Policy/Procedure/Guideline Review

Policy/Procedure/Guideline:	Attendance and Punctuality Policy
Senior Leader Responsible:	Fionnuala Swann
Author:	Fionnuala Swann
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Attendance Policy & Procedure

1. Introduction

Nelson and Colne College Group is committed to providing the highest quality education and training. Our vision is to build stronger communities and create high-quality, aspirational routes into high-value professional and technical careers, both regionally and nationally, for our learners.

For our learners to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and every learner should be at college, on time, every day they have timetabled sessions unless they have an unavoidable reason to be absent. Any absence affects the pattern of a learner's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

The link between attendance and attainment is well documented. Sporadic attendance impacts learners' academic results, mental health and resilience. Those who take an occasional day (or a week, or a fortnight) off college miss building blocks of knowledge. Catching up is a treadmill that becomes unmanageable and so their learning is fractured. Poor attendance can be one of the main signs of disengagement with a learner's programme of study and the college is committed to ensure all learners remain fully engaged with their learning for them to complete their studies and move onto aspirational destinations. As a career-focused college, good attendance is crucial for setting standards of positive behaviours required by employers.

The College therefore recognises the importance of regular attendance and strong punctuality for supporting and improving learner engagement, performance and outcomes. It also considers attendance as being a key aspect of learners' ability to demonstrate work readiness behaviour and is an employability skill.

The College expects 100% attendance. This includes apprentices, who are expected to attend 100% of scheduled visits within the workplace specifically 1-1 sessions and off the job training, for example functional skills English and math classes.

To achieve this, the College will monitor and manage learner attendance by:

- Clarifying and setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality at all timetabled sessions.
- Working in partnership with learners and, where applicable, their parents and employers, to ensure good attendance and punctuality, embedding a culture of engagement, reliability and commitment.
- Monitoring, reporting and taking action to improve attendance and punctuality where necessary.
- Ensuring registers are completed accurately and in a timely fashion.

The College understands that some learners, or groups of learners, who have particular needs may have weaker attendance. However, expectations must remain

high and individualised support given to these learners with the aim of seeing marked and sustained improvement over time.

Support for learners' success from parents, carers and employers is actively encouraged. It is good practice for parents, carers and/or employers and sponsors to be informed of persistent learner absenteeism and the college will actively pursue this. We seek consent to contact parents, carers and employers at enrolment for issues including attendance. Unless consent is withdrawn or there is a valid reason given not to contact relevant people, the College will deem the consent given at enrolment by the learner at any point throughout the studies is accepted.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out a clear strategy for attendance and punctuality, including detailing the high expectations of attendance and punctuality criteria for those learners in scope and the approaches to addressing poor attendance and punctuality when they fall below the expected standards.

It is also designed to explain the roles and responsibilities of staff, learners, and parents/carers in maintaining strong attendance; it will explain how academic and support staff will use systems and processes in place to record, review and monitor learner attendance towards agreed targets and where appropriate, seek to support learners overcome any difficulties which are affecting their engagement with their course or addresses absenteeism firmly, fairly and consistently.

3. Legislative/Quality Framework

The college and its employees have legal obligations to record learner attendance and monitor engagement in order to comply with various statutory reporting requirements including those of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), and professional accrediting bodies.

The College recognises and is supportive of the legal requirements to make reasonable adjustments and/or allowances under the terms of the Equality Act, 2010. Where a learner has disclosed that they have verifiable circumstances which may adversely affect their attendance, the College will take account of this and will implement reasonable adjustments as appropriate.

In addition, the College considers Children, Young People and/or Vulnerable Adults' missing from education a key specific safeguarding issue and will respond accordingly in relation to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance.

4. Scope

The policy is aimed at the following groups of learners:

- 16-18 Study Programme
- 19+ learners infilling into Study Programmes

- Adult part time and adults in tailored learning
- Apprentices

All staff are expected to read and be familiar and engage with the content in order to support the learners identified above as being in scope to understand and adhere to attendance and punctuality criteria.

5. Definitions

- **Attendance** refers to learners attending any sessions which are timetabled with a register.
- **Punctuality** refers to being on time to a lesson. Lateness is defined by the teacher or tutor and is usually related to the point at which the register is taken.
- **Timetabled Sessions** includes scheduled time spent on college programmes including taught or online sessions, workshops, work placements or tutorials as specified in a learner's timetable and/or individual learning plan.
- **Absenteeism** is a singular or reoccurring instance of staying away from college without good reason when timetabled to be there.
- **Lateness** is arriving to a lesson after the session has started and learning is taking place
- **Learners** includes those enrolled onto a full-time study programme or apprenticeship and adult learners.
- **Registers** in this policy relates to the electronic register using EBS.
- The term **Tutor** is used to describe the Personal Tutor or other member of staff responsible for the pastoral aspects of a learner's study programme, including **Tutor/Assessor** for apprentices.
- **Adult Learning Online**
  Adult Learners that are enrolled on accredited distance learning programmes access learning through a virtual learning platform. This mode of delivery provides the flexibility for learners to access study at times which are most suitable and appropriate for the learner and, as such, an "attendance mark" is not used or necessary.
  The learning platform provides detailed information of the learner's weekly activity on the platform including progress with assessments. The report identifies the learning and learner activity and progress towards course completion. Course tutors monitor progress. Any learner not making the

required progress have interventions put in place to ensure they engage and continue with their studies towards timely completion.

6. Absenteeism and Lateness

Attendance and punctuality will be regularly monitored throughout learners' time at College. This includes where learners are on work placement as part of their study programme (see work experience policy for detailed process on monitoring and actioning attendance and absence for work placements). While there is an expectation of 100% attendance at all timetabled sessions, the College recognises there may be circumstances that prevent this for all learners.

Absenteeism
Regardless of whether absence is notified in advance, the College regards absence (non-attendance or non-engagement) from study a concern for a learner's progression and achievement and will act accordingly to address the issue.

Poor attendance can be one of the main signs of disengagement by the learner on their programme of study and the College will attempt as far as possible to ensure that learners remain fully engaged and succeed on their programme. This may include appropriate intervention and/or referral to safeguarding where is it considered low attendance is an indication that a learner may be 'at risk' or in need of support due to identified needs.

In all instances, learners are expected to give a good reason, backed up with evidence, for all absences. This will be monitored by the personal tutor or course teacher in Adult Community learning.

Where absences can be foreseen in advance (for example, a medical appointment), the learner should notify their personal tutor who should record on Pro-Monitor the reason, copying in teachers and registers@nelsongroup.ac.uk for notification.

For unforeseen absences, such as illness, the learner or parent/carer must make contact with the College to notify the designated person of their absence as early as possible on the first day of absence and every subsequent day unless they are signed off by a doctor for a given period. Contact should be made by phoning the absence line or emailing the teacher/tutor/assessor for those attending adult tailored learning or apprenticeship provision.

For 16-19 funded learners on study programmes of more than 24 weeks in duration, there is a risk of them being withdrawn if they have not attended classes for at least 4 continuous weeks, excluding college holidays, unless we have auditable proof of the learners' intention to return.

For those apprentices who are undertaking a front-loaded or a block release delivery model and there is no plan for active learning to take place within a 3-

calendar month period, the apprentice should be put on a break in learning. If planned off-the-job training is unable to take place as scheduled in any 3-calendar month period, a retrospective break in learning must be used. However, where an apprentice has a term-time only contract, a break in learning is not required for the month of August.

For all other Apprenticeship delivery models, where there is no plan for active learning to take place within a calendar month, the learner should be put on a break in learning. If planned off-the-job training is unable to take place as scheduled in any calendar month, a retrospective break in learning is not required if there is active learning in the following calendar month. Where there is no active learning for 2 consecutive calendar months, a retrospective break in learning must be used.

Lateness

Learners are expected to provide a reasonable justification for any lateness. Learners are late if learning has already started. To encourage punctuality, teachers should follow a "hard start; soft finish" approach to lessons to allow learners to move around the college between lessons, given that there are no built-in standardised breaks. Teaching staff must challenge late learners as well as reward excellent attendance. (see section 9.3.2 for further detail on the role of teachers).

Failure to maintain good attendance will lead to intervention such as college 'At Risk' and/or Fitness to Study procedures for possible barriers to be identified and timely interventions put in place to minimise the ongoing risks associated to poor attendance.

7. Strategies to address 'At Risk' through attendance learners:

Attendance will be monitored on a weekly basis by Heads of Division and Curriculum Leaders and will be a regular agenda item on senior curriculum leads' one-to-one meetings with Heads of Division. If attendance falls below the agreed target, the curriculum team will implement strategies of support and interventions and subsequent sanctions may follow.

While not an exhaustive list, examples of this include:

1. Initially, the learner's tutor should speak to the individual regarding attendance. Remind the individual learner of expectations/set targets and supportive strategies offered (if applicable), report on Pro-Monitor as a cause for concern meeting, with agreed targets.

2. Persistent/sporadic absence/long term absence: Tutors and Learner managers (Curriculum Leader/ Head of Division) can access a range of interventions:

a) Contact with parents/carers/guardians/employer including phone calls, emails or letters where appropriate, in line with data protection requirements.
b) Supportive meeting with optional referrals to support services in College e.g. SEND/welfare or, where appropriate, referral to the Fitness to Study Procedure
c) Referral to a Learning and Progress Mentor

3. Escalate to a disciplinary – Stage 1 Meeting (to be recorded on Pro-Monitor) with
   a) Meeting with Curriculum Leader
   b) Development targets agreed
   c) Escalation to formal disciplinary (stages 2 and 3)

Where learners have not engaged with all reasonable attempts to support and attendance fails to improve to minimum standards, issues of attendance will be escalated through the College's Learner Disciplinary Procedure (see Learner Disciplinary Policy) and may result in a final written warning or possible exclusion.

8. Registers and Register Marks

In order for the College to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality it is essential that all registers are marked in an accurate and timely fashion. The staff member responsible for the session must complete the register marking as soon as possible and in all cases by the end of the day.

Registers are auditable documents and must be maintained in a timely and accurate fashion. Where it is identified that a member of staff persistently fails to mark a register, or marks registers late, they may be subject to disciplinary action. Where registers remain outstanding after 28 days the presumption will be for disciplinary action. In the event of a staff member being off sick the Head of Division is responsible for arranging cover and ensuring that the register is completed.

8.1 The register marks available for individual teachers to use are:

Code		Description	Impact on Attendance	Use by
P	Present	Learner is present PYSCIALLY IN CLASS	Positive	Tutor / Teacher
A	Absent	Learner is expected in class but did not attend	Negative	Tutor / Teacher

L	Late	Learner is late to class but marked as present	Positive	Tutor / Teacher
X	Absence	Pre-Notified Absence (absence line or email in box notified – with an automated comment on pro-monitor)	Negative	MIS

8.2 Other Register Marks that are applied by MIS only regarding recording of absences

The following marks are applicable to all learner groups. All marks must be approved by Head of Division/Curriculum:

Code	Description	Impact on Attendance
C	*16-19 Programme (including 19+ learner on 16-18 provision)* College Related Authorised Absence and specifically engaging in learning (i.e. Exam, college trip)– MUST be approved by Head of Division/Centre	Positive
W	*16-19 Programme (including 19+ learner on 16-18 provision)* Planned work placements	Positive
H	College Authorised Absence and specifically engaging in learning (ie family commitments abroad, supporting family members. MUST be approved by appropriate Curriculum Manager (HoD, HoC, Dean of HE, Deputy Dean)	Neutral
U	Learner on long term absence and not expected in lessons (Used for long term sick / hospitalisation, or regular absence due to unavoidable and serious medical treatment/appointments or family commitments). MUST be approved by appropriate Curriculum Manager (Head of Division/Curriculum, Dean of HE)	Neutral

N	Not required to attend (pre-agreed with Head of Division/Curriculum and MIS). For example, where a workshop is not compulsory.	Neutral
R	Used to automatically over-ride an absence mark 'A' directly after the last date of attendance when a learner has been withdrawn or completed early (does not over-ride other register marks).	Neutral

When the absence cannot be foreseen, the learner should advise the College through the college absence line, by 8:45am on the day of absence. MIS will then pre-populate the register with an X code. This process is explained on the back of learners' ID cards and will be reinforced during induction. Adults in community learning are expected to inform their teacher via email prior to the session.

Where no justification for the absence is provided in advance, this will be marked as an unauthorised absence (A mark). Tutors/Assessors will follow this up with their learners (or the course teacher in Adult community learning and Apprenticeship programmes)

When the member of staff who marked the learner absent next sees the learner, they should ask for an explanation for the absence, draw the learner's attention to the importance of attendance and carry out one or more of the following actions, depending on appropriateness:

- Reinforce the importance of regular attendance.
- Discuss with the learner how they will catch up with missed work.
- If appropriate, ask the learner to attend a repeat lesson in a different class (ensure the learner is added to the class register and inform MIS who will ensure the learner is marked present).
- Whatever action is taken should be put on Pro-Monitor for information and the tutor copied in. This means that the learner is targeted by both the teacher and the personal tutor.
- Maths and English teachers should take responsibility for attendance in lessons by following the same procedure.

Should a pattern of non-attendance emerge, the personal tutor should follow this up at the earliest opportunity with the learner, recording any information as a comment on Pro-Monitor. In Adult community learning, actions should be written up within a learner's ILP.

If the level of non-attendance is judged to be unacceptable (e.g. below the minimum standard of 93%) then the College's Learner Disciplinary Policy should be used to deal with the matter. Anything below this, unless by prior agreement or with valid reason, is unacceptable. It would therefore be appropriate to use the at risk procedure and/or disciplinary procedure as soon as problems become apparent, rather than leave the problems to grow without formally tackling them.

Attendance is monitored through a variety of ways, including live Power-Bi dashboard, weekly report to tutors and critical attendance as part of the college's vital signs reporting. It is expected that curriculum teams, include attendance monitoring as part of team meetings. Heads of Division should monitor this through weekly 1-1s with their Curriculum Leaders. Senior Leaders through monthly Quality and Performance meetings to ensure that appropriate action is being taken.

9. Linked Policies and Procedures

This policy links to and should be read in consultation with:

- Learner RESPECT Charter
- Behaviour strategy and policy
- Learner Disciplinary Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Additional Learning Support
- At Risk Procedure
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Work experience policy

10. Roles and Responsibilities

10.1 Learners

Learners identified as being in scope are expected to:

- Agree to abide by the college RESPECT Charter which includes explicit expectations of attendance and punctuality.
- Attend all of their timetabled lessons for the course(s) they are enrolled on punctually.
- Attend all sessions of organised work placement activity.
- Inform college by 8:45am or as possible when they are unable to attend college for any reasons or if they need to leave part way through the timetabled day*.
- Inform the college absence line and their tutor when they are unable to attend work placements.
- Seek approval for planned absence from their Course or Personal Tutor, such as a medical appointment.
- Plan to catch up on any work missed during absence.
- Speak to their personal tutor if they are experiencing short- or long-term genuine attendance difficulties so that prompt and appropriate support can be provided.
- Expect that claims for support funds may be affected due to absenteeism.

*Learners can report an absence by calling the absence line (details printed on the back of learner ID cards) on 01282 440293 or emailing absence@nelsongroup.ac.uk

Adults in community learning do not need to contact the absence line. They are expected to inform their teacher prior to the session by email with the reason they are unable to attend

10.2 Parents, Carers and Employers – 16-18 learners

Support from parents and/or carers is essential (where appropriate) to maintain the highest levels of attendance. If the learner is unable to attend for any reason the college should be notified as soon as possible – by phone or email to the personal tutor.

In return, parents and/or carers, are provided with attendance figures via half term progress reports which are sent home. For apprentices, employers receive updates on attendance during Progress Reviews.

Each day a learner is marked absent on a register, parents are informed promptly via text alerts. Similarly, if a parent has a concern about a learner's attendance they can contact college at any time and ask to speak to the personal tutor of their young person. Contact details of personal tutors are shared with parents through the new parent welcome packs (16-19 study programme learners).

Employers are expected to notify the college of any absence or concerns related to punctuality throughout the duration of a work experience placement and work with the College to provide support that is deemed reasonable to enable a learner to improve attendance were proportionate to do so. Employers are directed to report a learner absence through the college absence line.

10.3 Staff

10.3.1 All staff should strive to foster good attendance and punctuality and report any concerns to the personal tutor or appropriate manager/college Leader.

10.3.2 Teachers and Trainer Assessors should:

- Constantly and consistently reinforce the RESPECT Charter and reflect the college's high expectations of attendance and punctuality.
- Be at classrooms, study area or workshops to meet and greet their learners and start and finish sessions on time (in line with the 'hard start, soft finish' principle)
- Arrive early to welcome learners into their classroom/workshop/study area. They will shut their door when the session starts. Learners are expected to knock and wait for the teacher to let them in. Teachers and Trainer Assessors are asked to do this as quickly as they can, ensuring that the other learners in the class are on task while they deal with the latecomers.
- Respond to lateness in a way which has no detriment of learning: by learners not interrupting the session for the other learners by them coming in late and not being left too long waiting to be let in so they do not miss learning.

- Set expectations for the learners to join the class and always speak to them individually at an appropriate point. This must always be followed up either by speaking to the learner on a one-to-one basis in the session or asking them to stay behind if it is a repeat offender.
- Check that learners are okay first and depending on the answer, this will inform the following conversation. Teachers and Trainer Assessors have been provided with set scripts linked to this conversation:
    - What is the expectation of when you should arrive at the session?
    - Yes, that's right before the session is due to start"
    - What is the impact on you when you are late?
    - What is the impact on the teacher when you are late?
    - What is the impact on other learners when you are late?
    - What would happen if you were late for work?
    - Here we are preparing you for the workplace and expect you to arrive before the session starts, so you get the most from the learning experience. Thanks.

  This strategy and these questions support learners to verbalise and learn the expectations and values of the college and how being late impacts them and others, supporting them to develop appropriate behaviours that they will be able to transfer to their next steps.
- Keep learners after the learning session to make up time if they do not have a follow-up session.
- Ask learners to come back and make the time up at lunch if needed.
- Record lateness if the door has been shut and the lesson has started.
- Review the weekly lateness reports, and tutors will discuss this with their learners in tutorial and set actions where necessary:
    - First instance – 1:1 conversation just outside or inside the classroom
    - Second instance – Ask them to stay behind and have a conversation and reinforce points that have been discussed in the first conversation. Tell learners if they are late again it will be noted in Pro-monitor.
    - Third instance – Warning: Note on pro-monitor confirming action taken and target set in partnership with the learner.
- Where possible Teachers and Trainer Assessors to relate and model what might happen at work.
- Complete registers in a timely manner, defined as, when applicable this will be completed in a classroom situation at the start of the session.
- Ensure the use of accurate register marks as detailed in section 7 of this policy.
- Contact learners as soon as possible and following up absence with the learner.
- Monitor and manage individual and group attendance and punctuality for their sessions.
- Respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently, but always endeavour to take account of individual circumstances.
- Set appropriate targets for improvement where learner attendance is below college expectations, providing reasonable support as appropriate.
- Engage with specialist additional learning support or safeguarding interventions as required .

- Inform the Curriculum Leader/Programme Leader/Head of Division if a learner has been absent for sessions or where attendance is erratic, or punctuality is an issue and may require escalation to the learner disciplinary.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality through their own behaviour and teaching standards and use appropriate rewards for learners who maintain consistently high levels of attendance (95% or more).

10.3.3 Progress and Learning Mentors (where applicable) should:

- Check for receipt of texts from learners or their parents/carers via the absence reporting line and ensure appropriate follow up action is taken.
- Be present in corridors at the start of each day at timetabled sessions to encourage learners to make their way to classrooms in order to be punctual.
- Visit sessions from 09:00 (timetabling permitted) or planned start to check for learner absence.
- Telephone learners and parents/carers who are absent but have not reported their absence to elicit the reason and record findings via registers.
- Follow up learners absent for two days or more, initially through trying to telephone/text them and their parents / carers /employers
- Liaise with curriculum and support colleagues (particularly the ALS and safeguarding) to ensure timely interventions are made in relation to any identified needs.
- Discuss attendance and punctuality concerns with learners and set targets for improvements if necessary.
- Support the learner's return to college after a period of absence, mentoring, coaching and supporting as appropriate to enable improvement.
- Ensure timely and accurate recording of attendance interventions and support provided to learners on Pro-Monitor.

10.3.4 Personal/Course Tutor (Teacher in Adult community learning) should:

- Work with the curriculum team to follow up any absences and ascertain reasons.
- Monitor absence in weekly tutorial (using the attendance report produced by MIS) and working with the learner to improve absence.
- Deal with any personal/pastoral issues that affect poor attendance and punctuality and reacting to any cause-for-concerns raised by other staff.
- Liaise with parents/guardians/partner organisations where appropriate in order to improve attendance and resolves issues.
- Issue causes for concern and/or stage 1 disciplinaries for unacceptable and unexplained non-attendance.
- Update Pro-Monitor and ILPs with any targets around attendance.

It is crucial that tutors, in the early stages of the new academic year, target poor attendees from the outset, therefore tutors will be required to follow up all non-

attendance in the first two weeks of term on a daily basis and use the “at risk” meetings on Pro-Monitor to do this

10.3.5 Curriculum Leaders/Head of Divisions should:

- Ensure that the RESPECT charter is embedded within lessons.
- Monitor attendance in their curriculum areas weekly using vital signs reports.
- Monitor attendance and punctuality issues at team meetings and taking early action to resolve issues.
- Ensure that registers are marked accurately and in a timely fashion and following up on any unmarked registers with individuals in their team.
- Ensure that, in the event of a staff member being absent, the register is taken or reallocated on the timetable in instances of long-term absence.
- Ensure changes to timetables are communicated to MIS.
- Monitor attendance through learning walks and acting on issues of quality related to poor attendance and punctuality.
- Address any non-compliance issues in a timely manner.

10.3.6 Senior Leaders Should:

- Monitor the operation of this policy by receiving regular reports on learner attendance and ensure swift and effect management of issues of concern or underperformance in relation to college aims and key performance indicators.

10.3.7 Learner/Business Support/ Reception staff should:

- Where learners fail to report an absence through the relevant channels (absence phone line or email address), staff who take telephone calls act on emails from learners reporting an absence and record the reason for the absence on the learner’s Pro-Monitor and report the absence to registers@nelsongroup.ac.uk

9 Dissemination

9.3 A copy of this policy can be found on:

- Nelson and Colne College website
- Accrington and Rossendale College website
- Lancashire Adult Learning website
- Nelson and Colne College Staff Hub

10 Monitoring and Review

9.1 The policy will be reviewed annually by Nelson and Colne College Group’s Vice Principal (Academic).

11 Related Policies/Procedures

10.1 Documents related to the policy are:

- Learner RESPECT Charter
- Behaviour Strategy and Policy
- Learner Disciplinary Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Additional Learning Support Policy
- At Risk Procedure
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Work Experience Policy

11. Management Responsibility

12 The Vice Principal (Academic) has management responsibility for this policy across the Nelson and Colne College Group.