



Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

Academic Engagement Policy

Introduction

1. Students are expected to attend all scheduled teaching sessions as directed by their Head of Programme or the Head of Research Programmes. Full academic engagement is required in order to successfully complete assessments and the full programme of study. The College monitors the engagement of all enrolled students. A student is academically engaging if they are actively and consistently following their programme of study.
2. In addition, the Royal College of Art ("RCA") is required, as a sponsor of international student visas for study in the UK ("UK student visas") to comply with UK Visas and Immigration ("UKVI") legislation relating to these visas. Failure to comply with this legislation would mean the removal, by UKVI, of the College's right to sponsor international students at the College.
3. The College has a statutory obligation to monitor the attendance and engagement of its international students. Any student who requires a UK student visa to study at the College, and who fails to meet UKVI requirements on attendance must be reported to UKVI who will curtail the student's visa and require that student to return to their home country. Once a report has been made to the Home Office, the student will have 60 days to leave the UK.
4. This policy articulates how the College will comply with this obligation, while ensuring that students are treated fairly and given the information to enable them to comply with their own visa obligations.
5. The College will take all reasonable steps to update this policy to ensure compliance with UKVI regulations at all times. However, in the event of any conflict between this Policy and UKVI regulations, the latter shall take precedence, and the College reserves the right to take any lawful action to ensure continuing compliance with UKVI regulation.
6. For the purposes of this Policy, if the College buildings are closed due to Government advice and / or health and safety reasons, attendance at the College

shall be interpreted to cover attendance at mandatory sessions delivered by online methods. Any learning sessions cancelled by the College (for example as a result of industrial action) will not be treated as unauthorised absence.

Objectives

7. The College's objectives in respect of this Policy are to:
- Ensure that each student and staff member has clear guidance on their obligations in respect of attendance, as well as student visas where relevant, and can reasonably meet these obligations;
 - Give clear guidance on the consequences of non-compliance with the Policy;
 - Ensure continuing compliance with UKVI regulations in respect of UK student visas;
 - Ensure that the workload entailed by visa compliance and attendance and engagement monitoring is kept to the minimum necessary for all students and staff.

College Regulations

8. The College regulations state:
24. Students are expected to attend all scheduled teaching sessions as directed by their Head of Programme or the Head of Research Programmes. Failure to do so may lead to the termination of a student's registration.
25. A student who is absent through illness must notify their head of programme. If a student is away for more than three days, a medical certificate will be required. Failure to provide a medical certificate within 21 days of the student's return to College may lead to the termination of a student's registration.
26. Applications for absence on compassionate grounds, for periods of up to 21 days, must in all cases be made to the head of programme for approval. Unauthorised absence may lead to the termination of a student's registration.

27. Students holding a student visa are required to follow any policy on regular attendance set by the UK Government e. Programme staff are required to report any unauthorised non-attendance to the Registry who in turn are legally required to report this to the UK Government e. Non-attendance reported to the UK Government shall lead to the student visa being curtailed and the right to stay in the UK revoked, along with the termination of the student's registration.
28. Applications for periods of study leave of up to 31 days must in all cases be made to the Head of Programme, or Head of Research Programmes for research degrees, for approval. During a period of study leave a student's enrolment continues and tuition fees remain payable.
29. Regulations for periods of absence of longer than specified in regulations 24 - 28 shall be considered in accordance with Regulations 11 - 12 (Leave of Absence)
9. Under normal UKVI requirements, the College is required to record and report where students are studying if this is at a different location than the College. Students are expected to be in regular contact with their programme during any period of study leave.

Student Visa Holders and College Obligations

10. Each higher education institution ("sponsor") must ensure that each UK student visa holder is academically engaging throughout the period for which the student is being sponsored. This includes any period of leave for which the student has a visa in place (see paragraphs 17 -20). The sponsor must monitor and review a student's engagement as set out by UKVI. For UK Student visa purposes, academic engagement is assessed using the student's record of attending 'key events'. These include lectures, seminars and other learning & teaching sessions, registration and assessment events and other core activities related to the programme.

Attendance and Non-Attendance

11. All students should attend all scheduled teaching sessions and contact times on their programmes at the College. Heads of Programme or the Head of Research Programmes shall report all students with unsatisfactory attendance to the Registry. For students holding a UK student visa the Registry office in turn has reporting duties to UKVI.

12. UKVI legislation requires sponsors to review the reason for a student's absence where the student fails to comply with the institutional attendance and engagement policy. Any instance where the student has been warned of their obligations to attend by a sponsor institution must be recorded.
13. For the purposes of this Policy, any student who has not reached 70% attendance of key events without approval shall be regarded as having unsatisfactory engagement with their programme.
14. A student whose attendance is unsatisfactory shall be sent, in the first instance, a first warning, reminding them of their attendance obligations. If they acknowledge this, and following this their attendance improves to an acceptable level, no further action is taken. A record of this warning shall be kept on the student's record for the duration of their study. If attendance remains inadequate then they shall be invited to a meeting with the Registrar, or the Registrar's nominee, and shall be given a final, verbal warning, which shall be recorded on the student record. Failure to attend this meeting without an acceptable reason shall normally lead to termination of studies; students holding a UK student visa shall be reported to UKVI, shall have their visa curtailed and shall be required to return to their home country. If, following this meeting, attendance remains inadequate without acceptable reasons then the College's Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline shall terminate the student's registration; UK student visa holders shall have this termination reported to UKVI, in order for them to curtail the student's visa and require them to return to their home country.
15. The College will always seek to engage students in a dialogue before taking enforcement steps under this Policy; however for UK student visa holders the College is bound by UKVI rules and must report to UKVI when attendance falls below the minimum requirement.
16. Where the student fails to re-engage with their studies within 60 days of the first contact regarding their attendance (30 days for students undertaking their programme by distance learning), the College must withdraw sponsorship except in exceptional circumstances.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

17. Where a student is studying at the College under a UK student visa and they are absent from teaching (i.e. lectures, seminars, tutorials and other teaching and learning events) due to short-term illness or other circumstances the student

must obtain authorisation for this absence from their Head of Programme for Doctoral Students, the Head of Research Programmes. The Head of Programme shall report this authorisation to the Registry.

18. All absences, both authorised and non-authorised, must be reported to the Registry office by the relevant Head of Programme.
19. If a student requires a short period of leave they should request this. Authorised leave is agreed leave and this will not be reported to the UK government. However under normal UK student visa regulations, an absence cannot exceed 60 days and the student must still be able to complete the programme within their existing period of leave on their visa.
20. Outside of term-time, there is no requirement for students to be present on campus or to apply for authorised absence (the published term-times on the RCA's website applies).

Leave of Absence

21. The College has a leave of absence policy in place. Leave of absence can be requested on a number of grounds. Under normal circumstances, a UK student visa holder shall have their leave reported to UKVI and their visa shall be curtailed. A new CAS will be issued prior to return for the student to apply for a new visa; the student shall be liable for the cost of the new visa.
22. Forms for absence requests can be found on the intranet:
<https://intranet.rca.ac.uk/support/registry/registry-forms/>

Senior Management Team
September 2020

Updated Trevor Pearce
July 2022