers to both physical and mental ill-health.
- The self-certification process does not apply during summative assessment and resit periods. If students need to be absent from assessments due to illness, they should declare themselves "unfit to sit" to the Professional Development team on the assessment day and seek medical advice. Students should then submit medical evidence for approval through the mitigating circumstances process before the published deadline on the VLE.

Students with health-related absences beyond one week will be referred into the health concerns process until they are fit to resume their studies. Depending on the length of time away and what was missed, sick leave may require an action plan and/or conditions for return to be put into place to mitigate any educational impact that may have occurred.

- If the sickness period extends beyond five working days, the student must seek medical advice and obtain evidence from their GP or hospital to accompany their sickness form.
- Medical evidence will only be accepted from the student's registered GP, Occupational Health or professional specialist and not from any family or friend, irrespective of whether they are medically qualified.
- Authorised periods of absence should not normally exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students with health-related absences >4 weeks in total within the same academic year may be required to suspend their studies to restart the year at the next opportunity.
- Students with a long-term Sickness Absence and/or who have suspended studies for reasons of ill health may require occupational health clearance before they re-join their studies.

Compassionate Leave

Compassionate leave may be requested in the case of bereavement or if a close family member or dependent has either a severe life-threatening illness or severe accident.

- The amount of leave granted will depend on the circumstances and will be dealt with on an individual basis in consultation with the Professional Development and Conduct Lead. However, authorised periods of absence should not normally exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students who request extended absence beyond 4 weeks in total may be required to suspend their studies.
- Depending on the length of time away and what was missed, compassionate leave may require an action plan and/or conditions for return to be put into place to mitigate any educational impact that may have occurred.
- Students taking compassionate leave will be referred to relevant pastoral teams to ensure they are offered appropriate additional support.

Absence Monitoring, Catch Up and Support

The Faculty understands that students may need support and guidance as they deal with issues leading to periods of absence. Each week, students who are not in the satisfactory attendance category will be referred to the faculty concerns team to discuss barriers to attendance and to facilitate access to appropriate support.

Students will be expected to work with the concerns team and other relevant staff to identify routes to catch up on missed learning opportunities and to facilitate improvements in attendance such that they are able to meet expectations. As a minimum, absent students should engage with the relevant lecture slides, workbook and other session resources on Moodle or other advertised location and keep records of their catch up activities for each absence.

Through the attendance intervention steps outlined below, the Faculty aims to support an improvement in attendance and engagement and consequently an improved chance of success on the programme from both academic and professional perspectives. During those steps, it is possible that broader support needs are identified that may have contributed to a student's absence. In such cases, it may be appropriate to refer the student to additional support e.g. the wellbeing team.

The faculty and wider university have a range of support services available to support students and students will be signposted towards these as appropriate to their circumstances. Students are encouraged to look after their physical health and mental wellbeing and to proactively seek additional help and support whenever it may be required.

Support for Health Conditions.

Where there is an extended period of sickness absence or a concerning pattern of illness (e.g. a high number of incidences, regular illness on a particular day), a meeting will be arranged to discuss the student's health and fitness to study on the programme through the framework below. An important part of this process will be to ensure that adequate support structures are in place for the student.

- The Faculty will support students with sickness absence and health concerns through the University wellbeing team, the occupational health team and the reasonable adjustment policy where appropriate. In order to do this, the Faculty may request further medical evidence and/or require the student to attend an Occupational Health appointment and in some cases, the Faculty may recommend that a student suspends their studies on a temporary basis.
- Where students have been off sick for a period or have deferred their studies due to health, they may be required to attend an Occupational Health assessment prior to returning to studies.
- In cases where a student's sickness record or the management of a health condition means that they may be a danger to themselves, their colleagues or their patients, students may be referred to the fitness to practice process via the Concerns team. In consultation with the professional development lead, the patient safety lead and/or the Dean, this referral may be accompanied by conditions of continued study or a compulsory temporary suspension of studies in line with the general regulations.

Academic Support

Most academic requirements to catch up due to absence will be relatively low level and can be monitored by the student themselves with support from personal tutors as necessary. Students have access to their timetable and to resources on Moodle for each session and can be signposted to these, to relevant staff and to wider academic support routes as needed depending on what was missed. At higher levels of the framework below, academic catch up will be monitored through the action planning and review steps.

- An academic support referral can be made in circumstances where students have a need for complex or bespoke academic support. In the context of absence and leave, this may include students who have conditions attached to their studies such as removal from placement or students who have suspended their studies and returned within the same academic year. This might also be relevant to students who have missed components of mandatory training or other activities that are not due to be repeated within the current academic year.
- If a student needs to be absent from fixed time assessments (e.g. exams) due to illness, they should declare themselves “unfit to sit” on the assessment day and seek medical advice. Students should then submit medical evidence for approval through the mitigating circumstances process before the published deadline. This process can also be used for other unforeseen circumstances affecting attendance at a fixed time assessment.
- Where circumstances prevent engagement with or submission of a coursework assessment task before the advertised deadline, the mitigating circumstances process may be used to request a short term extension to a coursework deadline.

Escalation and Intervention

The escalation framework has been designed on a multi-stage basis with each stage being considered more serious than the previous. It is expected that each case will normally start at Level 1 when a student’s attendance/engagement has been identified as not meeting expectations as defined by the Attendance and Engagement Policy.

- Hopefully, Level 1 is as far as the case goes before the student’s attendance/engagement improves to meet expectations. However, where the student’s attendance/engagement continues to remain below satisfactory/agreed levels the case can be escalated to the next level with the ultimate sanction of the student’s studies being terminated.
- The procedure allows for a case to be de-escalated where some improvement has been achieved but attendance/engagement is still not at satisfactory levels. It is important in these situations that attendance/engagement continues to be actively managed until the student’s attendance/engagement reaches a satisfactory level and remains there for a period of time.
- Occasionally, there may be justification for a student to enter the process directly at a higher level e.g. due to a large number of absences in a short period of time, or where a long term absence is anticipated at the point of notification. However, where an attendance profile is otherwise satisfactory, it would be expected that the student’s case could de-escalate quickly if they engage similarly well with this process on their return.

- Students should be referred into other relevant processes where appropriate (e.g. mitigating circumstances, concerns) but this process should run alongside those wherever possible without delay. For example, misuse of the absence reporting process by a medical student may result in professionalism concerns being raised but this should not stop consideration of the absence issue specifically under this process.

Level 1 (Check in)

Student attendance or engagement falls below expectations.

Typical intervention at this level includes a courtesy notification that the attendance profile is not in line with expectations and the reasons why. Unless this work is already in progress, a meeting will be arranged between the student and their Personal Tutor or another member of staff to ensure students are aware of the attendance expectations and to identify barriers to meeting the attendance/engagement requirements and signpost to any appropriate support routes. A minimum of three working days' notice should be provided.

At this stage the emphasis should be on supporting the student by trying to identify any underlying issues (e.g., Health, Personal, Financial etc.) that may be preventing full engagement and where necessary directing the student to appropriate support services. There should also be a discussion around academic catch up to ensure this is on track.

The Level 1 meeting can be rescheduled within 5 working days at the student's request on one occasion only. If a student does not attend a Level 1 meeting without notice or does not attend a rescheduled meeting, this should be considered as a failure to complete a key engagement indicator and the case should be escalated to Level 2.

Where the reasons for absence are already known, a meeting may not be required at this stage. However, the student should still receive the Level 1 notification and should be offered the opportunity to meet if they wish to.

In all cases, a summary of the meeting (or barriers/actions if no new meeting took place) should be added to the student records system and students can receive a copy of this. This should include:

- Main barriers identified and anticipated timeframes for resolution (or confirmation that there are no ongoing barriers)
- Any support needs and access routes that have been identified
- Recommendations or agreed actions for the student (including any academic catch up not yet completed)
- Any follow up requirements for staff

A formal review is not normally required for Level 1 as the student's attendance will be monitored weekly as standard with the expectation that attendance levels will improve each week until they reach satisfactory levels. Level 1 students should continue to engage with staff as necessary to complete the actions and access appropriate support and should be notified when their attendance has returned to satisfactory levels. Level 1 students should be escalated to Level 2 if any of the following apply:

- They do not meet the satisfactory criteria by 1 month after the level 1 notification

- Their attendance declines and they meet the criteria for Level 2 at any point (even if the reasons for this are beyond the student's immediate control. This is to ensure access to a higher level of support and intervention if needed)
- They fail to complete agreed actions in relation to improving their attendance.

Level 2 (At risk)

Attendance remains below satisfactory levels

Where a student's attendance/engagement remains below expected levels or deteriorates further, as defined in the Attendance and Engagement Policy, then a meeting should be arranged between the student and a member of the Concerns team to establish why attendance/engagement has not improved as expected. The meeting should be held within 10 working days of escalation to Level 2 and should be minuted.

The Level 2 meeting can be rescheduled within 5 working days at the student's request on one occasion only. If a student does not attend a Level 2 meeting without notice or does not attend a rescheduled meeting, this should be considered as a failure to complete a key engagement indicator and the case should be escalated to Level 3.

At this stage the emphasis should be on the attendance expectations going forward and how the student will meet those and catch up missed work rather than exploration of the previous absences. Any underlying issues (e.g., health, personal, financial etc.) that may have been preventing full engagement will have been identified at Level 1 and some support signposting and action towards improvement should have taken place by now. These aspects can be reviewed in this meeting if necessary or the student can be signposted to support for this purpose but the main focus should now be on the need for improvement in attendance and how this will be facilitated and how academic catch up will be measured/recorded.

As part of the meeting, it is important that an Action Plan (including timescales) is agreed with the student who is committing to undertake the agreed actions. The action plan should cover the following:

- Expectations for attendance and timelines (e.g. satisfactory within one month and half way there within 2 weeks)
- Plans for catching up missed work and how and when this will be evidenced
- Any outstanding or further actions required in terms of accessing support for barriers to attendance
- Any agreed actions for staff (e.g. occupational health referral, reasonable adjustment review)
- Arrangements for the Level 2 review.

If it is not considered feasible to improve attendance to a satisfactory level within the next month or to catch up the missed learning, the student should be notified about the option to request suspension of studies and be advised to consider this. If at this point the student wishes to voluntarily suspend their studies or withdraw from the university, then the implications for this should be fully explained and the appropriate withdrawal/suspension of studies form completed.

Where an action relies on the input of another person, it is expected that the student will initiate the relevant actions within a 48h period and will feedback to the concerns team within 48 hours of any problem becoming apparent.

A Level 2 review meeting should be scheduled for no later than one month after the Level 2 meeting and the student's attendance will continue to be monitored weekly within the standard process in the meantime. There are likely to be one of three outcomes available from the review:

i) Where the student's attendance/engagement is now considered satisfactory, either as defined by the Attendance and Engagement Policy or as amended within the agreed Action Plan, the student will move to the Improved category and no further action will be required unless the attendance declines at a later date.

ii) Where attendance is improved but there are still some outstanding actions then the student should move to Level 1

iii) Where the student's attendance/engagement is still NOT acceptable or has worsened then the case should be escalated to Level 3. For medical students who have not engaged appropriately with attempts to support them or with agreed actions, professionalism/FTP implications should also be discussed. The student will be invited to a Level 3 meeting within the next 10 working days. The student should be escalated to Level 3 if any of the following apply:
    - They do not meet the satisfactory criteria after 1 month
    - Their attendance declines and they meet the criteria for Level 3 at any point (even if the reasons for this are beyond the student's immediate control. This is to ensure access to a higher level of monitoring and intervention)
    - They fail to meet agreed deadlines in relation to improving their attendance and/or catching up missed work.

Level 3 (Unsatisfactory)

Attendance interventions have not been sufficiently effective.

Where a student's attendance/engagement remains persistently below expectations despite actions at levels 1 and 2, as defined in the Attendance and Engagement Policy, then a meeting should be arranged between the student and the Professional Development Lead or another member of the Faculty Executive to issue a formal warning to the student regarding attendance and to explore why the support to date has not been sufficiently effective and the resulting academic implications. The meeting should be held within 10 working days of escalation to Level 3 and should be minuted.

The Level 3 meeting can be rescheduled within 5 working days at the student's request on one occasion only. If a student does not attend a Level 3 meeting without notice or does not attend a rescheduled meeting, the considerations below should take place without them and the required actions should be notified to the student in writing alongside a final warning with regards to suspension/withdrawal.

By this stage the student's level of attendance/engagement is likely to have been below acceptable levels for several weeks and, despite a number of opportunities to engage with Faculty staff and the wider University support systems, has still not reached acceptable levels. During the meeting it should be made clear to the student that continued poor attendance/engagement is likely to result in their studies being suspended/withdrawn. The

focus of this meeting will therefore be on what needs to happen in order to avoid that. This could include consideration of specific course/unit/assessment regulations in relation to any or all of the following:

- Whether there is sufficient engagement with academic catch up in order to be eligible to sit upcoming assessments and/or whether it may be possible to apply for extensions to assessment deadlines or to defer individual assessments whilst remaining on track for the current progression point.
- Whether there is sufficient opportunity to achieve academic catch up to meet the progression requirements in the timelines of the current cohort
- Whether the student is currently fit to study or likely to be soon (medical documentation and/or input from other teams may be required)
- Whether further academic, professional or pastoral support within the University would be available and might facilitate some improvement within the required timeframes.
- Whether agreed disability support has been offered/accessed and/or whether further reasonable adjustments might be appropriate.
- Whether there are wider professionalism concerns that may prevent improvement in attendance
- Whether the student wishes to suspend studies.
- Whether bespoke conditions of continued study are appropriate e.g. attendance at remedial sessions (if available) or engagement with online resources, no more planned absences before a certain date, requirement to submit evidence for illness where self-certification would normally be accepted.

As part of the meeting, a Professional Engagement Contract should be drawn up including actions and timescales for all student requirements and any staff input or modifications to standard course requirements. It should be made clear that the student needs to adhere to the contract in order to remain on the course with their current cohort.

The PEC should cover the following:

- Expectations for attendance and timelines (e.g. satisfactory within one month and half-way there within 2 weeks)
- Expectations for academic catch up and/or additional attendance/engagement requirements and how and when these will be evidenced
- Any outstanding or further actions required in terms of accessing support or otherwise removing barriers to attendance
- Any principles to follow or conditions associated with prioritising academic catch up over longer term professional development activities
- Any agreed modifications to standard course requirements (e.g. implementation of discretionary regulations, deferred assessments)
- Any agreed actions for staff (e.g., reasonable adjustments/support)
- The document will include a warning that any breach will result in escalation to the Dean
- Arrangements for the Level 3 review (within one month).

A Level 3 review meeting should be scheduled for no later than one month after the Level 3 meeting and the student's attendance will continue to be monitored weekly within the standard process in the meantime. There are likely to be one of three outcomes available from the review:

i) Where the student's attendance/engagement is now considered satisfactory, either as defined by the Attendance and Engagement Policy or as amended within the agreed Action Plan, the student will move to the Improved category and a further review will take place within the next month. If all is still satisfactory, there will be no further action required.

ii) Where attendance is improved but there are still some outstanding actions then the student should move to Level 2 and a Level 2 review should be scheduled.

iii) Where the student's attendance/engagement continues to be below acceptable levels then the case should be referred to the Faculty Dean.

Referral to the Dean

Students being referred to the Dean will normally have had an absence and engagement profile below expectations for a significant period of time and, having had opportunities to make improvements, are now being considered for compulsory suspension or withdrawal from assessments or from their course. The decision to withdraw or suspend a student is not one that is taken lightly so the primary purpose of this review is to ensure that the above process has been properly followed and that all reasonable routes to help the student achieve acceptable levels of attendance/engagement have been explored. Occasionally, a student may also be referred to the Dean due to being absent for a significant period of time and being unwilling or unable to engage in earlier stages of the process.

For each referral, the Dean will consider the following information.

- The student's attendance record for the current academic year
- Any relevant attendance information from previous academic years (e.g. they have reached unsatisfactory previously)
- The meeting notes for Level 1, 2 and 3 and associated reviews.
- Any additional information directly relevant to the decision (e.g. reasonable adjustment and support information, actions plans, PEC, assessment outcomes)
- Any "student statement" that may have been received for consideration. There is no expectation that the Faculty Dean will meet with the student.

The following outcomes are available:

1) The student will remain registered in their current cohort with a revised PEC outlining additional conditions of continued study. This may include the student's absence profile being considered within another process e.g. Fitness to Practise
2) The student will be barred from one or more assessments relevant to the learning activities that the student has been absent from. This may require the student to repeat parts of the course and pay the relevant fees. Any implications for honours points or other factors beyond passing or failing the assessment or module should be made clear to the student as part of this outcome.

3) The student will be suspended from studies on a compulsory basis. The reasons for suspension and the timelines and/or conditions for return to study should be made clear to the student as part of this outcome. This may require the student to repeat parts of the course and pay the relevant fees.
4) The student will be withdrawn from their course with no right to return. This outcome will normally only apply if there has been minimal contact or engagement from the student in relation to this process or if they have previously been referred to the Dean and that outcome has not resulted in the required improvement. The student will have a right of appeal.

For visa students, outcomes 3 and 4 will result in their student visa being cancelled and they will need to return to their country of residence.

A student may request a review of the Faculty Dean's decision by submitting their appeal to registry@buckingham.ac.uk within one week of the outcome being communicated to them.

The only recognised grounds for appeal are:

i) Incorrect recording of attendance/engagement
ii) Mitigating Circumstances that have not been disclosed at an earlier stage of the review process and an explanation as to why they could not be disclosed at an earlier stage and how any disclosure could have resulted in a different outcome.
iii) There has been a demonstrable error in the way that the procedures outlined above have been carried out.

The student is expected to provide any supporting information at the time of making the appeal. Registry will review the appeal and issue a Completion of Procedures letter within 10 working days. The letter will confirm the outcome of the review and inform the student of their right to request a review of the case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they are not satisfied with the decision.

Appendix: Guidance on exceptional absence approval criteria

Examples of common requests for exceptional absence, suggestions for appropriate evidence and guidance criteria for approval are included within the following subsections. Please note the following:

- All absence requests must be supported by appropriate evidence, and this should demonstrate why the student needs to be somewhere else or why they cannot attend where they are scheduled to be.
- Requests will be considered on an individual basis using the evidence provided and will be rejected where there is no evidence or where they don't meet the requirements as indicated below.
- Students should remember that exceptional absences are intended to be exceptional. Repeated requests for similar reasons will therefore not be considered favourably, particularly if students have not taken appropriate action to resolve previous issues or prevent a situation from reoccurring.
- Some categories may only be approved where the student has a satisfactory engagement record and where it is considered feasible for the student to catch up missed learning in their own time.
- Absences for unforeseen events will not be approved if it is considered that they should have been planned for.
- All absences, even those that are approved, will count towards attendance monitoring processes.

1.1.1 Medical Appointments

Wherever possible, medical appointments should always be made outside of scheduled teaching time. If appointments need to take place within teaching time, the absence request should be submitted as soon as the appointment date is known and the appointment letter should be supplied as evidence. Students are welcome to redact medical details from appointment letters if they wish, the Faculty only needs to see the name of the organisation and patient and the date, time, location and broad purpose of the appointment.

1.1.2 Religious festivals

Many religions and beliefs have special festivals or spiritual observance days and given the complexity and condensed nature of the curriculum it is not possible to design a timetable which allows for all religious observance. Therefore, students may request leave for religious purposes and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis following the general principles outlined below:

1. Approved absence for religious purposes should be for a limited period; normally one or two days in any given year.

2. Requests for leave must be made at least 14 days prior to the date of the event. Where the exact date of a religious festival is only known shortly beforehand, the first potential date should be requested 14 days in advance, and this can be updated up until the actual festival date if necessary. Requests submitted less than fourteen days prior to an event without prior consultation will not be approved.

3. Requests for absence from class for prayers or other religious activities on a regular basis will not be approved under this process. Students should plan their prayer times outside of facilitated sessions wherever possible (e.g. during self-directed study time or during breaks between sessions). If this is not possible, students should make use of natural breaks within sessions, in consultation with the person leading each session if necessary. Prayer breaks are expected to take place local to the relevant teaching session and to be of short duration (approximately 10 minutes).

4. Students are responsible for ensuring that any programme activities missed due to religious observance are caught up as much as possible in their own time. Missing course work or teaching activities due to religious observance will not be accepted as mitigating circumstances for failure in exams.
5. Every effort will be made by the Faculty to avoid a student being required to take part in assessment on a day of religious observance. However, the Faculty reserves the right to hold examinations and other assessment activities on such days if no alternative time is possible. Exceptional absence requests cannot be approved for summative assessment activities.

1.1.3 Parental leave

The Faculty understands that some students, or their partners, will have a pregnancy or adoption during the programme and will need a period of leave. Individual days off for scans and midwife appointments etc. will normally be approved using the same principles as for medical appointments. For longer term leave requirements, the Faculty will facilitate the provision of maternity/paternity/adoption leave on broadly the same terms as if the student were in employment within the NHS. All students must however meet the required standards for their course in order to progress within the programme and to graduate. This means that any substantial period of absence is likely to result in a delay to progression and to the date of graduation. Please see the 'Parental Leave policy' for more details.

1.1.4 Visa/Passport renewals

Some international students may need to renew visas or passports during their time on the course. Requests for leave must be submitted as soon as an appointment has been made and proof of the renewal requirement and appointment should be included with the request. Approved absence will normally be limited to the day of the appointment only. Students should make themselves aware of when their documents may need renewal and the routes to achieving this so that appointments can be made outside of teaching time wherever possible. If overseas travel is required for this purpose, students are expected to arrange this during holiday periods.

1.1.5 Jury Service/other civic duty

Students who are summoned to Jury service during term time should make use of the facility to request an alternative date to carry out this service. Alternative service start dates within the next year can be proposed to the courts and these dates should be selected to align with course holiday periods. International students called for similar civic duty or military service should follow the principles above to request deferral until either the course holiday periods or after graduation. If it is not possible to defer these activities and if absence is required during term time for a duration of more than 4 weeks, students may be required to suspend their studies.

1.1.6 Travel/weather disruption

Absences will **not** normally be approved for these reasons. Students are expected to take note of weather conditions and to plan their living and travel arrangements such that they can arrive on time (e.g. by taking an earlier train/bus). In exceptional extreme travel/weather situations (e.g. Government "do not travel" instructions), requests will be considered based on the situation or formal guidance applicable to the area local to the

student's base campus (phase 1) or base hospital (phase 2). Students who choose to commute long distances daily should therefore be proactive in considering how they will meet their attendance requirements if their usual travel routes are disrupted. Similarly, students who travel away from their term time addresses during weekends or holiday periods should plan their return travel to allow for potential "routine" delays that might reasonably be anticipated.

1.1.7 Family or personal events

The Faculty does **not** offer a personal holiday allowance during term time and therefore requests for absence to attend family events or other personal activities will not normally be approved. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as the wedding of an immediate family member, absence may be authorised at the discretion of the Professional Development and Conduct lead or Professional Development manager. Any such authorisation will normally be for one day only and will normally only be approved where the student has a satisfactory engagement record and where it is considered feasible for the student to catch up missed learning in their own time.

1.1.8 Educational and professional development activities

Students may request leave from the programme if they wish to attend medical conferences or other educational activities. Leave will be considered provided the student is contributing to the event (e.g. by giving an oral presentation or a poster presentation) or achieving some valuable career training or work experience. Typically, the student will also be presenting work they have carried out on the programme and/or be representing and enhancing the reputation of the University in some way.

Requests for this category of leave should be preceded by a discussion with the Professional Development and Conduct Lead and evidence should be provided by the conference organiser or training provider. Such requests will normally only be approved where the student has a satisfactory attendance/engagement record and where it is considered feasible for the student to catch up missed learning in their own time. Approval will normally be allowed on only one occasion during each academic year for a maximum of one week (5 working days) and this must not be during a summative assessment period. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to approve up to 5 individual days in an academic year for a related purpose.

1.1.9 Committee/team activities

Some students may be members of committees and if these are part of the Faculty structure (e.g. being a student rep), then absence from teaching for up to one day per term will normally be approved. It is, however, important to complete the relevant absence form and to inform the relevant Block or Unit Lead of the approved absence.

If students need to be absent to attend committees or team activities external to the Faculty, evidence of the student's role in the committee/team and the meeting/event invitation should be provided. Any committee/team membership that requires absence from the programme on more than 2-3 days per year across all committees/teams should be discussed with the Professional Development and Conduct lead before committing to the role.

1.1.10 Paid work/volunteering

It is **not** possible for students to approve absence from course activities to carry out paid work or volunteering activities. Any paid work or volunteering activities should take place in the student's own time (evenings, weekends and holiday periods) and if taking place during term time, this should be for a maximum of 10 hours per week.

1.1.11 Other Exceptional Absence requests

The Faculty recognises that there may be other reasons why students may need to request a planned absence (e.g. to attend court as a witness) or why exceptional absences may be required at short notice on occasion (e.g. unexpected carer/dependant responsibilities or a car accident). For planned events, requests should be made at least 14 days in advance. For unforeseen events, requests should be made before the relevant teaching sessions begins on the day that the need becomes known and should normally be requesting absence for one day only.