

# UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

## Attendance monitoring data usage policy

### 1. Attendance monitoring

Attendance at lectures and other teaching events is an important part of learning for all students on taught courses. Attendance is one of the indicators used to measure students' engagement with their course of study.<sup>1</sup> Students are expected to attend all timetabled teaching events, unless they have authorisation for absence. The University has Progress Procedures that set out how concerns about students will be followed up.

The University monitors students' attendance for a range of reasons. The primary purpose is to ensure that students are engaging with their studies, and to identify and offer help to those who may be experiencing difficulties, for whatever reasons. See our [Attendance Statement](#).

In some cases the University has contractual obligations to monitor attendance, as is the case for some health courses, which are funded by and delivered on behalf of the NHS. In addition, the University is required under the conditions of its Tier 4 Sponsor Licence to monitor and keep comprehensive attendance records for the students it sponsors.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Storage of data

Attendance data is normally collected electronically through the electronic readers in classrooms. Data from the readers is hosted on remote servers owned and operated by an external supplier<sup>3</sup>. The system is password protected and allows for members of University staff to be given different levels of access.

Where attendance data is collected manually using a paper register, the information may be entered onto the University's electronic Attendance Monitoring System or held within the department on a spreadsheet. Paper records are stored in accordance with the University's Retention Policy.

Information about meetings with students to discuss their attendance will be held in the student's department. Where an attendance matter is referred to a Progress Officer and to the Executive Dean or his/her nominee, a record of the referral and outcome will be held on the student's Electronic Student File.

### 3. Access to data

Students are able to access their own attendance data through MyEssex<sup>4</sup>.

Academic staff are able to access attendance data for all students in any module they are involved in teaching on, and Personal Tutors for their tutees. This will help them identify and offer support to students who have poor attendance. Departmental administrative staff will be able to access records for all students studying on courses and modules in their department so that they can identify individuals with attendance issues and arrange appropriate follow up in accordance with the Progress and Appeals Procedure.

Other staff in departments who have specific responsibility for attendance issues, including the Head of Department and Progress Officers, will have access to the records of relevant students. Attendance information will also be accessible to people outside the department who are involved in attendance monitoring, including the Deans and members of staff in Registry. Student Support staff will also have access to the attendance records of its clients.

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<sup>1</sup> Progress and Appeals Procedures for Taught Programmes of Study  
<http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/affairs.aspx#progress>

<sup>2</sup> Points based system: guidance for sponsors. Appendix D: guidance for sponsors on keeping documents.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-records-for-sponsorship-appendix-d> Accessed 1333/08/15.

<sup>3</sup> The data is hosted by TDS (Time data Security) Ltd under a hosting agreement with the University.

<sup>4</sup> This service will be available from the 2016 Spring term

All departments can access statistical data to help them identify trends. This data does not identify individual students.

#### **4. Sharing of attendance data**

Attendance data forms part of the personal record of each student, and in general it will not be shared externally, except in the circumstances laid out below.

#### **5. Legal Obligations**

##### **5.1 Home Office**

The University is a Sponsor, allowing it to recruit students from overseas who require visas to study in the UK. The University must tell the Home Office if a student does not attend 10 expected consecutive contacts and we have withdrawn sponsorship as a result.

Reporting to the Home Office is done via the Home Office Sponsor Management System. We do not report any detail of classes missed or attended. The Home Office may ask to see detailed attendance monitoring data as part of their inspection audits to ensure we are collecting and storing data as required.

##### **5.2 Law enforcement**

From time-to-time the University may release some attendance information to the Police or other law enforcement or anti-terrorist agencies. A written request made under Section 29 of the Data Protection Act 1998 will normally be required before this information is released.

##### **5.3 NHS**

The University shares some information about student progress with the NHS where the NHS is funding the course. For students on courses leading to professional registration attendance is constantly monitored and attendance reports are included as part of their references.

We share attendance data for students on CPD courses where it is requested, and this is made clear to applicants when they apply. Results information is sent to the student's employing Trust after the exam boards.

##### **5.4 Embassies**

Where we have received written permission from the sponsored student, or where there is a sponsorship agreement between the University and the student's embassy, we may provide information on the progress of sponsored students including a general indication of whether or not attendance is satisfactory. We do not report on actual missed classes nor on reasons given for any absences.

##### **5.5 Student permission**

Attendance information will not be shared or discussed with sponsors (except in the cases described above), parents, guardians, family members, spouses or partners, without the express written permission of the student, in line with the University's third party contact policy<sup>5</sup>.

Students may wish to share their attendance data with third parties for a variety of reasons for example in order to support a job application, a legal claim or other process, or to allow a parent, guardian, supporter or legal representative to discuss an issue regarding their attendance on their behalf.

If students wish their data to be shared in this way they must supply written authorisation, setting out what information may be shared, the contact details of the person or people the information is to be shared with, and the period over which the information is to be shared.

#### **6. Statistical data**

Statistical data, i.e. data that cannot be used to identify any individuals, could be shared across the University to help spot trends and plan services. It could also be shared externally, e.g. in response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.essex.ac.uk/records\\_management/policies/third\\_party\\_contact.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/records_management/policies/third_party_contact.aspx)

## 7. Student references

Information about a student's record of attendance will not normally be included in a student's references, except where the student has given permission (see 5.6 above).

## 8. Data retention

In accordance with the University's records retention schedules<sup>6</sup>, attendance data, whether paper or electronic, is stored for 6 years after the current academic year in which the data is collected.

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Review date Annually

### Version control record

| Version | Status/changes                                | Changed/approved by | Date       |
|---------|---|---------------------|------------|
| 1.0     | Final approved                                | USG                 | 20/09/2015 |
| 1.1     | Updated Home Office terminology and weblinks. | Sara Stock          | 13/08/2015 |

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.essex.ac.uk/records\\_management/records/retention\\_schedules.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/records_management/records/retention_schedules.aspx)