

Academic Engagement Policy

2025/26

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Academic Engagement Policy (2025/26)

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This policy sets out the expectations for academic engagement across all programmes delivered by Oak Hill, and the procedures that will be followed when concerns arise.

1.2 “Academic engagement” refers to the active participation in learning required for successful completion of a programme. It includes:

- Attending and participating in timetabled teaching sessions (in person or via approved remote access);
- Engaging in formative and summative assessment activities;
- Making appropriate use of learning resources;
- Communicating with tutors and administrative staff as required.

1.3 This policy applies to all students, including those studying full-time, part-time, or by distance learning. It incorporates the [Common Awards Academic Progress Procedures](#) and replaces the College’s previous Attendance Policy.

2. Principles

2.1 Academic engagement is central to student success, to the learning community, and to Oak Hill’s contractual obligations to Durham University under the Common Awards partnership.

2.2 Oak Hill College will:

- Promote a supportive and inclusive learning environment;
- Monitor engagement fairly and consistently;
- Intervene early when engagement concerns arise;
- Provide opportunities for students to explain and, where appropriate, address any issues impacting engagement.

2.3 Students are expected to:

- Meet the attendance and participation requirements for their programme;
- Notify us promptly of any difficulties affecting engagement;

- Work with tutors and staff to address concerns when raised.

3. Attendance and Engagement Requirements

3.1 General expectation

Students are expected to make satisfactory progress which means attending all scheduled teaching sessions for the modules on which they are enrolled, in the mode specified for their programme, and completing work assignments.

- For most programmes, this means attending in person unless a concession for remote access or absence has been granted.
- The only exceptions are:
 - Students enrolled on the *Foundation Award*, which is taught asynchronously;
 - Students enrolled on the *MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership*, for which attendance via Zoom is the primary mode of engagement.

3.2 Remote attendance

Attendance via Zoom is only permitted where:

- A concession for remote access has been granted by the Academic Registrar, or
- The student's programme is delivered primarily online as per 3.1 above.

A concession for remote access may be granted for any of the following reasons (although this list is not exhaustive):

- Long-term personal ill health or disability;
- Caring responsibilities for vulnerable persons;
- Concerns about public transport;
- Distance or accommodation difficulties, especially for part-time students.

Students seeking to attend a whole module via Zoom due to these or similar circumstances must submit a Zoom Attendance Request form (see *Acorn*→*Study*→*Policies & Forms*) to the Academic Registry Office (academic-office@oakhill.ac.uk).

3.3 Counting absences

An "absence" in this context means:

- Failing to attend a compulsory class in person or via Zoom (as applicable), or
- Attending but failing to engage in a way that meets the minimum expectations set out in Section 4 of this policy.

3.4 Impact of repeated non-attendance

Where absences are repeated or prolonged, Oak Hill may implement the following:

- Set milestones and monitoring requirements for the student to re-engage;
- Trigger the formal Academic Progress Procedure under General Regulation V, beginning with an Academic Progress Notice (APN);
- Recommend programme withdrawal if engagement does not improve within the APN timeframe.

4. Criteria and Evidence for Non-Engagement

4.1 Module tutors will keep **informal personal notes on attendance and engagement** to help them to identify early concerns. These records will not initially be considered as formal evidence for escalation but will help tutors to know when to begin an initial conversation with the student.

4.2 If escalation becomes necessary (see section 6.3 below), formal evidence will be collected and presented, including:

- **Class Attendance:**
 - In-person: corroborated by Zoom recordings showing those present in the room;
 - Online: Zoom attendance reports
- **Engagement with learning resources:**
 - Moodle login records and logs of accessing key resources.
 - Use of out-of-class tools (e.g., Padlet, discussion forums).
 - Join the session on the appointed start time'

5. Engagement in Hybrid and Online Teaching

5.1 Students attending via Zoom are expected to:

- Join using their name;
- Keep cameras switched on during teaching unless permission to remain off-camera has been granted;
- Keep microphones muted unless speaking;
- Follow all guidance given by the tutor regarding questions, discussions, and breakout rooms;
- Ensure they have suitable equipment, internet connection, and environment for participation.

- Inform the module tutor courteously and at an appropriate moment if they experience significant difficulties in engaging with the lecture due to technical or related issues.

5.2 Students attending in person are expected to:

- Arrive on time and stay for the duration of the session;
- Avoid unnecessary disruptions;
- Follow any specific norms for hybrid classrooms to enable equitable participation by Zoom students.

6. Monitoring and Intervention

6.1 Informal stage

When a module tutor identifies concerns about a student's academic progress or engagement, the tutor will:

- 1) Begin an informal conversation with the student to explore reasons and encourage improvement.
- 2) Inform the student's personal tutor, who may also engage to provide pastoral support.

If, after a minimum of two weeks, there is no improvement, the module tutor must notify the Vice Principal (Teaching & Learning) in writing, outlining:

- The nature of the concerns
- Details of prior conversations and support offered

The Vice Principal (Teaching & Learning) will determine if the circumstances warrant the issue of a formal written warning. This will indicate:

- Clear requirements the student must meet to demonstrate appropriate academic progress
- A deadline by which these requirements must be met before an APN may be issued.
- The warning will also invite the student to meet with the Vice Principal (Teaching & Learning) to discuss the circumstances of non-engagement and the requirements laid down to rectify this.
- The Students' personal tutor should be kept informed at each stage of the process.

6.2 Formal stage – Academic Progress Notice (APN)

An APN may be issued if:

- A student fails to attend classes and/or fails to engage with learning resources (as evidenced in section 4.2):
 - a) For four or more consecutive teaching weeks in a semester; or
 - b) For 50% or more of the teaching weeks (this criteria would only be applicable from the midpoint of the semester onwards).

The APN will:

- Specify the nature of the concern;
- Outline the actions required for improvement;
- Set a review period;
- Explain the consequences of failing to meet the required engagement level.

Clear records of each step of the process will be kept for review by the University if escalated.

6.3 Escalation

If engagement does not improve following the APN, withdrawal from the programme may be recommended by the Assessment Board, in line with Common Awards regulations. See [Common Awards Academic Progress Procedure](#) for more details.

7. Absences and Concessions

7.1 General Principles

- Full-time students are expected to be on campus Monday to Friday, attending all classes, Fellowship Group meetings, and placement requirements.
- Anglican ordinands must attend daily Chapel.
- Part-time students must attend all their classes and normally attend Chapel on days they are on site.

Students who anticipate being absent should request permission in advance from the Academic Registrar, explaining the reasons and expected duration.

A student who, because of illness or other unavoidable circumstances, is unable to fulfil his/her academic commitments may, as a matter of grace, be regarded as having met his/her academic commitments by concession. In such cases, the student should contact their personal tutor, who will then submit a request on their behalf to the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning) and the Academic Registrar.

Normally such a concession will not be granted on more than occasion in a single academic year, and it will be for no more than five weeks.

7.2 Short-Term Absences

For one-off or short-term absences due to illness, emergency childcare, or similar reasons, students should, where possible, attend lectures via Zoom. If this is not feasible, they may instead catch up via Learning Hub recordings. Students must request permission for such

short-term absence from the module tutor by email (copying in their personal tutor) in advance of the class wherever possible. If advance notice is not possible, they should inform them as soon as possible after the class. Temporary Zoom attendance for convenience (e.g., to receive deliveries) is not permitted.

7.3 Longer Temporary Absences

Absences longer than two consecutive days must be approved by the Faculty via the Personal Tutor, except in emergencies (e.g. sickness, bereavement,). The Faculty Meeting's decision is final and ensures consistent treatment.

7.4 Birth of a Child

Students requesting leave for childbirth, adoption, or fostering should apply through the normal channels (see section 7.3).

7.5 On-Site Exams/Tests

All students must attend in-person tests and exams at College as scheduled, regardless of permission for Zoom attendance in modules. Deferrals are granted only for extenuating circumstances.

7.6 Reading Weeks

Reading Weeks are for study, research, and preparation. Chapel continues on weekdays at different times than usual. Whilst attendance is encouraged, it is not mandatory.

7.7 Jury Service

Students summoned for jury service during term must consult their Fellowship Group tutor before responding to summons. Obligatory jury service may warrant extensions for assessments.

7.8 Attendance at Conferences

Attendance at conferences during teaching or exam weeks is not normally permitted. Exceptions require approval via the '*Conference Attendance Request Form*' which can be found on Acorn → Study → Policies & Forms, and are granted only when conferences are relevant to employability. Permission is limited to one conference per academic year, lasting no more than 72 hours. Extensions or deferrals due to conferences are not permitted.

7.9 Namugongo and Mission Trips

Students may participate in visits to Namugongo or Mission Trips but must plan coursework and revision carefully, as extensions or deferrals would not normally occur if trips coincide with exams or deadlines.

8. Responsibilities

- **Students** are responsible for meeting attendance and engagement expectations and communicating with module tutors and personal tutors if difficulties arise.
- **Module Tutors** monitor attendance and engagement, initiate early conversations, and escalate concerns appropriately.
- **Personal Tutors** provide pastoral support and liaise with students facing academic difficulties.
- **Vice Principal (Teaching & Learning)** oversees formal warnings and APNs.
- All staff and students should familiarize themselves with the Hybrid & Online Teaching Guidelines to ensure smooth participation in hybrid learning.

Author	Academic Registrar Acting Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning)
Date of Approval	28/08/25
Approving Committee	Teaching & Learning Committee
Status	Approved
Previous Reviews	N/A
Next Review	July 2026 or earlier if required