NCG Attendance Management Policy

Policy Title	NCG Attendance Management Policy
Policy Category	Compliant
Owner	Assistant Director, Performance and Outcomes - Quality
Group Executive Lead	Executive Director of Quality
Date Written	Updated August 2023
Considered By	QA / TLA Forum
Approved By	Executive Board
Date Approved	August 2023
Equality Impact Assessment	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics.
Freedom of Information	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
Review Date	August 2024
Policy Summary	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that learner attendance is consistently managed across all NCG operating Colleges. It sets out the high standards and expectations that we set for all learners and staff.

Applicability of Policy	Consultation Undertaken	Applicable To
Newcastle	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form	Yes	Yes
Carlisle	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster	Yes	Yes
Lewisham	Yes	Yes
Southwark	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire	Yes	Yes
Professional Services	Yes	No

Changes to Earlier Versions	
Previous Approval Date	**Summarise Changes Made Here**
August 2023	Update to include new withdrawal process
September 2022	Updated to include use of independent study mark (i mark)
July 2022	Wording amended to include reference to measures taken to ensure learners can access missed work include reasonable adjustments where a learner may have additional learning needs and /or a disability or is care experienced. Wording added to reflect that there may be exceptional circumstances where authorised absence is acceptable for a care experienced learner. Wording added to clarify the process for withdrawals / transfers of care experienced EHCP or HNs students. Definitions added for teacher, learner, apprentice, care experienced student and SLT. Removal of reference to track and trace. *Removal of reference to local attendance management procedures.*
September 2021	Update to remove asynchronous teaching mark (Y mark).

September 2020	Updates to register marks to incorporate approaches for sustainable blended delivery including asynchronous and synchronous remote delivery.
March 2020	Annex B created to identify how attendance / engagement would be managed during COVID lockdown.

Linked Documents	
Document Title	**Relevance**
NCG Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy	This policy identifies the required characteristics of all teaching, learning and assessment at NCG. It forms a non-negotiable expectation, through which the Group sets-out what is required of a successful teacher within NCG. The policy sets out the framework for the evaluation of teaching and learning and aligns the NCG core principles with national standards for teaching and education.
NCG Apprenticeships Policy	This policy sets out the requirements for NCG's apprenticeship provision in all Colleges regardless of scope and scale. It builds upon the Institute for Apprenticeships' definitions and core principles in defining a non-negotiable standard for implementation by college senior leadership teams.
NCG Single Safeguarding Policy	NCG, and its constituent college and training providers, is committed to the safety and well-being of its learning community. In doing so, this single policy will be adopted through college procedures and strictly adhered to.
NCG Unified tutorial, Attainment and Progress	Sets out the arrangements for learner progress milestone reports.
NCG Student Positive Behaviour Policy	Sets out the desirable behaviours, including attendance, required to succeed.
Care Experienced Student Policy	Sets out the NCG commitment to promoting positive outcomes for our Care-Experienced Students based on their holistic experience at an NCG College. It also reconfirms our commitment to the Care Leaver's Covenant and the Employer Charter.

1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that learner attendance is consistently managed across all NCG operating colleges. It sets out the high standards and expectations that we set for all learners and staff.

> **The NCG standard requires relevant staff to mark their registers accurately, each session, in line with this policy.**

2. Policy Requirements

Each NCG college is required to ensures full implementation of and compliance with this NCG policy.

3. Definitions

Attendance management is the process of ensuring that learners and apprentices attend their planned learning, regularly and on time. It is the responsibility of all staff in the Group to support this process. There is a special emphasis placed on teaching and training staff (to plan and deliver interesting lessons that encourage learners to attend) and tutors (through pastoral support and management of the learning programme).

Professional support staff in a variety of academic and non-academic roles support this process through mentorship, counselling, advice and guidance, data collection and management reporting.

The term **learner** is used in its widest sense and includes all learners, whether young people aged 14-18, learners with specific high needs, apprentices, adult learners, or higher education students.

The term **apprentice** is used to include all apprentices whether on frameworks or standards, regardless of sector and level.

The term **teacher** is used to describe all teaching and training staff, including teachers, lecturers, instructors, skills trainers, learning support practitioners, coaches / mentors, work experience coaches (or similar) and teachers in managing positions.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) relates to the Principal and senior leaders in each college.

The term **care experienced student** is used to describe any learner who is or has ever been in the care of the Local Authority and would therefore classify themselves as Care Experienced**.**

4. Attendance Monitoring Requirement

It is a funding and legislative requirement (including through Keeping Children Safe in Education) to maintain an accurate and reliable record of attendance – usually, but not exclusively, through register management.

Attendance and punctuality are integral and fundamental to all learning; however, the recording attendance is required for:

- Funding compliance.
- An accurate and permanent record of when and where a learner was present – and by extension health, wellbeing and safeguarding.
- To validate teaching hours for both permanent, sessional, and learning support staff.
- To underpin approaches to safeguarding, prevent and county lines initiatives by monitoring regular and frequent attendance patterns.

5. The NCG Standard (amplified)

The expectation for **all learners** is:

NCG, in its aim seeks to establish exceptional teaching, learner outcomes and experiences and therefore expects learners to have:

- 100% attendance.
- 100% punctuality.

This applies to all parts of their programme of study – including English and maths classes.

This aim should not be confused with key performance indicator (KPI) targets, which are set annually based on:

- Available national data for attendance.
- An adjustment for setting SMART targets.
- An adjustment for local and underpinning context.

The expectation for **all staff** delivering face to face and **synchronous** online delivery is:

- Registers must be completed at the beginning (within 20 minutes) of a lesson wherever the facilities exist to do so.
- 100% registers are marked each day / week for scheduled sessions, and within 5 working days for independent study sessions.
- Registers must be completed electronically where this facility exists.
- Where the facility does not exist, then registers will still be marked within 20 minutes and uploaded electronically to the MIS within the same day.
- Live synchronous lessons will use the appropriate mark to distinguish between delivery in college, and asynchronous sessions – this is essential to understand whether the learner was in college, or elsewhere.

6. Planned Learning

Reliable attendance measurement requires accurate planning, organisation, timetabling and register management. Problems arise when this fails to reflect the expectations of the study programme or apprenticeship. For example:

- Inaccurate start and end dates – note late enrolments must have an accurate start entered into the ILR to prevent the generation of unnecessary, unmarked backdated registers.
- Elements that are not formally taught, organised or supervised by a teacher or trainer.
- Inaccurate recording due to work experience, enrichment, higher education visits, industry visits or sporting activity.
- Inaccurate planning of day / block / semester release.
- Producing group registers for 1:2:1 planned tutorial activity or 1:2:1 learning support sessions, whereby the majority of the wider group would not be expected to attend.

It is the responsibility of the teacher, tutor, and course leaders to ensure that planning is accurate and that timetables / registers are not produced that exceed the requirements of this policy.

7. Authorised Absences (A)

It is accepted that there are occasions when it is not possible for a student or apprentice to attend for significant reasons that are out of their control. We recognise that attendance is important to learners who may subsequently seek references for higher education, apprenticeships, and employment. Therefore, the following points constitute accepted reasons for absence and should be marked as such on the register using the 'A' mark. Management reporting will be able to distinguish between the 'in / out' present attendance rate, and an adjustment for the 'A' mark, which will be used as a neutral mark.

Use of this mark requires a mandatory form of evidence, for example a hospital appointment card. It is a neutral mark on the register and does not contribute to cumulative attendance. Tutors should scan a copy and upload to eTrackr as evidence.

- Hospital or GP appointments (appointment card or letter required as evidence).
- Diagnosed medical conditions that require ongoing / regular hospital treatment (letter required as evidence of appointment schedule).
- Family bereavements of an immediate relative (grandparent, parent, carer, child, spouse, sibling) – does not require evidence, but should be verified sensitively.
- Court attendance for jury service (requires evidence of duty / dates).
- Job interview (requires evidence of appointment).
- Designated Religious Festival – does not require evidence.
- Driving test (requires evidence of appointment).
- Mandated appointment with Department for Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Home Office (requires evidence of appointment).
- Shielding / ill health as a result of coronavirus high risk, or due to temporary isolation due to Public Health England / NHS advice is unable to continue study for some reason (note if fit and able the learner would continue to study remotely and be marked using S marks as appropriate).
- Appointments related to the support of care experienced students such as PEP meetings and reviews and other key external meetings (evidence should be requested but may not always be available therefore a sensitive approach may be required).

8. Learner Attendance Management

College procedures must set out how attendance issues will be fairly investigated, the consequences of persistent and intentional

nonattendance (disciplinary or sanctions) and the measures taken to ensure that learners can access missed work and / or training include reasonable adjustments where a learner is care experienced or may have additional learning needs and / or a disability to ensure there are no accessibility barriers. It should concurrently set out how good, persistent attendance will be recognised, and where applicable, rewarded. The NCG Student Positive Behaviour Policy sets out the code of conduct for learners, and behaviours expected, including good attendance. It also sets out the stages for dealing with a lack of attendance.

Non-attendance (O) can occur for a number of reasons, and it is essential that tutors, teachers, support staff and managers work together to determine whether or not there is:

- A genuine reason for non-attendance in the short, medium, or longer term.
- Whether the attendance is related to specific issues at the place of learning (inappropriate course choice, financial constraints, transport, or access to the provision, bullying).
- Whether there is an underlying support need / exceptional circumstance where a reasonable adjustment needs to be in place.
- Whether the attendance issue can be resolved with the assistance of parents, carers, employers, or other parties.
- Whether the attendance is likely to result in unintended consequences for the learner e.g., removal of financial support, benefits, or disciplinary action.
- Whether the learner can make up any missed learning.
- Whether system or staff error has resulted in untimely and / or inaccurate attendance.

College attendance procedures must ensure that repetitive absence – viewed over a 3-week period, or repetitive trends over a longer period (e.g missing the same day per week) – is tackled robustly and promptly to ensure a rapid and supported return to learning.

Learners absent for longer than 4 weeks should be formally reviewed by the SLT and potentially withdrawn from their programme of study unless there are clear mitigating circumstances and a clear plan for return to learning.

Use of approved break in learning status may be used in some circumstances, such as maternity; staff are required to follow college procedures and checks before enacting a break.

This policy and the accompanying college procedures must be accessible to the learners through induction, College managers must implement a method to ensure that the learner understands and formally agrees to the policy, prior to starting their academic, vocational, or applied studies.

College procedures must set-out through pastoral and / or behavioural management policies what happens when a learner fails to attend regularly, the timeframes and how this will be communicated to the learners though induction and through ongoing reminders.

9. Attendance Reporting

Group QA and Group IDS will ensure that attendance reporting is a key feature of automated performance dashboards and reports.

These reports will use an open and transparent attendance calculation methodology that aligns with sector best practice. The minimum requirements and current methodology for the calculation of attendance are set out in the annex to this policy.

10. Subcontracted Provision

All NCG colleges must ensure that any provision delivered through subcontractors meets the same standards with respect to attendance. This will be achieved by:

- Inclusion of adherence to the quality framework policies in the NCG Subcontract Management Framework.
- Specific contract clauses with each subcontractor to stipulate compliance with the policies within the framework.
- College assurance checks to validate that the subcontractor has a local procedure in place prior to delivery that meets that NCG policy.
- College assurance checks to ensure ongoing compliance with the attendance policy.
- A focus on attendance as part of the ongoing quality monitoring of subcontractors.

11. Assuring Policy Compliance

11.1. Local Compliance

The timely marking of registers is a non-negotiable standard across the Group and college leads are accountable for implementing a consistent approach through the college procedure. Where staff persistently fail to mark registers promptly, will require initial discussion to determine:

- Whether the staff member requires further training (developmental).

- Whether the non-timely marking is due to technical issues (requires urgent investigation and resolution).

- Whether the non-timely marking is due to occasional carelessness (censure), persistent carelessness (competency) or malevolence (disciplinary).

11.2. Assurance

In order to provide the NCG Executive with assurance that the attendance policy is implemented correctly across all areas of the Group, the following steps will be taken to demonstrate compliance.

- Each **principal** will have an explicit performance objective assigned around implementation of the attendance policy and the steps required to ensure ongoing local compliance.

- Colleges will monitor and act on local compliance, particularly to ensure 100% marking of registers, 100% conversion to electronic records, and to ensure there is no abuse of the authorised absence marks.

- **Group Business Assurance** will periodically review college procedures to assure that it aligns with the main NCG attendance policy and is sufficient to drive up attendance rates locally.

Annex A 1. Recording Attendance

1.1. Programme of Study / Adult / High Needs Learning

Students should be marked Present (P) on a formal register when they are attending the following activities when a routine teacher / tutor is present:

- Core programme aim.

- English & Maths.

- Taught tutorials.

- Employability training.

- Planned, timetabled, and taught enrichment activity such as study or vocational skills.

- Taught (teacher-led) revision sessions.
- Examinations.
- Additional learning support.
- Planned and organised Independent Study sessions

When the routine teacher / tutor is not present, or when the learners is participating in a concurrent planned activity (sports or skills competition / enrichment / work experience) then a learner may be marked as 'not required to attend' (N) on the register (in study, but not present in class) – and then the attendance activity should be recorded using an alternative appropriate format.

- Social action e.g., NCS – usually evidenced through evidence of attendance and / or project work provided by NCS.
- Participating in Skills or Sports Competitions.
- Volunteering – usually through a journal or log-sheet.
- Work Experience / placements – usually through a journal or booklet.
- Trips & visits – usually recorded through an ad-hoc register.
- Planned personal study – recorded as learning journal or erecord if using an on-line learning tool.
- Non-taught enrichment – for example participation with college sports teams or skills competitions.

1.2. Apprenticeships

Apprentices should be marked Present (P) on a formal register when they are attending the following activities:

- Skills or knowledge training (forming part of the required off the job element).

- English & maths (although not included in the required off the job entitlement).

- Taught tutorials (although not included in the off required the job entailment).

- Taught (teacher-led) revision / skills consolidation sessions (forming part of the required off the job entitlement).

- Examinations (although not included in the required off the job entitlement).

- Additional learning support (although not included in the required off the job entitlement).

2. Attendance Marks

The following are the acceptable register marks: /	Present
A	**A**uthorised Absence, used only for those activities listed in section 7 (neutral attendance).
E	Attended for the majority of session but left **e**arly (positive attendance).
I	Independent Study, used for specifically planned and organised independent study activity sessions, that form part of the study programme. It is an asynchronous mark, whereby the tutor setting the work verifies that the study has been completed (usually through evidence of learning) and updates the register within 7 calendar days. It is a positive mark, but it is not a mark that is used to confirm the physical presence / time / place of the learner, as would be the case with the P mark. For this reason, the mark should not be used in other timetables lessons as a substitute for taught teaching. However use of this mark is permitted, with the express permission of the college principal, for very occasional circumstances where a teacher is not able to teach the class, and no cover is available, but the learners are able to complete set work (for example in a strike, or in the case of extreme COVID staff disruption).

L	Arrived **l**ate but attended the majority of session (positive attendance).
P	**P**resent (positive attendance) in the college for face-to-face delivery. Extending to planned and supervised study sessions and accompanied educational visits.
S	**S**ynchronous (positive attendance) - live streamed / real time remote or distance delivery where the learning is actively engaged in the session at the time.
N	**N**ot required to attend; in study, but not present in class or study session that is not supervised or registered – may for example be used if an examination, or work experience, sporting, or skills event clashes with a planned session (neutral attendance).
N (also used for)	Short, temporary college closure (e.g., CPD, snow, strike) (neutral attendance).
N (also used for)	The student has completed and achieved the course ahead of planned end date, but the completion has yet to be processed (neutral attendance).
T	**T**ransferred to another college programme (neutral attendance).
W	**W**ithdrawn (neutral attendance).
O	Short term sickness, reported by the Student / parent / carer that does not qualify for 'A' mark (negative attendance).
O (also used for)	Disciplinary action / Suspended (negative attendance).
U	**U**nreported absence, no contact made (negative attendance).

3. Attendance Reporting

Group IDS, in partnership with Group QA, will ensure that attendance reporting is a key feature of automated performance reports – this will include as a minimum:

- Individual learner attendance and punctuality.
- Group and Tutor Group attendance.
- Specific course aim attendance such as main aim, tutorial, Maths and English.
- Attendance by key demographic or segmentation (such as gender, ethnicity, disability and difficulty and social disadvantage).
- Persistent non-attendance (as required).
- Unmarked registers.
- Untimely marked registers.
- Ability to filter for attendance on FE as opposed to HE, full cost, or other funded programmes.
- Access to different 'snapshots' of data to support quality improvement, for example a 3-week rolling average, weekly snapshot or the ability to exclude the first 42-day period.

These reports will use an open and transparent attendance calculation methodology that has been consulted on with the Colleges. The current methodology for the calculation, along with detail of any registers that are excluded from the main 'FE' dataset calculation, is set out in Appendix C. Each report will also make clear the source of the data and also whether it is live or based on stored 'aggregated' datasets.

Attendance Scenarios – not intended to be an exhaustive list

Reporting and Monitoring Student Absence				
Ref	**Scenario**	**Action**		**Attendance Management**
1	Student / parent calls the college to report a short-term sickness absence	Call received and information logged – student is marked absent (O)	Admin team	Campus attendance phone number / email address as advertised **– student marked absent reported (O)** unless mitigation can be evidenced for authorised absence. Action / support will be proportional to circumstances and time absent. Student will be reminded of expectations.
2	A student is absent, no contact	Student is marked absent – unreported (U)	Session tutor / lecturer	**Student marked absent unreported (U)** Nominated tutor to follow up absence through pastoral procedures. Action / support will be proportional to circumstances and time absent. Student will be reminded of expectations and process in reporting their absence.
3	Student is on work experience, or is involved in a skills competition, but the class is running as normal	A planned activity – student is marked not required to attend (N)	Session tutor / lecturer	Tutor must communicate with sessional teacher; student marked **not required to attend** (N) and an alternative form of attendance required.
4	Student is on a driving test and has an appointment card	An example of authorised absence (A)	Session tutor / lecturer	Student marked as **authorised absence (A).**
5	Student has been to see a consultant, but can't produce an appointment letter	Student is marked absent – mark depends on whether the tutor / team were notified	Session tutor / lecturer	Tutor marks **student marked absent unreported (U)** and requests a copy of the letter, if tutor notified ahead of time, then **student marked absent reported (O).** Tutor updates the mark to **(A) authorised absence** if applicable and evidence provided.

6	A group of students are marked absent, for a bespoke tutorial when they are not required to be attend	Timetable should be amended, to reflect only those students required and registered	Session tutor / lecturer	**Timetable / register update required on planning system** Tutor should update the planning system and ensure accurate recording of their group against planned hours.
7	A learner turns in 30 minutes late for 90-minute sessions	Student is marked late and the minutes late recorded	Session tutor / lecturer	**Student marked late (L)** – follow NCG policy for follow-up action / support the time late should be recorded in an appropriate field.
8	Student is on an accompanied (taught) educational visit for the full class at the time of the planned session, facilitated by their usual tutor at this time.	A planned activity	Session tutor / lecturer	**Student marked present (P)** using existing register on return to college – in this case the 20min rule will not apply.
9	A student is advised to self-isolate due to COVID and the rest of the class are attending as planned.	The student would normally continue to study from home	Session tutor / lecturer	Student is marked using the I mark as in independent study. This is only done when the tutor verifies that the planned learning has taken place. It is a positive mark.).
10.	The teacher is delivering a session in real time using Teams.	A synchronous planned activity	Session tutor / lecturer	If the teacher is streaming the session live using Teams students viewing / participating in real time would be marked synchronous delivery (S). The teacher must verify that they are present – i.e., use of chat for questions, audio, and use of camera.

Annex B – Adjustments during COVID19 lockdown measures (this section is achieved in this current version of the policy).

Annex C - Calculation of attendance rates

Attendance rates across NCG will be calculated using the same underlying methodology regardless of the local MI System being used. This will ensure that like for like comparisons across the group are available and that consistent information is shared, for example during any external inspection.

Attendance calculation formula

The basic attendance calculation is as follows:

Attendance % =   <u>Total positive register marks</u>

                            Total planned marks

Note – all neutral marks are excluded from the calculation

In terms of the individual marks this can also be expressed as:

The calculation for punctuality is as follows

Punctuality % =   <u>Total present excluding late marks</u>

                            Total present including late marks

Annex D - Provision in scope

For calculation of the core Further Education (FE) dataset the provision where the majority of learners attending are funded from the following sources will be included and is provision subject to Ofsted Inspection - Programmes for young people (aged 14 – 18).

- Adult Education Budget.
- Adult learner loans.
- Apprenticeships (attending day or block release).
- Traineeships.
- Subcontracted out (to other providers).

The following will also be monitored for contract and quality purposes, but will be excluded from self-assessment reports (as out of scope for Ofsted)

- Higher Education programmes.
- European Social Fund Programmes.
- Commercial full cost courses.
- International courses.
- Provision subcontracted in (from other providers).

Withdrawals and Transfers

We expect that Colleges will remove negative attendance marks for any learner that occur after their date of last attendance / learning when they withdrew from a course or transferred to a different class / course. Where a w/d or transfer is being processed

for a student with an EHCP or who is HNF or care experienced it is essential, prior to any decision being made, that relevant key support colleagues are notified timely, as communication with external stakeholders is required.

New from August 2023

Non-attendance lists go out weekly – this includes 2-3 week non-attenders as the intent is to get ahead of these learners before they drop out.

1. At the same time the four-week non-attenders list will be circulated to Learner Data Partners who will go away and speak to managers, tutors etc and either get a tutor signature for withdrawal or auditable evidence of intention to remain. They have two weeks to get this back to the LDS lead and LDS will process those withdrawals.
2. Any other withdrawals not due to non-attendance will follow the existing processes and withdrawals will be processed in line with those. If the automated withdrawal system is used, ultimately this will be LDS doing the withdrawing but only after college authorisation has allowed it to process through the system. This will include learner notified withdrawals or withdrawals from elements of programmes.

It's worth noting there will be a KPI on four-week withdrawal in the attendance email that goes out each week and this will include elements of programmes not attended for four weeks. It would be expected that college would use process 2 to action these to prevent late year funding band changes which have unexpected / unaccounted for financial implications in Q3 and Q4. It's advised colleges monitor this KPI to keep the number low.