**Student Engagement Policy**

# Policy Statement

Research on student experience, retention and success indicates that learners who are fully engaged with their studies are more likely to complete their programmes of study and achieve excellent academic outcomes. Cardiff Metropolitan University is committed to providing every student with supportive, enabling learning opportunities and environments that facilitate learner progression, satisfaction and success. As outlined in the Student Engagement Strategy, Cardiff Metropolitan University aims to ‘provide opportunities that allow all students to thrive throughout their learning experience’ (Student Engagement Strategy 2018-2023). Background information and key engagement points in student lifecycle are outlined in Appendix A.

This Policy aims to ensure that students have fair and equitable access to opportunities that promote and encourage academic engagement. It also ensures that students who, for a variety of reasons, experience academic disengagement are provided with early, targeted support that is designed to re-engage them with their programme of study. For more information on the specific purpose and scope of this policy, see Appendix B.

The Policy defines what ‘student engagement’ means at Cardiff Metropolitan University and identifies a range of key engagement points that are considered essential for academic progression and success. The Policy sets out how the University supports students to engage fully with their studies and in turn, what the University expects of students in relation to engagement with their programme of study. The Policy aims to ensure that all students gain the maximum benefit from their higher education experience.

Operational guidance will be made available to support the implementation/delivery of the Policy.

# Links to relevant policies, regulations and guidance

This policy should be used in conjunction with a number of other University strategies, policies and regulations, including (but not limited to):

* Strategic Plan
* Student Engagement Strategy
* Personal Tutoring Policy
* Fitness to Study Policy
* Assessment and Feedback Policy
* The Student Charter
* Mitigating Circumstances Procedure

# Student Engagement at Cardiff Metropolitan

The following definition of student engagement was developed as a result of a series of consultative workshops with staff and students, in which participants described what ‘engagement’ means at Cardiff Metropolitan University:

*‘Student engagement’ describes the time, effort and resources invested by both students and the University in relevant, purposeful activities that enhance learning, develop a sense of belonging, improve academic outcomes and the overall learning experience’.*

# Principles

**Principle 1: Our approach to engagement will focus on success**

The University’s approach to student engagement is positive and enabling. If a learner is recognised as being at risk of disengagement and withdrawal, actions are taken in order to attempt to re-engage them in order for them to continue their studies. In the event that the student is no longer able to continue their studies, suspension or withdrawal may be the most appropriate option. In such cases, students will be supported through these processes.

**Principle 2: The University and the student, where possible in partnership, will attempt to overcome known barriers to learning/progression**

Any student who enrols on a programme at the University does so with the intention of achieving the academic qualification. In circumstances whereby a learner’s performance is/could be impacted (e.g. ill health, personal issues or general academic difficulties) students will notify their Personal Tutor or Programme Director, who will discuss the student’s options, next steps and, where appropriate act as a gateway to appropriate resources, opportunities and services (e.g. Student Services).

**Principle 3: Learning and engagement are shared responsibilities**

Learning is a shared experience and the University’s approach to learning places high value on participation and active engagement of students with their peers, lecturers and other staff involved in the learning process.

**Principle 4:** **Equitable engagement opportunities for all**

Every taught programme at Cardiff Metropolitan University will include a wide range of educationally engaging learning opportunities that students proactively interact with, and participate in throughout all stages of the student lifecycle.

**Principle 5: Regular contact will be maintained with each student**

Regular contact will be maintained with each student through the Personal Tutoring Scheme and programme-related activities. Distance learning, placement and work-based learning students and learners writing up dissertations will maintain contact with supervisors, mentors or other named nominees (e.g. via email or other specified means of contact).

**Principle 6: Student engagement data will be used to support student learning**

A number of student engagement points are captured and (where appropriate) used to provide early, targeted support to learners, and to inform curriculum development. In accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA), students will be required to give consent for the University to process and use their personal engagement data, which may be used to provide supportive interventions.

**Principle 7: Students will have opportunities to discuss and reflect on their engagement and performance**

Students have opportunities to reflect on, and discuss their own progression, attainment and engagement with members of their programme team and Personal Tutors. Engagement data is used as the basis for meaningful, evidence-based conversations between learners and relevant members of staff.

**Principle 8: Where student success is no longer possible, the University may withdraw or suspend a candidate in their best interests**

Where there is sufficient cause for concern (for instance, if a student fails to meet the expectations set out in this policy for a sustained period of time) and attempts to re-engage a student have failed, a Programme Director may suspend a student, or instigate the withdrawal process.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may be deemed unfit to study by the university. In these cases, students can expect to receive information on the University’s Fitness to Study Policy, and advice/guidance on suspending their studies or withdrawal from their programme of study.

# Student Engagement entitlements and expectations (Appendix A)

Pre-arrival engagement opportunities

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| Students who intend to study with us are entitled to receive opportunities to engage with the University prior to their arrival.  These could include Open Days, correspondence and pre-arrival activities at institutional, School or programme level.  Students are entitled to their work on pre-arrival activities to be followed up or built upon as part of their assimilation into the Cardiff Metropolitan University community. | We expect that students will read and respond to pre-arrival communication, participate in or complete learning activities, and be prepared/willing to discuss and build upon these once they begin their studies. |

Induction

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| Every student is entitled to be inducted into the University in a manner which is designed to help learners to develop a sense of belonging to their programme, and the University.  Returning students will be provided with re-induction activities.  Students’ induction experience will adhere to Cardiff Metropolitan University’s Principles of Induction. The principles, which can be found here, aim to ensure that all programmes provide learners with a high-quality, equitable induction experience.  Students will have opportunities to get to know staff and fellow students. Campus based students will also be provided with orientation activities.  Students who are late arrivals to a course should be inducted and are entitled to an equitable experience.  As outlined in the Personal Tutoring Policy, every student should be allocated a named Personal Tutor by the end of the induction period. | We expect that students will actively participate in induction opportunities.  Students will be pro-active during induction week in establishing positive relationships with staff and students which can be built upon throughout and beyond the course of study.  This includes attending meeting(s) with Personal Tutors during the induction period. |

Personal Tuition

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| All students will be allocated a named Personal Tutor, preferably from the academic programme on which the learner is enrolled.  All students (including those taught via distance learning or on work placements) are entitled to an equitable personal tutoring experience.  Personal Tutors will provide academic support and guidance throughout the student lifecycle, and will discuss with individual learners their engagement, progress and performance. Personal Tutors will have the knowledge and skills to signpost learners to relevant support services and extra-curricular opportunities.  Personal Tutors will indicate their availability via the Personal Tutoring Portal. | We expect that students will take responsibility for scheduling and attending Personal Tutoring meetings.  Students will inform their Personal Tutor of any circumstances that may affect their performance.  Students will be prepared to discuss openly their academic engagement, progress and performance within personal tutoring meetings to help optimise their university experience and maximise their chances of success. |

Learning Environments

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| Students can expect to access learning resources, that are of a high standard, and appropriate to their learning needs, regardless of the mode of study, or where the student choose to learn.  Students can expect that the range of digital, information, academic, critical thinking and information literacy skills required for their learning will be clearly presented, with opportunities to develop those skills.  In terms of the University’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), each module will comply with Cardiff Metropolitan University’s minimum requirements, which sets out expectations on what must be provided within the VLE for each module to enable students to engage in high quality blended learning.  Campus-based students can expect to access [Library Services](https://study.cardiffmet.ac.uk/Library/Pages/Students%20and%20Staff.aspx), resources, spaces and support. This will include subject related books, journal articles and online materials and electronic study skills guidance/activities, in addition to computers and the support to use a variety technology to study and learn.  For those who are not on campus, students can expect a wide variety of those same resources to be available online, via a range of tools and apps. They can also expect to have access to a range of online support services and staff to assist them with their learning needs. | *Students who can travel to campuses are encouraged to use the Learning Centres, and the learning resources contained therein, as well as support services and staff, to support their learning.*  *All students should regularly access learning materials and support services via the VLE, website, the App, and other online services.*  *Students are expected to fully participate in online learning activities, where required, as part of their programme of study.*  *Students are expected to develop their academic, digital and information skills by taking advantage of the development opportunities provided.* |

Attendance

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| Every student is entitled to engage in a range of appropriate timetabled learning and teaching activities, which could mean: lectures, seminars, workshops, laboratory or workshop practicals, studio-based sessions or visiting speakers.  For each programme of study, students can expect to experience relevant, appropriate learning and teaching approaches within timetabled sessions.  Personalised Student Timetables are constructed and evaluated against a range of metrics, designed with the aim of optimising learning and the student experience. Timetables will be clearly presented and made available to all students.  Programme/Module Handbooks will clearly describe all expected attendance points and procedures for reporting absence.  Students who, for unavoidable reasons, have missed a series of teaching sessions will be offered appropriate support to enable them to catch up and re-engage with their studies when they return to timetabled sessions.  If a student is unable to catch up, or continue their studies following a period of absence, they are entitled to access support and guidance on suspending their studies (or alternative).  There may be very rare occasions in which a student, in agreement with the University, is not required to attend teaching events (e.g. due to specific learning needs or a disability). | Students are expected to be punctual, attending and fully participating in all timetabled sessions and other learning opportunities (including placements).  Where necessary, students will engage with any attendance registration or monitoring methods that are in place.  If a student is unable to attend a teaching session for a valid reason, they are required to give their apologies (where possible, in advance).  Where a student is undertaking a work placement or work-based learning, any absence should be reported to the employer/work placement provider as soon as possible.  The University understands that there will be some circumstances that may lead to longer-term, absence or a series of absences. In these circumstances, students will inform their Module Leader, Programme Leader or Personal Tutor.  There are additional attendance requirements for Tier 4 students, students some professional courses and some sponsored courses. |

Assessment submission and feedback

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| Students are entitled to comprehensive information on all assessments, including learning outcomes, assessment criteria and deadlines.  Students are entitled to ‘assignment brief’ unpacking opportunities that are designed to help learners explore, clarify and to develop familiarity with assessment criteria and requirements.  In line with the Online Submission and Marking policy, all students are entitled to submit their summative assessments online, where appropriate.  Students are entitled to receive timely feedback on all assessments. Feedback is provided via the VLE for all summative assessments.  Where there is a good reason why a student is unable to submit an assessment, they will be entitled to use the Mitigating Circumstances procedure. | Students are expected to submit written coursework and non-written assessments before specified deadlines. Students may also be required to complete assessed work such as oral presentations, performances, practicals, problem-based or scenario-based learning, examinations or observations on an arranged date/time.  If a student is unable to meet deadlines for the submission of coursework, they are expected to make their Module Leader aware as soon as possible. Students will also notify their Personal Tutor so that they can be provided with appropriate guidance and support.  Students are expected to engage with their assessment feedback and use feedback comments to make improvements to their learning and performance. If a student does not understand their feedback comments, or has questions about elements of the feedback, they should contact the marker, or Module Leader. |

Assessment marks

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| Entitlement | Expectation |
| If a student does not submit work, or fails an assessment, they may be entitled to a re-submission.  If a student’s assessment average assessment marks declines unexpectedly, the student will be contacted by a member of staff to discuss their performance and to explore the range of support available at Cardiff Metropolitan University, should the learner require it. | If a student does not submit work, or fails an assessment, they are expected to contact their Personal Tutor to discuss their options, including re-submission. |

**Policy review date:** TBC

**References**

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**APPENDIX A**

**Background information on student engagement and key engagement points**

[The National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE)](http://nsse.indiana.edu/NSSE_2015_Results/pdf/NSSE_2015_Annual_Results.pdf#page=5) suggest that student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality:

1. the time and effort students invest in their studies and other educationally purposeful activities.
2. how the institution organises and delivers its resources, curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage and enable student participation in activities proven to maximise student learning.

Through consultation, students identified a set of behaviours that they believed to be characteristic of a truly engaged student: *open-minded, positive, enthusiastic, empowered, confident, and inspired*. Students believe that Cardiff Metropolitan University should be a place where ideas evolve and learners feel they can make an impact, in partnership with the University. The University should provide opportunities to support student learning, whilst students should be willing to invest in their own learning and to support the learning of their peers.

Engagement can be contrasted with alienation, which can be described as *‘Inertia, apathy, disillusionment or engagement in other pursuits’* (Krause, 2005, 4). Alienation is linked to ‘surface’ and narrow approaches to learning, as well as higher risk of non-As outlined in the Strategic Plan (2017-2022) supporting students to succeed, excel and reach their potential are key priorities at Cardiff Metropolitan University. The University will develop a community of practice committed to success across the student lifecycle, placing students at the centre of their learning (Student Engagement Strategy 2018-2023).

Thomas (2012) proposes that ‘success’ means helping all students to become more engaged, more effective learners in higher education which helps to improve their academic outcomes and progression opportunities after graduation (or when they exit higher education). In addition, Cardiff Metropolitan University recognises that nurturing student engagement may lead to student success in the form of students engaging with the university as alumni or through further study with the institution.

Evidence from the ‘What Works?’ student retention and success programme highlights the need for universities to take a proactive approach to student engagement, emphasising the effectiveness of mainstream engagement approaches that reach and enable each student to maximise their success.

Universities are also encouraged to be reactive, where necessary, identifying ‘at risk’ students and those considering withdrawing from their programme of study. Mainstream engagement approaches can be supplemented by paying attention to the ways in which students integrate, behave and perform once they are in higher education and then intervening if necessary with timely support and re-engagement opportunities. Engagement indicators are key academic activities, which provide evidence of engagement.

These include, but are not limited to:

* completion of pre-arrival activity/activities,
* attendance and participation in scheduled teaching sessions,
* active and regular use of available resources including the Virtual Learning Environment, Library and online recordings,
* submission of formative and summative assessments,
* attendance at meetings with Personal Tutors and Supervisors.

Pre-arrival engagement opportunities

Lizzio (2011) suggests that students must be encouraged to develop their student identity even before beginning their induction. Pre-entry engagement help to improve retention and success in higher education in the following ways (Thomas, 2011):

* providing information, knowledge and skills to improve pre-entry decision making and retention;
* developing expectations and academic preparation pre-entry to enhance transition, retention and success;
* fostering early engagement to promote social integration.

Induction

Lawson (2015) presents the argument that students’ initial experiences of university shape their experience of the rest of the degree. Thomas (2012, p16) notes that *‘induction activities should have a range of functions, but in particular they should facilitate students to build social relationships with current and new students and members of staff’.* Cardiff Metropolitan University recognises the importance of induction and establishing study and support networks early on.

Personal Tuition

At Cardiff Metropolitan University, we recognise that effective personal tutoring is integral to student success and progression (Thomas and Hixenbaugh, 2006; Stephen, O’Connell and Hall, 2008; Thomas, 2012; Parker, 2016).

Learning Environments

Cardiff Metropolitan University provides both physical and online / virtual learning environments designed to support and enable learning. Therefore, the Student Engagement Strategy (2018-2023) puts a strong emphasis on the importance of designing the ‘physical and digital environment’ around our students. The services we offer will be co-designed, using student feedback and up-to-date methodologies.

Physical environments are the places where campus-based learners can go, which are designed to facilitate and support their learning needs, by offering spaces, resources and face to face support that is dedicated to that purpose, such as Academic Skills, Information Literacy, and IT Training courses.

The Virtual and Online Learning Environment is integral to the delivery of most academic programmes and provides programme-related resources and learning activities, as well as a platform allowing learners and staff to communicate and collaborate with each other. Online support services also include the support of academic, library and technical specialist through a variety of channels, aimed at giving you the support you need when not in the proximity of the physical learning environment.

Blended learning allows students to benefit from ‘a harmonious balance between online access to knowledge and face-to-face human interaction’ (Osguthorpe and Graham 2003, p228). In addition, accessing library resources, including e-resources is a core skill when engaging in academic study.

Attendance

Studies show that good attendance is correlated with good academic outcomes (Newman-Ford, Fitzgibbon, Lloyd and Thomas, 2009) and that where lecture capture is provided, it does not provide a like-for-like substitution for attending (Edwards and Clinton, 2018).

Assessment submission and feedback

Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student learning experience. Students learn from their engagement in assessment activities and their interaction with staff and/or peers, both as part of the assessment task and through review of their assessment performance. For students, assessment is also a vehicle for obtaining feedback on their progress and performance, enabling them to reflect and continually build on their learning.

Assessment marks

Assessment enables students to benchmark their current level of knowledge or skills, identify areas for improvement and make judgements about the overall progress made. Assessment marks determine the extent to which a learner has met the assessment criteria (and learning outcomes).

**APPENDIX B**

**Purpose and Scope of policy.**

Purpose

The Student Engagement Policy seeks to:

* Define student engagement at Cardiff Metropolitan University;
* Enhance the overall learning environment by encouraging active participation through full engagement for all areas of study;
* Set core/minimum expectations around student engagement (including within the different Cardiff Metropolitan University contexts);
* Provide opportunities for students to reflect on, and discuss their own progression, attainment and engagement with members of their programme team and Personal Tutors;
* Provide the University with mechanisms and support structures to better promote/support student progression and success.

Scope

The policy applies to all students enrolled on Cardiff Metropolitan University taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, regardless of mode of delivery. This includes programmes delivered by a UK partner institution and international collaborative partners, as well as work-based learning.

International students who are covered by Home Office Tier 4 requirements have additional obligations, including attendance monitoring for immigration compliance purposes. These are set out within [Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725666/Tier_4_Sponsor_Guidance_-_Doc_2_-_Sponsorship_Duties_2018-07-16_FINAL.pdf) document.

In addition, some programmes of study at the University are subject to engagement requirements (e.g. attendance) specified by professional bodies and other external organisations. Where these requirements are different to or more rigorous than those set out in this Policy (and associated guidance) the requirements of the professional body will prevail.

Postgraduate Research students are not subject to this Policy, since their patterns of engagement are different from taught students.