

UKVI Academic Monitoring and Engagement Policy

Groups Responsible for Policy Review:	Executive Team, Academic Board (for information)
Executive Team Member Responsible:	Academic Secretary and Director of Academic Services
Date Last Approved:	April 2024
To be Reviewed:	Every 12 months
Review consultation:	Executive Team
Date of Next Review period:	April 2025
Related policies	This policy must be read with the LST's Attendance Policy, Wellbeing Policy, Fitness to Study Policy and the Student Route Compliance Policy.

1. Preamble

London School of Theology monitors attendance and engagement to ensure students are progressing academically and to help ensure it is carrying out its duty of care to all students.

In addition, the school has obligations in respect of international students being sponsored under the Student Route (formerly Tier 4) This policy sets out the responsibilities of all those who are involved in supporting international students, and the responsibilities of the students themselves.

The Policy sets out steps that must be taken if there is non-engagement of students. However, London School of Theology's approach is one of support for students and the emphasis is on removing any barriers that students might have to engage in to enable them to enjoy their studies and to achieve to their full potential. This Policy must therefore be read alongside the LST Attendance Policy, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study policies.

2. Scope of this policy

- 2.1. This policy addresses the engagement of all international students. Students are categorised by the Home Office as Band 1 or Band 2:
 - Band 1: Study at a Higher Education Provider at RQF Level 5 and below
 - Band 2: Study at a Higher Education Provider at RQF Levels 6,7 and 8
- 2.2. If a student is studying a course which spans more than one level the Band is determined by the most appropriate scheme relevant to their level of study as outlined in this document. London School of Theology students will typically be in Band 2.
- 2.3. This policy sets out:
 - a. The responsibilities that London School of Theology staff and students have in complying with UKVI requirements and, therefore, complying with this policy
 - b. The systems that are in place to monitor academic engagement
 - c. What information is recorded to confirm that students are academically engaging
 - d. What actions will be taken when a lack of academic engagement is identified
 - e. The maximum period of non-engagement before intervention will take place (the guidance states that this does not have to exceed 60 days)
 - f. The robust systems in place to identify students who are not engaging, with specific emphasis on the different groups of students to whom monitoring applies
 - g. When non-engagement will lead to withdrawal of sponsorship

3. Definition of terms

- 3.1. Abbreviations used in this document:
 - a. CAS Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
 - b. SIS Student Information System

- c. UKVI UK Visas and Immigration
- d. VLE Virtual Learning Environment

4. Academic Engagement

- 4.1. The London School of Theology is required to ensure that all students on a Student Visa are actively engaging with their studies as part of its duties as a Student Sponsor with Track Record of Compliance.
- 4.2. 'Engagement' means that the students are **actively and consistently** following their programme of study.
- 4.3. To demonstrate engagement, Band 1 students must attend a minimum of 15 hours of daytime (08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday) classroom-based study per week. If a student does not achieve 85% attendance in any calendar month, London School of Theology will review the student's attendance and annotate the student's record with the reasons for non-attendance, and note the measures being taken to address this.
- 4.4. If a Band 1 student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive calendar months London School of Theology will withdraw sponsorship, unless there are extenuating circumstances, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.5. Band 2 students are required to engage with their studies, and this must include regular engagement with on-campus activities. Evidence of engagement, depending on the programme of study being undertaken, could include:
 - 4.5.1. For all students:
 - a. Attending lectures, seminars or tutorials
 - b. Undertaking research or fieldwork
 - c. Submitting essays, assignments and attending examinations
 - d. Studying in the library
 - e. Accessing the VLE to listen to recorded lectures
 - f. Attending Study Skills sessions
 - g. Attending scheduled meetings with staff, such as a Personal Tutor, Supervisor
 - h. Attending Placements
 - i. Attending Supervision
 - 4.5.2 Counselling students (all the applicable activities at clause 4.5.1 as well)
 - a. Attending Residential Weekends
 - b. Attending Process Groups and all other counselling-related activities
 - 4.5.3 Music students (all the applicable activities at clause 4.5.1 as well)
 - a. Attending First Study Music lessons
 - b. Attending a chosen Ensemble Group
 - c. Attending and participating in weekly Chapel services
 - 4.5.4 This is by no means an exhaustive list and programme teams may include other programme-specific activities that could demonstrate engagement.

5. Monitoring Engagement: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students

- 5.1 London School of Theology is keen to ensure that all students are progressing and are supported in their studies. It is also a Home Office requirement to monitor the engagement of sponsored international students. This section applies to **undergraduate** and **postgraduate taught students** only.
- 5.2 Holiday periods for undergraduate students are:
 - a. Christmas/Winter Holidays – the period between December to mid-January.
 - b. Easter/Spring Holidays – the period between mid-March and mid-April.

- c. Summer Holidays – the period between July and mid-September.

5.3 Holiday periods for postgraduate taught students:

- a. Christmas/Winter Holiday – the period between term one and term two.
- b. Easter/Spring Holiday – the period between term two and three.

- 5.3.1 Postgraduate (taught) students do not normally have a holiday period during the summer months, because they are required to work on their dissertation.

5.4 When monitoring engagement, the School will be mindful of the possibility that the student has become a victim of modern slavery. Possible signs of this are the student not being able to attend meetings alone, appearing to be under the control of others, being reluctant to engage in discussions and appearing frightened. If concerns are identified these should be discussed with the Academic Secretary and Director of Academic Services (ASDAS) in the first instance.

5.5 Responsibilities of the Attendance & Welfare Panel (AWP)

- a. Engagement will be monitored by the AWP (consisting of the UKVI officer, Assistant Registrar and Chaplain) using data from a variety of sources, including attendance records submitted by lecturers and supervisors, SIS (Student information system) records as well as feedback from lecturers, tutors and placement supervisors. Engagement will not be monitored outside of term time.
 - b. If a student has not engaged in any activity on campus for 2 weeks, they will be sent an email reminding them of the importance of engagement.
 - c. If attendance does not improve and a student does not engage on campus for 4 weeks, they will be contacted by the Attendance and Welfare panel. This is the informal stage of the Fitness to Study process. Both the UKVI officer and Programme Leader are members of the Attendance and Welfare Panel and Fitness to Study Panel respectively.
 - d. If the student's attendance does not improve and does not engage on campus for 6 weeks, the student will be informed that their sponsorship is at risk. They will be informed that, if they do not contact the UKVI officer in the next 48 hours, their sponsorship will be withdrawn and therefore they will be withdrawn from their programme of study. The student will be invited to a Fitness to Study meeting first. This will be the formal stage.
 - e. If a student has a sporadic attendance pattern (for example, not engaging for two weeks, then engaging and then stopping engagement again) the AWP will contact the student and request a face-to-face meeting.
- 5.6 If the student fails to meet the minimum engagement requirements, the AWP will keep a record of any conversations or correspondence with the students, and any actions that are taken.
- 5.7 If a student fails to re-engage with their studies within 60 days of their last registered engagement, sponsorship will be withdrawn, except in extenuating circumstances agreed by the School and in line with the School Extenuating Circumstances Policy. The UKVI officer is responsible for informing UKVI.

5.8 Responsibilities of the student

- a. Attendance will be recorded by the Lecturer and recorded in SIS.
- b. The student is responsible for replying promptly to any communication about non-engagement.
- c. If the student does not engage due to personal circumstances (e.g. sickness) the student would typically be expected to fill in an absence form with the required evidence and/or apply for extenuating circumstances which will also require evidence. The Visa Compliance Team/Attendance and Welfare panel, who are also members of the Extenuating Circumstances panel, would be aware of this when discussing the student's attendance.

6. Postgraduate Taught Students: Dissertation

- 6.1. Postgraduate students at London School of Theology typically have a few months in which they are working on their dissertation.
- 6.2. The end date of a degree programme must not be set as more than 2 weeks after the last formal interaction from the student (e.g. handing in of the dissertation or the final lecture of a

programme, attending an oral examination, or the final lecture of a programme). If a student submits their dissertation earlier than 2 weeks before the end date of their degree programme then sponsorship of their visa will be withdrawn, and the student will no longer be eligible for the Graduate Route Visa.

6.3. Responsibilities of the Student

- a. When working on their dissertation, the student is responsible for engaging with their studies on campus and providing evidence of this. This could be through meetings with their Dissertation Supervisor, study in the library, attending an agreed session relating to the dissertation or other on-campus engagement.
- b. After a meeting with their Dissertation Supervisor the student is responsible for advising the Programme Administrator who will record the meeting has occurred (with email evidence, on a spreadsheet or on the SIS).

6.4. Responsibilities of the Supervisor

- a. The Dissertation Supervisor is responsible for responding to an email that indicates that a student has recorded an interaction with them and confirming that this interaction took place.
- b. A student is not allowed to be absent during the dissertation period, unless this is for specific research at an approved location. A Dissertation Supervisor should confirm if it is necessary to do research at a specific location off campus.

6.5. Responsibilities of the Attendance & Welfare Panel

- a. The Attendance and Welfare Panel (AWP) will monitor the engagement of dissertation students, in the same way as for undergraduate taught students (set out in Section 5 above). Non-engagement will be addressed in accordance with the timescales set out in 5.5-5.7.

7. Postgraduate Research (MTh, MPhil, PhD) Students

7.1. London School of Theology must ensure the engagement of sponsored students who are completing a PhD.

7.2. Responsibilities of the Student

- a. The student is responsible for contacting their PhD Supervisor at least once every month. with a minimum of at least 10 contact points/academic year (6 contact points/academic year for part-time students. Unless the student has been given formal permission to study at a different location, and this has been reported to the UKVI, this contact should be face to face and on campus.
- b. After each meeting with their supervisor, the student must complete the Supervisory form and email this back to the Research Programme Administrator as outlined in the Research student handbook. The Programme Administrator must record these meetings on a spreadsheet or on the SIS). This will make it possible for the Assistant Registrar to take note of the interaction and email the PhD Supervisor.
- c. The student is responsible for agreeing any holiday period with their supervisor.

7.3. Responsibilities of the PhD Supervisor

- a. To ensure that the Supervisor meets with the student, the Supervisor will meet with the student at least ten times a year for full time students and for part-time students at least six times in the year (often more regularly in the first year, at the supervisory teams.
- b. To ensure that the UKVI Officer and the Research Programme Administrator are made aware promptly if a student on a student visa is not engaging with their studies as outlined above.

8. Retake/Interruption/Deferral: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught

8.1. Students might be required to retake an element of their course.

- 8.2. If a student is required to complete an assessment in the August resit period, there are no monitoring requirements because they will be studying for the resit during a holiday period.
- 8.3. If a student is required to repeat some of their modules with attendance:
 - a. If attendance is required to fulfil that requirement, then attendance monitoring will be as set out in Section 5 above.
 - b. If a student defers/interrupts their course for a year, they will be required to return home until the next academic year starts and their studies resume. Their sponsorship will be withdrawn in the meantime and the Home Office will curtail their visa to 60 days, during which they will be required to return home. To resume their studies, they would be required to reapply for a new visa on their return.
 - c. If a student interrupts their course for a year (under current LST regulations, students can only interrupt their studies one year at a time), they will be required to return home before the next academic year starts and their studies resume. Their sponsorship will be withdrawn in the meantime and the Home Office will curtail their visa to 60 days, during which they will be required to return home. To resume their studies, they would be required to reapply for a new visa on their return.

9. Interruption/Withdrawal: Postgraduate Research

- 9.1. **MPhil/PhD Students** can take one or more such periods of interruption of study (in three monthly blocks) totalling up to twenty-four months (full-time) or twenty-four months (part-time) during their whole period of research registration. The beginning of a period of interruption can be backdated to the start of the current month, but no more. An administration fee is charged for applying for a suspension/interruption of registration. Interruptions continue to be capped at 24 months total, and after 12 months **a student must tell their supervisors** again if they intend to continue to interrupt.
- 9.2. **MTh Students** can take one or more such periods of interruption of study (in 2-3 monthly blocks) totalling up to six months (full-time) eight months (part-time) during their whole period of research registration. The beginning of a period of interruption can be backdated to the start of the current month, but no more. An administration fee is charged for applying for a suspension of registration.
 - a. If a student interrupts their course for a year, they will be required to return home until the next academic year starts and their studies resume. Their sponsorship will be withdrawn in the meantime and the Home Office will curtail their visa to 60 days, during which they will be required to return home. To resume their studies, they would be required to reapply for a new visa on their return.
 - b. If a student interrupts their course for a year or more, they will be required to return home until the next academic year starts and their studies resume. Their sponsorship will be withdrawn in the meantime and the Home Office will curtail their visa to 60 days, during which they will be required to return home. To resume their studies, they would be required to reapply for a new visa on their return.

10. Away from campus: Not studying

- 10.1. A student might request to spend a Leave of Absence to address personal circumstances which arise during their studies.
- 10.2. **Responsibilities of the Student**
 - a. The student should make a request for a Leave of Absence using the relevant absence form at least two weeks before the leave is due to start. This request should be made using the relevant Cognito form, [linked here](#).
 - b. The student is required to discuss their request with either the UKVI officer or the Attendance and Welfare panel to discuss the implication of their request on their visa status.

- c. When the student returns to the UK they will be required to apply for a new visa.
- d. Absence from studies might mean that the student loses their eligibility for the Graduate Route visa.

10.3. Responsibilities of the Attendance & Welfare Panel

- a. The Attendance and Welfare panel would advise the student, copying the Programme Leader into the correspondence which clarifies the student's situation.
- b. The UKVI officer must inform the UKVI that the student is taking a Leave of Absence, giving the length of absence that has been approved.

10.4. Responsibilities of the Programme Leader

- a. The Programme Leader/Research Supervisor is responsible for approving a Leave of Absence request, following advice from the Visa Compliance Team/Attendance and Welfare panel or the UKVI officer.

[end]