

Newcastle Sixth Form College Student Attendance and Punctuality Procedure

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Approved by: Principalship

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Responsible Manager: Vice Principal: Students

Introduction

We expect students to attend all classes punctually according to your signed Learning Agreement and course timetable. This gives you the best opportunity to be successful in your studies as we know that good attendance is linked to good attainment. 2 weeks absence is shown to result in a drop of 1 whole grade at A-level. Remember, your attendance is always required on references for universities and employers. Definitions of attendance:

- 100% Good
- 99-95% Acceptable
- Less than 95% Below Expectations

Action required in the event of absence

If you need to miss a lesson, you or your parent/guardian should:

- Inform the College Admin Team in advance of any unavoidable **planned** absence;
- Telephone the College Admin Team on 0191 272 1001 between 8:30am and 9.00am to explain your **unplanned** absence. You will be asked for your personal details and for how long you expect to be absent.

Rewarding good attendance

Most students at the college have excellent attendance. The greatest reward for this is academic success. Students with good attendance will also be recognised through verbal and written feedback.

Authorised absence

We expect that you maintain 100% attendance and punctuality through the year. The college is not able to authorise holiday in term time. Students taking holiday in term time put their achievement at risk. Routine medical and dental appointments are also not permitted reasons to be absent and will be recorded as unauthorised.

The following list gives some examples of situations where an absence may be authorised (A) if they are believed to be **genuine and unavoidable**:

- Religious Holidays
- Hospital appointments with a consultant or similar (not GP appointments)
- Diagnosed medical conditions that require ongoing/regular hospital treatment
- Family bereavements of a close relative
- Court attendance/judicial/jury service
- Job interview
- Designated Religious Festival
- Driving test

Authorised absence is a neutral mark on the register and does not contribute to cumulative attendance.

The following progression related activity will be recorded as neutral (N) if the college is notified in advance with evidence:

- Participating in a significant extra-curricular activity, such as drama or sport
- University open days, university or career related interviews
- Student organised work experience

COVID-19

It is vitally important that we are all following official guidelines surrounding COVID-19. This may mean that you are expected to self-isolate due to a positive COVID-19 test or being identified as being in close contact with someone who has tested positive through track and trace. We have procedures in place to ensure that any students who are self-isolating due to COVID-19 will not miss out on their learning.

If you are required to self-isolate and are well enough to participate in streamed lessons, we expect that you have 100% engagement with these. Engagement with these will result in a positive register mark (Y/S). If you do not engage with these online activities, this will be marked as an Unauthorised absence (U).

If you are required to self-isolate and are unable to engage with online learning you need to inform your PDC to access support.

Request for Absence

If you know in advance that you will be absent you should complete a 'Student Request for Absence' form. These are available from the Main Office or Coaches and require the signatures of all teachers. They should then be handed in to the Principal's PA in 0.20 who will pass to a member of SLT to authorise as appropriate.

Punctuality

You should be in class ready to start the lesson at the timetabled start time. Any arrival after the published start time will be recorded as Late with the number of minutes late. You will be asked to take a seat or wait outside the lesson until a suitable moment, you will be spoken to quietly and calmly to establish the reason for lateness and given advice on how to begin the work. In any week where you are late you will need to complete compulsory catch up for the missed learning time to ensure you don't fall behind. This may be at break, lunchtime, in an independent study period, or after college.

Unauthorised absence

If you are absent without authorisation your absence will be noted by the member of staff who takes your class and the following actions will be taken:

- You will be spoken to by your coach or teacher to identify the causes of your attendance issues and how we can support you to resolve them.
- We will contact your parent/guardian
- If you are in receipt of a Bursary or any other support payment from College, you will not receive payment for any week where your attendance is below 95% including authorised absence
- We will identify if you have any problems or difficulties and we may arrange for you to have special help from your coach/teachers/ or Target Learning Support Team.
- We will listen to any problems that you may wish to raise and will try and give you the support and guidance needed to be successful.

If your attendance and/or punctuality is not of an acceptable standard and there are no special circumstances then we will begin the attendance disciplinary procedure.

Attendance disciplinary procedure

All meetings will take place on Microsoft Teams where possible.

If your subject or overall attendance and punctuality give us cause for concern and are not improving then you will be issued with a Yellow Card.

Yellow Card (STAGE 1):

This is a formal verbal warning. The following additional action will be taken:

- You will be contacted by your coach to discuss your attendance and any support you may need
- Your attendance will be checked each morning and afternoon
- We will contact your parent/guardian
- You will be required to attend Supervised Study and/or Subject Intervention

If your attendance and punctuality do not improve then you will be issued with a second Yellow Card.

Yellow Card (STAGE 2):

This is a formal written warning. The following additional action will be taken:

- You will be contacted by your coach/tutor to discuss your attendance and any support you may need
- Your attendance will be checked each morning and afternoon
- A meeting will be held with you, your parent/guardian, and a member of SLT
- You will be required to attend Supervised Study and/or Subject Intervention

Red Card (STAGE 3):

You will be required to attend a meeting with your parents/guardians and a member of SLT. This meeting will decide if you:

- can be allowed to return with a final written warning on the understanding that any further caution will result in the permanent loss of your place at college
- are not allowed to continue at the college and will be supported to find a more appropriate course outside of Newcastle Sixth Form College

Once you have reached a disciplinary stage you will remain at that stage for the remainder of your time at Newcastle Sixth Form. Additional support and monitoring may be paused if you maintain improved attendance.

Weekly and 6 week review

All students on the Yellow Card 2 or Red Card stages of the attendance procedure will be reviewed in weekly SLT meetings. In week 6 of each half term, any student who is significantly below the trigger and not showing improvement will only be allowed to continue at the current stage of the attendance procedure with the agreement of the SLT and Principal. Where this may lead to the permanent loss of a student's place a final meeting will be held with the student and their parents/guardians and a member of SLT.

Non attendance

Students who are absent for longer than 3 weeks will be withdrawn from their programme of study immediately unless there are clear mitigating circumstances and a clear plan for return to learning.

Fitness to study

Newcastle Sixth Form College is an educational institution for full time students. We are committed to providing support to all students to cater for each students' individual needs and promote inclusivity and equality of opportunity. We work to make reasonable adjustments for any student, including with the Attendance and Punctuality Procedure, and in doing so we fully comply with the Equality Act 2010.

It is important, however, to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the individual support that can be provided within a sixth form college. There will be times when a student's physical or mental health are so affected that they are no longer able, despite reasonable support and adjustment, within the College and externally, to maintain reasonable academic progress:

1. We are not a distance-learning College and, while it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible on a temporary basis, prolonged periods of absence cannot be sustainable.
2. There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health can require support beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer.
3. Occasionally a student's ill health may present a health and safety risk to either themselves or those around them that is unmanageable in a mainstream educational setting.

There are therefore occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our judgement that, in the best interests of a student, continuing at College is no longer the best option. The 'Fitness to study' Appendix outlines the process to be followed where there are 'fitness to study' concerns.

Appendix 1: Responsibilities for promoting good attendance

Students

- Attend all timetabled sessions
- Be responsible for your attendance and punctuality
- Communicate with college to explain absences
- Provide up to date contact information to allow communication with yourself and your parent/carer

Parents

- Support students to have 100% attendance at college including checking etrackr
- Check reasons for absence are valid
- Support students to arrange commitments, such as medical appointments, outside of college hours wherever possible
- Seek agreement in advance for planned absence
- Provide up to date contact information for the college to use.

Class teachers/Coaches

- Arrive to all lessons 5 minutes before scheduled start and begin lesson at scheduled time
- Log in and complete registers at the start of each lesson (first 20 minutes)
- Contact unauthorised absent students each day and record on etrackr (while on amended timetable)
- Follow the 'absence and attendance' flow chart

Heads of Department

- Ensure that attendance is a key agenda item in all meetings, briefings and 1:1s
- Ensure that registers are completed by each member of the team.
- Ensure registers are taken where staff are absent and lessons are delivered
- Follow the 'absence and attendance' flow chart
- Ensure their team follow the flow chart
- Check etrackr weekly to ensure subject attendance follow up is taking place

SLT

- Monitor that processes are being followed consistently and fairly
- Follow the 'absence and attendance' flow chart
- Ensure link departments follow the flow chart, checking data regularly
- Ensure that attendance is a key agenda item in all meetings, briefings and 1:1s including reviewing students on disciplinary procedure
- Follow up concerns over missed registers

Main Office

- Contact unauthorised absent students each day and record on etrackr (when on normal timetable)
- Take absence calls and record absence on unit-e
- Monitor and inform staff of missed register
- Ensure students on trips/visits/independent study are recorded accurately
- Produce monitoring reports for HODs and SLT

Personal Development Coaches

- Follow the 'absence and attendance' flow chart
- Ensure that registers are completed in each personal development class
- Check that reasons for student absences are valid.
- Inform parents/guardians of attendance concerns (when cumulative attendance falls below 90%).
- Inform parents/guardians of attendance concerns and issue attendance warning, disciplinary action, and consideration of a student's fitness to study (when cumulative attendance falls below 85%).
- Inform parents/guardians of attendance concerns where attendance is believed to impact progress.
- Complete agreed daily, weekly, and cumulative attendance figure monitoring.
- Refer students to support needed where appropriate or necessary.

Attendance Codes

The following are the acceptable register marks:	Present
P	Present (positive attendance) Extending to planned and supervised study sessions and accompanied educational visits
N	Not required to attend; in study, but not present in class or study session that is not supervised or registered (neutral attendance)
A	Authorised Absence (neutral attendance)
L	Arrived Late (positive attendance)
E	Left Early (positive attendance)
S	Synchronous (positive attendance) - live streamed/ real time remote or distance delivery where the learning is actively engaged in the session at the time (note: does not necessarily have to include video, a learner may be working and in contact via audio, chat or email)
Y	Asynchronous (positive attendance) recorded/pre-set remote or distance delivery to provide for flexibility
U	Unreported absence, no contact made (negative attendance)
O	Disciplinary/Suspended (negative attendance)
N	College Closure (e.g. CPD, snow, Strike (neutral attendance) Office use only
N	Course achieved and completed (neutral attendance) Office use only
T	Transferred (neutral attendance) Office use only
W	Withdrawn (neutral attendance) Office use only

Marking of registers

All registers must be marked within the first 20 minutes of a session beginning. If this is not possible, e.g. computer failure, a paper register must be taken and uploaded to the system within 24 hours. Missing register reports will be run each day and circulated in the afternoon.

Accuracy of Authorised absences

It is a requirement that staff follow the procedure when authorising absences, and do so with honesty and integrity. The accuracy of recording for authorised absences will be ascertained by regular comparison of authorised and unauthorised attendance figures and half termly audits of authorised attendance marks by Wider College Leadership Team. Where staff fail to follow the procedure an initial discussion will take place to establish how to proceed, as with following up marking of registers.

Issues with marking of registers and accuracy of authorised absences

Where staff persistently fail to mark registers promptly, or issues are identified with the accuracy of authorised absences, an initial discussion is required to determine:

- Whether the staff member requires further training (developmental)
- Whether the non completion is due to technical issues (requires urgent investigation and resolution)
- Whether the issue is due to occasional carelessness (censure), persistent carelessness (competency) or malevolence (disciplinary)

Appendix 2: Fitness to Study

Joining the college

Students are encouraged to disclose any physical or mental health need as part of their application and at enrolment. This disclosure will in no way prejudice any decision about the application – on the contrary, it is used to establish how best we can respond to the individual need and what reasonable adjustments can be made. In cases where a complex or significant physical or mental health condition is disclosed, a referral to the Learning Support team will be made. A learning support meeting will be held and it may be appropriate that further information is sought from health professionals supporting a student to be able to formulate a support plan. The meeting will discuss and agree details of the support plan, the appropriate programme to be studied and any reasonable adjustments that we will commit to making. In these cases, the support plan will require formal medical paperwork to be provided and students will usually be allocated, in addition, the oversight of a member of the Learning Support Team. The support plan will be reviewed throughout the year and consent will be sought to share with subject teachers and Personal Development Coach the key relevant information so that they can best make adjustments. Without this consent, we are unable to commit to providing reasonable adjustments in all aspects of College activities.

Studying at the College

If a student does not disclose a pre-existing physical or mental health condition on application, then it is unlikely that they will receive support or reasonable adjustment until the condition becomes clear to a member of staff. Early disclosure of issues is therefore vital to allow us to assess how best to accommodate students and also to avoid exacerbating the issue through a lack of knowledge on the part of their subject teachers and Personal Development Coach. We will always seek to provide appropriate support to any student with ill health, whether the condition was pre-existing or commences during study at the College.

Students are made aware of the extensive range of student services at the College both at induction and as part of the ongoing Personal Development Programme. All staff at the College have a duty of care to students and can be approached with any concern, however small.

The main staff who would be consulted by students are:

Personal Development Coach	Subject Teachers	Learning Support and Counsellor	Link Member of SLT	Safeguarding Leads
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The member of staff consulted will seek consent from the student to share with subject teachers and the coach/teacher the key relevant information so that they can best make adjustments. In exceptional circumstances confidentiality may need to be broken without the student's consent. In these circumstances the student will always be informed.

If the nature of the medical condition requires support or reasonable adjustment needs to be made to a student's studies, then a referral to the Learning Support Team will be made to assess the student. This may lead to a support plan being agreed and other staff in the College, becoming involved in providing support. Consent will always be sought from the student to involve parents and carers in these decisions, however in certain extreme cases confidentiality will need to be respected if the student requests it. The support plan may also involve referral to outside agencies, such as CAMHS or the student's GP.

This is particularly true where the health condition causes significant concern, since the expertise and capacity of the College in providing medical support is finite and the responsibility for medical support lies with the external services. In crisis situations, where there are immediate and grave concerns for a student's health or well-being, staff will judge how best to provide first aid and whether emergency services should be called. We will always endeavour, in these situations, to contact parents and carers as soon as possible.

Limits to support

Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins the College or whilst at the College, there need to be reasonable limits set to the support that can be offered. These include both the flexibility the College should show around academic progress (attendance and meeting assessment expectations) and the support (type, location and frequency) that is needed for a student to remain at College. Clearly it is difficult to set non-negotiable limits for academic progression and support and there needs to be judicious professional judgement in each case.

Furthermore physical and mental health conditions may be temporary or permanent, short or long-term, stable or prone to remission. As a guide therefore, the following minimum expectations should be set:

Academic progress

Each case needs to be considered on its merits, but it is clear that a minimum level of attendance needs to be maintained that will allow a student to realistically achieve. Academic success depends on engagement in classroom activity, so excessively long periods of complete absence or very poor attendance will make a student's studies untenable.

With regards to coursework and homework, if students fall significantly behind with their deadlines, despite extensions being offered, then there comes a point at which catching up is not viable. The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will be set in each case depending on the circumstances. Support It is reasonable for teaching staff, on a short-term temporary basis, to liaise with students via email and Moodle. This cannot continue long-term. We are not a distance-learning College and do not have the resources, expertise or remit to be one. In terms of pastoral support, Personal Development Coaches, Tutors, Subject Teachers, Learning Support Team, College Counsellor, Careers Leader, Safeguarding leads can all provide appropriate support within certain parameters. We will, where appropriate, refer to external services and maintain liaison with them.

We cannot provide, however, complex medical or psychiatric support. This would be usually sought externally through the GP or other services. Finally, pastoral support is finite and needs to be available for other students as well. In all cases the support we offer must be on site and available to all students.

Fitness to Study

Our default position, as a College, is that we want all students to complete their studies successfully and achieve their potential. There are occasions, however, when physical or mental health issues are so complex or so significant that this is not possible. Clearly each student needs to be considered on a case by case basis and the College needs to ensure it is fully aware of all the medical evidence and the wishes of the student and the parents or carers.

Ideally, a clear consensus would always emerge about the best way forwards, but this will not always be the case. There will be occasions where the College believes that it has exhausted the support options available, it has made reasonable adjustments in all aspects of College life, but the student is unable to maintain their fitness to study. These situations impact negatively both on the student, since their welfare is at risk, and on the College, since there is an excessive demand on resources.

For the student, who has struggled to maintain their academic progress against the odds and for whom trying to keep the structure of College life going has been so far a positive factor in their rehabilitation, there comes a tipping point at which trying to catch up after a lengthy absence with deadlines significantly overdue is actually more stressful and therefore more of a negative impact on their health than withdrawing from studies.

The time required to work with individual students to catch up on missed work, liaising remotely via email and the Study Directory for absent students and arranging meetings and support for students is a finite resource and cannot unreasonably impact on the learning of

other students at the College. If the College reaches a decision, after consultation with the student, parents / guardians and medical professionals, that a student should withdraw then this will be actioned. In these situations, we would always assure students and their parents or carers that the best interests of the individual student and their welfare are at the centre of decisions.

Where there is no consensus that withdrawal is the most appropriate outcome, then the stages below will be followed.

Fitness to study stage 1 A letter is sent home outlining concerns and inviting student and parents to a case conference with the Coach, Lead PDC and Target Learning Support Team (if appropriate). The situation is reviewed two weeks later.

Fitness to study stage 2 A case conference reviews the situation and provides guidance to the Assistant Principal: Students, who will adjudicate on the feasibility of the students continued place at college. The student will then be notified of the decision.

NB. It is crucial to recognise that, on occasions, the College is advised, by medical specialists, that it is unsafe for students to attend. This advice will always supersede College procedure and the student will not be able to attend until we are notified of their fitness to do so by the relevant authority.

Restarting at College

Students at Newcastle Sixth Form College with Fitness to Study issues sometimes request to restart at the College. In most cases, the College strongly advises against restarts as historically attendance, retention and progression of restarting students has been poor and restarting was therefore not in their best interest.

Newcastle Sixth Form College will consider a request to restart where:

- a student has not restarted before at the college or elsewhere
- they meet the typical entry requirements
- they withdrew from college of their own accord
- there is robust medical support outside of College and there is time before the restart to respond to this support (typically 6 months)
- there is evidence of their fitness to study e.g. through voluntary or paid work
- the student is willing to undertake additional supervised study within the college day

The decision to restart will be made by the Assistant Principal (Students) in consultation with Learning Support and relevant staff in the best interests of the young person. Where there is insufficient evidence the restart will not be successful then it will be refused with the decision confirmed in writing. Decisions can be appealed by writing to the Principal within 7 days and giving the grounds for the appeal.

Where the College offers the opportunity of a restart, the onus is on the student and their parents or carers to ensure they are recovered enough for the restart to work. Any restart will be conditional on maintaining reasonable expectations of attendance and progress as relapses would not be in the interests of students. Restarters will be monitored by their Coach and Learning Support and will begin on Stage 1 of the Fitness to Study Procedure