



BRUNEL UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT: TIER 4/SPONSORED STUDENT POLICY

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Maintained by:	Compliance & Sponsorship Manager
Owned by:	Registrar
Reporting to:	Senate
Last updated:	June 2022
Next review date:	June 2023
Location of Master Document:	Brunel University Engagement - Tier 4/Sponsored Student Policy Guidance (V4) - November 2020
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Version:	V5

Introductory Note

The Tier 4 (General) Student immigration category was replaced by the new Student Immigration Route in the UK in October 2020. International students now apply for and obtain a 'Student Visa' to study in the UK, now incorporating nationals of the EU, EEA and Switzerland. The regulations set by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regarding the requirement to monitor the engagement of international students with Student Visas remains the same as under the previous Tier 4 system. Note that students enrolled on Tier 4 (General) visas were not required to obtain a new Student visa. Therefore, the regulations and processes outlined in this policy apply to both Tier 4 (General) and Student visa holders.

Purpose

- 1.1. Academic engagement is vital for the successful completion of a student's studies. It is also a key element of Brunel's mission of being part of a community that is inspired to work, think and learn together to meet the challenges of the future. Additionally, in the case of students on Tier 4/Student visas, compulsory engagement is monitored as part of Brunel University's visa sponsorship obligations. The University is required to notify UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) of students who are deemed to not be engaging on their programme of study.
- 1.2. This policy provides guidance and information on the expectations of Brunel University London in relation to engagement for all international students with sponsored visas.

2. Expectation

- 2.1. Students are expected to attend or engage with **all** academic activities for the course on which they are enrolled (i.e. teaching, coursework, tutor/supervisor meetings, exams) and to devote appropriate time to their studies outside of these.
- 2.2. It is expected that students with sponsored visas will contact their academic department if they expect to miss any scheduled academic activity and account for any absences.
- 2.3. When students have a period of study with no taught classes or assessment, for example when writing a dissertation/thesis or undertaking a placement, they are required to remain in regular contact with their tutor/supervisor and attend any scheduled academic events arranged by Brunel University London.
- 2.4. Tier 4/Sponsored Students are required to notify Brunel University London of their intentions to leave the country during term-time (for more than 10 days), including during any writing up periods¹.
- 2.5. Students who plan to work on/complete their dissertation in the UK will be required to have regular meetings with their supervisor. Failure to do so may result in the University having to escalate the student's case for non-engagement under [Senate Regulation 15](#).
- 2.6. Students who plan to leave the country and return home to work on/complete their dissertation are required to inform their academic department of the date they will be leaving. Please note, the University may be required to withdraw visa Sponsorship and the visa may be curtailed (cancelled).
- 2.7. Postgraduate Research students who have submitted their thesis are expected to stay engaged with their supervisor by preparing for their viva. Once the student has attended their viva and has received the panel's recommendations, engagement will resume as outlined in paragraph 3.4.
- 2.8. Postgraduate Research students may be permitted to leave the UK and return to their

¹ Although this is excepted for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

home country to undertake data collection with the permission of their supervisor/academic department. The student must remain engaged with their programme while abroad as outlined in section 3 below.

- 2.9. Brunel University's preferred method of contacting students, including with regards to engagement, is by email. Email communication will be sent to a student's Brunel email account. Students are expected to check their Brunel email account regularly. Failure to check email will not be accepted as mitigation should disciplinary proceedings arise as a result of non-engagement.

3. Student Engagement Monitoring

- 3.1. All degree level students will be formally monitored against at least ten pre-defined 'engagement points' each year by their academic department.
- 3.2. Engagement points will be based on course requirements and scheduled academic events on each course of study, consisting mainly of coursework submissions, examinations, lecture/seminar/lab attendance and tutor/supervisor meetings, as determined by Course Leaders.
- 3.3. Postgraduate Research students will be formally monitored against the initial 4-week review, supervisory meetings (routinely every 6-8 weeks), and progression meetings. Supervisory meetings are not complete until the supervisor has signed them off in e-Vision. Supervisors are required to sign meetings off within 2 weeks of their occurrence.
- 3.4. If the student is recommended for corrections (6 or 12 months) as the outcome of their viva, they will resume regular supervision meetings every 6 weeks accordingly. Once the student is recommended for award, no further supervisory meetings are required.
- 3.5. The University is also obliged to ensure contact is maintained with students during all work placements. The University will only recognise work placements for Tier 4/Sponsored Students that are confirmed with the Professional Development Centre (PDC) by the placement deadline. Whilst the student is on placement, PDC will contact the student at 3 engagement points to confirm they are still at their placement. Employers will be made aware that any unauthorised absences of the student from placement, or more than 5 days off work due to illness without a medical certificate, will be considered non-engagement and will be reported to their Brunel University contact.
- 3.6. Engagement is also monitored throughout a student's enrolment by the use of academic facilities such as the Library and access to the computer network on campus, to help ensure continued student attendance on their course.

4. Engagement on courses delivered at the Language Centre and Brunel Pathway College (BPC) and Visiting Research

- 4.1. Attendance of student's enrolled at the Language Centre or BPC will be monitored internally by these departments, who have their own attendance policies and monitoring

processes that differ from programmes delivered in the University's Colleges. Attendance is typically monitored on a daily basis at most classes and measured by attendance percentages. Students are expected to adhere to these attendance policies at all times and failure to do so may lead to escalation for non-engagement as outlined in section 6.3 below.

- 4.2. It is expected that all visiting research students on Tier 4/Student visas will have appropriate formal supervisory arrangements in place at Brunel (even though they may continue to receive other supervisory support from their home institution). The engagement of visiting research students on Tier 4/Student visas will be formally monitored via their attendance at supervisory meetings routinely every 6 weeks.

5. University Engagement

- 5.1. In addition to the College Departments monitoring students' engagement on their course, Tier 4/Sponsored Students will have additional engagement points with the University across the academic year. All students will be required to sign a Student Declaration on eVision at the start of each academic year upon registration/re-enrolment. Students will also be required to log on to eVision in April to confirm/update their UK contact details.

6. Student Absence and Non-Engagement

- 6.1. Brunel acknowledges that there may be instances of absence due to ill health or other extenuating circumstances. Where evidence is available to support such absences, this will be taken into account when considering adequate engagement. Students experiencing long term difficulties arising from changes in their personal, medical or other relevant circumstances may be advised or required to temporarily withdraw from their studies (abeyance) and re-join when in a position to do so.
- 6.2. In cases where a missed contact point is the result of a medical issue or appointment, medical evidence should be obtained from the student. The evidence must relate specifically to the time of the illness and must make clear that the student was medically unfit to attend Brunel. It must confirm the date the student is fit to resume their studies. Letters from acupuncturists, herbalists or other alternative practitioners will only be accepted when supported by certification from GMC registered doctors. Medical evidence must bear the hospital or GP's practice stamp and/or be on appropriate letter-headed paper.
- 6.3. Tier 4/Sponsored students who miss an engagement point, are absent for 2 weeks or more without authorisation or are considered to not be engaged on their course at any time will be contacted by their College/Department. Students will be given the opportunity to provide reasons for non-engagement and will be required to meet with the supervisor/tutor. Students who fail to attend this meeting or do not have a sufficient reason for their non-engagement may be referred to the Immigration Sponsorship Review Panel by the Dean of College (or appropriate authority) in accordance to [Senate Regulation 15](#).
- 6.4. At all stages, students are encouraged to disclose evidence of ill health or other

exceptional circumstances, such as family bereavement, to explain periods of absence.