



School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice

ATTENDANCE POLICY

BSc Paramedic Practice Students

Revision	Date	Owner/s	Approved by	Next review
1.3	March 2020	CPMT	SAB	Oct 2021

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1. Introduction

This policy has been developed to contribute to the requirements for attendance monitoring in order to comply with the professional requirements of the course.

As an approved provider of Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Paramedic Practice course, the School is required to evidence that it has robust processes for monitoring students' attendance to meet the required standards.

It is acknowledged that during any period of study there may be times when students are unable to attend theory or practice due to ill health or personal reasons. Throughout the course students can access advice and support from the Course Team and the University's Student Services which are outlined in the student handbook.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate paramedic students.

3. Principles of Policy

The following principles will apply:

- HEI staff and practice partners will implement the attendance policy consistently, fairly and transparently.
- Students will be given clear and unambiguous information relevant to the attendance requirements of the course.
- Students will adhere to the Attendance Policy and seek support as required.
- Exemptions to the Attendance Policy will be considered and may be applied when exceptional circumstances occur.

4. Course Requirements

4.1 University Attendance

Students who attend a course that leads to a professional qualification are required to attend all timetabled sessions and engage in all learning opportunities associated with timetabled classes.

4.2 Punctuality

Given the potential for class disruption, as highlighted in student feedback, students are expected to attend all scheduled classes on time. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late may not be permitted to enter the classroom dependent on nature of class; however, they will still have access to online material via CampusMoodle. Late arrivals will be considered on an individual basis.

Module team members will contact personal tutors if punctuality is a persistent concern. Personal tutors will then contact students to discuss concerns.

4.3 Mandatory Training

All students must attend all scheduled and timetabled mandatory training sessions and annual updates. Students will not be permitted to commence practice experience if they fail to attend.

4.4 Attendance in Practice

It is an HCPC requirement that paramedic students undertake learning that reflects the 24-hour, 7 day a week delivery of care. For example, ambulance shifts are normally 12 hours in length, in hospital shifts are normally 12 hours and community around 7.5 hours. Students should normally undertake the shifts alongside their practice educator. Students should not self-roster, must comply with the off duty and access the usual request process of the practice learning

experience (PLE) area if a specific duty request is required. The only exceptions to compliance with normal shift patterns would be for students with protected characteristics or reasonable adjustments, or who are under 18 years of age.

Students must be aware that, although there are a minimum number of hours of attendance required in each PLE and to complete the course, these are minimum limits and students are required to attend all hours allocated for each PLE.

4.5 Leave Entitlements

4.5.1 Annual Leave Entitlement

The annual leave dates are pre-determined within the course timetable and are designed by the Course Team at the University. Students receive annual leave dates for the whole of the course on commencing the course. If the University makes changes to the course which impact on annual leave dates, students will be informed. If these changes affect pre-booked holidays, they will be honoured if students can provide evidence that booking was made prior to being informed of course changes.

Any periods of leave taken out with timetabled annual leave periods will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

4.5.2 Public Holidays

Students are expected to follow the rostered shift pattern whilst on placement; this may include public holidays. The actual hours undertaken should be recorded on the student's timesheet. In the event of lost hours due to service closure, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

4.5.3 Make-up Time Policy

The Make-up Time Policy is relevant for students undertaking **undergraduate courses only**. The policy is available from:

www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning

4.5.4 Authorised Absence

The term 'authorised absence' refers to unscheduled, specific time off from a course that is approved by designated individuals on behalf of the Course Management Team.

Normally, authorised absence is requested by students and approved by a designated individual. It is the student's responsibility to inform the relevant designated individual of the need for authorised absence at the earliest opportunity. Where necessary, students should continue to communicate with the individual who has approved the authorised absence to inform them of any further issues or developments in their circumstances.

When on practice placement students should, in the first instance, request a change to their allocated days off or shift pattern. This will minimise the need for authorised absence and the loss of attendance hours. Authorised absence will be approved where this is not feasible and where the student's needs relate to a category specified within this policy (see 5.0 Authorised Absence Provision).

Please note that authorised absence will result in loss of clinical hours and may result in make-up time being required at the end of the course (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

4.6 Designated Individuals

Normally, the personal tutor (when students are based within the University) or the named practice educator (when students are based within a PLE) will approve authorised absence for students. PLE staff, however, may decide that the area

manager will authorise absences rather than the practice educator. In exceptional circumstances other designated individuals may authorise absence for students. [Other designated individuals include: personal tutor buddy, deputy practice educator, course lead or deputy, practice placement manager or deputy, practice teacher, practice education facilitator, practice education lecturer, senior lecturer or Head of School.]

4.7 Non-attendance/Non-engagement

Any concerns that are raised regarding the student's attendance on their course will be brought to the attention of the course lead.

The course fee is funded by the Scottish Government and the Student Awards Agency Scotland may in some cases provide loans/grants to some students. There are often attendance stipulations within these funding methods and, as such, students have a responsibility to fully engage within their studies to ensure these awards are maintained. In some case if the student does not engage this may result in the student being required to pay back awarded monies.

In instances where persistent non-attendance or non-engagement with online learning has occurred for any reason, students may be subject to a non-academic misconduct or fitness to practice hearing which may lead to their discontinuation from the course.

5. Authorised Absence Provision

5.1 Personal Events

5.1.1 Serious Illness/Bereavement

This category refers to circumstances that relate to serious illness, acute need or death of a family member, dependant or close friend. Normally up to one week authorised absence can be approved for circumstances specified above. Individual needs vary however and students may not require a full week. Alternatively, an

extension of this time can also be approved. The following factors should be taken into account:

- The relationship of the student to the individual who is ill or has died;
- The student's need to travel; or
- The student's responsibilities for an individual who is ill, or the estate when an individual has died.

Where it is envisaged that authorised absence may be required beyond 14 working days, the course leader should be consulted to determine whether changes to the student's course is feasible, or whether temporary suspension of study is a more appropriate option. Where these options are not viable, the course leader will approve longer periods of authorised absence where this is deemed necessary.

On return to the course following authorised absence in this category, personal tutors and practice educators should meet with the student to review their progress on the course. Consideration should be given at this meeting to the student's need for support. Students should be encouraged to access relevant support services.

5.1.2 *Personal Health Issues*

This category refers to circumstances that relate to the need to secure emergency dental or medical care or treatment and does not include routine appointments for check-ups or ongoing treatments unless this requires attending appointments with specialist medical practitioners, or the need to have specialist investigations.

Students must endeavour to arrange for such appointments to take place out with programmed University attendance or the planned duty rota while on PLE; however, it is acknowledged that this can be difficult to achieve. During PLEs, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested.

In the event of lost hours due to health related appointments, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

5.1.3 Other Personal Circumstances

This category refers to occasions where students may need to consult other professionals about personal events, such as solicitors, or be legally required to attend meetings, e.g. court appearances (not jury service). This category does not include attending job interviews or training associated with jobs or driving tests: These events need to be arranged during the student's own time.

Students must endeavour to arrange such appointments out with programmed University attendance or the planned duty rota while on PLE. It is acknowledged, however, that this can be difficult to achieve. During PLEs, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested in the first instance to avoid the requirement for authorised absence.

In the event of lost hours due to service closure, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

For attendance at social events during PLEs, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested. In the event of lost hours due to such absences, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

When attending University, the student should contact their personal tutor to discuss authorised absence. Authorised absence should be kept to a minimum in such circumstances; approval can be given for authorised absence ranging from a ½ day to 2 days (where travel is involved and students are a close relative or are playing a key role in the event).

5.2 Unforeseen or Emergency Situations

5.2.1 Domestic Situations

This category refers to circumstances that are unforeseen and where urgent attention is required to secure the situation and prevent ongoing issues. Such circumstances include break-in to the home, fire, burst pipes or flooding, car theft or accident.

During PLEs, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested in the first instance. Normally, authorised absence ranging from ½ day to a full day can be approved for the circumstances specified above.

In the event of lost hours, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

5.2.2 Severe Weather

During theory time the University will communicate with students any changes to scheduled classes.

During PLEs, when there is no evidence of police advice not to travel, all reasonable attempts should be made to attend. In the event of police advice not to travel within a particular geographical area and public transport is compromised, in the first instance, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be negotiated. Where the above is not possible, the actual hours worked should be recorded on the student's timesheet.

Where severe weather results in child care issues for students, every effort should be made to make alternative arrangements for child care to prevent loss of clinical hours. If this is not possible, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested. Where the above is not possible, the actual hours worked should be recorded in the appropriate practice learning document.

In the event of lost hours due to adverse weather, students should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

5.2.3 Carer Arrangements

The term 'carer' within this policy is defined as students who have a dependant/s who normally live in the same house, e.g. spouse/partner, child, parent, grandparent or other relative, and who take responsibility for the day to day care of the dependant/s. It is noted that there may be carer arrangements that may not fully reflect the above definition and these will be considered on an individual basis.

This category addresses circumstances where unforeseen or urgent issues related to planned care arrangements arise. This may be the breakdown of care arrangements or developments that challenge usual care arrangements, e.g. child becomes ill, or parent is unexpectedly discharged from hospital to student's care.

During PLEs, a change to scheduled days off or shift pattern should be requested in the first instance. Normally, authorised absence, ranging from ½ day to 2 days, can be approved for the circumstances specified above and such authorised absence is designed to enable the student to make alternative arrangements for care. The actual hours worked should be recorded on the student's timesheet.

In the event of lost hours due carer commitments, the student should consider amendments to their working pattern as per the make-up time policy (see 4.5.3. *Make-up Time Policy*).

Where care arrangements become problematic, are ongoing and impact on the student's regular attendance and ability to meet the course requirements, the student will be requested to discuss their options with their personal tutor in the first instance.

6. Attendance at Conferences/Leadership Events

Students may be given the opportunity to attend conferences or other events during their course. If approved attendance falls during scheduled theory time, the hours will be recorded as theory. Attendance that falls within a scheduled PLE will only be accredited if it is possible within the relevant course regulations and can be mapped to relevant course competencies. Travel time to these events will not be credited.

7. Recording of Absence

7.1 *Authorised Absence*

In all cases where authorised absence is approved, the designated individual as defined within this policy, should complete the Authorised Absence form, available from: www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning

The completed form should be submitted as soon as possible to Room H510 or scanned and emailed to: snpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk

Where authorised absence from PLE has been approved, the Student Centre will inform personal tutors of the authorised absence, length of approved absence and reason for absence. Personal tutors will be able to determine whether additional support may be necessary for students.

7.2 *Recording and reporting attendance to meet course requirements*

The School operates appropriate attendance monitoring processes and the student will be informed of these during their course induction. Examples of attendance management include within smaller classes, such as tutorials and skills, we will ask students to register their attendance. Registers are therefore a critical tool for monitoring attendance.

All students are expected to attend all timetabled classes unless exceptional circumstances prevent them from doing so.

Students must ensure they sign the relevant registers when in class, taking the following into consideration:

- Students to sign for their own attendance only – students should not ask other students to do this on their behalf.
- Students should never sign on behalf of other students who are not in attendance.
- Students should not sign the register and then elect to not attend – e.g. do not attend part of the class, sign the register and then leave the class post sign-in unless there are exceptional circumstances and they should be shared with the academic staff facilitating the class.

Students who are found to be compromising the conduct and character expected of paramedic students may be referred to a non-academic misconduct hearing.

During PLEs students are required to record the actual hours worked on timesheets. These are verified by a designated individual in practice and submitted on completion of the PLE.

7.3 Recording and Reporting Sickness and Absence

If the student is unable to attend a University class, they must follow this procedure:

- Email the Student Centre as soon as possible informing the School of their absence providing an anticipated duration of absence if known.
snpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk
- Email the Student Centre to report return to University.
snpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the information is relayed promptly and accurately.

If the student is unable to attend a PLE, they must follow this procedure:

- Telephone the PLE as early as possible before commencement of the shift.
- Provide anticipated duration of the absence if known.
- Record the name of the person taking the message.
- Record the date and time the telephone call was made.
- Email the Student Centre as soon as possible informing the School of their absence with an approximate date of return if known.
snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk
- When fit enough to return from sickness, the student must contact the PLE (ideally at least 12 hours before commencement of their next shift).
- Email the Student Centre to report return to PLE.
snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk

Within the course sickness is recorded when the student does not attend theory or practice because of ill health and has followed the procedure outlined above for notification of sickness.

An absence is recorded if the student is absent from theory or practice and fails to notify the appropriate personnel using the relevant procedure as outlined above. Unauthorised absences should not occur during any part of the course.

Failure to notify the University or PLE of sickness will result in the student being recorded as absent.

7.3.1 Certification

If the student is off sick for up to 7 days, a self-certificate should be completed, available from: www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning

The completed form should be submitted to Room H510 or scanned and emailed to: snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk

If the student is off sick for 8 or more consecutive days, they must obtain a medical certificate from their General Practitioner. This certificate should be sent to Room H510 or scanned and emailed to the Student Centre where it will be held in the student's file: snmpabsencereporting@rgu.ac.uk

8. Guidance for Managing Students' Attendance in Practice

The processes relating to reporting absence within this policy should be followed. On return to PLE following any period of absence a 'return to practice' discussion should take place between the student and their practice educator or PLE manager. Please consider the following:

8.1 Before the discussion

- Identify if there are any patterns or trends in the absence e.g. on, before or after days off/annual leave, same day each week.
- Ensure fairness and consistency.
- Consult the practice team - Practice Education Facilitator (PEF), Practice Educator or Practice Education Lecturer (PEL), in the event of 3 or more absences within the placement to consider whether additional support or input from the Practice Education Team is required.
- Consult the practice team to instigate a practice learning support plan (PLSP) if the student has repeatedly failed to adhere to the processes outlined within this policy.

8.2 During the discussion

- Reasons for absence should be discussed and can be recorded in general terms e.g. health issues, personal issues. The student may not wish to divulge exact details of the circumstances of their absence.
- Summarise the actions to be taken.
- Note that the discussion has taken place and any agreed actions within the student's practice assessment documentation (PAD).
- If a PLSP has been instigated, the required documentation should be completed during discussion.

8.3 After the discussion

- Monitor and review regularly, informing the practice team if repeated absences occur.
- If a PLSP has been instigated, the required documentation should be sent to the relevant PEL.

Recurrent or unauthorised absence from practice and/or repeated failure to follow the absence reporting procedures may result in the PLE raising a PLSP. Relevant documentation is available from the Practice Learning Support section on the Practice Learning webpage:

www.rgu.ac.uk/practice-learning

The Practice Education Team can offer guidance as required.