



**SOAS**  
University of London

**Student Continuation Policy**

## **Student Continuation Policy**

### **Primary Teams**

- Academic Teams
- Departmental Teams
- Registry Teams

### **Secondary Teams**

- BLE Support
- IT

### **Systems/Applications**

- Campus
- Unit-E
- BLE

### **Related Documents**

- Stage 1 intervention guidance note
- Stage 2 intervention guidance note
- Stage 3 intervention guidance note
- SOAS Attendance Policy

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# **Student Continuation Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Student Continuation Policy and associated application and processes are part of SOAS's commitment to providing a supportive and engaging learning environment which enables students who have committed to a programme of study to achieve their full potential.
- 1.2 This policy presents the principles and rationale behind the School's approach to monitoring and addressing student engagement patterns. It further outlines the methods and processes whereby the School may seek to understand and inquire where a student's engagement pattern has fallen to a level of concern.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the SOAS's Attendance Policy which specifically outlines the expectations of student attendance across the School.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all accredited students on a SOAS programme of study, covering undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, full time and part time delivery. Distance learning and online students are out of scope for the purposes of this policy.

## **3. Principles**

- 3.1 SOAS has a commitment to improve student engagement, retention and attainment through enhancing the relationships and touch points between students and staff
- 3.2 SOAS recognises the investment that students make when they enrol on a programme of study and recognises that as a responsible institution it has a duty to monitor engagement patterns with a view to improvement
- 3.3 SOAS recognises that educational outcomes are intrinsically linked to engagement with a programme of study, and in order to support the learning journey and improve student attainment, that mechanisms must exist that review and act on engagement patterns before they significantly impact the overall student experience
- 3.4 SOAS recognises, as a collaborative institution, that engagement with programmes and fellow students enhances both the individual and collective learning experience.
- 3.5 Students are expected to fully engage with the programme, including meeting the programme specific thresholds for attendance that pertain to their discipline.

- 3.6 SOAS recognises that on occasion, unforeseen and unpreventable circumstances may impact a student's ability to engage fully with their programme of study, and that it has a responsibility to respond in an understanding manner to such circumstances and to work to support students to fully re-engage with the programme.
- 3.7 SOAS will develop a continual review of engagement patterns and create interventions where necessary to support a student in times of deteriorating engagement. These interventions, whilst seeking to understand the underlying trends and look for improvement, will be supportive in nature and seek to bring students back to expected thresholds of engagement.

#### **4. Definitions**

##### **4.1 Engagement**

Student engagement covers a range of activities and interactions that point to meaningful student participation in the learning experience. Student engagement definitions can vary widely, with the focus of this policy being on measureable indicators of student interaction with their programme of study, staff and the School. Examples of indicative measures of engagement include attendance patterns, access of online learning materials, submission of work in a timely manner. This is not an exhaustive list.

##### **4.2 Monitoring**

Monitoring refers to the mechanism(s) by which the School reviews engagement patterns and administers staged interventions based on available data.

##### **4.3 Attendance**

Attendance; which is one factor that informs overall engagement, includes presence at expected, timetabled sessions related to specific programmes and modules. These may take the form of lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical classes or any taught session.

##### **4.4 Available Data**

Data elements that may inform actions on engagement include: attendance data, data pertaining to access of online resources, records of completion of assigned work and meeting prescribed deadlines. This list is not exhaustive, but provides context as to the types of data under review.

#### **5. Disengagement**

- 5.1 Each department currently identifies and communicates with students the expected levels of engagement for the programme of study

- 5.2 Each department individually monitors the data available on engagement patterns and reviews in line with the pedagogic expectations of each programme
- 5.3 Where it is established that an individual's pattern of engagement falls below the expected thresholds, departments will identify and seek to create a dialogue to address the deterioration.
- 5.4 Deterioration of engagement measures may include a drop in classroom attendance, a failure to regularly submit work, or failing to progress with peers at appropriate progression points.

## **6. SOAS Approach**

- 6.1 SOAS wishes to encourage and improve student engagement and progression across all programmes, and the below process is developed in the spirit of collaborative working with students to identify early, and address, factors that may be impacting an individual's ability to fully engage with the programme of study.
- 6.2 SOAS recognises that a fall in engagement levels may be the result of factors both internal and/or external to the School, and wishes to provide students with appropriate support options during these times.
- 6.3 The process defined below is designed to ensure meaningful communication is maintained with students, and that services that may assist with re-engagement are made available at the earliest opportunity.

## **7. Monitoring and recording Process**

### **7.1 Stage 1 action**

A student whose engagement levels deteriorate will be identified by the relevant Departmental Team who will review available data as detailed above.

- 7.2 Departments determine the expectations of engagement, which will incorporate some or all of the elements prescribed above. Contact will be made via SOAS email, supported by a phone call in order to establish whether additional support is required to help with re-engagement with the programme.

- 7.3 *The communication will seek a response or evidence of improvement in engagement from the students within 10 days of issue before additional measures are taken to establish the cause.*

### **7.4 Stage 2 action**

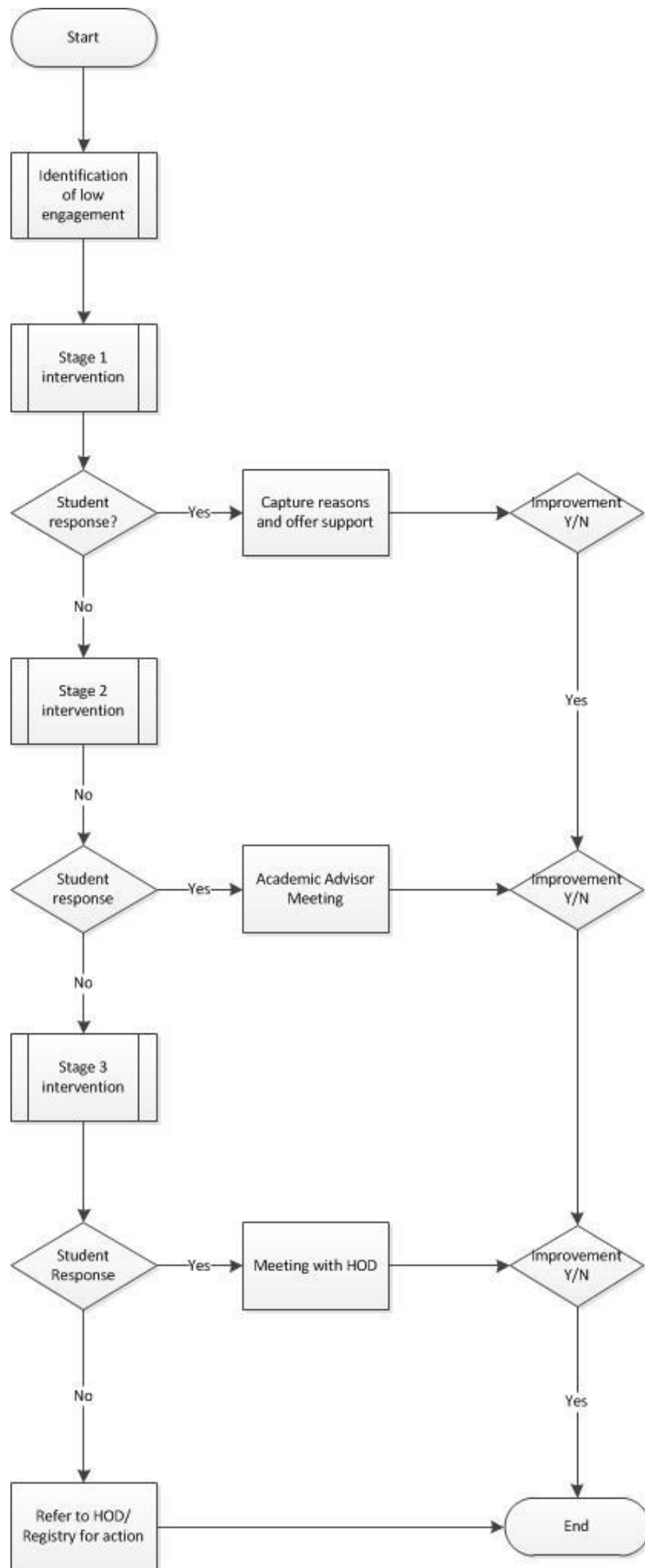
If attempts at stage 1 of the process do not facilitate open communication with the student, and engagement levels continue to be of concern, the Departmental Team will communicate with the student via SOAS email, term-time address and telephone number records on our systems.

- 7.5 The student will be requested to make contact with the School, and to have a meeting with their assigned Academic Advisor to understand in more detail why engagement has reduced, and to identify additional support mechanisms that may be put in place to address this area and improve.
- 7.6 Academic Advisors are best placed to discuss the range of academic support available and to assist a student to get back on track and ensure progression and attainment on the programme.
- 7.7 *The communication will seek a response or evidence of improvement in engagement from the students within 10 days of issue before additional measures are taken to establish the cause.*

### **7.8 Stage 3 action**

A student who fails to respond to the measures taken in stage 1 and 2 of this process, and continues to have a reduced pattern of engagement that falls below the expectation of the programme of study will be contacted by their Departmental teams to arrange a meeting the relevant Head of Department.

- 7.9 This meeting will seek to establish the root causes of the deterioration of engagement, as well as trying to understand why a student has not responded to previous School action to provide support. The meeting will be requested via email, telephone call and letter to ensure all routes of contact have been attempted.
- 7.10 If attempts to address the deterioration in engagement are not successful at this point, the matter will be referred to the relevant Head of Department and the Registry Team to determine a course of action.
- 7.11 *The communication will seek a response or evidence of improvement in engagement from the students within 10 days of issue before additional measures are taken to establish the viability of continued enrolment on a programme of study.*



## **Appendix: Student Engagement Plan 2020/21**

### **Addendum to Student Continuation Policy in response to Covid-19 pandemic and the move to online teaching.**

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and teaching moving online in the 2020/21 academic year, data from online systems such as BLE/Moodle will be used as an indicator of student engagement with online teaching and academic activities. This not only fulfils our compliance requirements but also enables us to reach out to students who have not engaged with online teaching platforms at all and may be at risk of dropping out.

#### **Available data**

Student login and engagement data from the BLE platform, otherwise known as Moodle to students, will be utilised. A report will be run every two weeks to capture the engagement levels of students across all levels of study at SOAS.

#### **Monitoring and recording process**

##### **Stage 1 Action**

A student who has not engaged with BLE over a two-week period will be identified on the report, as outlined above. The Student Experience, Engagement and Retention Team (SEER) will contact all students who have not engaged with their studies during this period. Contact is made via SOAS email and attempts to establish whether additional support is needed to help with re-engagement with the programme.

*The communication will seek a response or evidence of improvement in engagement from the students within 5 working days of the issue before additional measures are taken to establish the cause.*

##### **Stage 2 Action**

If attempts at stage 1 of the process do not facilitate open communication with the student, and engagement levels continue to be of concern, the Departmental Team will request the student contact the School via email and meet with their assigned Academic Advisor. The meeting will seek to understand in more detail why there has been no engagement and to identify additional support mechanisms that may be put in place to address this area and improve. Students should contact their academic advisor within 5 working days.

##### **Stage 3 action**



A student who fails to respond to the measures taken in stage 1 and 2 of this process and continues to have no engagement will be contacted by their Departmental teams to arrange a meeting with the relevant Head of Department.

This meeting will seek to establish the root causes of non-engagement, as well as trying to understand why a student has not responded to previous School action to provide support. The meeting will be requested via email or telephone call.

If attempts to address the non-engagement are not successful at this point, the matter will be referred to the Registry Team to determine a course of action.

