



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Student Absence Policy

This Policy on Student Absence applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The University considers student welfare as a priority and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progression and wider university experience. This policy has been developed to provide clear guidance on student absence with a view to reduce the impact of absence on academic study.

1. Definitions

1.1. **Students are absent** if:

- a. they do not attend a teaching session that is on their personalised timetable
- b. they do not attend an examination
- c. they do not attend any part of a placement
- d. they do not attend planned activity relating to the learning experiences of the module, for example fieldtrips, site visits, rehearsals and conferences.

1.2. **A Teaching Session** is any timetabled learning and teaching session. It includes lectures, seminars, practical and computer workshops.

1.3. **Notified Absence** The reasons for absence can include the following:

- a. Illness
- b. Personal (including Compassionate Leave)
- c. Sport
- d. Adverse Weather
- e. Study Leave

1.4. **Unauthorised Absence** is where the reason for non-attendance is unknown.

1.5. **A Self-Certified Absence** is a period of absence that is no longer than seven consecutive days¹, excluding periods of assessment or examinations. No supporting documentation is required.

¹ Seven consecutive days includes weekends (for example Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday)

2. Attendance Requirements

The Attendance Policy states the University's attendance requirements.

2.1. Students are responsible for:

- a. Attending all timetabled learning/teaching sessions associated with their programme of study and ensuring they have their attendance recorded.
- b. Notifying in advance using the automated online absence form in the Student Portal. Reasons may include notification of absence involving representation at University events or Students' Union related activities.
- c. Notifying any unforeseen absences from classes as soon as practically possible. Notification of absence will only be recorded up to 5 working days after the last date of absence.
- d. For absences lasting more than 5 working days, attach a medical certificate to the automated online absence form in the Student Portal.

2.2. In relation to Formal Examinations and Coursework the following applies:

- a. Students are expected to attend all necessary formal examinations and submit coursework by published submission dates.
- b. Students who fail to attend a scheduled formal examination or submit a piece of coursework (where no approved extension has been granted), will be marked as a non-submission.

2.3. Programme Specific Requirements

- a. Due to the diversity of programmes delivered at QMU, there will be a number of Professional/Statutory body requirements with respect to attendance.
- b. Where programmes must conform to such requirements, these should be clearly communicated to students.

2.4. Placement Activities

- a. Students who undertake a placement as part of their programme are responsible for ensuring that their attendance matches the requirements of the placement provider. Placement providers will inform the University if a student is failing to maintain a good attendance record, which may lead to the students being withdrawn from the placement activity and potentially from their programme of study.
- b. Professional Bodies may specify requirements for placement attendance which must be adhered to. Any Professional Body requirements will be detailed in the relevant Student Programme Handbook.

3. Notification of Absences

3.1. Students must provide notification of their absence using the automated online Student Absence Form in the Student Portal and provide evidence where necessary, as detailed below:

- a. Absent for a period of **more than seven consecutive days**, a Medical Certificate² or other appropriate documentation³ must be provided.
- b. Absent for **less than seven consecutive days covering periods of assessments/examinations**, a Medical Certificate⁴ or other appropriate documentation⁵ must be provided.
- c. Absent for **less than seven consecutive days** and teaching events have been missed, the student can self-certify the absence.

3.2. Planned Absence

- a. The notification of absence should be provided in advance where the absence is planned, for example to attend a funeral or represent the University in an official event. Notification of absence will only be recorded up to 5 working days after the last date of absence.
- b. The student is expected to complete the automated online Student Absence Form in the Student Portal; this will be forwarded to the Programme Leader.

3.3. Unexpected Absence

- a. Where advance notification is not possible, for example in the event of illness, it is expected that the student will inform the University as soon as practically possible. Notification of absence will only be recorded up to 5 working days after the last date of absence.
- b. Where the University does not receive notification of the reason for unexpected absence then the absence will be recorded within the attendance monitoring process and may trigger a notification to be sent as detailed in the attendance policy.

3.4. Absence from Placement

- a. Students must inform both the Placement provider contact and the University of any absences whilst on placement.
- b. There are a number of programme specific requirements regarding placement hours, some programmes require hours to be made up at another time. Please refer to the relevant programme handbook.

² Students should note that, in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Executive Health Department, medical practitioners may charge a fee for the provision of medical certificates.

³ Appropriate documentation includes, a medical report, a note from a hospital, a formal notification of a hospital or clinic appointment, evidence from a member of staff who was alerted to the circumstances at the time, a letter from the student counsellor or other professional that the student consulted during the period when difficulties occurred or a note from the police.

⁴ See 2 above.

⁵ See 3 above.

4. Recording of Absences

- 4.1. Student absences will be logged within the Student Record System.
- 4.2. Notified absence will be recorded as one of the following reasons:
 - a. Illness
 - b. Personal (including Compassionate Leave)
 - c. Sport
 - d. Adverse Weather
 - e. Study Leave
- 4.3. The absence is recorded as unauthorised where there is no advanced notification or known reason.
- 4.4. The attendance monitoring system will log any absence from a scheduled teaching/learning event and record this in the student record system as an unauthorised absence.
- 4.5. Absence whilst on placement will be logged by the placement provider and the University. The placement provider will send notification of the total attendance hours to the University for logging.
- 4.6. A record of Placement Hours, including any absence, will be held electronically in the placement database and a hard copy in the Student File.

5. Periods of Absence

- 5.1. Student absence will be monitored as part of the attendance monitoring process. When minimum attendance requirements are breached, as stated in the attendance policy, the student will receive correspondence from the University highlighting their absence and any necessary action required.
- 5.2. Periods of absence should not exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students who request extended absence beyond 4 weeks may be required to defer their studies. Any requests for extended periods of absence will be subject to Programme Leader approval and will depend on the nature of the programme delivery.
- 5.3. The student has the responsibility to contact the appropriate staff members (usually the Module Coordinator) as soon as possible to determine:
 - a. If there are any alternative arrangements to compensate for missed work or assessment
 - b. If any remedial work is required

5.4. Patterns of absence will be reviewed by the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) and Programme Leader, as stated in the Attendance Policy. Students who have breached the minimum attendance levels will be asked to meet with their PAT or Programme Leader to discuss the absences.

6. Support Available

The University understands that students may benefit from support and guidance to help them deal with any issues contributing to low level of attendance. There are a number of support services available to assist students.

6.1. **Effective Learning Service (ELS)** provides guidance and support for all students wishing to develop their study and learning skills.

6.2. **Personal Academic Tutors (PATs)** will act as a facilitator and 'mentor' to the student whilst at the University, encouraging the student to optimise their learning opportunities. The PAT is expected to refer students to other appropriate agencies and fully trained staff either within the University or elsewhere for support and resolution of issues of concern.

6.3. **The School Office** is responsible for supporting staff and students, administering programmes of study, placements, and clinics.

6.4. **Student Services** is a professional support department working to ensure students have the information, advice, guidance and opportunities necessary to support their successful experience and achievement whilst studying at QMU.

- a. Counsellor, counselling@qmu.ac.uk
- b. Student Finance Adviser, studentfunding@qmu.ac.uk
- c. Disability Adviser, disabilityadvisers@qmu.ac.uk
- d. Jobshop Co-ordinator - jobshop@qmu.ac.uk

6.5. **The Students' Union** is a student led organisation specialising in enhancing the student experience providing advice and support, union@qmu.ac.uk

6.6. **Thinking of Leaving?** If you are considering transferring to another course, taking a year out or perhaps leaving university altogether, it is very important that you are able to understand and consider all of your options before you make a decision. Information is available on the following website <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/thinkingofleaving/>

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