



Attendance Policy

**Reviewed and Approved by the Leadership Team
January 2011**

This Policy applies to all College programmes except those for which the applicable policy is that of a validating Higher Education institution or other Awarding Body.

This Policy is available on-line at www.davidgame-group.com

1. We will consider any request for this policy to be made available in an alternative format.
2. We review our policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. All policies are subject to equality impact assessments*. We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to these impact assessments and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility or fairness of the policy.

*Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to see whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on grounds of race, gender, disability, age, religion or sexual orientation.

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David Game College is aware of the correlation between absenteeism and academic progress and therefore takes a strong view on the need to closely monitor attendance for all of its students, irrespective of their visa status. The British Accreditation Council (BAC) has a requirement that no student's cumulative attendance should fall below 80%. However, for students holding visas, the statutory requirements are more stringent, requiring students who miss 10 expected contacts to be reported to the UKBA.

1. Rationale

This policy is a response to the quality agendas and requirements presented by the Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted) and the statutory requirements of the UKBA (United Kingdom Border Agency) as prescribed under Tier 4 (see Appendix 1). Its formulation is designed to enhance consistency in approach to attendance across the different programmes at David Game College (“the College”). The College is committed to offering opportunities for the development of all students in ways that meet individual needs. One aspect of this is a commitment to improving retention and achievement through raising standards of attendance and punctuality.

2. Aim

This policy aims to assist all students to take responsibility for their full and prompt attendance which will enhance their learning experience, develop their personal skills and promote retention, achievement and progression. In the case of Compulsory School Age (CSA) students, the policy is intended to ensure full compliance with the requirements of Ofsted.

3. Principles on which the policy is based

There are four principles underpinning the College’s approach to student attendance:

- a. Student attendance should be managed across the College;
- b. Targets for student attendance rates should be set and monitored across all College programmes;
- c. Punctuality and full attendance at lessons should be a benchmark by which the quality of the College’s teaching and learning is judged;
- d. Every effort should be made to maximise punctuality and attendance.

4. Students’ Entitlements

Students are entitled to the best opportunities to be successful in their studies. If a student’s general attendance and punctuality give the College cause for concern and there is a worry that the student may not complete his/her studies successfully, the student will be contacted by the College Attendance Officer to discuss their progress. An attempt will be made to identify any problems or difficulties and arrangements may be made for special help from the teaching staff or for special tutorials and support. The College Attendance Officer will listen to any problems raised and will try to give the support and guidance needed to help the learner to be successful. It is part of the student’s entitlement that lessons start and end promptly. Every effort will be made to give advance warning of unavoidable changes or cancellations to classes.

5. Students' Responsibilities

The College requires students to **attend all classes punctually** according to their signed learning agreement and course timetable. Students should not knowingly miss a class for anything other than illness or exceptional circumstances. It is not usually permitted for students to take holidays in term-time. If a student needs to miss a class, the parent or guardian should:

- a. Contact the College administrator in order to inform the Personal Tutor and member of staff who teaches the lesson(s), in advance, of any planned absence (e.g. for a doctor's or dentist's appointment);
- b. Phone the College administrator, as soon as possible, to explain an unplanned absence due to illness. The parent or guardian will be asked for details of the illness and for how long the absence is expected to last;
- c. Explain by letter or email the reasons for absence due to illness lasting more than one week. Addresses will be checked against College records for verification.
- d. On return to College following an absence lasting more than one week, the student will be asked to complete a self-certification form;
- e. The student must make arrangements to catch up on any work missed during absence.

If a student is **absent without authorisation** (for visa students please refer to Appendix 2) and there has been no response from the parent or guardian, the student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the course after four weeks of absence. There may also be other remedial action taken (including disciplinary action in some cases) before the end of the four week absence period, if a student's pattern of attendance and/or punctuality is not of an acceptable standard. Unacceptable attendance and/or punctuality may affect examination entry. Students may be excluded from classes if they are more than 10 minutes late, unless there are good reasons.

6. Teaching Staff's Responsibilities

All Teaching Staff are required to:

- a. Advise students of the College Attendance Policy during induction;
- b. Inform the Personal Tutor if a student has been absent for two lessons or where attendance is erratic;
- c. Mark attendance, absence and lateness in the register and ensure regular scanning;
- d. Contact, or arrange for contact with the student or parent/guardian, via the Personal Tutor, where appropriate, wherever there is cause for concern;
- e. Monitor and report individual and group attendance and punctuality for their classes;
- f. Help to support students' return to College, as appropriate;

- g. Ensure withdrawal forms are completed, via the Personal Tutor, as appropriate, where a student has been absent without authorisation for four weeks;
- h. Start and finish classes on time.

Personal Tutors are required to:

- a. Keep other teaching staff informed of issues and actions relating to a student's attendance and punctuality;
- b. Monitor and report on students' attendance and punctuality, with the help of teaching and support staff;
- c. Refer unresolved issues concerning attendance and punctuality to the College Attendance Officer and Vice Principals;
- d. Ensure paperwork regarding student attendance is up-to-date and kept in the tutorial file.

The Attendance Officer is required to:

- a. Ensure absence and lateness forms are completed and passed to the Personal Tutor;

7. College Management's Responsibilities

The Vice Principals are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of this policy and that students have been inducted into it. In addition, the Vice Principals will be responsible for setting annual targets for attendance rates across all College programmes. In conjunction with management information from the register system, the Vice Principals are responsible for facilitating the production of regular timely and accurate attendance data and reports, to allow teaching staff to take prompt action for the benefit of students.

8. Standards by which the success of this policy can be evaluated

- a. Annual targets for attendance are met;
- b. Continually improving attendance and punctuality;
- c. High levels of attendance and punctuality when measured against relevant benchmarks;
- d. Swift action to support students with below acceptable benchmarks for attendance and punctuality;
- e. Improved student success;
- f. Staff compliance with the policy during quality audits;
- g. Positive feedback in self-assessment reports.

9. Responsibility for implementing this policy

- a. The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy across the College;
- b. The Vice Principals are responsible for overseeing the operation of this policy in the College;
- c. The Vice Principals are responsible for ensuring that academic teaching staff and Personal Tutors collaboratively address the requirements of this policy;
- d. The College staff, which includes Personal Tutors and subject specialists, together with appropriate support staff, are responsible for meeting student entitlement.

10. Review of this Policy

- a. The Vice Principals are responsible for the periodic review of this policy;
- b. The next review is due to take place in September 2011.

Appendix I

For advice on the appropriate ways in which to record attendance for students of Compulsory School Age, see:-

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=13903>

For the regulations affecting migrants who wish to study in the UK, see:-

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance1.pdf>

Appendix 2: Student Attendance Policy Procedure

Rationale

Attendance is very important for two main reasons: students have made a commitment to work towards achieving academic success by enrolling on their programme of studies. In order to achieve success in their studies it is important that they participate in, and engage fully with, all their scheduled activities such as lectures, workshops and seminars. The College therefore regards attendance as an essential part of students' studies. Further, the College is required by law to have robust systems in place in order to keep track of our students. Under this new points-based system, it is the duty of the College as a sponsor to ensure that our students are in compliance with all the requirements of their permission to study in the United Kingdom. In order to achieve this, the College monitors attendance very strictly so that we are able to ensure that our students are not in breach of their legal duties.

The legal framework

If a student is in the UK on a student visa, he/she must aim to attend all lessons and must submit all his/her work on time. To maintain attendance throughout the duration of their course, holders of a student visa are advised that David Game College ("the College") is obliged to comply with the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) Tier 4 rules. These rules are laid down by the UK government and require that all full time courses attended by students holding a study visa must comprise a minimum of 15 hours of day time supervised study per week. If a student's cumulative attendance (for the purposes of this policy, cumulative attendance is calculated over one academic term) falls short of 80% and/or in case of any student missing 10 expected contacts, the College is required by law to report that student to the UKBA. It is likely that action will then be taken to curtail the student's visa, which may result in expulsion from the UK.

Procedure for Recording Attendance

- a. The Attendance Officer monitors the attendance at each class.
- b. The Tutor of each lesson puts in appropriate codes against the name of each student on the register.
- c. Students arriving after the start of the lesson but within the first 10 minutes of the class are marked as 'Late'.
- d. Students arriving more than 10 minutes late may join the class at the discretion of the Tutor.
- e. The register is collected from each class and any authorised absences will be incorporated. The Attendance Officer then updates the Attendance Database by the end of the day. This will be checked once a week by the Registrar and audited by the Leadership Team.

Definition of an "expected contact"

UKBA requires that sponsors report students who miss 10 expected contacts, which amounts to about two weeks of a course. David Game College defines a missed expected contact as 50% or more of one day's scheduled lessons, i.e. if a student misses one lesson of three within a day, this will be marked as an absence in the register for the lesson concerned but the student will not be deemed to have a missed expected contact. However, if there is only one lesson in the day, which is missed, then that absence will count as a missed expected contact. By definition, a missed expected contact will always be an unauthorised absence.

Procedure for Authorised Absence

If a student is unable to attend a class, he/she must do the following:

- a. In case of planned leave, fill in a Leave of Absence Application Form and submit it well in time. Leave forms are available at the College reception and the student hand book.
- b. In case of unplanned absence, inform the Attendance Officer as soon as possible (preferably on first the day of absence), to explain the reasons. On return to College following any period of unplanned absence, complete a Leave of Absence Form explaining the reasons for absence (e.g. due to illness, for a doctor's or dentist's appointment etc.).
- c. The Principal, or his representative, will be responsible for the sanctioning of any leave. Records of authorised absence will be retained on the student's file.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy

The Attendance Officer is responsible for ensuring continuous and effective implementation of this attendance policy. The College Leadership team monitors the operation of this policy on a weekly basis by receiving regular reports on student attendance from the Attendance Officer. Attendance is discussed in the weekly meeting of the Leadership group – all instances of authorised and unauthorised absence are reviewed. The policy itself is regularly reviewed in order to make sure that it is in full compliance at all times with the relevant laws and regulations of the UKBA. The following is the procedure for monitoring the attendance policy:

- a. Once all attendance has been entered into the system on the same day, the Attendance Officer generates a Daily Attendance Record.
- b. The Attendance Officer reviews the daily report and necessary action is taken. In the case of unauthorised absence, Email and SMS alerts are sent to students who have missed 2 expected contacts. A first warning letter follows. This letter requires the students to explain the reasons for this fall in their attendance, and to ensure that the absence is not repeated.
- c. A second warning letter is issued to students who have missed a total of 5 expected contacts.
- d. A third warning letter is sent to a student who has missed 8 expected contacts.
- e. Once a student has missed 10 expected contacts, the UKBA is informed.
- f. The College Leadership team reviews attendance each week and discusses any student who has received a warning letter or who has been reported to UKBA.
- g. UKBA will be informed using the appropriate and prescribed systems about the following occurrences, whichever occurs first:
 - i. A student has missed 10 expected contacts – these include but are not limited to attending a lecture, a meeting with a tutor or other member of staff, submitting an assessed or non-assessed coursework, attending a test/examination etc. If a student who has already been reported to the UKBA reports back to the College with a valid reason for his absence and the College is satisfied with the response from the student to warnings and his/her efforts to improve the attendance, UKBA will be informed.
 - ii. If a student has had a significance change of circumstance.
- h. Students who have been issued a final warning and reported to the UKBA, and who have failed to provide a satisfactory explanation to the College for their missed expected contacts, may have their sponsorship withdrawn.

- i. A Register of those students reported to the UKBA is maintained by the Registrar. A log of all the communications with students is maintained for future references and follow-up by The Principal or his representative.
- j. An interview conducted with a student about attendance/absence or any warning sent to the student must be recorded in the student file. The reasons and evidence for any authorized absences being granted will also be recorded and kept in the student's file.
- k. The College will take all possible actions in its power to track the whereabouts of any students who have continuously failed to attend or have had their places withdrawn. The College will provide all relevant information that will help the UKBA to identify and locate such students.

Appendix 3: Examples of Authorised and Unauthorised absence

Authorised absence may include absences for reasons such as the following:

- a. Illness
- b. Medical and dental treatment
- c. Wedding or bereavement of family members
- d. Short-term exceptional domestic circumstances
- e. Certain days of religious observance
- f. Court appearances
- g. Attendance at a Children's Hearing or Care Review
- h. Excursions or sporting fixtures arranged by or in conjunction with the College

In any such cases, the College will require *bona fide* evidence of such reasons, such as a doctor's certificate or other evidence in writing. In the case of family or religious events, corroboration should be provided by the student's parent or guardian.

Unauthorised absence may include absences for reasons such as the following:

- a. Holidays taken in term-time without prior approval by the College
- b. Unsubstantiated illness, medical or dental treatment
- c. Any unexplained absence