SWC

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Student Attendance Policy

Policy Owner:	Student Engagement & Support Manager
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1. Introduction

1.1 South West College requires Further Education (FE) and Work Based Learning (WBL) full and part-time students to attend College regularly, recognizing that their commitment to attend regularly also indicates a commitment to make the most of all the learning opportunities available. Regular and punctual attendance are qualities that are highly valued by employers who want to know that their workforce is reliable, and therefore the College seeks to develop these qualities in all its students.

1.2 For the 26/27 academic year most of the delivery is expected to be via in person classes. Occasionally it may be necessary or advantageous for classes to be delivered online. The College will ensure that students attending classes remotely or working at home under guidance will be credited with a positive attendance. Non-attendance will be investigated and recorded appropriately.

1.3 It is the policy of South West College to encourage 100% attendance and punctuality.

2. Students' Responsibilities

2.1 Regular Attendance

2.1.1 It is important that you come to College on a regular basis and attend full classes, be that on or off campus.

2.1.2 If you get into the habit of irregular attendance, your work will suffer, mainly because there will be little continuity of learning. You will be missing key parts of the curriculum, and you will not get the practice you need to improve your skills and increase your knowledge. The same applies to punctuality, if you are continually late, you will be missing important parts of the curriculum, therefore, putting yourself at a disadvantage and in the long term not achieving the grades/qualifications that you will need to progress to higher education and/or employment.

2.1.3 We understand that occasionally you and your family circle may have problems, but we expect you to make your attendance at College a priority. You should only take time off if you are ill, or if there is a major family emergency or bereavement.

2.1.4 Reasons for absence such as 'minding the house', going shopping during classes or looking after younger brothers or sisters are not acceptable - however, each case will be looked at on an individual basis.

2.1.5 South West College recognises that some students may experience connectivity issues. Where this is the case, the student must inform the tutor. The College will make the Learning Resource Centres available for such cases and students are required to book into one of the College's Learning Resource Centres.

2.2 Authorised Absence

2.2.1 Absences can only be authorised for specific reasons when evidence is produced. The following are examples of acceptable reasons for authorising absences: -

- Sick - genuine illness as verified by parent, guardian, doctor etc.
- Medical appointments, which could not be made out of College hours.
- Where a student/family member has underlying medical conditions and is shielding
- A visit to a university open day or a career-related interview.
- A work placement, which is an integral part of the student's course.
- Attendance at a funeral or wedding of close family members.
- A driving test.
- A College class representative meeting.
- Interview for employment.

2.3 Unauthorised Absences

2.3.1 The following are examples of unacceptable unauthorised absences: -

- Holidays, students are expected to take these outside of the College student calendar.
- Part or full-time work which is not part of the students' programme of study.
- Leisure activities (except for College events).
- Birthdays or family celebrations.
- Babysitting siblings.
- Driving lessons.

2.4 What You Should Do:

2.4.1 If you are ill/self-isolating - Full-Time Student

- If you need to stay at home because of illness, you or your parent/guardian should notify the College, on the first day of your absence by 9.30am and subsequent days. Until you or your parent/guardian (under 18) informs us why you are absent; you will be marked as an 'unauthorised' absence.

2.4.2 If you are ill/self-isolating – Work Based Learning Student

- If you are a student on a work based learning programme and you are ill, you or your parent/guardian must notify the Work Based Learning team in your campus in order for them to adjust your daily attendance register. If you do not ring - you will be marked as an 'unauthorised' absence.

2.4.3 If you have an appointment

- If you need to leave College during timetabled classes because you have an appointment, you must inform your course coordinator at the time of leaving. As far as possible, appointments should be made outside College hours, so that your programme of study is not interrupted.
- If you should fall ill during the College day, you should report to your course coordinator, who will decide whether you should go home, and will contact your parent/guardian if necessary. You should not go home during the College day without informing your course tutor and/or student support officer.

2.5 EMA

2.5.1 If you are in receipt of EMA, Further Education Award, Hardship Fund or Care to Learn it is your responsibility to verify your attendance at College. Failure to do so will lead to non-payment.

2.6 Absence during the College Day

2.6.1 If you were marked present at the start of a morning session, and then absent yourself during the day without permission, your Course Coordinator will follow up your absence. You will be required to provide an explanation and/or evidence to support this. Your Parent/guardian will also be notified if under 18 subject to consent as per enrolment form.

3. College Responsibilities

3.1 In line with guidance issued by the Oversight and Advisory Group responsible for guiding the safe return to campus, and in order to facilitate contact tracing if the need arises, lecturers are required to record learner attendance daily against each register activity/timetable slot. Lecturers will mark the attendance register at the start of each session of the College day.

3.2 When your lecturer calls the register at the start of each class, they will mark you either: -

CHECK

- P - Present
- A - Authorised Absence
- U - Unauthorised Absence
- S - Sick
- L - Late (those who appear **after** the first 15 minutes of a lesson).
- H - Holiday / Annual Leave
- B - Public Holiday (Trainees)
- X - Suspension
- D - Work Experience / Off the Job Training
- E - Exams / Study Leave
- V - Blended Learning

3.3 If you are absent, the lecturer will only authorise your absence later when they have been informed of the reason and if it is justified.

3.4 If you are absent and you or your parent/guardian has not informed the College on the first day, College staff will follow up your absence. A member of the Student Engagement and Support Team/Training Staff will ring your parent/guardian to find out the reason why you are absent, or a text may be sent to your parent/guardian (under 18 only) requesting this information.

3.5 If your attendance falls below 80% you or your parent/guardian will be contacted to discuss and, where appropriate, the student disciplinary procedures may be

invoked. Attendance will be monitored from the commencement of your course through the Student Support Team.

4. Summary Of The Attendance Policy

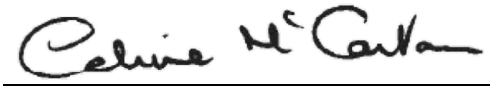
- You should attend College punctually and regularly.
- You need to let the College know why you are absent on the first day, by telephone or e-mail.
- Absence is authorised by the College. Only illness, family emergency or bereavement will normally be authorised.
- Medical and dental appointments should be made out of College hours. If unavoidable, please bring evidence to your course tutor in advance of appointment.
- Lecturers must inform Student Engagement team on first day of absence.
- Lecturers will mark a register for each class they take during the day. Lateness or absence will be recorded and followed up.
- Holidays should not be taken in term time.
- If your attendance at College falls below 80%, you and your parent/guardian (if under 18) will be contacted to discuss appropriate support and the Student Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked.

5. Monitoring Attendance

5.1 The College has a responsibility to monitor all student attendance. At a strategic level, management will review attendance on a monthly basis in the Data & Performance Meetings and Faculty Performance Review Panels. At a Department level, Deputy Heads of Department in conjunction with Curriculum Managers, coordinators and programme teams meet monthly to review all aspects of student progress including attendance. Where a student's attendance has been highlighted as a concern, they will use the 'Student RAG System' and Tutorial to address this with the student, with follow-up support and intervention provided by the Student Services Learning Support Mentors.

6. Policy Review

6.1 The College will ensure that adequate resources are made to promote this policy effectively and is committed to reviewing this policy annually.

Signed Principal and Chief Executive: 

Date: 04 November 2026

Signed Chair of the Governing Body: 

Date: 04 November 2026

Related Documentation

Title	Location	Owner
Policy for the Promotion of Positive Student Behaviour	Website and Gateway	Head of the Faculty for Automotive, Computing and Engineering
NI FE Colleges Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy	Website and Gateway	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Gateway	Head of Services

Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
2.2.1	Remove "Sickness related to COVID 19"	
2.4.1	Remove "If your illness is COVID related you should follow guidance issued by the Public Health Authority or the NHS."	
2.6.2	Remove paragraph regarding the marking of absences during Covid19.	

Communication

Who needs to know (for action)	All staff All students
Who needs to be aware	N/A

Communication Plan

Action	By Whom	By When
Communicate to all lecturing staff	Heads of Departments	On approval
Communicate to all staff	Student Engagement and Support Manager	On approval
Upload to Student and Staff Gateway	Executive Support Officer	On approval

Document Development

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Role
Sharon Pritchard	Student Engagement and Support Manager
Carol Viney	Head of Faculty Professional and Social Sciences
Carol Anne Deeny	Manager Centre for Excellence in FE
Elizabeth Shackels	Quality and Performance Manager
Joanne Lucas	Risk and Compliance Officer

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Name	Organisation	Date
N/A		

Approval Dates

Approved by	Date
Governing Body	04 November 2026

Document History

Issue no. under review	Date of review:	Persons involved in review	Changes made after review? Yes/No If Yes refer to change log	New Issue No.	If changes made was consultation required?	If changes made was Equality Screening required?
V1.0	November 2021	Sharon Pritchard	Yes (minor only)	V2.0	No	No
V2.0	November 2022	Sharon Pritchard	No	V3.0	No	No
V3.0	October 2024	Brian McIlduff	Yes, minor formatting	V4.0		
V4.0	September 2025	Brian McIlduff	No	V5.0		
V5.0	September 2026	Sharon Pritchard	Yes	V5.1	No	Yes