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Attendance and Engagement Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The BMBS 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.
- 1.2. 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 'Student Route' visa.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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.

2. Maximising your learning

- 2.1. 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, that is to say have 100% attendance. You are encouraged to use all learning resources to maximise your opportunities to learn and develop to become a knowledgeable and responsible medical graduate.

- 2.2. 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 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.
- 2.3. 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 full-time study programme.
- 2.4. 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/Clinical Academic Tutor, or the KMMS Student Life and Guidance 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.

3. Compulsory learning activities

- 3.1. Attendance is expected for all learning activities throughout the programme. Most learning activities have monitored attendance. It is your own responsibility to check your learning activities in the student and module guides.
- 3.2. If you are absent, for any reason, from 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.

4. Attendance and assessment

- 4.1. Under no circumstances will an absence alter 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.
- 4.2. Attendance forms part of your assessments, demonstrating professional behaviours expected of you at all times, and that you are reliable and committed to your programme of study both of which are professional attributes expected by the GMC.
- 4.3. All modules, where applicable, require a minimum threshold of 80% attendance 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 activities, or other markers of poor engagement (including lateness and poor participation), as unacceptable attendance even if the 80% threshold is achieved overall.
- 4.4. Absence which takes your attendance below the minimum thresholds is never permissible and you will need to meet with the School to determine if:
 - a. you need any additional support
 - b. if you should take time away from the programme (intermission),
 - c. if your levels of absence mean you are ineligible to sit an exam.
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. 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 mitigating circumstances. This would be:
 - a. an [Extension to Deadline](#) (for submitted coursework assessment) or;
 - b. an absence from an assessment (for scheduled assessments).

For further information, refer to the [Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances Procedures](#)

5. Recording attendance

- 5.1. Recording your own attendance is a common way for qualified doctors to provide evidence of their ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CDP). You will normally be expected to register your own attendance and are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of your attendance record. Details of how to do this are available on the student portal, under Attendance, engagement and absence. Failure to register yourself as present will be considered as non-attendance.
- 5.2. Attendance will additionally be checked periodically by KMMS. These attendance checks may be in forms such as sign-in registers, or online data collection. These may be used to cross reference and or validate self-registered attendance records.
- 5.3. You will be able to track your engagement and participation on the programme via your personal student record and through the attendance software.

6. Reporting on attendance of international students

- 6.1. UK Visas and Immigration, UK Border Force and Immigration Enforcement applies a Points Based Immigration System for the UK. If you are an international/EU student that holds a student visa (including Tier 4 visa) to study with KMMS, this means that the University of Kent are responsible for sponsoring international students for visa purposes by issuing a Certificate of Acceptance of Studies (CAS). KMMS is required to confirm to the University of Kent at regular points during the year that you are still in attendance. If you fail to attend regularly, the University of Kent will be obliged to report this to the UKVI, 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.

7. Absences

- 7.1. 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. This can be done either in advance for a planned absence or as an unplanned absence via the Leave of Absence forms. Please note that all absences will nonetheless count towards your attendance record as per section 4.
- 7.2. 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 failed the year on the basis of attendance. Depending on the circumstances of your absence and the reasons why you did not inform KMMS, you may have to repeat part of your programme, or you may not be permitted to re-join the programme.

- 7.3. Absence forms must be submitted by **whichever date comes first:**

Within 10 working days of the absence taking place

OR

The last day of teaching for the module the absence relates to

Forms received outside of this window will normally be rejected.

8. Planned absences

- 8.1. If possible, you should notify the School in advance if you need to be absent during term time. A Leave of Absence form must be completed and returned to the Curriculum and Assessment team before the period of absence.
- 8.2. For any foreseeable absence, you should provide as much notice as possible. You should meet with your Personal Academic Tutor or Clinical Academic Tutor and agree how you will make up for your missed learning.
- 8.3. If you and your Personal Academic Tutor or Clinical Academic Tutor are unable to agree a plan to make up for missed learning, you should request a meeting with your Head of Year. Ultimately, the Board of Examiners must be satisfied with your attendance throughout the programme and approval for

all absences is at their discretion. Planned absences **do not** change or extend the minimum attendance requirement per module.

- 8.4. Informing KMMS about planned absences is professional and courteous and allows for discussions around alternative arrangements, mitigations or intermission of your studies.

9. Unplanned absences

- 9.1. If your absence is unforeseen, you should communicate your absence as soon as possible. This should be done by completing the Leave of Absence form. 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 to the school to come from your next of kin, or as soon as practicable if this is not possible.
- 9.2. You may wish to provide supporting evidence, such as a medical certificate, for the reason for your unplanned 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 choose to submit additional evidence, please attach this as a file to your Leave of Absence form.

10. Absence relating to health

- 10.1. 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 communicate the necessary absences, via a Leave of Absence form, so that proper and appropriate records of your attendance and engagement with the programme can be maintained.

- 10.2. If you are not sure who to contact or expect to be ill for several days, please inform KMMS when you complete your Leave of Absence form, who will inform relevant members of teaching and assessment staff on your behalf.

11. KMMS response to absence

- 11.1. 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 or Clinical Academic Tutor and the KMMS Student Life and Guidance 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 the KMMS Student Life and Guidance page on the Student Portal.

- 11.2. KMMS will raise your attendance with you, typically via email notification, if you have not made prior contact with the KMMS Curriculum Team and:

- a. if there are notable trends in the overall number of your absences and/or;
- b. 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 yourself and your studies. In the absence of contact from you, KMMS may contact and request a meeting with you when your attendance record becomes a concern.

- 11.3. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- 11.4. 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 learning objectives. If you or someone else have concerns about this, you should meet with your Personal Academic Tutor or Clinical Academic Tutor 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.

- 11.5. 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 Study and Fitness to Practise Policy](#).
- 11.6. Lack of communication around your absences may raise concerns about your professionalism. The following issues will automatically raise concerns about your professional conduct and will be referred for consideration under the processes of the Low-Level Concerns & Fitness to Practice policy:
- a. if you are absent without notifying the school;
 - b. 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, assisting others to falsify their records, and attending compulsory activities only in part without updating or communicating your attendance.
- 11.7. If it is not possible to address concerns about your attendance and engagement on the programme to the satisfaction of the Board of Examiners, 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. Further details about attendance can be found on the [Student Portal](#) and [KMMS policies page on our website](#).