



**Heart of Yorkshire**  
Education Group

# Higher Education Retention and Attendance Code of Practice

Date: September 2023

This Code of Practice relates to processes in place relating to higher education programmes at the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group (the Group) which support our strategic agenda to improve retention. Developing strategies at programme level to improve retention and student success including 'recovery plans' for programmes which do not meet the Group's targets is a key element of this. We are committed to meeting the diverse needs and requirements of our students, as described in the Group's Access and Participation Plan.

The Code of Practice covers student support strategies, information advice and guidance, attendance, and data monitoring expectations and methods. The document provides guidance on procedures and expectations for different stages of the student journey, including pre-enrolment, induction, on-programme student support, and attendance, and aims to ensure that the relevant information pertaining to their student experience is easily accessible in one document.

Full account has been taken of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, most specifically, Advice and Guidance - enabling student achievement. Full account has also been taken of the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) higher education guidance documentation.

Students are directed to familiarise themselves with any relevant procedures of their awarding body.

## **1 Terminology**

- 1.1 This Code of Practice ("the Code") relates to the student experience of students enrolled on higher education programmes at the Group.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this documentation, a student is defined as a person enrolled on a higher education programme of study at the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group irrespective of the mode of study (e.g., full or parttime) or the location of the learning or delivery that takes place.
- 1.3 Retention refers to strategies implemented by the Group to work with students in order to try and prevent student drop out / non-completion of studies.

## **2 Guiding Principles of the Code**

- 2.1 A total commitment to student development and achievement. This informs all the Group's strategies and operational approaches and is effectively communicated to all staff and students
- 2.2 Policies and procedures are clear, accessible and inclusive
- 2.3 Clear, consistent, accessible communication about opportunities and support is available to all students from pre-entry through to completion and beyond
- 2.4 An over-arching commitment to equal opportunity both to enable all students to develop academic and professional skills and to provide an inclusive and engaging learning community
- 2.5 Enable students to take responsibility for their own learning
- 2.6 Clear communication about course outcomes to all current and prospective students and staff
- 2.7 Active encouragement of feedback from students and staff to continuously improve the learning environment

*(UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2018).*

2.8 The Code outlines minimum expectations in relation to the range of strategies, processes etc. which impact upon issues connected to student retention. The key processes covered within the document relate to:

- Information, advice, and guidance (“IAG”): pre-enrolment, offer stage, on course and withdrawal
- Induction and orientation
- Attendance
- Management of information and data
- Student support and bridging provision.

*The timings provided within this Code do not include bank holidays or periods when the respective Colleges are closed.*

## **7.0 Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

7.1 This sub-section of the Code relates to a consistent approach to the provision of Higher Education IAG at the College

7.2 Staff members providing IAG must ensure that responses to enquiries are received by the enquirer within 48 hours of the initial request

7.3 The College provides 24-hour access to its website, via which emails requesting IAG can be submitted

7.4 Students may be asked to feed back on their experience of IAG through methods such as internal student surveys, staff/student consultative committees or other Higher Education forums. This data may then be utilised in the College’s reporting processes, including those submitted to validating partners or awarding bodies

7.5 All staff providing IAG will be provided with the requisite training to undertake the role and will be provided with up-to-date and accurate information relating to the higher education programmes and courses available to prospective students. Where changes have been made to programmes, these updates will be provided to IAG staff in a timely manner and in an appropriate format.

7.6 The Code recognises the importance of effective IAG as part of a process which:

- assists prospective students to develop a sense of the academic requirements of a programme prior to enrolment
- relates to a wider framework which not only supports access to higher education learning, but also helps the student understand the processes towards completion of that learning and progression thereon recognises, and assists in finding solutions for, barriers to learning
- offers 'material information' which enables prospective students to make well informed choices which realistically match their aspirations and personal needs, and which are based on impartial advice.

## **8.0 Pre-enrolment (Student Research and Application)**

8.1 The following information should be available to students during the pre-enrolment phase of their application process:

- The programme title, the relevant awarding body (where applicable) and detail of the award that will be received upon successful completion of the programme
- The entry requirements for the programme, which will include academic and non-academic criteria. Students will also be provided with information relating to the typical offer issued
- The proportions of directed and self-directed study time required by the programme
- The levels of personal commitment expected from the student
- The nature of the assessments used
- The likely group sizes and the learning environments utilised including specific information relating to minimum group size at which a programme will run
- Course design, delivery methods and indicative content. This to include details of any optional modules and the criteria attached to their selection
- The location of study (or possible locations if potentially changes could be made). This would also include, where known and where applicable, the location of any compulsory work placement activity
- The duration of study for any approved mode of attendance
- Any relevant pre-enrolment reading or other preparation
- Full course costs which will include tuition fees (plus any known or planned increases) and where variations occur, how these are applied (e.g., international students only) and any additional course costs (e.g., compulsory field trips, specific equipment, or materials) and an indication of likely cost. An indicator will be provided as to the nature of the cost, i.e., mandatory, optional, necessary for academic completion

- When and how fees and other costs are payable including the date on which students become liable for those fees. Any necessary flexibility related to course costs will be clarified
- Signposting or guidance relating to financial support
- Details of the next phases of the admissions processes including relevant dates and times
- Appropriate contact details for key staff members along with details on status and experience for these key programme staff
- Where applicable, disability support information
- Where applicable details of any professional body accreditation/regulation relevant to the programme
- Signposting to any terms and conditions, or rules and regulations which are unusual, surprising, or specifically important to the completion of the course
- Details of any external regulation applicable to the Group.

## **9.0 Offer Stage**

- 9.1 The issue of an offer by the College to a higher education student may be made on conditional or unconditional grounds
- 9.2 If and when a student accepts any offer made by the College for a higher education programme, this creates a contract between both parties
- 9.3 In order to ensure that compliance with all legal requirements takes place the College undertakes to do the following:
- Ensure all important information relating to the programme continues to be sent to students
  - Ensure that the terms and conditions which accompany the offer are sent to the student and that any unusual or surprising terms are highlighted and that this information is provided to the student in advance of any offer being accepted
  - If, in advance of the offer being accepted, the College is aware of potential changes to information, we will provide an indicator of what may change, how and when
  - All documentation, including the offer, will be sent via a durable medium, most likely to be as an attachment to an email
  - For distance contracts, a student will be advised that there is a 14-day cancellation period.

## **10.0 Student Enrolment**

- 10.1 Any changes to material information which occur prior to enrolment will be communicated to the student at the earliest opportunity

- 10.2 The Group undertakes to ensure that all pre-contract information is available to students enrolling on site, and that those enrolling at a distance are sent all necessary information in a durable medium
- 10.4 Students' attention will be drawn to the terms and conditions and any other rules and regulations, which will be made fully available. Any unusual or surprising terms will be highlighted

### **11.0 Post-enrolment/On Course**

- 11.1 At various points during a student's time at the Group, additional IAG may be necessary and beneficial. This IAG may be outside of the normal remit of the teaching team and could include information around finance, careers, wider services such as counselling or health and wellbeing, concerns or complaints and quality standards. If such a need arises, students are encouraged to speak with their programme leader in the first instance for onward signposting where appropriate.

Relevant links to other available services will also be made available in the Programme Handbooks (where utilised) and on the HE Student VLE page.

### **12.0 Withdrawal from a programme of study**

- 12.1 It is recognised that students may have personal circumstances which mean it is necessary for them to withdraw from the course
- 12.2 In all such circumstances, students are advised to speak to their programme leader in the first instance as there are options available to students which may enable studies to continue
- 12.3 IAG relating to the implications of fees and loans should be provided to these students in a timely manner
- 12.4 Where the available solutions are not suitable and a student wishes to continue towards withdrawal, their Programme Leader is required to undertake an exit interview which fully details the reasons for the withdrawal and the potential solutions discussed and offered. This should occur in a timely manner, and preferably no later than 14 days following the student's formal decision to withdraw
- 12.5 If the withdrawal results from the student deciding that they have made a mistake in terms of their chosen programme, IAG relating to options for transferral to a new course or a change in mode of attendance should be provided.

## 13.0 Induction

- 13.1 The quality and breadth of the induction experience provided to our higher education students is of fundamental importance to the retention of those students on their programmes of study
- 13.2 The Programme Leader, along with the teaching team as appropriate, should ensure that all new student cohorts receive a comprehensive programme induction, irrespective of mode of attendance. This may not necessarily occur during one specific day, but over a short period of time at the commencement of each new academic year
- 13.3 Specific arrangements should be made to induct late enrolling students, or those unable to make the formally arranged sessions for any reason
- 13.4 Induction expectations are as follows – as a minimum, students should be made aware of:
- Information about wider services and facilities. Where applicable (e.g., LRC plus) a contextualised introduction to these services should be incorporated into Student Support Hours, wherever possible, within the first two weeks of the academic year
  - Opportunities for involvement in events or activities outside those usually attached to the programme, e.g., HE Ambassador programme, Student Union etc.
  - Provision and explanation of programme handbooks and module handbooks
  - An explanation of formative and summative feedback and its purpose
  - Provision of the assessment schedule for the programme
  - Information on the submission of assessments and academic regulations – expectations, penalties, mitigating circumstances, extensions, plagiarism etc. (ensure the students are aware of the need to consult both the Group and awarding body/validating partner regulations). Outline where this information can be found and how the student can access it.
  - Attendance expectations and details of who to contact in an absence situation
  - Contact details for all relevant programme staff, support services, and HE personnel including the Head of HE, the HE Administrator, the relevant Head of Curriculum and the HE Student Experience Co-ordinator
  - Timetable information and planned programme delivery
  - Any other information required to be presented by your relevant awarding body/validating partner
  - The role of, and the process/timeframe for the appointment of, student representatives
  - The VLE – both the programme pages and also the generic HE Student page.
- 13.5 Programme leaders, in the first staff/student consultative committee of each academic year, must collect information from the student representatives regarding the induction experience. This should be appropriately

minuted ensuring that feedback is also disseminated to the Director of HE and the HE Student experience co-ordinator.

- 13.6 The Group will ensure its induction procedures are reviewed on an annual basis by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee.

#### **14.0 Attendance**

- 14.1 The Group recognises that there is a direct correlation between student attendance and the likelihood of student success on their higher education programme. An at-risk student will often demonstrate a declining attendance profile and therefore, internal attendance targets are set each year in order that potential at risk students can benefit from early identification and appropriate support
- 14.2 The attendance target will be 90%. Annual targets will be disseminated to staff once set, and to students in both the corporate induction event, but also via programme teaching teams and via the VLE
- 14.3 It is recognised that for many of our part-time students, their employment, childcare and other caring responsibilities may, at times, prohibit regular attendance at timetabled sessions. Whilst this is not to be considered the norm, or appropriate for all part-time students, where a student presents a specific case to a programme leader and maintains contact both with the programme team and via the VLE, this will be considered to be acceptable practice
- 14.4 Programme teams must produce an action plan which sets out a clear support strategy for any student who is identified to be at-risk of not achieving. For students who are not attending or maintaining contact with the programme team, the attendance procedure shall be followed (see appendix 1)
- 14.5 Particular note should be taken of attendance profiles at key points of the academic year which are considered to fall within the first assessment period and also the beginning of semester 2. Programme teams should highlight students with non-submission of assignments which can often be a pre-cursor to students failing to return to complete their studies
- 14.6 Programme leaders should maintain the Student Support Hours during the assessment weeks as this can be a period where 'at risk' students could be particularly vulnerable. Nonattendance at arranged support sessions should be actioned immediately.



## **15.0 Data and Management Information**

- 15.1 Data and information relating to IAG, induction, attendance and withdrawal should be collected via forums such as the Internal Student Survey, Staff/Student Consultative Committees and HE Quality and Standards. This data will be analysed, audited, and utilised in various reporting mechanisms which are then disseminated to bodies including the Executive Team, the Office for Students, Governors, and Student Finance as required
- 15.2 Annual Programme Review meetings and reports must take full account of any, and all, such data.

## **APPENDIX 1: ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE**

### Letter to be sent following three unexplained non-attendances

Dear ...

#### **RE: Attendance – First Notification**

We are concerned that your attendance on your programme has fallen recently, and that we have not heard from you with regard to an explanation for this. If you are experiencing difficulties which are impacting on your ability to attend, we would like to reassure you that we do have support services within the College, which are available to you.

We do need you to be aware, that any continued or future absences potentially could have adverse implications on your ability to continue with your studies, and also access to student funding. However, we are still at a point in time where this can be resolved and so you are advised to contact us as soon as possible.

Please contact Andrew Cawtheray, our HE Student Experience Co-ordinator, on 01924 789317, email him on [a.cawtheray@wakefield.ac.uk](mailto:a.cawtheray@wakefield.ac.uk) or visit him in WU006.

Yours sincerely

Higher Education Administrator's Office

### Letter to be sent following non-response to Letter 1 plus additional absence

Dear ...

#### **Re: Attendance – Second Notification**

We are contacting you again, as we do not appear to have received a response from you to our recent letter regarding your non-attendance on your programme. Your attendance currently falls into one, or both, of the following two categories:

- Your attendance is lower than the 90% expectation for higher education students at the College without explanation
- You have had unapproved absence from your programme lectures for a period exceeding 3 weeks.

Continued absence without contact or explanation is now a serious matter and if we do not hear from you by ..... you are at risk of being withdrawn from your programme.

Withdrawal can have the following implications (this is for guidance only and is not an exhaustive list):

- You will no longer be a higher education student at Wakefield College, and your enrolment will cease as of your last date of attendance, not from the date of withdrawal
- You will lose access to all services at the College
- You will be required to pay any outstanding debts you may have with the College and all items currently on loan (e.g. library books) must be returned immediately
- You remain liable for tuition fees
- If you are in receipt of Student finance, further payments will cease
- Any maintenance loans or grants which have been paid to you directly by the Student Loans Company may have to be paid back. It is your responsibility to contact SLC in this regard
- You are responsible for checking all related contract terms and conditions related to your time as a student at the College and assess whether you have any outstanding liabilities
- Any withdrawn student who then restarts the same, or any other programme, at a later date, will be charged the full tuition fee that is applicable for the financial year they restart
- If you decide you do wish to resume your studies, you will be required to go through the full formal application process again.

#### What to do now

You must contact Andrew Cawtheray, our HE Student Experience Co-ordinator on 01924 789317, email him on [a.cawtheray@wakefield.ac.uk](mailto:a.cawtheray@wakefield.ac.uk) or visit him in WU006 **no later than 7 days from the date of this letter.**

Yours sincerely

Higher Education Administrator's Office

Letter to follow non-response to 2<sup>nd</sup> stage letter

Dear

Re: Attendance – final notification

Despite previous correspondence regarding your continued non-attendance on your programme, you have failed to make any contact with us. As a result, this letter constitutes formal notification that if we do not hear from you **within 7 days of the date of this letter** you will be formally withdrawn from your higher education programme of study at the College.

Withdrawal can have the following implications (this is for guidance only and is not an exhaustive list):

- You will no longer be a higher education student at the College, and your enrolment will cease as of your last date of attendance, not from the date of withdrawal
- You will lose access to all services of the College
- You will be required to pay any outstanding debts you may have with the College and all items currently on loan (e.g. library books) must be returned immediately
- You remain liable for tuition fees
- If you are in receipt of student finance, further payments will cease
- Any maintenance loans or grants which have been paid to you directly by the Student Loans Company may have to be paid back. It is your responsibility to contact SLC in this regard
- You are responsible for checking all related contract terms and conditions related to your time as a student at the College and assess whether you have any outstanding liabilities
- Any withdrawn student who then restarts the same, or any other programme, at a later date, will be charged the full tuition fee that is applicable for the financial year they restart
- If you decide you do wish to resume your studies, you will be required to go through the full formal application process again.

What you must do now

You must contact Andrew Cawtheray, our HE Student Experience Co-ordinator on 01924 789317, email him on [a.cawtheray@wakefield.ac.uk](mailto:a.cawtheray@wakefield.ac.uk) or visit him in WU006 **no later than 7 days from the date of this letter**.

Yours sincerely

Higher Education Administrator's Office