

Attendance and Engagement Policy

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Section 1: Overview

1.1 Purpose and general principles

- 1.1.1 In accordance with participants' professional responsibilities as a training social worker and as a registered student of Lancaster University, Frontline expects participants to attend and engage fully with all aspects of the programme. This policy therefore applies to all participants across both years of the programme.
- 1.1.2 Absence from the programme can negatively impact participants' ability to pass assessments and practice social work of the highest quality. Frontline therefore monitors participant attendance and engagement for the programme's duration, so that staff can support and provide early intervention to participants who may be experiencing difficulties and are at risk of dropping out.
- 1.1.3 Frontline recognises that in rare occurrences, there may be **exceptional circumstances** which mean that a participant is unable to attend a timetabled day (e.g., important milestones or an ailment/illness which leads to absence from work). For the procedure around this please refer to [section 2](#) of this policy.
- 1.1.4 In year 1, Frontline's minimum attendance requirement is:
- Placement: at **least 200 days in practice** are required. Please note, that this figure is set by Social Work England (SWE). If this minimum is not met in the expected timeframe, participants will be unable to apply for SWE registration and will not be able to progress into year 2 until placement days are complete, along with other year 1 requirements.
 - Teaching days: **at least 80% attendance**. 'Teaching days' include the summer institute and recall days.
 - At the start of Year 1 Frontline places particular emphasis on **compulsory attendance at the summer institute**, as this is where participants learn the core foundations of social work practice and where they form integral working relationships with their fellow cohort. It would not be expected that a participant would miss more than one or two days of the summer institute at most, and this would only be in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.1.5 In year 2, Frontline's minimum attendance requirement is **at least 80% attendance** of teaching days.



1.1.6 In year 1, participants are permitted up to 25 days' holiday as approved by their consultant social worker. In year 2, participants' holiday is allocated in accordance with the local authority/employer policy.

1.1.7 With most teaching elements being inextricably linked to participants' practice-based learning during year one of the programme, it is not possible for participants to complete Year 1 on a part-time basis.

1.2 Responsibilities

1.2.1 This policy is owned by the Chief Social Worker, who is responsible for its implementation.

1.2.2 Practice tutors and consultant social workers (year 1), dissertation supervisors (year 2), and Frontline's support staff are expected to implement its procedures for monitoring attendance.

1.2.3 Frontline is responsible for:

- establishing and communicating clearly the attendance and engagement requirements of the programme to participants;
- notifying participants of all timetabled days in advance of their occurrence to help in the meeting of this expectation.
- monitoring the attendance and engagement of participants and maintaining appropriate records for reference;
- Where a member of Frontline staff, normally the practice tutor (year 1) or dissertation supervisor (year 2), identifies concerns with a participant's attendance and/or engagement, they will aim to intervene and support participants, as per the processes set out in [section 2.4](#);
- making decisions about the adequacy of a participant's attendance and/or engagement. Frontline will consider the circumstances of the individual alongside the requirements of the programme;
- Where relevant, progressing participants under an alternative Frontline Policy where the concerns continue and/or increase;
- Where breaches of this policy are made, to report concerns to Lancaster University, and where appropriate request that the participant is either **deemed withdrawn** or **excluded** (see [section 5](#) for definitions).

1.2.4 Participants are responsible for:



- consistently and proactively engaging with requirements associated with the academic and practice elements of the programme;
- organising their residential and other arrangements around teaching days (including the summer institute);
- ensuring they have an understanding of the programme contents (e.g., structure, curriculum, academic units, practice requirements) and where uncertain, to seek clarity from a relevant member of staff;
- notifying Frontline/their placement provider of intended absence(s), according to the process described within this policy. Frontline expects participants to use their professional judgement to determine whether an absence is admissible based on the parameters set out in [Section 2](#);
- responding to requests from Frontline teams in a timely manner;
- raising as early as possible with practice tutors (year 1) or dissertation supervisors (year 2) any challenges/difficulties being faced that are impacting upon their ability to meet the attendance and engagement expectations;
- monitoring the number of absences they have taken, and to be conscious of this with relation to expectations for their attendance for the remainder of the year;
- where Frontline queries an absence engaging in dialogue in accordance with profession etiquettes (e.g., that it is constructive and respectful) and that programme requirements are considered;
- catching up on missed learning where at risk of falling under 80% attendance of academic days;
- maintaining up-to-date contact details with Frontline and Lancaster University and checking their Lancaster University email account regularly for information.

Section 2: Procedure

2.1 Requesting an absence

2.1.1 All absences should be reported to the parties, as noted below. Absences should be reported ahead of the day where practicable and normally no later than the day of absence.

2.1.2 Depending on a participants' stage within the programme, they will need to submit a notification of intended absence via email to the relevant member(s) of staff as outlined below:

Summer Institute

Participants should email SI@thefrontline.org.uk.

Recall days (year 1 and year 2)

Participants should contact their practice tutor/dissertation supervisor and regional coordinator via the regional inbox: southregion@thefrontline.org.uk for London and the South West;



northregion@thefrontline.org.uk for the Midlands, North East and North West).

Placement (year 1) Participants should contact their Consultant Social Worker. The Consultant Social Worker and participant should discuss the likely duration of the absence and consider the effect this may have on the participant's ability to undertake and complete the programme requirements.

Placement (year 2) Participants should report absences to their local authority/employer in line with its policy and procedures.

2.1.3 Following the receipt of an intended absence, a review will be conducted by Frontline to confirm if the absence is authorised or not and following on from the review of the participant's attendance, will consider whether any further actions are required.

2.1.4 If upon receipt of notification of a participant's intended absence it is determined to be without good cause, Frontline will normally contact the participant. It is expected that this will result in an agreed outcome and actions in relation to the absence.

2.1.5 Participants may be asked to provide evidence to support their absence where appropriate and necessary.

2.1.6 Any participant who is suffering from a serious infectious illness (e.g., measles, malaria) or who is absent because of contact with a person suffering from such illness must immediately notify Frontline, and must send a medical certificate to the regional inbox (southregion@thefrontline.org.uk or northregion@thefrontline.org.uk) before returning, stating that there is no longer any risk of infection being conveyed to other persons.

2.2 Logging attendance at recall days

2.2.1 For **online teaching days** (Summer Institute and Recall Days), Frontline will monitor participants' attendance via Zoom usage reports. Frontline can identify participants through the details they log into zoom with (full name and Lancaster University email address).

2.2.2 For **in-person teaching days**, Frontline will ask participants to register their attendance via a QR code that will be provided and signposted to them. To ensure full attendance of the Recall Day,



Frontline may alter when the QR code is shared with participants during each Recall Day. It is the responsibility of the participant to make sure they log their attendance for in-person Recall Days.

2.3 Catching up on missed learning

- 2.3.1 Where participants are at risk of falling under 80% attendance of teaching days (summer institute and recall days), they **must** catch up on missed learning. They should do this via the resources available on Moodle, and through watching any video recordings of the missed day that are available, and, where available and where space allows, through attendance of teaching days in other regions.
- 2.3.2 Where participants catch up on a missed day of learning due to an absence, participants must contact their regional inbox (southregion@thefrontline.org.uk for London and the South West, or northregion@thefrontline.org.uk for the Midlands, North East and North West), otherwise their attendance record will not be updated.

2.4 Managing absence and engagement concerns

- 2.4.1 Where a participant is either absent without notifying relevant staff (see 2.1.2), has not provided a satisfactory explanation of their absence, or where there are emerging or continuing concerns around their level of attendance and engagement (which may include making insufficient academic progress, for example, via non-submission of academic assignments), they may be subject to several steps of intervention, within which attendance and engagement concerns will be explored alongside possible mechanisms of support.
- 2.4.2 Where a **singular unauthorised absence** has occurred participants may be contacted by Frontline for a satisfactory explanation.
- 2.4.3 Where attendance continues to decline beyond this, and there are **emerging concerns** around a participant's attendance and/or engagement, they will normally receive **several email communications** from Frontline, reminding them of Frontline's expectations and to ascertain whether there are any reasons for this change, and to offer support.



- 2.4.4 At this stage, a participant's practice tutor/dissertation supervisor and principal practice tutor will be made aware that the participant has received another email communication from Frontline regarding their attendance and/or engagement.
- 2.4.5 If the situation does not improve sufficiently, participants will normally be invited to an **informal meeting** with the practice tutor/dissertation supervisor, which will typically result in an action plan and/or further warning being provided to the participant.
- 2.4.6 Where there are **persistent concerns** around a participant's attendance and/or engagement (i.e., they have completed the above steps of escalation noted in clauses 2.4.2 – 2.4.5 with little to no improvement), the participant will be reported by Frontline to Lancaster University, with a recommendation of **exclusion** (see [section 5.1](#) for definition) from the University on the grounds of making insufficient academic progress.
- 2.4.6 Where a participant, without reasonable explanation:
- fails to respond to multiple communications; and/or
 - stops attending recall days without first discussing this with Frontline and then fails to respond to multiple communications; and/or
 - leaves/stops attending their placement/employment without first discussing this with Frontline and their placement provider and then fails to respond to multiple communications;

The participant will be **deemed withdrawn** (see [section 5.1](#) for definition).

- 2.4.7 A participant can be deemed withdrawn from the Frontline programme in year 1 and 2, or from the academic component alone in year 2.
- 2.4.8 If a year 1 participant stops attending all taught and practice-based elements of the programme without reasonable explanation, Frontline will discontinue the payment of the participant's bursary.
- 2.4.9 2.4.9 There may be some instances where a participant's attendance and engagement issues indicate a need to be referred to a more appropriate policy (such as Fitness to Practise or Fitness to Study). Frontline will review attendance and engagement concerns on a case-by-case basis to



determine where this may be appropriate.

Section 3: Practice Learning Experience Extension

- 3.1 During year 1, where because of approved absence a participant cannot complete the required placement days (at least 200) within the normal timeframes, Frontline's Placement Scrutiny Committee (PSC) may exceptionally consider an extension to the participant's practice learning experience. This would take place at the end of the same programme year.
- 3.2 An extension can normally be granted for a maximum period of 30 days to allow the participant to complete the minimum days in placement and progress to year 2.
- 3.3. If the maximum 30 day extension will not enable the participant to meet the minimum 200 days in placement, the participant will normally be referred to the [intercalation policy](#).
- 3.4 For an extension to be considered by Frontline's Placement Scrutiny Committee, a recommendation should normally be made by the participant's practice tutor, typically following practice review 4.
- 3.5 Practice tutors should state in their referral whether they believe that the participant will be able to demonstrate the [end of placement](#) PCFs by the end of the recommended extension. This will be considered by the Placement Scrutiny Committee. Where it is clear that a participant will not be able to demonstrate the [end of placement](#) PCFs even with a placement extension, an extension is unlikely to be approved.
- 3.6 For an extension to be approved by Frontline's Placement Scrutiny Committee, a stage two practice educator must be available to support the participant within the placement for the duration of the extension period. Where a stage two practice educator is not available to support an extension to placement, but the Placement Scrutiny Committee believes that the participant should have the opportunity to complete, the participant will be permitted to intercalate and would complete their placement on their return (see [intercalation policy](#)). If a participant chooses not to intercalate, then clause 3.7 will apply.



- 3.7 If an extension cannot be approved, a participant who at 31 August has not completed 200 days in practice and/or has not met the [end of placement](#) PCFs, will be deemed by the Placement Assessment Panel (PAP) to have failed to meet the requirements for completion of year 1 and a failure will be recommended as the result of assessment element FLSW914b(1) / FLSW903(4) (assessment element dependent upon participant's cohort). Ratification of the failure by the examination board would result in a fail and exit from the programme.

Section 4: Maximum period of registration

- 4.1 Lancaster University's academic regulations set the maximum period of registration for all taught students at the normal length of the programme, plus two years. This gives a maximum period for the Frontline programme of four years. Any extended periods of time away from study (i.e., intercalation and parental leave) are not included when calculating a student's period of registration.

Section 5: Annex

5.1 Definitions

- 5.1.1 **Deemed withdrawn:** a participant is assumed to have withdrawn where, there is a breach of the attendance and engagement policy, and the participant has:
- Failed to respond to multiple communications;
 - stopped attending recall days without reasonable explanation and failed to respond to multiple communications;
 - left/stopped attending their placement/employment without reasonable explanation and failed to respond to multiple communications.
- 5.1.2 **Exclusion:** where a participant, at the request of either Lancaster University or Frontline, is excluded from the programme and ceases to be a student of the University. This will be in rare circumstances, for example: where a participant has failed to meet the requirements of the programme; academic failure following reassessment; breached the attendance and engagement policy and there are persistent concerns around a participant's attendance and/or



engagement with little to no improvement following an escalation of the concerns; breached of the participant discipline policy; not met the conditions of return following a period of intercalation or extended leave; a placement not being available following a period of intercalation or extended leave. The decision to exclude a participant can only be taken by a Lancaster University examination board, Lancaster University's Standing Academic Committee, or the Lancaster University Board of Discipline.

5.2 Relevant Frontline policies and documents

5.2.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

- Intercalation policy
- Withdrawal Policy
- Fitness to Study
- Fitness to Practise
- Pregnancy and parenting policy
- Practice Learning Experience Agreement (PLEA).