Monitoring Student Visas for UKVI Compliance Purposes: Principles of Engagement Management

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Purpose	The University of St Andrews is required to ensure that the engagement of all Student visa holders is monitored for the purposes of compliance under the Student Route.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.6	Amendment of policy and update for new academic year (2025/26).	Published	Heather McNeill, Deputy Academic Registrar	09/08/2024

Monitoring Student visa students for UKVI compliance purposes

Principles of engagement management

1. Operational oversight

1.1. The University of St Andrews will ensure that the engagement of all Student visa students is monitored for the purposes of compliance under the Student Route Framework, in line with the duties set out in the UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance.

1.2. The responsibility for overseeing compliance will rest with the UKVI Compliance Group and Compliance Advisory Panel and will be operationally managed from within Registry.

1.3. Escalation by the Compliance Advisory Panel of individual student cases will be through the University's UKVI Key Contact (or their delegate). Consultation may take place with the University's Authorising Officer as required.

1.4. Data will be managed in accordance with statutory legislation and the University's own policies on Data Protection.

2. Coherent monitoring

2.1. The University will ensure that institutional compliance is coherent and founded on or aligned with relevant existing strategies, policies and processes wherever possible.

2.2. The University will monitor the engagement of individual students within identified student cohorts using existing cohort definitions wherever possible.

2.3. Normal patterns of student engagement at St Andrews encompass a variety of academic and non-academic activities. These engagement activities will be monitored in a light-touch and non-intrusive way without interference in the University's primary functions of learning, teaching and research.

3. Co-operative monitoring

3.1. The academic and professional services communities at St Andrews will co-operate to address any unsatisfactory processes which may be highlighted during engagement monitoring if these are identified as potential causes for irregular patterns of student behaviour as defined by UKVI guidance.

3.2. The University will use intelligence from the engagement monitoring process to ensure that appropriate and sufficient levels of support are available to all its students engaged in academic and non-academic activities at the University.

4. Consistent monitoring

4.1. Whenever possible, the University will treat all students equally, whether they are studying with a Student visa or not, and all policies and procedures will be applied fairly across each cohort.

4.2. Separate engagement rules appropriate to each student cohort will be developed to enable consistent and non-intrusive monitoring. The University will be consistent in its approach to monitoring engagement activities across all student cohorts and will actively

assess all relevant engagement patterns as defined below, trends and rules as part of regular operational process reviews.

5. Checkpoint monitoring

5.1. The University will monitor compliance of Student visa holders using a series of academic and other engagements over the course of each academic cycle (usually a 10-12 month period). The University may monitor a range of information to inform its engagement monitoring, including data relating to engagement with matriculation and confirmation events, tutorials, seminars and laboratories, examinations and assessments, coursework submission, supervision meetings, annual progress reviews, and other systematically gathered information (e.g. self-certification data, swipe access, etc.). The University may also gather information from external partners or organisations (e.g. providers of study abroad or work placements) in order to monitor student engagement to meet its responsibilities as a Sponsor of student visas.

5.2. The University has identified a series of *compulsory contact points*, *expected contact points* and *possible contact points* that make up expected patterns of engagement across each student cohort.

5.2.1 Compulsory contact points (Monitored by Registry) – two per year for all students.

    a. Compliance engagement will be monitored using existing compliance activities based on **Matriculation** and the **Confirmation event** held in Week 3 of Semester 2. All students are required to attend these events, and Registry will monitor and follow up with all students who have not attended to ensure they do so within the required timeframe.

    b. Students who fail to complete **matriculation** by Monday of Week 4 of the relevant semester (or week 4 of their own programme for PhD students) will have their studies terminated under the Failure to Matriculate policy.

    c. Students who fail to complete the **Confirmation** event by the end of Week 7 of Semester 2 will be reported to the UKVI as not engaging, the University will withdraw its sponsorship of the visa, and the student will have their studies terminated.

5.2.2 Expected contact points (Monitored by Schools) – cohort specific academic and engagement will accrue per student per academic cycle using existing academic monitoring policies and processes.

   5.2.2.1 Foundation and Pre-Sessional students studying below SCQF level 8

- Academic monitoring will be primarily based on the **University's Academic Alerts** policy, which is available via the University's Governance Zone: Academic Alerts Policy. Schools are expected to follow the protocols outlined within this document and submit alerts for those students who are not engaging appropriately.

- Academic alerts will be monitored in line with UKVI's requirements for monitoring of programmes below degree level. Where a Foundation student has not reached 85% attendance of their classroom-based study in any given month, IELLI and Registry will review the reason for the student's absence with the student. The student will be expected to take steps to approve their attendance.

- Where the attendance of a Foundation student falls below 70% for three consecutive months, according to conditions of its Sponsor Licence, the University must withdraw sponsorship due to lack of academic engagement unless there are exceptional and evidenced reasons for the

non-attendance. Such decisions will be reviewed by the Compliance Advisory Panel in accordance with this Policy.

5.2.2.2 Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Students

- Academic monitoring will be primarily based on the **University's Academic Alerts** policy, which is available via the University's Governance Zone: Academic Alerts Policy. Schools are expected to follow the protocols outlined within this document and submit alerts for those students who are not engaging appropriately.

- Registry will monitor all **academic alerts** issued to Student visa holders and will review engagement, following up directly with students as appropriate to ascertain the reasons for absence.

- In addition, Registry will monitor all students who have received a **0X in any exam diet**, and those who have **not received any credits** during a semester and will follow up with these students to review engagement.

- Supplementary academic engagement monitoring, where required, may include monitoring tutorial, seminar and laboratory attendance, examination attendance, and coursework submission, on a school and/or cohort basis.

5.2.2.3 Postgraduate Research students
- Research student monitoring will utilise the existing **Postgraduate Annual Progress Review** and will be facilitated through the online Progress Review tool in accordance with the guidelines.

- It is essential that at least 3 contact points per semester (including the Summer semester period (semester 3)) are identified for Postgraduate Research students, in addition to the Postgraduate Annual Process Review. These should be reasonably spaced throughout each semester (approximately monthly intervals), including the summer period.

- Schools are responsible for ensuring that adequate and easily accessible records are kept of possible contact points for postgraduate research students, by making use of the MMS Project Meeting Log Tool to record supervision meetings. Details of any other contacts used to monitor PGR student engagement (e.g. lab access logs, attendance at compulsory seminars, etc.) must be produced upon request to aid engagement monitoring.

5.3 Possible contact points (Monitored by Registry) – Systematically gathered information, e.g. exam attendance, swipe access, etc. may be used to provide supporting evidence of ongoing engagement with the University.

6. Reporting to UKVI

6.1. It is the students' responsibility to engage with the compulsory contact points set out in relation to their programme of study, as set out in Section 5 above, and to follow the relevant procedures in place for reporting changes in circumstances, such as leave of absence, change of location, engagement with fieldwork or research elsewhere. If, as a result of applying relevant policies, the student will be aware from the University for reasons that are not permitted under the terms of the University's Sponsor licence, the University will withdraw sponsorship of the student's visa, and will report this via the UKVI Sponsor Management System (SMS) within ten days of the change in circumstance being applied.

6.2. Where students do not engage with the compulsory contact points set out in 5.2.1 (matriculation and confirmation), in line with the requirements of the Sponsor Licence, the University will report students to the UKVI for non-compliance, within 10 days of the relevant compliance deadline. Reports will be made using the UKVI Sponsorship Management System (SMS).

6.3. Students whose pattern of engagement is deemed unreasonably irregular will be referred to the Compliance Advisory Panel for consideration. The Compliance Advisory Panel will consist of, as a minimum, the Deputy Academic Registrar or their nominee (Chair) and an Associate Dean or Associate Provost, or their nominee. The Panel may invite other relevant members of University staff to contribute as appropriate in order to gain a full understanding of the student's engagement and any underlying circumstances contributing to this. If the Panel deems that there has been unsatisfactory engagement without good reason, after all possible checks have been carried out to investigate and verify non-compliance, a recommendation will be made to the University's Key Contact (or their delegate) to withdraw sponsorship for compliance reasons. The University's Authorising Officer may be consulted as required.

6.4. The decision to withdraw visa sponsorship will normally result in the termination of the student's studies. This will be reported through the UKVI SMS within 10 days of the student record being updated to reflect the termination.

6.5. The University will report to UKVI any student who is identified as being in breach of any of their visa conditions, as soon as the University becomes aware of the situation and establishes that a breach has occurred. Depending on the circumstances, a breach of conditions may also result in a decision to withdraw sponsorship.

7. Appeals relating to Withdrawal of Sponsorship

7.1. Where the University takes a decision to withdraw sponsorship, resulting in a termination of studies, it does so to comply with its responsibilities as a Sponsor of students under its UKVI Licence.

7.2. Appeals must be submitted within ten working days of the date of the decision to withdraw sponsorship being formally communicated to the student, and will **only** be considered where one of the following grounds applies:

a) Substantial extenuating personal circumstances directly relevant to the student's academic engagement (supported by evidence), of which the University was not aware when the decision to withdraw sponsorship was taken, and which could not reasonably have been disclosed by the student (an explanation for earlier non-disclosure **must** be provided, along with full details (plus supporting documentation as relevant) of the extenuating circumstances which are being put forward as the basis for the appeal).

b) Evidence of irregular procedure, improper conduct, or lack of due diligence in the decision-making process which led to the withdrawal of sponsorship.

7.3. The University's Authorising Officer will be responsible for hearing appeals to decisions made by the University's Key Contact (or their delegate). Where the University's Authorising Officer has been involved in the decision-making process to withdraw sponsorship, an alternative member of the Principal's Office with suitable experience will hear the appeal.

7.4. Should an appeal be upheld; the University will withdraw its reporting provided a decision has not yet been made by UKVI to curtail the visa. If the visa has been curtailed by UKVI, the University will issue a new CAS if the student is required to be in the UK for the remainder of their studies.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	Current policy placed into Governance Zone template.	Published	Heather Dudek, Unit Administrator, Registry	21/04/21
1.1	Policy approved for the new academic year (2021/22).	Published	Heather Dudek, Unit Administrator, Registry	02/08/21
1.2	Policy approved for the new academic year (2022/23).	Published	Heather Dudek, Unit Administrator, Registry	28/09/22
1.3	Policy approved for the new academic year (2023/24).	Published	Heather McNeill, Deputy Academic Registrar	13/09/23
1.4	Clarification to terminology in section 5 (academic year 2023/24).	Published	Heather McNeill, Deputy Academic Registrar	29/11/23
1.5	Amendment of policy and update for new academic year (2024/25).	Published	Heather McNeill, Deputy Academic Registrar	09/08/24