



Attendance and Engagement Policy

Approval Body:	Mulberry School Trust Board
Approval Date:	12.09.24
Implementation Date:	16.09.24
Review Date:	June 2027
Policy Version:	2

Policy update / revisions

Date	Updates / revisions
June 2025	Reviewed. No updates made

1. Purpose

The Attendance, punctuality and Engagement policy is in place to ensure Beginning Teachers (BTs) benefit from teaching and learning opportunities so that they can successfully complete their level of study and subsequently their courses, meeting the relevant professional, statutory, and regulatory requirements.

The policy sets out the expectations of engagement through attendance and punctuality, how Mulberry College of Teaching will monitor and support their engagement and what will happen if the level of engagement is unsatisfactory.

The expectation is that BTs will attend centre-based and live on-line sessions on time, as timetabled and to engage timely with all course materials and assessments provided unless they are unable to do so because of illness, disability or other extenuating circumstances. This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used in the teaching profession as a whole.

2. Introduction

2.1 This policy applies to all courses that Mulberry College of Teaching (MCoT) offers.

2.2 Mulberry College of Teaching reserves the right to make reasonable changes to this policy. These changes will normally come into effect at the beginning of an academic year. MCoT also reserve the right to introduce changes during the academic year when MCoT reasonably consider it to be in the interests of learners or required by law, or the requirements of relevant regulatory bodies.

2.3 The BT needs to take responsibility for their attendance and punctuality. This is because high levels of participation contribute significantly to academic achievement, retention, progression, and the successful completion of the course. It also contributes to the enhancement of the quality of the learning experience and the development of core skills such as teamwork and professional communication and behaviour. It is therefore essential that all BTs take responsibility for their learning.

2.4 The policy will seek to encourage and facilitate BT engagement with their course to promote an enhanced learner experience, support achievement and enable MCoT to meet the requirements of regulatory and professional bodies.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 All BTs are responsible for maintaining regular attendance and punctuality, and ensuring that any periods of absence, however short, are communicated, recorded and managed in accordance with MCoT's policies and procedures.

3.2 The Directors of MCoT are ultimately responsible for overseeing BTs absence levels; and meeting with individual BT's to ensure that they are supported if necessary, and that issues with absence are raised and dealt with as soon as they arise, ideally informally.

3.3 Programme Tutors and Lead Mentors are responsible for ensuring accurate records of absence are maintained. They should notify MCoT Directors promptly if concerns arise.

4. Planned absence

4.1 Medical and dental appointment

MCoT appreciates that from time-to-time BTs may need to attend medical, hospital, dental, optician and other similar appointments. The difficulty of obtaining GP and hospital appointments is acknowledged. Whenever it is possible to do so, BTs should endeavour to arrange such appointments in their own time or, if this is not possible, then at times that will cause the minimum amount of absence from training sessions or school placements, such as the beginning or end of the working day.

The BT should be prepared to provide evidence if needed.

Routine medical appointments (such as dentist and opticians) should not be made during the working day.

4.2 Other circumstances

BTs may have a planned absence for other reasons including, but not limited to, childcare or other caring commitments or job interviews.

Examples of standard responses:

Graduation ceremonies: Absence of one day to attend a graduation ceremony for first degree will be granted. Any requests for travelling time associated with this would not be expected to exceed half a day in total.

Interviews: All reasonable requests will be honoured. Decisions relating to absence for interviews abroad or in places involving extra days for travel will be limited to a cumulative maximum of three working days in the year.

Visits to schools before application/interview: Given the open-ended nature of these absences and the significant demands of the course, leave of absence will not be granted for these visits. In refusing the application, MCoT will, if requested by the BT, contact the school in question, informing them both of the BT's expression of interest in attending and the rationale for the refusal of the application.

Visits to schools prior to employment: One day will be granted if requested. Additional days requested by the school employing the BT may be granted at the discretion of the MCoT.

Urgent caring/ Personal leave: A maximum of two days at any one time will be granted for purposes of urgent and unforeseen personal business to fulfil an important and significant personal commitment which cannot be undertaken at another time. This does not include attendance to family weddings, which are subject to special permission.

Holidays: The intensive nature of the course means that holidays, including those booked before commencement of the course, should not be undertaken.

4.3 Notifying MCoT of a planned absence

In the event of a planned absence, BTs should request time away from learning in writing via email at least two weeks in advance and with as much notice as possible. The contact for all matters relating to absence is admissions@mulberrycollegeofteaching.org

The Directors and Tutors reserve the right to deny a request in the event that a request is deemed unreasonable, including with too little notice. .

5. Unplanned absence

5.1 Centre-based training

All BTs who are unable to attend centre-based training due to illness or for any other unplanned reason must notify the MCoT by email

(admissions@mulberrycollegeofteaching.org) no later than 8.00am on the day of training. BT's must also notify their placement school.

If centre-based training is taking place over two or more consecutive days, BTs must follow this procedure on each day of absence.

If, by 9 am, MCoT has not been informed of an absence, MCoT will contact the BT, and if not available, the named contact, to confirm the safety of the BT and ascertain why they are not in attendance.

5.2 Placement absence

It is the BTs responsibility to inform their placement school of planned and unplanned absences.

BTs must also notify MCoT via email, of any unplanned absences while on placement / attending school or work. This should be communicated on the day of absence and each day on any subsequent days as per 5.1

6. Medical certification

Absences of fewer than seven calendar days may be self-certifying. However, in cases of poor attendance due to multiple short-term absences, MCoT may request medical evidence.

Absences of more than seven calendar days require a fit note signed by a registered medical practitioner. This must be supplied to MCoT, who will attach a copy to the absence record.

If a BT is subject to an ongoing illness and would like to request a deferral or review their occupational health, they should submit written request by email, together with a medical certificate which explains the extent of the illness and the likely effect on their progress through the course. The situation will be reviewed by the Directors of MCoT to determine whether the BT should be considered for deferral on medical grounds. MCoT reserves the right to undertake a management referral through their occupational health provider in these circumstances.

7. Return to work and convalescence

On return to work following an extended period of absence of more than one week, MCoT Tutors or Directors will have a meeting to review plans to return to the programme, including any temporary adjustments that might support their return. This may involve the mentor of their placement school. A BT returning to course after an extended period of absence may be required to submit to a medical examination by Occupational Health professional.

8. Maternity and paternity leave

BTs seeking to take maternity leave from their course will be invited to meet the Directors of Mulberry College of Teaching to discuss a planned break in learning. A reasonable break in learning will be agreed, and it is generally expected that a learner will complete the course within six school terms.

A BT in receipt of student finance must use a Change of Circumstances (CoC) form to inform Student Finance England of the suspension of studies. A further CoC form must be completed on return to the course.

MCoT will offer a short period of absence for paternity leave following a discussion and agreement with the Directors of MCoT and/or Tutor, and the placement school / employer.

9. Compassionate leave

Leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis. All requests for leave that exceed 3 working days must be referred to Directors of Mulberry College of Teaching.

10. Unexplained absence

When a BT is absent without authorisation and a Fit for Work certificate has not been provided, the following procedure will be followed:

- The BT and their placement school / employer will be contacted
- The BT will be asked to attend a meeting with the Director of MCoT and/ or Tutor to discuss the absenteeism and agree a plan of action.
- If the BT does not attend the meeting or arrange a suitable alternative, MCoT will inform the BT in writing that their studies have been suspended. Student Finance England will be informed where appropriate.

11. Habitual non-engagement

If a BT's engagement and/or attendance is deemed to be unsatisfactory, MCoT reserve the right to deem a learner to have withdrawn from the course and payments will be suspended. MCoT will issue a warning regarding a BT's level of engagement prior to inviting the learner to a meeting to discuss the issue. If a BT does not attend the meeting, or if engagement does not improve, MCoT may deem it necessary to withdraw the learner from the course and payments suspended.

Examples of not fully engaging include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Repeated non-participation in teaching sessions;
- Repeated absenteeism ;
- Repeated poor punctuality
- Not submitting assessments (including formative assessment);
- Failing to respond to email or written correspondence;
- Failure to comply with mandatory training relevant to a professional course

BTs have the right to appeal a decision within the grounds and timescales set out by MCoT's Complaints Policy.

11. Catching up on missed learning

It is the responsibility for the BT to catch-up on missed learning.

In the event of missing centre-based sessions, access to catch-up materials will be provided and the BT will be invited for a short 'Viva' conversation to assess their understanding with the Programme Tutor.

In the event of missing school-based (placement activities) or ITAPs, the Directors of the Programme may require the BT to extend their placement time in order to make the expected progress, should further time be recommended.