

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Responsible for Implementation: Head of Quality and Compliance

Latest Review Date: September 2023

Next Review Date: September 2024

Authorised By: Chief Operating Officer

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About Us

Access Further Education Limited ('The College') has subsidiary companies, trading names and trading partnerships through which it operates. The trading names and partnerships might have their own names or brands, but the legal entity for the purpose of this policy is Access Further Education Limited. Trading subsidiaries, trading names and trading partnerships include Access Creative College ('ACC'), National College for Creative Industries ('NCCI'), and Access Sport.

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Context

It is acknowledged that the following factors contribute to improving learners' attendance, motivation and retention:

- Setting out clear expectations of attendance and punctuality from day 1. That every student is expected to attend every lesson and have 100% attendance;
- Identifying and supporting at-risk learners as soon as the warning signs appear;
- Having a well-known and coherent infrastructure of support in place, including one-to-one reviews, Additional Learning Support (ALS) etc;
- Delivering well structured and managed course programmes, integrating one-to-one reviews, group tutorials, ALS, the development of ILPs and learner enrichment activities;
- Having a clear and fair code of conduct and disciplinary procedure that incorporates robust systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality, following up absences promptly.

2. Purposes and principles

Access Creative College's aim is to support learners to achieve their learning outcomes, ensuring that their experience at Access Creative (ACC) is a positive one that will lead them into further study or employment.

Research has shown that regular and/or unauthorised absence is a critical factor in determining the retention and achievement of learners. Learners of ACC have attendance targets of 100%, although ACC accepts that anything at 90% or above is acceptable. The key to good attendance is learners' personal involvement in and commitment to their course, regular attendance monitoring by all staff, and good quality follow up strategies where appropriate.

This policy provides a framework within which ACC staff can operate. It specifies in broad terms the strategies that are to be used to respond to poor attendance and punctuality. It is recognised however that implementation of aspects of the policy will be at the staff's discretion in accordance with their knowledge of the individual and group.

The overarching philosophy behind this policy is that we should treat our learners with respect and as adults. The examples that we ourselves set as staff are very important in modelling positive behaviour. It is therefore expected that ACC staff have high personal standards in terms of attendance and punctuality.

As retention, achievement and learner attendance are inextricably linked, ACC expects all learners to attend all planned and programmed sessions included within each learner's education programme. The components of a programme may include theory and practical sessions, group tutorials, GCSE classes, online learning, work experience and prescribed enrichment sessions. ACC will apply consistent and rigorous procedures to monitor learner attendance and will offer appropriate support to facilitate and encourage learners to comply with course and centre attendance targets.

The register is the formal auditable document used by ACC to record attendance and punctuality. ACC will ensure that this record is consistently marked and made accurate. Learners who fail to meet the minimum standards set by staff will be challenged initially by the learner review process

and will be set targets to improve. Learners who fail to respond positively to this process may be subject to ACC Disciplinary Procedure.

All components of the programme are purposefully planned to maximise the development of each learner and to prepare them for success in terms of the end qualification and progression. Each component is an essential part of the course and to miss any of them, or any part of them will undermine the effectiveness of that course and may have a negative impact on fellow learners. Missing or being late can be disruptive for the group. Missing or being late without good reason undermines the development of the skills and behaviours required for employment and further study

3. Procedures

a) Punctuality

Any late attendance to a session should be recorded in the register, using an 'L' mark. If lateness has been previously agreed with a tutor, this should be noted. Otherwise, any lateness should always be challenged, and reasons recorded in the staff records. The accurate marking of registers is a contractual requirement for all teaching staff and ACC will take non-compliance with these procedures seriously. It is the responsibility of Course Leaders to ensure that all teaching staff are made aware of the register marking codes.

During induction, learners should be informed of the procedure to follow should they be unavoidably late. This is usually to telephone the centre to explain. Learners should not be excluded from classes due to lateness, as this merely exacerbates the lateness issue by making them even more behind with work – also causing the teacher extra work. Wherever possible, learners should make up the lost time at a time convenient to the member of the teaching staff involved.

Teaching staff should refer learners to the VLE, where resources and worksheets may be stored to facilitate the catch up of work missed.

In situations where learners are late to practical classes and have thus missed demonstrations and relevant Health and Safety information, they will need to be accommodated within the class but not allowed to perform potentially risky operations.

In all instances, the teacher should make it clear to the late learner that the lateness has been noticed. This should be done immediately if possible, by acknowledging the learner as they enter the room. It is appropriate to expect that the learner apologises for their lateness at this point.

However, prime considerations should be the use of discretion and the avoidance of disruption to the session. At an appropriate moment in the proceedings of the class, the teacher should approach the learner to inquire discreetly as to the reasons for lateness, and to give any handouts or materials that the learner has missed.

The Course Leader should be informed immediately if lateness becomes a regular problem. The Course Leader should raise issues of lateness during one-to-one reviews, and record this on the learner's ILP.

b) Attendance

The expectation is that learners should have 100% attendance. Access Creative College's expectations in relation to attendance should be outlined at the interview stage, as well as, during induction, and reinforced by the delivery team and centre management. It is imperative that all members of staff should take the issue of poor attendance seriously.

Learners should arrange appointments and other commitments (e.g. doctor, dentist etc.) outside of their timetabled education programme, as well as arrangements for any extracurricular activity (gigs, rehearsals etc). This should be explained during the induction.

In the event of absence it is important to ensure that the learner has had the opportunity to receive materials that were used from any missed lessons. Resources should be made available on the VLE and often a 'buddy' can be asked to collect the necessary materials during the lesson. As with any attendance policy, the teacher should make a point of checking with the learner on their return that all is well, which has the advantage of letting the learner know that their absence has been noted.

General procedures for dealing with non-attendance:

Teachers complete registers based on what is present during a session resulting in either present (/), absent (O), and late (L) marked on a register. See [Authorised Absence Guidance](#) below for further guidance.

Learners must contact the centre to say if they are going to be absent. This system should be explained to learners during the induction period.

Interventions

Appropriate steps for addressing non-attendance

On the fourth week of unauthorised absence, the learner should be withdrawn from the centre and Central Services informed. A formal letter (3) should be issued, and a copy sent to Scott Leishman at Central Office.

Where possible, personal contact is better than email or letter and it is always recommended that the Course Leader or relevant member of staff chase up by phone. In addition, other methods such as text, email and the VLE may be effective. However, a record must be kept and any action resulting in the formal discipline should be documented and backed up by an official letter or email. All of this should be recorded on the Guru (ACC's Learner Management system).

Where there is an intermittent but persistent pattern of absence, clear targets must be set and monitored and if not achieved, the learner should face appropriate disciplinary action. The Centre Managers (CM) have an element of professional discretion when applying the disciplinary process and withdrawals.

However, meetings with the learner should always be clearly documented, and the decision to allow an exception should be agreed with the CM at the centre. It is good practice to put an action plan into place with the learner with clear time scales for improvement. It is detrimental both to the learner and the rest of the centre to allow poor attendance to continue unchecked.

Parental/carer involvement is a crucial component when addressing attendance. Staff must notify parents/carers (if appropriate) when putting interventions in place to ensure that they are aware of any developments throughout the process. Parental/carer engagement should include invitations to meetings, inclusion in correspondence, notification of any stage of the disciplinary procedure etc.

Monitoring

Centre Management review patterns of attendance on a weekly basis through an attendance return containing:

- Attendance data for all cohorts including maths & English;
- Interventions and narrative on attendance data;
- Unmarked and pending register data;
- Accuracy of headcounts & timely register completion.

This leads to CMs completing a half-termly analysis of attendance trends, causative factors, identifying good practice and high priority interventions.

From their monitoring, Course Leaders should be aware if there are particular patterns of non-attendance, such as absence from one particular class or persistent absence on the same day of each week. Patterns such as these should be indicated to Course Leaders, who should then raise the matter in a one-to-one review with the learner.

Authorised Absence Guidance

Scott Leishman (SL) manages authorised absences on behalf of centres. Centre staff request authorised absences via Guru (online information learner management system) including evidence to support an application. Applications are processed weekly with the following outcomes:

- Approve – no reason needed – update attendance marks with A for the day(s) requested.
- Reject – provide reason, e.g. "reason is not included on the organisation's list of acceptable authorised absences."
- Refer – provide reason, e.g. referred to Centre Manager for further information.

Please note:

- Requests will only be considered if requested on Guru on an individual basis.
- SL will inform Centres if there are present marks on the day the authorised absence has been requested to confirm.
- SL will inform Centres if there are no registers set up for the day the authorised absence has been requested.
- Both unauthorised and authorised absences are recorded as a negative mark for reporting purposes on Guru.
- For GCSE English and Maths days the registers will be cancelled for the whole day centrally.

Types of Authorised Absence Requests

The below outlines a list of resulting register marks from the authorised absence request process.

Code	Description
A	Authorised Absence
D	Distance Learning
E	Employability/Enrichment
N	Not Expected

Employability/Enrichment 'E' mark

For learners who are not in a regular session because they are instead attending an enrichment/employability activity organised by ACC, request mark as 'E'. These learners must be on a separate non-qualification register for that activity. All requests must still be submitted through Guru and marked as 'Employability' in the reason/type.

Learners who have been suspended

Learners suspended will be updated as 'N' on applicable registers. Centres must still complete the authorised absence request on Guru and the marks will be updated to 'N' for the period of the suspension.

Distance Learning requests

Distance learning must only be used in exceptional circumstances upon approval by the Head of MIS and/or Head of Quality and Compliance, once approved, a request must be made on Guru using the authorised absence process.

The application must include the specific dates when the distance learning has been approved and the [Distance Learning Log 2022/23](#) must be uploaded as evidence. Distance learning guidelines and policy are covered in the next section.

Each log (one per register session resulting in a Distance Learning 'D' mark) must be signed by the learner and tutor to confirm the activity detailed took place. A link to the work undertaken must be supplied (Moodle/Google doc etc.) and will be checked and verified.

Failure to provide evidence will result in the register mark being amended to absent 'O'

Work experience

If ACC organise work experience activities for the learners then requests will be approved for authorised absence type A.

Acceptable Reasons (requires evidence) examples
Hospital and specialist medical treatment or emergency doctors appointments

Religious observances and festivals
Open Day or Visit to University (not including travel time one day maximum)
Funeral attendance of a close relative (not including travel time one day maximum)
Court witness or Family Court appointments
Jury Service
GCSE English and Maths resits
Illness with doctors note
Job Interview – only related to course
Travel delays – trains and tubes: If the journey each way (according to TfL journey planner) either: - Takes more than an hour <i>longer than usual</i> , being not less than 90 minutes in total; - Costs more than twice as much as usual, and not less than £5;
Doctors and dentist appointments
Work related courses or events – agreed as acceptable only with evidence from organisers directly linked to course

Unacceptable Reasons examples
Birthdays or similar celebrations
Sleeping in
Leisure Activities
Part-time work or interviews for non-related jobs
Holidays
Driving Test – these should be made for a date/time when not due in College
Rehearsals and gigs - only accepted in exceptional circumstances e.g. participation in a 'professional production' or 'official charitable event'
General illness without sick note
On-demand exams at other Centres which can be arranged for a date/time when not due in College