# Staff Guidance on the Policy on Academic Alerts

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1. Introduction

This guidance document is to be used in conjunction with the Policy on Academic Alerts. The Policy on Academic Alerts should be consulted and read thoroughly before consulting this guidance document; the purpose of the guidance is to give supplementary information to staff on the use of the Academic Alerts system. The policy can be found on the University’s Academic Policy webpages at:

https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/teaching-and-learning/policies/academicalerts.pdf

Key information on the following can be found in the Policy on Academic Alerts:

- Principles
- Types and Status of Academic Alerts
- Attendance Monitoring and Academic Alerts
- Procedure for Issuing and Managing Academic Alerts
- Matrix of Academic Alerts

2. Overview of Issuing Alerts

The Academic Alert types are outlined below, with examples of the circumstances under which they should be issued. The policy outlines the rules and regulations that govern the issuing of Academic Alerts. The guidance below details further the circumstances under which Alerts are issued to students.

Academic Alerts are issued through the Module Management System (MMS). Staff should complete the appropriate Academic Alert pro-forma, which can be found under the Academic Alerts tab on the overview page of the module’s MMS page. Staff should complete all the necessary fields on the pro-forma, and free text entered on the form should be consistent with the relevant Senate Regulations for the corresponding academic year, which can be found at:

https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/rules/ugsenateregulations/ (Undergraduate)

Any date given in the free text of an Alert should be specified as an explicit date, rather than in terms of semester week number or generic School/Department deadlines.
Once the pro-forma has been completed the Alert can be issued and it is then automatically e-mailed to the student and relevant university staff members. Academic Alerts are automatically copied to the following people:

- Student
- Module Coordinator
- Adviser of Studies
- Student Services
- Registry
- Relevant staff roles selected from menus within the Academic Alert pro-forma

There is also the ability to Cc. the Alert to another member of staff by typing in the relevant staff member’s email address. Please be careful when typing in e-mail addresses as it is easy to send the alert to the wrong person.

Staff, with the relevant permissions, can view the Academic Alerts issued to students within a module by going to the Academic Alerts tab on the overview page of the module’s MMS page and viewing existing Alerts.

Staff with permission levels that allow them to view all Academic Alerts issued within a School e.g. Director of Teaching, can access all issued academic alerts by selecting the ‘view school’ feature on MMS and then selecting ‘Academic Alerts Records’ under the ‘Assessment’ heading.

The appropriate staff roles for issuing Academic Alerts are as follows:

- ABSENCE and ASSESSMENT Alerts may be issued by administrative or teaching roles;
- ENGAGEMENT Alerts may be issued by teaching roles;
- FINAL Alerts may only be issued by module co-ordinators (or other roles carrying similar authority, such as level co-ordinators) or Directors of Teaching. Schools may also choose to restrict the issue of final Alerts to the Director of Teaching.

The circumstances under which Academic Alerts would be issued are described in the following sections. Please consult the policy alongside this information.

### 2.1. Academic Alert: ENGAGEMENT

The Academic Alert ENGAGEMENT is a broad Alert that can be used in a range of circumstances. It allows staff to alert students to concerns regarding their engagement with their studies or poor performance (in formative or summative assessment) within a module.

A student may be issued an Academic Alert ENGAGEMENT when:

- It is noticed that they regularly miss non-compulsory teaching sessions.
• Their marks for coursework are repeatedly below an acceptable level (e.g. below 7).
• They fail to submit work for formative assessment (which has not been identified as compulsory).
• They fail to prepare for a class or do not participate fully within a class.

Academic Alert ENGAGEMENT should NOT be used when:

• A student has been absent from classes in a module for a period of time that is close to contravening the School/Department’s or University’s absence policy.
• A student fails to submit compulsory work or attend a compulsory assessment.

Academic Alerts ABSENCE and ASSESSMENT should be used in these instances.

2.2. Academic Alert: ABSENCE

The Academic Alert ABSENCE should be issued when a student is at risk of contravening the School/Department’s or University’s absence policy. For details on your School/Department’s absence policy please consult the appropriate School handbook. Details of the University’s absence policy can be found at:


Academic Alert ABSENCE should be issued prior to the point at which a student has contravened the relevant absence policy, as issuing the alert after this point does not give the student a chance to act upon their attendance problems. Schools/Departments must therefore clearly identify how absence will be recorded and at what point the Academic Alert ABSENCE will be sent. This will be in line with the attendance monitoring model your School has adopted, the guidelines for which are outlined in Section 3 of the Policy: Attendance Monitoring and Academic Alerts.

If Schools/Departments identify a student who has contravened the relevant absence policy, and who has not previously been issued with an Academic Alert ABSENCE, then an Academic Alert ABSENCE should be issued immediately clearly stating that the absence policy has been contravened. No student should be issued with an Academic Alert FINAL for non-attendance unless an Academic Alert ABSENCE has previously been issued. Students should be given 4 calendar days from the issue of the alert to respond to an Academic Alert ABSENCE in this situation, before the status of that alert is set to “Unresolved.”

2.3. Academic Alert: ASSESSMENT (Late Submission)

The Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Late Submission) should be issued when a student submits a piece of summatively assessed work late. The aim of the Alert is to make students aware of the late penalties they will be incurring and of the consequences if they fail to submit the work at all.
The Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Late Submission) should be issued well before the date by which the student will receive a grade of 0 for the work, so that adequate support from Student Services and/or Registry can be provided in an attempt to get the student back on track. School/Departmental policy should determine the cut-off period at which a grade of 0 will be awarded and this should be published in School/Department handbooks. A student should have 4 calendar days within which to respond to the Alert before its status is changed to “Unresolved”.

If a student fails to submit the work entirely and the Academic Alert remains “Unresolved” at the point they receive a 0, then there is no need to issue an additional Academic Alert, (e.g., Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Failure to complete assessment)) as the specified consequence of the Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Late Submission) is that students may be awarded 0X for the module if they fail to submit work. As such, if a student fails to submit outstanding work after receiving an Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Late Submission) then an Academic Alert FINAL can be issued without any further warnings, as long as the student is in the situation that they cannot meet the compulsory elements of the module. An Academic Alert FINAL should not however be issued solely for failure to comply with instructions in previous Alerts, and especially if they have not failed to meet the compulsory elements of the module.

2.4. Academic Alert: ASSESSMENT (Failure to complete assessment)

An Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Failure to complete assessment) can be issued to a student who fails to attend a compulsory scheduled assessment such as a class test or oral presentation, and who does not notify the School/Department of non-attendance and agree acceptable arrangements in advance for alternative assessment.

If a student fails to act upon an Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Failure to complete assessment), or does not provide acceptable justification for failing to complete the assessment, during the 4 day calendar period before the status of the Alert changes to “Unresolved”, then an Academic Alert FINAL can be issued without any further warnings, as long as the student is in the situation that they cannot meet the compulsory elements of the module.

2.5. Academic Alert: FINAL

An Academic Alert FINAL informs students that they have missed, or failed to submit work for, too many compulsory elements of a module and as such, they will receive a grade of 0X for the module.

An Academic Alert FINAL must not be issued unless a student has previously received an Academic Alert ABSENCE, an Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Late submission) or an Academic Alert ASSESSMENT (Failure to complete assessment). The principle of the Academic Alert system is to provide students with an opportunity to remedy a situation. Issuing an Academic Alert FINAL without issuing a previous Alert warning students of a deficiency in their studies would not provide them with the opportunity to remedy the situation.
A FINAL Alert should therefore only be issued to a student once they are in a situation where they cannot meet the compulsory elements of the module. It should not be issued solely for failure to comply with instructions in previous alerts.

Once a student has received an Academic Alert FINAL they may cease studying on the module and completing assessments for the module, although they are not forced to do so. If a student wishes to continue with the module (for example, in the hope of a successful appeal of the decision to issue the Academic Alert FINAL) then they must continue to submit work by the published deadlines, and attend class tests and examinations. Staff are not required to mark the work at this time, but must retain the work on file in case of an eventual successful appeal by the student.

3. Monitoring and Following up on an Academic Alert

As outlined in the policy, there are three statuses that Academic Alerts can be flagged as:

- In Progress
- Unresolved
- Resolved

Once an Academic Alert is issued, it will be flagged as “In Progress” and the student then has 4 calendar days within which to respond to the Alert. If a student does not respond to the Alert within 4 calendar days, then the alert will change to “Unresolved” and relevant follow-ups will be made by Student Services (for pastoral monitoring) and Registry (for cohort trend monitoring and UKVI compliance purposes).

It is therefore important to record when a student has acted upon an Alert. If a student responds to an Alert to the satisfaction of the member of staff who issued the Alert, its status should be set to “Resolved”, with an optional note as to the nature of the resolution. Staff have discretion to accept emailed responses.

If a student responds to an Alert but does not offer a satisfactory explanation, the Alert status should be set to (or remain as) “Unresolved”.

If an Alert has been satisfactorily responded to by the student, but this is not flagged in the system as “Resolved”, the alert will change to “Unresolved” and Student Services and Registry will follow-up on the student unnecessarily. Failure to change the status of an Academic Alert to “Resolved” following a student’s correspondence with staff may therefore cause distress to students and add extra work for Student Services and Registry.

No Alert should be changed to “Resolved” if the student has not responded to it¹. It is important that students who do not respond to Alerts are followed-up on by the

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¹ Or, in exceptional cases, if some other party, e.g. Student Services, has responded on the student’s behalf.
University, and therefore flagging an Alert as “Resolved” when it is “Unresolved” would undermine the Academic Alerts process and principles.

4. Self-Certificates

A self-certificate of absence submitted by a student in itself does not preclude an Academic Alert being issued. Self-certificates should however be taken into consideration when issuing an Alert. The following situations would normally apply.

- If a student misses a compulsory module element and submits a self-certificate of absence covering the period of the compulsory element and contacts the School/Department to determine what action is required of them in relation to the missed element, then an Academic Alert should not normally be issued.

- If a student misses a compulsory module element and submits a self-certificate of absence covering the period of the compulsory element but does not contact the School/Department to determine what action is required of them in relation to the missed element, then an Academic Alert would normally be issued.

- If a student misses a compulsory module element and submits a self-certificate of absence covering the period of the compulsory element and provides substantial reasons as to why they cannot, at that time, make further contact with the School/Department in relation to the missed element (e.g., the student is in hospital) then an Academic Alert would not normally be issued. Schools/Departments are encouraged to consult with Student Services if they are unsure how to proceed in these circumstances.

- If a student misses a compulsory module element and the School/Department becomes aware of good reasons, through a mechanism other than self-certification, (e.g., a Student Services email), as to why the student has missed the element, then an Academic Alert would not normally be issued. Staff can consult Student Services or the relevant Pro Dean if they are unsure whether the identified grounds for missing a compulsory element are sufficient for an Alert not to be issued.

5. Census Dates for Academic Alerts

By promptly issuing Academic Alerts there are potential academic and pastoral benefits for all students. To ensure these benefits, and in line with the policy on Academic Alerts, Schools/Departments are required to be ‘up to date’ in issuing of Academic Alerts on three particular census dates in each semester:

- end of week 4
- end of week 8
- end of week 11

On these dates, Schools/Departments should ensure that all Academic Alerts in the following categories have been issued.
• **ABSENCE**: Where a student fails to attend a class or other activity that forms part of a module’s compulsory elements, a new Academic Alert should be issued for each activity missed.

• **ASSESSMENT (Late submission), ASSESSMENT (Failure to complete assessment)**: Where a student fails to submit coursework on time, or to attend a class test or oral presentation. If coursework is subsequently submitted, this should be recorded via the “Resolved” facility in MMS.

To strike a reasonable compromise between timeliness of monitoring information, and administrative burden for Schools/Departments, there is a grace period of two days. This means that for every compulsory activity and coursework deadline falling at least two days before the census date, the corresponding Academic Alert should have been issued by the end of the census date. The principal roles in this process are as follows:

• **Students** fulfil their responsibilities to attend classes and to take ownership of their own learning, as set out in the University’s Terms and Conditions of Study;

• **Module Co-ordinators** ensure that appropriate Academic Alerts are issued as set out above, with assistance from administrative staff where necessary;

• **Directors of Teaching** are responsible for the operation of the process within their Schools/Departments.

6. **Guidance on Attendance Monitoring Models**

Attendance monitoring and Academic Alerts are explicitly linked, and the policy outlines guidance on the elements Schools/Departments should seek to incorporate into their attendance monitoring model.

A School/Department may record attendance via paper sign-in sheets, paper recording by tutors, swipe-card recording, recorded clicker activity, or any other appropriate mechanism. If not directly integrated with MMS, attendance records must be entered into MMS within two working days. If a student is in contravention of the attendance monitoring model then the relevant Academic Alert must be issued. Each School/Department must also document its attendance monitoring practices in its student handbook.

In addition to the guidelines outlined in the policy, some examples of attendance monitoring are given below:

• A compulsory element of a 1000-level module is defined as attendance for at least 70% of the weekly tutorials. At each tutorial, the tutor records attendance on a paper sheet, and updates the attendance record in MMS after the tutorial. A student not attending the module would receive at least two ABSENCE Alerts by Week 7.
• A core 3000-level module is compulsory for all students on a particular programme. The School/Department chooses not to carry out monitoring for any other 3000-level modules in that semester, having checked that all General degree or non-graduating students taking modules in the School/Department are also taking that core module. Four seminars are defined as compulsory elements. Attendance is monitored by passing round a sign-in sheet, and MMS is updated by administrative staff after each seminar. A student not attending the module would receive one ABSENCE Alert after each of the seminars.

• Three lab-based modules at 4000-level are monitored, the School/Department having determined that all SH students take at least one of these modules. Attendance at labs is monitored by swipe-card, with MMS being updated directly.

• A 3000-level module includes two class tests as part of its assessment. Monitoring is implemented by issuing an ABSENCE Alert to each student not attending a class test.