



**Academic Board 03-02-2021**

**Prof. Rob McAllen and Ms Eleanor Fouhy**  
**Academic Development and Standards Committee**

**Briefing note for Colleges and Academic Units re changes to the University Attendance Policy**

At its meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020 Academic Board approved changes to the current University Attendance policy which will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. The principle change is a rewording of the attendance policy removing the all-encompassing nature of the policy that was largely described by academic units as unworkable and unenforceable. The updated Attendance Policy will be published in the University Policy Portal (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/academicgov/policies/>). The link to the General Regulations for students will also link to the Attendance Policy which states:

*It is widely accepted that there is a clear link between regular student engagement in all learning activities and assessment and associated ongoing success in the discipline. Every registered student is expected to engage with all scheduled in-person, online synchronous/asynchronous teaching elements of their programme, including but not limited to lectures, tutorials, laboratory classes, placement, etc. All module requirements in terms of attendance will reflect those prescribed by Accreditation Bodies as relevant.*

**It is anticipated that this overarching declaration will be sufficient for attendance requirements of students in most academic units.** However, it is recognised that some units may need to stipulate specific mandatory attendances at certain teaching activities (e.g. practicals, field courses, language labs, seminars and tutorials) and either award marks for student attendance and participation (**note marks cannot be awarded for attendance only**) or stipulate a minimum attendance criteria (x% of those activities) to be attained. In this case the updated policy requires this detail to be clearly specified in the relevant section of the module description, viz.:

- 1) **Where marks are awarded for student attendance and participation** – this requirement must be included in the **Assessment** section of the BOM with clear indication of the marks awarded.
- 2) **Where a minimum satisfactory attendance at a specific learning activity / activities is mandatory** – this must be detailed in the **Pass Standard and any Special Requirements for Passing Module** section. In addition, the entry must also clearly detail the penalty for non-compliance of these requirements and School and College Curriculum Committees are requested to examine these entries in detail to ensure absolute clarity on this matter.

The University has established a series of guiding principles that should be considered when drafting and approving specific attendance requirements for students and associated sanctions:

- Necessary and proportionate – The requirements and sanctions should be necessary and proportionate for the module concerned. e.g. Is the required attendance level correctly set? Is the sanction for not meeting an attendance requirement proportionate?
- Clear – The requirements and sanctions are fully outlined, unambiguous and capable of being understood.
- Traceable – It will be possible to easily collect evidence related to attendance and maintain records.
- Enforceable – The proposed sanctions are clearly stated and capable of being easily enforced.
- Consistent – Requirements and sanctions should be consistent in cognate disciplines.

For accreditation – Attendance requirements should be linked directly to the relevant Professional Regulatory Statutory Body (PRSB) rules or professional standards.

**These mandatory attendance activities must be documented in the Book of Modules** (rather than Programme Handbooks, websites, etc.) in the manner described above, to ensure that all students taking the module (irrespective of the programme and/or the anchor School/Dept/College) are fully aware of the attendance requirements for that module. Where the attendance requirement for a module is referenced in **other published material, it must be via direct link to the BOM description to ensure accuracy and consistency and in keeping with the University principle of there being one version of the truth.**

### **Action Required:**

In order to comply with the updated policy **Schools/Departments must complete a thorough review of all modules anchored in their academic unit** with a view to:

- Identifying which modules currently include a reference to attendance
- Updating module descriptions in-line with the updated policy i.e.
  - Removing references to attendance in modules where it is no longer relevant
  - Where relevant including reference to attendance in Assessment and Pass Standard and Special Requirements for Passing Module sections of the BOM

The Schools/Departments must also review the Programme Descriptions in the University Calendar and Programme Marks and Standards to ensure that reference to attendance is removed from these documents and where relevant included in the module description which is the designated document to reflect attendance requirements

Academic units must also review all other sources of information such as **handbooks, websites, prospectuses etc.**, and ensure absolute consistency in relation to attendance requirements by **ensuring the BOM entry is the “one version of the truth” via use of links to the BOM description** and that the newly updated BOM descriptions are unambiguous and enforceable in nature. This will ensure clarity for students and staff alike in expectations around student attendance and participation and reduce the number of appeals each year based on contradictory or confusing information in numerous publications.

Therefore, to facilitate this change to take effect at the start of the next academic year (2021/2022), academic units are asked to ensure that module descriptions are updated to comply with policy and submitted for approval to the relevant School and College Curriculum Committee in accordance with local deadlines for approval and sign off of curriculum changes for 2021-22,). **It should be stressed once more that the revised attendance declaration will suffice for many modules and the Book of Modules description should only refer to attendance where absolutely necessary.**

For queries on this policy and the process for reviewing and updating modules descriptions (and other publications) please contact your School/College Curriculum Committee in the first instance. APAR and SREO are also available to advise, as required.

*Prof. Rob McAllen and Ms. Eleanor Fouhy*

*On behalf of ADSC*

*January 2021*