

Postgraduate Taught Sponsored Student Attendance (Staff FAQs)

This document is designed to support staff members/teams to answer PGT student queries in relation to attendance. It is not a public facing document for students.

Can a PGT student leave the UK and go home during the official University vacation times?

During the shorter winter and spring vacation periods they can go home, but during the summer it is important to remember that they are studying on a full-time course. This means that the summer vacation period for undergraduate students (late May to late September) is not considered a vacation period for PGTs and is treated as term time.

They are therefore expected to remain in the UK, complying with the requirements of the [Attendance, Absence and Engagement Policy](#).

What are the requirements of the Attendance, Absence and Engagement Policy for PGT students?

The Policy should be read in full but the basic requirements are:

- During timetabled teaching, anything less than 25% attendance will mean a student is referred to an SSPP. Anything between 26-69% attendance will require investigation and potentially referral to an SSPP. Anything over 70% attendance is not a cause for concern and will not require any actions.
- Outside of timetabled teaching, a monthly contact point must be met. The majority of these contact points should be in person, and no more than two remote contact points are permitted in a row.

How long is the period outside of timetabled teaching?

It may vary slightly depending on the course and the academic year calendar but in general, teaching finishes at the end of semester 2. Therefore, some of April, and all of May, June, July, August and September are outside of timetabled teaching and will require a monthly contact point to be met.

Are there any exceptions that would allow a PGT to leave the UK and remain compliant with the terms of their sponsorship?

Yes. If a student needed a break from their studies and needed to leave the UK as part of the reason for this, they can request an authorised absence. More information, and the request form, is available here: <https://student.sussex.ac.uk/international/visas/during-studies/changes/break-from-studies>

Additionally, the Attendance Policy does permit up to two remote monthly contact points in a row which would allow a PGT student to undertake those contact points via a video call rather than an in person meeting.

A PGT has no more in-person teaching and has completed all their module assessments; can they leave the UK at the end of their timetabled teaching and write up their dissertation overseas?

Yes, if they do not wish to maintain their right to study and work in the UK. They can write up their dissertation overseas if they do not want to continue living in the UK and do not wish to maintain eligibility for the [Graduate Route visa](#) after their studies.

If they do wish to maintain their right to study and work in the UK, and their Graduate Route eligibility, then they can still leave the UK for certain periods providing they can remain compliant with the requirements of the Attendance, Absence and Engagement Policy.

This is because the summer is still considered term-time for PGT students and they are completing a full-time course. The School/Faculty must monitor attendance during the full length of the course, including where there are no timetabled teaching and learning activities. The full details of the requirements are available in the Attendance, Absence, and Engagement Policy.

Who can provide more detailed information about how the impact on a student's immigration status if they are deciding to write up outside the UK?

Students should contact an [International Advisor](#) if they have questions about how their decisions could impact their immigration status. This includes eligibility for the Graduate route visa and options to return to the UK

Does the submission of work during an assessment period count as a monthly contact point?

No. The monthly contact points are to ensure the student is meeting attendance requirements. Submission of an assessment is not classified as attendance as it can be done from outside the UK. It is evidence of engagement with studies and would be taken into consideration when determining whether a student was in breach of the attendance policy but it is not the same the monthly contact points. Section 4.5 of the policy refers.

A student (or the PAB) has deferred their dissertation submission. What are the attendance requirements for them?

The monthly core contact points will also be required for postgraduate taught students with deferred dissertation submissions for the months of October, November, December and January as they have not yet completed their course. The decision to defer is normally made by the student or the PAB in the June/July period and so the October contact point is required. If the student has not passed their dissertation, this will not be known to them until late October and it is accepted that no monthly contact point is required for October, in these cases.

A PGT student has not passed all their assessments and the exam board has given them resits. What are the attendance requirements for them?

Re-sitting students, unlike deferred dissertation students, do not receive a continuing student CAS and so have to leave the UK by the end date of their visa (usually 30th January). This is required (clause 5.125) by the UKVI Sponsor Guidance as they are no longer deemed have any "continued participation". That means there are no attendance requirements for them after September.

How should the monthly contact points be recorded?

Sussex Direct has a "record contact" webform which can be used to record a contact point. Dissertation supervisors, academic advisors, or other members of staff, including professional

services, will be able to use this method. Alternative mechanisms can be used; the only requirement is clear evidence of the contact point must be able to be produced during an audit. If you are not sure about recording contact points please speak with your Senior Education Manager in the first instance. Internal guidance will be circulated in June as to how to use the webform.

What if a PGT student has a short-term illness, can they self-certify an absence?

If they are in the UK and otherwise able to meet the attendance requirements then they do not need to let the University know about any illness.

If their illness prevents them from meeting the attendance requirements, whether that is during timetabled teaching or outside of that when a monthly contact point is needed, then they will be noted as absent and the relevant actions taken to ensure their attendance returns to the expected levels after the illness.

A student has been unable to sit an exam or submit coursework because of the circumstances causing their absence. What should they do?

If a student thinks that the circumstances of their absence have impacted their academic performance they may wish to make an [exceptional circumstances claim](#).

A student wants to go home for a couple of weeks to attend a personal event/family commitment etc. Is this permitted and what do they need to do to request this?

If this is during term time then they will miss classes. That is their choice and their responsibility to make sure that their studies are not adversely impacted and particularly that do not miss any assessment submissions. Exceptional circumstances will not be approved for a planned trip. Relevant actions (per the Attendance Policy) will be taken if the absence means that their attendance falls below the required levels. If they have generally good attendance, then a short absence to attend an important event outside the UK should not be a problem.

If this is during May-Sept then it is their responsibility to schedule the required monthly contact point outside of the planned trip so that they do not miss any attendance requirements. Exceptional circumstances will not be approved for a planned trip. Relevant actions will be taken if the absence means that their attendance falls below the required levels. If they have generally good attendance, then a short absence to attend an important event outside the UK should not be a problem.

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