

Open College of the Arts (OCA)

Active Study Policy

Version no	Status	Policy Owner	Approved by	Date of approval	Date of next review
1	Approved	Craig Dewis	OMG	06/11/2019	
2	Approved	Craig Dewis	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2023
3	Approved	Head of Student Services	CQC - Chair's Action	21 July 2023	June 2024

1. The purpose of this policy

As an educational charity, the Open College of the Arts (OCA) has a duty of care to students who enrol to our programs of study. This duty of care extends to wellbeing and safeguarding, but also progression, attainment and access to success. In addition we have regulatory requirements to monitor activity for reporting purposes to Office for Students (OfS), and Student Loans Company (SLC) (hereafter referred to as Student Finance) among others.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all students studying undergraduate and postgraduate courses at OCA when they are enrolled to a unit. This policy does not apply when students are between units (when students are waiting to be assessed, or are 'interrupted'), and it does not apply during periods of pre-agreed study breaks while enrolled to a unit (deferrals). Certain sections and/or paragraphs may relate to specific students; where this is the case this will be clearly identified.
- 2.2 Details of engagement for short courses and foundation courses are contained within OCAs Non-Accredited Framework.

3. Linked and other policies and legislation

- 3.1 This policy is subject to [OCA's Terms and Conditions](#).
- 3.2 This policy references the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. In addition, the policy references the [Academic Regulatory Framework](#), [Common Credit Framework](#), and [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#), Non-Accredited Framework, [Fitness to Study Policy](#), [Student Accessibility Policy](#), [Refund Policy](#) and [Student Complaints Policy](#).

4. General Principles

- 4.1 Students enrolling onto a course of study with OCA need to remain engaged with their studies throughout. Active engagement with a course increases the prospects for success.
- 4.2 OCA is committed to helping students succeed. This policy, whilst there are reporting obligations included, is focussed on how OCA can best assist students to engage and progress in their studies.
- 4.3 OCA monitors engagement in order to provide support to students. Where there are gaps in interaction with OCA services and support, these flag up intervention points that OCA uses to get in touch and provide support.
- 4.4 As a body in receipt of public funding through Student Finance and the Office for Students, OCA is required to report ongoing engagement with studies. This is a requirement for any student in receipt of funding through Student Finance.

5. Reporting duties

- 5.1 OCA is required by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 to report to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) details of students at OCA at set points each academic year, including engagement with studies; this information is also provided to the Office for Students as detailed within the OCA's [privacy notice](#).
- 5.2 Students in receipt of funding through any of the national funding bodies in the UK (Student Finance England, Wales, or Northern Ireland) have specific conditions attached to their funding, including that their institution reports details of study engagement. At three points in each academic year, OCA is required to report to Student Finance the status of each student in receipt of funding.
- 5.3 Student Finance and other relevant organisations require ongoing interaction with studies in order for tuition fees and/or maintenance payments to be released. Engagement is defined by OCA in section 6 of this policy.

6. Active engagement with study whilst enrolled on a unit/module for undergraduate students

- 6.1 OCA defines active engagement with studies as interaction with one or more services provided by OCA in order for students to complete their studies. Ongoing active engagement is defined as one or more interactions with these services in any given rolling 90 day period **whilst enrolled on a unit/module** unless a pre-agreed study break has been arranged.
- 6.2 In any 90 day period students enrolled on a unit/module need to interact with OCA in at least one of the following ways:
- 6.2.1 Submitting an Assignment/Project through OCA Learn
 - 6.2.2 Accessing course materials via OCA Learn
 - 6.2.3 Attending a tutorial or other academic support
 - 6.2.4 Engagement with the Learner Support Team to support academic progress
 - 6.2.5 Update to learning log/reflective commentary (where OCA has access to this via OCA Spaces)
 - 6.2.6 Submitting work for formal assessment
- 6.3 OCA conducts monthly checks with tutors and OCA support teams, contact and/or active engagement with services to work out whether any of the above have happened. Evidence of any of the above will enable OCA to confirm active ongoing engagement for reporting purposes. If no active engagement has not been recorded during a 90 day period while the student is enrolled on a unit/module the student will be registered as non-engaged.

7. What happens when there is no active engagement on undergraduate programmes

- 7.1 During any given 90 day period while enrolled on a unit/module, if there is no recorded active engagement with any of the above services unless a pre-agreed study break has been arranged, we will attempt to contact the student. This contact is to see what is happening, if there are any issues affecting students ability to study, and to offer support.
- 7.2 OCA will get in touch via email to a student's OCA and personal email addresses as held on the students file and the student will be given 10 working days in which to confirm active engagement if they are active in other ways, or seek support if needed.
- 7.3 If there are extenuating circumstances preventing a student from engaging effectively, they will be able to discuss options with the Learner Support Team (learnersupport@oca.ac.uk). This could include, but is not limited to, applying for a deferral (study break) if it is not possible to study, discussion of reasonable adjustments due to disability, or support to apply for [DSA \(Disabled Students Allowance\)](#) if applicable. If the circumstances are health or disability related and expected to continue for some time, the [Fitness to Study policy](#) may also be appropriate.
- 7.4 If for any reason students actively wish to withdraw, students should request a [withdrawal form](#) from studentadvice@oca.ac.uk.

8. Withdrawal from study

- 8.1 Where there is no recorded engagement from a student during any specified 90 day period while enrolled on a unit/module, and OCA receives no response within the 10 working days in paragraph 7.2 above, students will also be classified as not in attendance with their funding provider.
- 8.2 Students not in attendance will ordinarily be withdrawn from their degree pathway. Where this is required, 30 days formal notice of the intended action will be given to the student by email to the students OCA email address and personal email address as held on the students file.
- 8.3 Once a pending withdrawal notification has been sent, if engagement is re-established prior to withdrawal, a study plan will be required before a student can continue unless the Learner Support Team feels an alternative course of action is appropriate due to mitigating circumstances.
- 8.4 Students in receipt of Student Finance funding, classified as not in attendance, and withdrawn from study will be notified to Student Finance.

9. Postgraduate students

- 9.1 The process for Postgraduate students differs as there is a set schedule of attendance for these courses.
- 9.2 The tutor team will be the first to notice non-attendance / engagement and students will be contacted after a missed session / deadline where they have not notified the tutor in advance of their inability to attend. Concerns may also be raised in cases where a student has indicated an inability to attend but there have been multiple sessions missed.
- 9.3 Students may be invited to attend a discussion with their tutor to see if any support measures are required.
- 9.4 If there are mitigating circumstances preventing a student from engaging effectively, students will be able to discuss options with the Learner Support Team (learnersupport@oca.ac.uk). This could include, but is not limited to, applying for an interruption of studies, discussion of reasonable adjustments due to disability, or support to apply for DSA (Disabled Students Allowance) if applicable. If the circumstances are health or disability related and expected to continue for some time, the [Fitness to Study policy](#) may also be appropriate.

10. Refunds

- 10.1 Refunds, and the grounds for eligibility are outlined in the [OCA Refund Policy](#). Withdrawal due to non-engagement does not constitute grounds for a refund or reduction of fees.

11. Appeals

11.1 Students may only appeal an academic decision where there are specific grounds relating to the fairness or adequacy of the procedures followed, including the consideration of all relevant evidence, the correct application of rules, how a decision was communicated, bias, and whether the decision was one which, in all the circumstances, it was reasonable for OCA to have made. Full details of how to make this request is contained in OCA's [Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#).

12. Support for the policy

12.1 If you require any support with this policy you should contact the Learner Support Team at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk or 01226 978618 to discuss at the earliest opportunity.

13. Control of the policy

13.1 This policy was authored by Craig Dewis, Head of Student Services in consultation with OCA Staff and given approval through OCA Oversight Management Group in June 2022

14. Reviewing the policy

14.1 OCA will work closely with the Student Association to gather student feedback on the outline of the policy, its intentions, the administration of the policy, and a review of all these points in practice. These will then be fed into the next review point for the policy.

14.2 The next review date is June 2024. If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then you should contact either the Learner Support team directly at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk, or if you are a student, you might also wish to raise these with the appropriate OCASA representative.