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BMBS ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

The BM BS programme at Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) is designed to both offer you an undergraduate degree qualification and to prepare you for professional clinical practice in the NHS as a Foundation Programme Doctor. Attendance is an important objective measure of your engagement on your programme and can predict future professional behaviours when you are qualified.

KMMS has several obligations and responsibilities to monitor your attendance and provide reports to the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University, the UK Foundation Programme, the General Medical Council (GMC), the Office for Students (OfS), the Student Loans Company, and the UK Government Home Office (if you require a visa to study in the UK). KMMS is required to maintain accurate records and escalate non-attendance for all students with a Tier 4 visa.

As a registered medical practitioner, you will be required to adhere to the professional standards required by the GMC. In the Foundation Programme syllabus, *Section 1: Professional Behaviour and Trust*, there are several specific requirements relating to professional behaviours, personal organisation and personal responsibility. These include values and behaviours such as probity and honesty. This KMMS policy has been written with these professional standards in mind and it is your professional responsibility to be aware of its contents.

This policy is intended to help you to optimise your personal learning and academic achievements, contribute to and benefit from group learning experiences and to help you to demonstrate the professional standards required by the GMC.

Maximising your learning

As a student enrolled on the undergraduate programme at KMMS, you will be provided with both learning activities and learning resources. You are expected to attend all learning activities. You are encouraged to use all learning resources to maximise your opportunities to learn and develop to become a knowledgeable and responsible medical graduate.

Your programme is blended, with both online and face to face learning. Technology will be used to assist with connectivity and social rapport, collaborative information discovery and sharing, and content creation. KMMS considers attendance in the context of both this online learning and face to face delivery. Your attendance at and participation in these activities will maximise your opportunities to learn, be successful

in your assessments and to train to become a professionally responsible medical graduate of KMMS.

You should make yourself aware of any specific attendance requirements for all curricular activities in which you are involved. You should avoid scheduling or participating in activities that directly conflict with the required parts of your programme. It is important to note that this is a fulltime study programme.

You are responsible for all your learning and training on the programme, including any sessions that you are unable to attend. You must also demonstrate your engagement on the programme and in group learning. If your attendance at scheduled teaching is noted to be poor, you will be required to discuss any underlying reasons for this with your Personal Academic Tutor or the KMMS Student Life and Wellbeing team. If you miss a group work activity you must create an equitable solution with your colleagues that will balance your individual needs with the impact of your attendance and engagement on the needs of the group, your fellow students and others.

Compulsory learning activities

A high level of attendance is expected for all learning activities throughout the programme. Most learning activities are compulsory and typically include:

- School induction
- Module and Placement induction/introduction
- Tutorials
- Seminars
- Symposia
- Lectures
- Webinars
- Online quizzes
- Online assignments
- Clinical skills sessions and bedside teaching
- Personal Academic Tutor meetings
- Clinical Supervisor meetings
- Educational Supervisor meetings
- Mandatory training sessions
- Specific clinical activities or clinics

This list is non-exhaustive, and it is your own responsibility to check your learning activities in the student and module guides.

If you are absent, for any reason, from compulsory learning activities that are required before you attend a placement, you may not be able to attend any session in the clinical environment without first having shown evidence of having made good the learning related to the missed activity. This is for important reasons of patient safety, as well as your own health and safety. If you are in turn absent from placements for this reason, this will be recorded as non-attendance for the placement also.

Attendance and assessment

Under no circumstances will an absence relieve you of the requirement to meet all the academic requirements of your course. You must be able to attend and participate in compulsory learning activities, which includes synchronous and some asynchronous learning, examinations, assignments and other formative assessments. If your attendance is making it difficult for you to be successful in examinations or submit coursework you must use the Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstance Procedure to notify KMMS of this.

Attendance at compulsory learning activities is monitored and forms part of your assessments. All the modules on the programme require a minimum threshold of 80% attendance in compulsory learning activities as a condition of achieving a pass for the module. Although 80% attendance is widely regarded as the minimum acceptable, KMMS regards non-attendance at specific compulsory activities, or other markers of poor engagement (including lateness and poor participation), as unacceptable attendance even if the 80% threshold is achieved overall.

Absence beyond the minimum thresholds is never permissible and you will need to meet with your Personal Academic Tutor and Educational Supervisor to determine if:

- you need any additional support
- if you should take time away from the programme, or
- if your levels of absence mean you are ineligible to sit an exam.

Any decision about your need for planned academic support, or decision to restrict your eligibility for examinations, will be taken alongside a broader consideration of your overall progression and performance throughout the programme.

Attendance at assessments is compulsory. If your personal circumstances (including illness) mean that you know you will miss an assessment or submission deadline, you should apply for an [Extension to Deadline](#) (for submitted coursework assessment) or Deferment of Assessment (for Applied Knowledge Tests).

Recording attendance

Recording your own attendance is a common way for qualified doctors to provide evidence of their ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CDP). You will be expected to register your own attendance for each compulsory learning activity. Details of how to do this for campus activities and placements are available in the [Student Handbook](#). Failure to register yourself as present will be considered as non-attendance.

Attendance will additionally be checked at random by KMMS. These may be in forms such as sign-in registers, or smartcard tap-in systems. These may be used to cross reference and or validate self-registered attendance records.

You will be able to track your engagement and participation on the programme via your personal student record.

Reporting on attendance of international students

The UK Visas and Immigration, UK Border Force and Immigration Enforcement applies a Points Based Immigration System for the UK. If you are a non-EU student, this means that the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University are responsible for sponsoring non-EU students for visa purposes by issuing a Certificate of Acceptance of Studies (CAS). KMMS is required to confirm to the Universities at regular points during the year that you are still in attendance. If you fail to attend regularly, the Universities will be obliged to report this and this could affect your immigration status. It is especially important that CAS sponsored students ensure that attendance documentation is completed carefully. The monitoring process for international students is not different from attendance monitoring for home/EU student, but the requirement of KMMS to produce a report of your attendance is.

Absences

KMMS accepts that there are some reasonable and legitimate explanations for you to be unexpectedly absent, such as illness or personal issues. You will have to take professional responsibility for informing KMMS if you are not able to attend a compulsory learning activity. This can be done either in advance for a planned absence or as an unplanned absence.

If you are absent for three consecutive weeks, without having notified KMMS by one of the formal routes described in this policy, you will be considered to have withdrawn and may not be able to resume the course without re-registering. Depending on the circumstances of your absence and the reasons why you did not inform KMMS, then

you may have to repeat part of your programme or you may not be permitted to re-join the programme

Planned absences

If possible, you should try and get the prior approval if you think you need to be absent during term time. If you do need to be absent for any reason you must apply for Exceptional Leave of Absence. This must be completed and returned to the KMMS School Office before the period of absence. Details of how to complete this can be found [here](#).

You should allow sufficient time to get approval for a planned absence. We require that you submit your request a minimum of four weeks in advance. You are responsible for requesting approval for your individual absence; no group approvals will be granted. You should meet with your Personal Academic Tutor or Educational Supervisor and agree how you will make up for your missed learning as approval is not likely to be given if there is no reasonable plan for making up the missed learning. If insufficient notice for the absence is provided or the learning activity cannot be made up, then permission to be absent will not be supported.

Examples of situations that may be considered reasonable for Exceptional Leave of Absence include foreseeable personal health needs such as necessary elective surgery; personal or immediate family events; representation at national or international level such as for a sporting or cultural event; academic engagement relating to your programme such as presenting at a conference. This list is neither exhaustive nor guaranteed as each request is considered on a case by case basis, which includes taking cognisance of your academic record to date.

If you and your Personal Academic Tutor and Educational Supervisor are unable to agree on the appropriateness of your request, you should request a meeting with your Head of Year to discuss your request. Ultimately, the Dean or their delegate must be satisfied with your attendance throughout the programme and approval for all absences is at their discretion. Approved absences do not change or extend the 80% minimum attendance requirement per module.

If your absence is not approved, we expect you to: make the necessary arrangements to change your schedule so that you can be present, or; to discuss an interruption of your studies with KMMS if your absence is unavoidable.

Unplanned absence

If your absence is unforeseen, you should communicate your absence as soon as possible and no later than five working days after the absence has occurred. This should be directly from yourself, and not communicated via your peers. It is understood that the nature of some unforeseen absence may prevent you from communicating your absence to the school within five working days and there may be some rare circumstances where it would be acceptable for the notification comes from your next of kin, or as soon as practicable if this is not possible. Details of how to complete this can be found [here](#). You will be required to provide supporting evidence, such as a medical certificate, for the reason for your absence where appropriate. Examples of situations that may require unplanned absence include: personal or immediate family issues, such as bereavement, illness and childcare responsibilities. This list is not exhaustive and each situation will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

If you are unable to attend your programme for health reasons, you can self-certify for up to seven consecutive days. If you are absent for more than seven consecutive days (including weekends) we recommend that you see your GP and obtain a letter or medical certificate. Please hand your letter/medical certificate to the KMMS Student Life and Wellbeing Manager as soon as possible after you return.

Absence relating to health

Health issues may result in planned or unplanned absences or both. It is important that you access the necessary care and support to maintain your physical and mental well-being during your programme. Examples of necessary care include preventive health services, visits for acute illness, ongoing care for chronic illnesses, physical therapy, and counselling and psychological services. Consistent with your rights under university policies and the law, you have a right to privacy when requesting permission to be absent to access care. You still need to request and communicate the necessary absences so that proper and appropriate records of your attendance and engagement with the programme can be maintained.

If you know you are going to be absent from a compulsory learning activity due to illness, please inform the staff member and KMMS as soon as possible. This applies to assessments and teaching that takes place on campus and at an NHS partner institution, including primary care. If you are not sure who to contact or expect to be ill for several days, please inform KMMS when you communicate your absence, who will inform relevant members of teaching and assessment staff and the KMMS Student Life and Wellbeing team on your behalf.

KMMS response to absence

KMMS will respond to Exceptional Leave of Absence requests as soon as is possible. You should not assume your request has been approved until you receive explicit confirmation. If you, or anyone else, have concerns about your ongoing ability to engage with or attend your programme this should be raised with an appropriate member of staff, such as your Personal Academic Tutor and the KMMS Student Life and Wellbeing team. Early and immediate help is available to you the moment you, or anyone else, have concerns about your attendance. More information regarding the support available to you can be found through KMMS Student Life and Wellbeing [here](#).

KMMS will raise your attendance with you in the absence of you making prior contact with the KMMS assessment team if there are notable trends in the overall number of your absences and or if you are absent for a prolonged or recurrent period due to illness or other personal reason. This is to help identify situations where you may need additional support to manage your studies. In the absence of contact from you, examples of situations that will trigger KMMS to contact you, the KMMS Student Life and Wellbeing Manager and the module lead or Head of Year and request you to arrange a meeting with your Personal Academic Tutor include:

- Three non-attendances for compulsory learning activities in any one module
- Five consecutive days physical non-attendance
- Five consecutive days electronic non-attendance, including no sign into the virtual learning environment
- Single non-submission or attendance for assessment,

This list is not exhaustive and each situation will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

If you are absent on repeated occasions or for protracted periods of time, for any reason, it may mean that it is not possible for you to have covered all mandatory learning objectives. If you or someone else have concerns about this, you should meet with your Personal Academic Tutor or Educational Supervisor and subsequently your Head of Year to determine if a plan with additional support can be achieved which will enable you to catch up on the learning you miss.

It may not be possible for you to mitigate the learning that you miss. Should this be the case, you may need to interrupt your enrolment on the programme until the reasons for your absence have been addressed and you can return to the programme at an appropriate point. More information about this can be found in the [Low Level Concerns & Fitness to Practice policy and the Fitness to Study](#) policy.

The following issues will automatically raise concerns about your professional conduct and will be referred to your Head of Year, for consideration under the processes of the Low Level Concerns & Fitness to Practice policy:

- If you are absent from a compulsory learning activity without communicating this either through: obtaining advance approval as outlined above for planned absences; communicating your absence as outlined above for unplanned absences.
- If you claim to be in attendance but this is found to not be the case. This includes falsifying your own record, asking others to falsify on your behalf and attending compulsory activities only in part without updating your attendance record.

If it is not possible to address concerns about your attendance and engagement on the programme to the satisfaction of the Dean then you may not be allowed to progress any further on your programme. You may have to interrupt your studies and repeat a part of your programme, demonstrate that you are fit to study or even fit to practise at a Fitness to Practise hearing, or you may be required to withdraw from the programme. These are all severe sanctions and this policy is meant to highlight to you the importance of early support, should you find it challenging to attend and engage with your programme.