

ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY 2020-21

Spirit Studios has developed this policy as a means to providing a supportive learning environment where students can be encouraged to achieve their full potential. As an industry training and HE provider, we recognise the importance of professional values, and we consider we have a responsibility to act in a supportive role upon non-engagement.

Attendance, engagement and punctuality are key components in attainment, progression, and achievement. Regular participation in scheduled lessons is a key indicator in student success and opportunity, and in employability, and we therefore encourage you to attend all scheduled sessions. If you feel that your attendance or engagement may be slipping, or that you're failing to submit work, ask us for advice. We won't judge you when things start to slip; we'll work with you as much as possible to help you get back on track.

We use a system called Stingray to monitor attendance.

Recording Attendance

At the start of each lesson, a list of students in attendance is recorded by the tutor in Stingray. The data is entered in one of two ways: either Attended or Absent.

Where a student attends a lesson only partially, either by arriving late or leaving early, it will be at the tutor's discretion to record whether the lesson was attended or not, depending on the material covered within the student's period of attendance. Where a lesson is missed due to unforeseen circumstances or even if the absence is authorised in advance, the recorded session on Stingray will only show absence.

Attendance Expectations

In all courses at Spirit Studios it is expected that you should achieve at least 80% attendance. It is important to be aware that where courses are validated by a partner university, attendance records may be consulted at progression boards, and decisions on your progression on the course made accordingly.

In some cases, poor attendance along with poor grades may result in your withdrawal from the programme.

Where your attendance starts to fall below expected levels, or where there is deemed to be a lack of engagement, a member of the academic team will contact you to offer support if this is required, and to offer a reminder of your commitment to attend scheduled lessons.

If after this communication your attendance or engagement does not improve then we will contact you again to reaffirm our offer of support. We will ask you to get in touch with us urgently to resolve any underlying issues which may be causing your continued absence from the course and to offer further support where we can. We will also remind you that in the interest of health and safety, access to facilities is dependent on knowledge and skills acquired through scheduled sessions and for this reason your access to facilities booking credits on Stingray may be suspended. Access to facilities bookings will be reinstated after you meet with the Academic Supervisor to discuss your return to studies.

We will also advise you that further absences or lack of sufficient engagement without communication with us may lead to your removal from the course. If your continued absence or lack of engagement leads to your removal from the course, the date of withdrawal will be recorded as the last day of attendance.

If you wish to inform us if you cannot attend a lesson, or if you are going to arrive late or leave early, please speak to the relevant module tutor.

If at any time during your course you have concerns about attending scheduled sessions, please come and speak to us; contact details for relevant staff are in your Course and Module Handbooks. We may be able to advise you on alternative arrangements, but we will also make you aware of any implications that changes to your mode of study (or withdrawal from the course) will make to your funding arrangements.

Punctuality

Please ensure that you arrive on time for the start of each scheduled session. Late arrival at sessions or early departure from them, can be disruptive to other class members and to your tutor. If you do arrive late for a session, please wait outside the door until you perceive a moment of least disruption, and then quietly let yourself in and take your seat. If you wish to apologise to the tutor, please do this after the lesson, or in the break.

Spirit Studios has a duty of care to all students, and in a case of persistent lateness, and if it is felt that this is disruptive to the class, the tutor may refuse admission to the session, and will refer you to a tutorial session with the Academic Supervisor.

Engagement

Student engagement can be measured in a variety of ways, and not only through attendance at scheduled sessions. It is expected that you maintain a sufficient level of self-directed study to support the learning process in lessons; this can be evidenced when discussed in scheduled workshops, or in tutorial sessions.

Self-directed study also includes time spent in studio facilities, and so staff are able to monitor your bookings in Stingray. Similarly your engagement with the library resources can be monitored via LibraryWorld, as well as your interaction with Google Classroom.

Engagement can be further measured by your involvement with extracurricular activities, such as the Creative Spirit sessions, or other industry events such as field trips and guest lectures.

In most cases, a lack of engagement can be viewed as a lack of communication. Inability to fully engage with some lessons or some aspects of your course can be mitigated when the reason for this is effectively communicated to a member of staff.

It is important to remember that engagement, as much as attendance, is necessary for your personal and professional development, as well as your academic progression on the course.

Fitness to Study

Spirit Studios is committed to supporting our students and recognises the importance of your health and wellbeing in relation to your academic progress and student experience.

Where a sustained period of absence is recorded due to ill health or incapacity, and it has a detrimental impact on your ability to progress academically, there is a supportive process used to determine your fitness to study.

On occasions where your health or wellbeing deteriorates to the point where it raises questions about your fitness and suitability to continue studies, we will consider a range of conditions where problems may have arisen, including:

- long-term damage to your health
- deterioration in your appearance, attendance, behaviour or ability to meet deadlines
- disruption to other students
- unsustainable demands being made of staff
- prolonged or regular bouts of absence due to illness
- risk of abuse or harm
- criminal or antisocial behaviour

In any instance where your fitness to study is called into question, you will be invited to a meeting with the Academic Supervisor and/or support staff to discuss options. You will be able to invite someone of your choosing to accompany you in this meeting if you wish. Together we hope to assess your perception of the impact that your health and/or behaviour is having, and to ensure you understand our expectations regarding fitness to study. In all cases, the purpose of this meeting is to find the best way forward to meet your needs for health and wellbeing.

The outcome of this meeting may include one of the following:

- no action is needed
- an action plan is devised to assist you on a path back to full fitness
- a suspension of studies is implemented; this will allow you adequate time to recuperate and to return to your course at an appropriate time.

Where you have been 'signed off' by a medical professional as sick, or unable to work or study, you are required to not enter the premises until you have been deemed fit to work/study by your health practitioner.

It is important to note that these are not disciplinary measures, and that all discussions of fitness to study are dealt with in strictest confidence.

Returning from a Period of Absence

While you are absent from lessons, it is your responsibility to catch up on the lessons you have missed by checking the appropriate lesson content and resources on Google Classroom. On your return from a period of absence, it is always best to approach your tutors regarding the missed sessions and enquire about any self-directed learning you can implement and to catch up with any designated course work.

After a period of extended absence, please ensure that you arrange to meet with the Academic Supervisor, who will discuss an action plan with you to support the catch-up process.