



**Dumfries and
Galloway College**

One step ahead

STUDENT FUNDING ABSENCE AND ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURE

Responsibility: Executive Director of Finance and Strategic Planning

Issue Date: 20th September 2024

Equality Impact Assessment: 17th July 2024

Version: 1

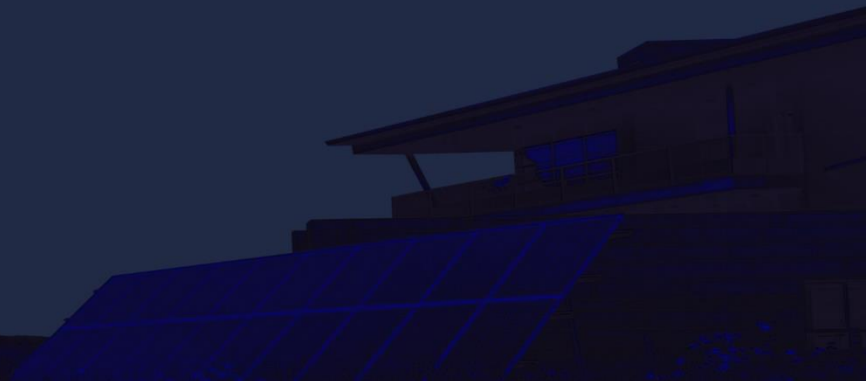
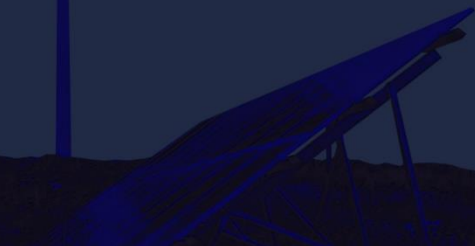


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Student Funding Absence and Engagement Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure sets out how Dumfries and Galloway College will implement the attendance/engagement criteria for students in receipt of Further Education Bursary or Education Maintenance Allowance payments as stipulated by the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Funding Council Bursary Policy has a focus on engagement rather than attendance, however, Scottish Government provide guidance for EMA which is less flexible on attendance and would expect EMA students to have 100% unless agreed on the onset of the course to be 80% (both expected to have satisfactory attendance/engagement).

This procedure sets out the criteria to be applied and the permitted number of days' absence a student may self-certificate. It also provides details of engagement, appeals processes and the procedure to be followed by both staff and students should a payment be withheld due to failing to meet the engagement/attendance.

2. *Scope*

This procedure applies to all Dumfries and Galloway College students in receipt of Further Education Bursary (Bursary) or Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payments or other student support funds such as Childcare and Discretionary Funds.

3. *References*

- 👉 Dumfries & Galloway College website: www.dumgal.ac.uk
- 👉 SFC website: www.sfc.uk
- 👉 SAAS website www.saas.gov.uk
- 👉 EMA Scotland website www.emascotland.com
- 👉 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

4. *Definitions*

SAAS – Student Awards Agency for Scotland

SFC – Scottish Funding Council

EMA – Education Maintenance Allowance

5. *Responsibility*

5.1 It is the responsibility of the Executive Director of Finance and Strategic Planning to review and update this procedure.

5.2 The Student Funding team will provide support and advice to staff and students in administering the procedure.

6. *Procedure*

6.1 Attendance requirements

6.1.1 Students should attend all timetabled classes to receive payment for both Bursary and Education Maintenance Allowance, regardless of online or face to face to face learning.

6.1.2 Attendance will be checked every 2 weeks and failure to achieve full attendance each week may result in payment being stopped for one or both weeks. This means if they are marked absent from even one class, they should either cover it with an online absence self-certificate, or speak to their lecturer if they think a mistake has been made.

6.1.3 Payment is also linked to engagement, as determined by the Curriculum Managers. If a student is having difficulty meeting the attendance /engagement requirements, then they should be offered pastoral care and support prior to the withholding of any student support payments. Payments should only be withheld if the college has proof of unsatisfactory attendance/non engaging.

6.2 **How to Self Certificate**

6.2.1 If a student is absent from College for any reason, they should submit an online absence self-certificate through LearnNet to cover their absence. They can do so from any pc, tablet or smartphone by logging onto the college LearnNet and selecting the 'Absence button'. They should check later that their self-certificate has been accepted and their absence covered. It is their responsibility to check their attendance/engagement regularly through the Student Portal.

6.2.2 They may self-certificate up to a maximum of 4 days per term:-
(term periods a guide exact dates can be found on LearnNet/Student Portal)

Term 1 August - October

Term 2 October - December

Term 3 January - March

Term 4 April - June

The system is available from the first day of absence and locks down after 7 days. They should submit their online absence self certificate on the first day of absence otherwise payments may be withheld or delayed.

6.3 **Medical Certificates**

6.3.1 Medical Certificates up to a maximum period of 6 weeks per Term will be accepted for Student Funding purposes. Students are encouraged to use the online self-certificate system for absences less than 5 days.

6.4 **Special Leave**

6.4.1 Special Leave will be allowed under this procedure for the following reasons:

- **Maternity Leave** – up to a maximum of 6 weeks leave can be granted for student funding purposes
- **Paternity Leave** – Up to a maximum of 2 weeks leave can be granted for student funding purposes
- **Adoption Leave** – Up to a maximum of 6 weeks leave can be granted for student funding purposes

6.5 **Vulnerable students**

6.5.1 Where a student has complex circumstances or health issues or groups that may be impacted by this legislation i.e. Care Experienced students, disabled, maternity, paternity or adoption leave then the Curriculum Managers should exercise flexibility and conduct an Equality Impact Assessment on their attendance and engagement to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged. College should also be mindful of their corporate parenting responsibilities under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

6.6 **Suspended or Excluded Students**

6.6.1 Should a student be suspended from College pending a disciplinary hearing Student Funding staff should be informed of suspension to ensure payments are not affected and registers should be marked accordingly. Should a student be excluded then an official notification should be sent through to the Funding Team and all future payments will be terminated.

6.7 **Appeals**

6.7.1 If a student's funding has been stopped as a result of absence and the maximum permitted days' absence has been used a student may submit an appeal if one of the following reasons apply:

- **Court appearance** – Court summons, Jury Duty Citation, Witness Citation can be submitted as evidence
- **Hospital appointment** – appointment letter can be submitted as evidence
- **Transport problem** please provide details to the Student Funding Team who will follow up with College Estates team.
- **Childcare problem** – submit details to the Student Funding Team
- **Funeral** – submit details to the Student Funding Team
- **Carer** responsibility e.g. looking after an adult dependent on the student – submit details to the Student Funding Team

- **Self Certificates/Absences** – The appeal should be submitted with the supporting evidence to the Student Support Funding Officer email studentfunding@dumgal.ac.uk.
- **Engagement** – An appeal should be submitted with any supporting evidence to the Curriculum Manager.

7. *Distribution*

- Repository
- All Staff
- Student Portal
- College Website

8. *Revision Log*

Revision Log		
Date	Section	Description
July 2024		New procedure

THIS FORM TO BE UPDATED WHENEVER THERE IS A CHANGE IN ANY SYSTEM DOCUMENT				
Document Name	Document Owner	Revision Number	Date of Issue	Date of Withdraw
Student Funding Absence and Engagement Procedure	Executive Director of Finance and Strategic Planning	1		

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Document:	Student Funding Absence and Engagement Procedure
Executive Summary:	Impacts are positive across the majority of protected characteristics, particularly relating to disability, gender reassignment and pregnancy/maternity.

Duties:

1: Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

2: Promote equality of opportunity

3: Promote good relations

* Human Rights to privacy and family life, freedom of thought and conscience, education, employment

PSED Impacts

	Commentary
Age	<p>The procedure has a positive impact across these protected characteristics. A clearly fair system will reduce the risk of students feeling that others are being favoured due to their protected characteristic status thus promoting good relations, which in turn should reduce the likelihood of harassment based on observed abuse of the absence system on these grounds.</p> <p>The overall effect of the policy will be to increase equality of opportunity by giving all groups a clear set of actions and a transparent pathway free from discrimination.</p> <p>In addition to the positive impacts described above, students who have disabilities, those who need to take time off due to gender reassignment treatments or those who encounter difficulties related to pregnancy or adoption leave are accommodated and do not suffer detriment due to their status.</p>
Disability	
Gender	
Gender Based Violence	
Gender identity/ reassignment	
Marriage/civil partnership	
Pregnancy/maternity	
Religion or Belief	
Race	
Sexual Orientation	

Additional Considerations

Care experienced	
Carers	
Mental Health	
Socio-economic status	
Veterans	
Human Rights*	The Human Right to Education is positively progressed by this procedure, as it ensures that every student is supported when circumstances beyond their control result in absence.

Lead Officer:	Executive Director of Finance and Strategic Planning		
Facilitator:			
Date initiated:			
Consultation:	The procedure is structured to meet legislative requirements and to reflect industry best practice. It is structured to fit with the requirements of funding bodies.		
Research:			
Signature	K. Hunter	Date	17.07.24