LEARNER ATTENDANCE POLICY

For completion by The Executive

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1. Purpose

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to learner achievement, progression, wellbeing, safety and preparation for employment. This policy establishes a consistent whole-College approach to:

- setting clear expectations for attendance and punctuality.
- recording and monitoring attendance accurately.
- identifying emerging concerns promptly.
- understanding and addressing barriers to attendance.
- supporting learners to re-engage and make progress; and
- taking proportionate action where attendance does not improve.

The policy supports, and should be read alongside, Student Standards and the Own Your Future framework.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

All learners and apprentices including those in HE

3. Policy Statement

This policy applies to learners and apprentices across all College provision, including further education study programmes, adult learning, apprenticeships, higher education and high-needs provision. It covers all scheduled elements of a programme, including vocational and academic sessions, English and mathematics, tutorials and THRIVE, work experience and placements, online learning, examinations, educational visits and agreed workplace activity.

Heart of Worcestershire College expects learners to attend **100% of their timetabled programme** and to arrive on time, ready to learn. The 100% expectation is an aspiration and standard, not an assumption that every absence represents misconduct. However, the College does not authorise any absence. Where attendance is affected by illness, disability, mental health, caring responsibilities, safeguarding concerns or other significant circumstances, the College will seek to understand the barrier and provide appropriate support.

Recent FE policies similarly apply the attendance expectation to the full learner programme and link attendance with achievement, progression and employability. They also distinguish between absence caused by disengagement and absence which may indicate that a learner needs pastoral, welfare or learning support.

Core principles

The College's approach is based on the following principles:

- **High expectations:** Attendance and punctuality are everybody's responsibility and will be promoted consistently from recruitment and induction onwards.
- **Belonging and engagement:** Learners are more likely to attend when they feel safe, included, known and valued.

- **Early identification:** Emerging absence patterns will be identified and followed up before they become entrenched.
- **Support before sanction:** Staff will seek to understand the reasons for absence and remove barriers wherever reasonably possible.
- **Consistency and fairness:** Attendance procedures will be applied consistently while recognising individual circumstances and the need for reasonable adjustments.
- **Shared responsibility:** Learners, parents and carers where appropriate, employers and College staff all have a role in improving attendance.
- **Safeguarding:** Unexplained or concerning absence will be considered in the context of the learner's safety and wellbeing.
- **Evidence-led action:** Attendance data, learner voice and professional knowledge of the learner will be brought together to inform decisions.

These principles reflect the current HoW approach of high expectations, early identification, consistent register practice and escalation through support and, where necessary, the Learner Equity and Opportunity Panel.

Apprentices are expected to attend **100%** of all scheduled learning activities, including off-the-job training sessions, workshops, reviews, assessments and any other planned learning required as part of their apprenticeship programme. High levels of attendance are essential to ensure timely progress, achievement of apprenticeship standards and successful completion of the programme.

Higher Education students engage actively with their course throughout the academic year. Attendance includes participation in scheduled learning activities, assessment activities, tutorial support, independent study tasks, and online learning as appropriate to the mode of study. Students are expected to maintain a minimum attendance target of 90 per cent across scheduled learning activities. The policy is designed to promote student achievement, progression and wellbeing, support academic success and retention, ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, provide an auditable record of student engagement and meet Student Loans Company attendance requirements.

4. Definitions

FE Further education
ELT Executive Leadership Team
HoW Heart of Worcestershire College
HE Higher education
LEOP Learner Equity and Opportunity Panel

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the College has an effective Learner Attendance Policy that complies with relevant legislation, regulatory requirements and funding rules. It will receive assurance regarding attendance performance, significant attendance gaps between learner groups, and the effectiveness of actions taken to improve attendance, retention, achievement and progression. The Governing Body will ensure that this policy is reviewed regularly and that appropriate arrangements are in place to support learner engagement, wellbeing, safeguarding and success.

5.2 Principal and Senior Leaders

The Principal and Senior Leaders are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation, monitoring and review of this policy across the College. They will promote a culture of high attendance and participation, ensure appropriate systems and resources are in place to support attendance improvement, and monitor attendance, retention, achievement and progression outcomes. Senior Leaders will ensure attendance arrangements comply with safeguarding, funding, data protection and equality requirements, and will provide assurance to the Governing Body on the effectiveness of the College's attendance strategy and interventions.

5.3 Staff

All staff are responsible for promoting positive attendance and punctuality and for ensuring that attendance expectations are communicated clearly to learners. Staff must record attendance accurately and promptly, follow College procedures for responding to absence and lateness, and take timely action where attendance concerns are identified. Teaching staff, Personal Tutors and Curriculum Teams will work collaboratively with learners, parents/carers (where appropriate), employers and specialist support services to understand and address barriers to attendance. Staff must ensure that attendance concerns are considered within the context of safeguarding, wellbeing, SEND and other individual circumstances, and that actions and interventions are appropriately recorded and monitored.

5.4 Students

Learners are expected to:

- attend every scheduled element of their programme and arrive on time.
- remain in sessions for the planned duration.
- follow the College’s absence-reporting arrangements as early as possible.
- provide relevant information or evidence when reasonably requested.
- discuss attendance concerns openly with their tutor or other appropriate member of staff.
- participate in reviews and agreed support or attendance plans.
- catch up on missed learning where appropriate and achievable; and
- arrange routine appointments outside scheduled learning wherever possible.
- not book holidays in term time.

Persistent lateness will be addressed in the same way as poor attendance because it disrupts learning and affects the learner’s progress and development of workplace behaviours.

6. Procedures

Further Education:

Recording and responding to absence

Registers are the College's formal attendance record and are important for safeguarding, funding, audit and learner monitoring. Teaching and delivery staff must follow the college's register expectations:

During the Lesson

- *Take the register within the first 5 minutes.*
    - *If you're in a practical space without IT access, use paper or a teacher planner.*
    - *You can also complete it on a PC/laptop and leave it open.*
- *Mark students as 'late' if they arrive after 5 minutes but before the end of the lesson.*
    - *This encourages attendance and participation, even if late.*
- *Submit the register during the lesson if:*
    - *All students are present, or*
    - *Attendance matches expectations.*
- *If students are absent but might arrive late, wait and submit at the end of the lesson.*

Submission Deadlines

- *If you can't submit during the lesson:*
    - *Morning registers must be submitted by 13:00.*
    - *Afternoon registers must be submitted by 17:00.*
- *Do not finish lunch, leave for home, or end your workday without submitting your registers.*

Students can report an absence via StudentAbsenceLine@howcollege.ac.uk or through the "Report a Student Absence" link on the college website.
The Customer Services team record the absence through the absence reporting tool in Staff Advantage.
Once reported, registers are automatically populated with the appropriate mark, and staff are instructed not to change this mark.

- P = Student reported absence.
- R = Parent/carer reported absence.

Reporting can be completed by any curriculum or support staff through Staff Advantage when information is received from a student or parent/carer.

Automated communications

- Automated emails are sent twice daily, at approximately **12:00pm and 4:30pm**, to learners who have been absent from morning or afternoon sessions.
- For learners under 18 where appropriate consent exists, parents/carers also receive notification if the student has reported their own absence.

Where a learner is absent:

1. **Same-day response:** Personal Tutors receive daily absence reports and are expected to follow up, prioritising vulnerable learners. The learner should be contacted and the outcome recorded on ProMonitor or the relevant College system.

Parents or carers will be informed where appropriate and in accordance with the learner's age, circumstances and information-sharing arrangements.

2. **Emerging pattern:** The Personal Tutor, course team or apprenticeship staff will discuss the concern with the learner, explore barriers and agree actions or attendance targets.
3. **Continuing concern:** The Curriculum Manager will review the case and coordinate appropriate curriculum, pastoral or specialist intervention.
4. **Significant or persistent concern:** The learner may be referred to the Learner Equity and Opportunity Panel, safeguarding, Fitness to Study or the Student Standards process, depending upon the circumstances.

Support to improve attendance

Support will be personalised and may include:

- one-to-one review and mentoring through Personal Tutors or other designated staff.
- an individual attendance or re-engagement plan with clear, achievable targets.
- contact and joint planning with parents or carers where appropriate.
- support from Wellbeing, Safeguarding, SEND, High Needs, Academic Skills or financial support services.
- reasonable adjustments related to disability, health or mental health.
- help with transport, financial hardship or other practical barriers where support is available.
- curriculum-level action to improve engagement, sequencing, timetabling or the learner experience.
- support to catch up missed learning.
- careers guidance or course review where the programme is no longer meeting the learner's needs.
- referral to external services or partners, with appropriate consent; and
- recognition and celebration of good or improving attendance.

Current HoW activity includes Personal Tutor one-to-ones, mentoring plans, parent engagement, Own Your Future targets, department-led interventions, rewards and recognition through the 100% Club, and coordinated support for mental health, SEND, high-needs and other vulnerable learners.

Attendance concerns linked to a learner's disability, health, mental health, safeguarding circumstances or other vulnerability will not automatically be treated as misconduct. Advice from appropriate specialist staff will inform any decision and reasonable adjustments will be considered.

Monitoring and Intervention

Attendance will be monitored at learner, session, course, department, provision and College level. Monitoring will include:

- live and weekly attendance dashboards.
- attendance trends and direction of travel.
- persistent-absence and cohort movement reports.
- session-level and curriculum attendance hotspots.
- English, mathematics and THRIVE attendance compared with core programme attendance.

- patterns by learner group, including disadvantaged, vulnerable, SEND and high needs learners.
- apprenticeship, workplace, online and subcontracted provision.
- Own Your Future checkpoints and progression indicators.
- register completion and accuracy; and
- relationships between attendance, retention, achievement and progression.

Attendance intervention will not rely solely upon percentage attendance. The College will also consider the number of learning days or hours lost, so that support can begin before a learner reaches a level of persistent absence that places achievement or continuation at significant risk.

Attendance will therefore be reviewed regularly using both overall attendance and cumulative learning time lost. Where the agreed trigger of **7** days is reached, the learner will receive an attendance review to identify the pattern and reasons for absence, understand any barriers to attendance and agree appropriate actions and support.

The review will consider whether absence is concentrated within particular subjects or elements of the study programme and whether safeguarding, SEND, health, mental health, financial, caring, transport or other circumstances are affecting attendance.

The resulting attendance improvement contract which involves parents/carers (where possible) will identify the actions required from the learner and College, the support being provided, the review date and the consequences should attendance fail to improve.

A learner whose attendance falls below 60% will be identified as persistently absent and at high risk, requiring active monitoring, support and review. This is an intervention threshold, not an automatic withdrawal threshold. Where a under 18 learners attendance is causing a concern that they are likely to be withdrawn from their programme, every effort will be made to contact their parents / guardians in order to inform them of this concern and consider possible interventions.

The Quality-led session-level process identifies timetabled sessions below 70% attendance so that Curriculum Managers can investigate barriers and report improvement actions through the Leaders of Learning forum. The Inclusion Dashboard supports oversight of attendance and outcomes for vulnerable cohorts.

Targeted learner voice will be used to understand reasons for non-attendance, including where attendance in a particular element of the programme differs significantly from the learner's main aim.

LEOP, Student Standards and withdrawal

The Learner Equity and Opportunity Panel provides an additional fairness and equity check for learners whose attendance places achievement, progression or continuation at significant risk. Before referral, curriculum teams should evidence contact attempts, discussion with the learner, parent or carer involvement where appropriate, an attendance or support plan, specialist referrals and review of progress.

LEOP may recommend:

- an enhanced support plan.

- a further period of intensive monitoring.
- additional curriculum or specialist intervention.
- action through Student Standards where non-attendance is wilful and support has not led to improvement; or
- withdrawal where the learner is no longer participating and appropriate support and review have been exhausted.

Learners who have not participated in learning for four consecutive weeks will normally be considered for withdrawal in line with DfE funding requirements. Where there is auditable evidence that the learner intends to return, the College may continue to monitor and support the learner without immediate withdrawal. Decisions will be informed by safeguarding, wellbeing, equality, SEND, LEOP and other relevant considerations and will be appropriately documented.

Apprentices:
Where an apprentice is unable to attend a planned learning activity, they must notify both the College and their employer as soon as possible and follow the agreed absence reporting process.

Any non-attendance, unauthorised absence, or persistent lateness will be recorded and monitored by the College. Where non-attendance is recorded, the apprentice's employer will be informed and may be asked to support actions to improve attendance and engagement.

Attendance will be reviewed regularly as part of the apprentice's progress monitoring. Where attendance falls below expected levels or gives cause for concern, this will be discussed during Progress Review meetings involving the apprentice, employer and College representative. An attendance improvement plan may be agreed, setting out clear actions, timescales and expectations for improvement.

Persistent poor attendance may affect an apprentice's progress, achievement and ability to successfully complete their apprenticeship programme and may result in further action being taken in line with College and employer procedures

Higher Education:

Students unable to attend must notify the College as soon as possible
Stage 1 - Informal Support begins when attendance falls below 90%.
Stage 2 - Formal Attendance Review begins when attendance falls below 80%
Stage 3 - Attendance and Engagement Review begins when attendance falls below 70%.

Where a student no longer demonstrates attendance or academic engagement and all reasonable attempts to re-establish participation have been exhausted, the College may determine that the student has withdrawn from their program of study. Attendance data will be reviewed regularly by Course Teams and HE Coordinators, monthly Curriculum Manager (HE) will monitor attendance across all courses and raise concerns directly with Department leads and HE Coordinators to agree on any formal actions and consequences.

7. Monitoring and Review

Responsibilities, equality and review
All staff are responsible for promoting attendance. Teaching staff must complete accurate registers and respond to absence; Personal Tutors and course teams coordinate early

intervention; Curriculum Managers monitor patterns and ensure consistent action; specialist teams address identified barriers; MIS and Quality teams provide reliable reporting; and senior leaders and governors scrutinise attendance, gaps and the impact of improvement work. Learners will be made aware of the potential consequences of continuing non-attendance as part of the attendance improvement process.

The College will implement this policy in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and its Public Sector Equality Duty. Attendance information will be considered by learner group to identify disparities, evaluate the impact of interventions and ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by disability or other protected characteristics.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually through attendance, retention, achievement and progression data; learner and parent voice; curriculum quality processes; LEOP outcomes; equality analysis; and oversight by ELT and the Corporation.

For HE the HE Academic Board will monitor attendance rates at overall and course levels as a fixed item on the agenda for each termly meeting. Attendance rates will be commented on by HE Coordinators in the College Annual Self-Evaluation Document

8. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy complies with:

- The Equality Act 2010.
- Further and Higher Education Act 1992
- Education and Skills Act 2008
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0-25 years
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Guidance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Department for Education Funding Rules and Funding Guidance
- Apprenticeship Funding Rules (where applicable to apprentices)
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)

9. Training and Awareness

Staff with responsibility for recording, monitoring or responding to attendance will receive appropriate information, guidance and training to ensure consistent implementation of this policy. This will include attendance recording procedures, register accuracy, early intervention processes, safeguarding responsibilities, data protection requirements, and consideration of equality, SEND and wellbeing-related factors that may affect attendance. Attendance expectations and responsibilities will be communicated to learners, and to parents, carers and employers where appropriate, through induction, learner documentation and ongoing engagement activities.

10. Environmental Impact/Sustainability Considerations (if applicable)

This policy supports the College's commitment to environmental sustainability and the Planet Strategic Theme. Attendance monitoring, communication and reporting will be undertaken through digital systems wherever practicable to minimise paper use and administrative waste. The promotion of learner engagement, online learning (where appropriate) and efficient use of college resources contributes to the College's wider sustainability objectives.

11. Legal Requirements/Issues outside of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The College has a legal and regulatory responsibility to maintain accurate attendance records, safeguard learners, and monitor participation in learning. Attendance concerns may be considered in the context of safeguarding, health and wellbeing, and the College's duty of care to learners. Attendance information will be recorded, stored and shared in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Attendance monitoring and withdrawal decisions will be undertaken in line with relevant DfE funding rules, apprenticeship funding requirements and other regulatory obligations.

12. Equality Impact Assessment Statement

The Equality Act 2010 does not require public authorities to carry out EIAs by law. The College does however, carefully consider the impact, when creating or amending its policies, on all concerned parties regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and records this at ELT meetings in order to demonstrate compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

13. Related Policies and Documents

Student Standards; Own Your Future Framework; Learner Equity and Opportunity Panel (LEOP) Procedure; Safeguarding Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; SEND Policy; Fitness to Study Procedure; Work Experience Procedures; HE Guidance; Apprenticeship Guidance; Register and MIS Guidance.

14. Appendices

None. Operational procedures, guidance and associated forms are contained within the Student Standards, Learner Equity and Opportunity Panel (LEOP) Procedure, Register and MIS Guidance, SEND Policy and related College procedures.