

Student Attendance Policy

Contents:

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Why Regular Attendance is so important	2
3. Understanding types of absence	2
4. Absence procedures	2
5. Persistent Absenteeism	3
6. Diploma Students in receipt of DaDA Funding	3
7. Lateness	3
8. Persistent Lateness	3
9. Authorised Absence.....	3
10. Term Dates, Holidays and Absence Requests	4
11. Attending Open Auditions and Agent Meetings (Year 3 students only)	4
12. Tier 4 Sponsored Students.....	4
13. Recording Attendance	5
14. Calculating Attendance:	6
15. Action taken due to Persistent Student Absenteeism.....	7
16. Sanctions for Unsatisfactory Student Attendance	8
17. Summary of Sanctions:	9
18. Appeals against a Programme Withdrawal (Final Stage)	10
19. Student Advice (BA Students only).....	11
20. External Adjudication by Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)	11
21. Document Control	11

1. Introduction

Providing a student experience of the highest possible quality is something that Bird College takes very seriously. Promoting and encouraging student engagement with all aspects of their learning experience is a key aspect of this, and it is vital that all students at Bird College attend all their timetabled sessions, unless absence is unavoidable, to gain the greatest benefit from their education and training.

This policy has been developed as part of Bird College’s overall Student Attendance & Engagement Strategy which aims to provide a supportive learning environment of which student attendance is one aspect of overall engagement.

The College monitors the attendance of students at timetabled teaching sessions for the following reasons:

- a) To aid the retention of students by allowing early identification of those students at risk and allow timely interventions to be made in terms of academic and pastoral support.
- b) To comply with the requirements of the UK Home Office under our Tier4 licence that requires us to monitor the attendance accurately of those students subject to visa restrictions so that an attendance return can be made within specified timescales required by the Home Office.
- c) Attendance data from the BA (Hons) in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre will be provided to the University of Greenwich to inform their statutory returns to The Office for Students (OfS) and HESA. This data is used to determine the funding received by Bird College.
- d) To enable notifications of withdrawals/suspension to be made on time so that external stakeholders, (e.g., UKVI, University of Greenwich, Trinity College London) are informed in a timely manner.

2. Why Regular Attendance is so important

Attendance on any Further or Higher Education course is essential to develop one's knowledge and academic skills. Here at Bird College, there is also a clear correlation between high attendance and artistic and technical development, as this can only be achieved through a rigorous and sustained commitment to all aspects of a student's training. Any unauthorised absence, therefore, disrupts the learning experience and could also impact on your overall college experience. The staff at Bird College want you to achieve success and sustain long careers in the Musical Theatre and Dance industry, and they expect you to attend every session on your timetable.

The College expects **100% attendance**. Students should note that both the College and validating partners consider 'absence without consent' to be a serious breach of their regulations. Poor attendance can lead to one of the following outcomes:

- Disciplinary action (e.g., suspension)
- Failure to complete a module (BA) or unit (Diploma)
- Failure of continuous assessment components
- Failure to progress to the next year of study or to gain a final award

3. Understanding types of absence

Every absence from college is classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Authorised absences are periods away from college for reasons such as illness and medical appointments which unavoidably fall within college time, emergencies, or other unavoidable situations. We ask all students to endeavour to book medical appointments at the start or end of days to minimise disruption to their studies.

Unauthorised absences are those which the college does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Staying away from college unnecessarily
- Missing individual lessons over the course of a day
- Day trips, Family celebrations and holidays in term time

If a student is going to be absent from any lesson, they should follow the Absence Procedures (below).

4. Absence procedures

In the event of an absence due to illness or unavoidable and/or unforeseeable circumstances, students should email or telephone the College at studentabsences@birdcollege.co.uk or **020 8300 6004 (Option 1)** before 09.45 on each of the days the student is absent, so that tutors can be informed. *(In the event of a student being too ill to contact the college personally, they should ask someone reliable to telephone the College on the above number on their behalf by the stated time).* **If a student does not email or telephone before this time and there is not an exceptional reason this absence will be considered not notified and unauthorised. Several absences of this type will lead to disciplinary action.**

If a student is away for 5 or more consecutive days, a medical certificate must be provided to **Lyn Upton, the Timetable and Register Data Coordinator**, upon their return. **Lyn Upton** is based in the Reception Office (Room 12) on the ground floor each morning and room 119 on the first floor in the afternoons (Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays only) and can be contacted via Lyn.Upton@Birdcollege.co.uk or **020 3846 0333**. Students who have been absent from college for a long period due to illness or an injury, must arrange to meet the **College Physiotherapist** upon their return and prior to restarting a full timetable. In this meeting, the **College Physiotherapist** will assess the student and inform them whether they are able to participate in full physical activities.

If a student is 'signed off' from college by the **College Physiotherapist**, they will inform both the student and the relevant staff of the length of time the student has been signed off for. Should the student remain absent beyond the date agreed with the **College Physiotherapist**, the student must email or telephone the College at studentabsences@birdcollege.co.uk or **020 8300 6004 (Option 1)** before 09.45 on each of the subsequent days they will be absent.

5. Persistent Absenteeism

Members of **The Executive Team** at the college monitor all absences thoroughly and any cases where students are persistently absent will be investigated. A student is first flagged as a 'Persistent Absentee' when their attendance falls below 90%. Absence at this level will have a detrimental impact on any student's professional training prospects and this is why we intervene at this stage. It is essential that the student and the staff work in partnership to ensure the student's attendance improves and that they're able to meet the requirements from their professional training.

6. Diploma Students in receipt of DaDA Funding

Students on the Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre programme and in receipt of Drama and Dance Award (DaDA) funding, please note that your continued receipt of funding is conditional on satisfactory attendance of classes as well as appropriate behaviour at the College and progression in your studies. **Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their DaDA support withdrawn by the College, in accordance with the DaDA Scheme regulations.**

7. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. The college day will typically begin from 08.00 to 08.15 to allow students time to warm up prior to their first practical class, and all students must endeavour to attend all lessons on time and only exceptional circumstances will be considered as an acceptable reason for lateness.

Students who arrive to class late might disrupt the training of others as well as for themselves. Students will be permitted to join classes, no matter how late they arrive, but must adhere to their tutor's instructions. For physical classes, students must ensure they warm-up appropriately regardless of the time they join the class, and may then be allowed to partake in that class. Where tutors consider a latecomer's participation in a class to be impractical, the tutor may instruct the student to watch without participating and to take notes from the side.

Tutors will record student lateness on their registers for monitoring purposes by the **Executive Team**. **The Executive Team** are conscious that circumstances outside an individual's control may, on occasion, prevent students arriving for their first scheduled class of the day on time.

If students arrive late having attended a meeting with a member of staff, for example with the **Principal & Artistic Director, Assistant Principals** or **College Physiotherapist**, please advise the tutor upon arrival to that class.

8. Persistent Lateness

Persistent Lateness is tracked and monitored carefully by members of the **Executive Team**.

When patterns of lateness have been identified by members of the **Executive Team**, students will be asked to attend a meeting with the **Principal & Artistic Director** or **Assistant Principal (FE/HE QA)** to discuss strategies and to set targets to improve their punctuality. Students who fail to demonstrate an improvement will be subject to disciplinary action.

9. Authorised Absence

Absence is not normally allowed for any reason other than medical or serious personal reasons (e.g. family bereavement). If a student has a medical appointment, the student must complete an **Absence Request Form**. A blank Absence Form will be sent to all students at the start of the Academic Year for completion as required. Once completed, please email your Absence Request Form to the **Assistant to the Principal & Artistic Director** at Jessica.Levin@Birdcollege.co.uk. The student will only be contacted if the request has not been approved by **Luis DeAbreu, the Principal & Artistic Director** at Bird College..

Students should make every effort to arrange medical appointments at the beginning or end of the day or during free periods to avoid major disruption to their lessons. If it is only possible to get a medical appointment during class time, students should inform the College **BEFORE** the event otherwise the absence will not be authorised. Students should

also consider the Assessment Schedule when booking time off. Students can only miss an assessment if they qualify for 'extenuating circumstances' (Please see separate policy).

Please note that requests to attend Weddings, Birthdays and other Special Occasions will not normally be considered as Authorised Absence, and attendance of such events will have a negative impact on your attendance percentage.

Students who have met with the **Assistant Principal (Student Wellbeing)** and have subsequently been granted authorised absence for a specific length of time, will still need to complete an Absence Request Form and email it to the **Assistant to the Principal & Artistic Director** at Jessica.Levin@Birdcollege.co.uk.

Please note a Notified absence is recorded as a negative attendance. An authorised absence will be recorded with the appropriate attendance type (see Section 13 on Recording Attendance).

10. Term Dates, Holidays and Absence Requests

Term dates should be carefully considered before holiday plans are made, as permission will never be given for holidays taken in term time. Any requests for absence should be made in writing to **Luis DeAbreu**, the **Principal & Artistic Director**, or to **Jessica Levin**, the **Assistant to Principal & Artistic Director**, and in advance of the forthcoming absence. Students must also gain permission from the **Principal & Artistic Director** before accepting performance work or activities outside Bird College.

11. Attending Open Auditions and Agent Meetings (Year 3 students only)

Students wishing to attend Open Auditions must add their names to a sign-up sheet on the timetable noticeboard at the relevant times. For Open Auditions, the sign-up sheet will be collected on the Thursday in the week prior to the audition to enable us to plan an appropriate timetable in advance. Students do not need to complete an absence request form for an open audition UNLESS they miss the Thursday deadline and subsequently decide to attend the audition. The absence request form must be completed and returned at least 48 hours prior to the audition. Any requests received less than 48 hours prior to the audition will not be authorised.

Bird Agency auditions will always be authorised and you do not need to complete an Absence Request form nor communicate this information to anyone.

If you are notified directly of a recall at your audition, you must add the details to the Tagmin© calendar. No email or Absence Request form are required.

You will not need to complete an absence request form for Agent Meetings but details must be added to the Tagmin© calendar, including the name and contact details of the agent.

Registers will be marked as positive if you follow the procedures above.

Please also note we will be doing spot checks on the following:

- **Agent Meetings** (Agents may be contacted to confirm meetings)
- **Open Auditions** (Open auditions may be visited/contacted to confirm attendance)

Adherence to these procedures is extremely important and failure to do so can cause unnecessary additional work for the College. Abuse of these systems and procedures will lead to reprimand.

12. Tier 4 Sponsored Students

- a. In addition to attending classes, International Students who are being sponsored by Bird College on a [Tier 4 visa](#) must attend 3 attendance checkpoint events, usually held on the first day of the Winter, Spring and Summer terms. At these checkpoints, students must present their current passport and visa documentation for

staff to check. Failure to attend any of these checkpoints with no satisfactory reason will result in the student being withdrawn from their programme of study and reported to UKVI.

- b. When considering an application for a CAS extension, or a CAS in cases where international students with a non-Tier 4 visa wish to switch to Tier 4, the student’s attendance record will be considered when deciding whether to issue a CAS or not.



13. Recording Attendance

An electronic register (**eRegister**) for each individual lesson at Bird College will be taken by the tutor at the start of the lesson, to allow the Executive Team to monitor student attendance.

➤ **Teaching Staff are responsible for:**

- a. Taking a register for each class, following the coding system outlined in this policy.
- b. Reminding students of the importance of attendance at learning and teaching sessions.
- c. Signposting “at risk” students to the appropriate members of staff at Bird College, such as the Head of Department, Principal, Assistant Principal, Academic and Assessments Manager or Student Counsellor, to allow timely interventions to be made in terms of academic and personal support.

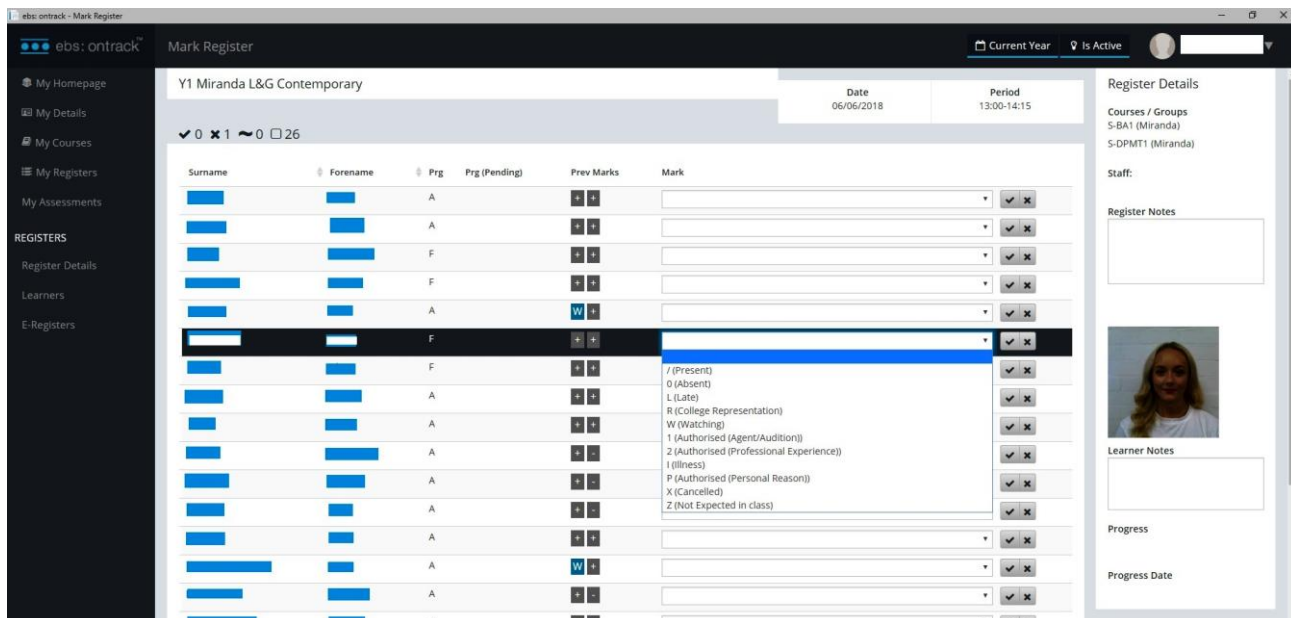
All teaching staff will take a register for each class, using the following coding system to record student attendance and absence:

Mark / Code	Description	Mark	eRegister Shortcut
/	Student is PRESENT in Class	Present	
W	Student is WATCHING , not participating	Present	
L	Student arrived LATE	Present	
X	The tutor has CANCELLED the class	Neutral	
0	Student is ABSENT from Class	Absent	

The following codes will mainly be used by Support Staff to record absences:

Mark / Code	Description	Mark
R	Student is REPRESENTING the College	Present
E	Absence is AUTHORISED (PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE)	Present
Z	Student is NOT EXPECTED IN CLASS	Neutral
I	Student is absent due to ILLNESS or medical appointments	Absent
P	Absence is AUTHORISED (PERSONAL REASON)	Absent
1	Absence to attend an external AUDITION/AGENT MEETING	Absent

An example of an eRegister with all of the marks displayed to record student attendance and absence:



14. Calculating Attendance:

eRegisters allow staff at Bird College to monitor student attendance at timetabled teaching classes. Registers support the College's retention and support of students by allowing early identification of students at risk and to allow timely interventions to be made. Interventions can include both academic and personal support, as well as setting individual targets to improve student attendance.

Student attendance is calculated as a percentage of the number of timetabled teaching classes attended, and includes those classes attended but not participated in, for example, due to injury. It also includes classes that students were late for. All of these situations will result in the student receiving a positive attendance mark. Poor punctuality is not acceptable, however, and the College will monitor student lateness separately. Students who regularly arrive for classes late will be subject to the **Sanctions for Unsatisfactory Student Attendance** outlined in the next section of this policy.

Students who support and represent Bird College at Open Days, Auditions, External Events, etc., will receive a positive attendance mark, under the category of 'College Representation' (see table in Section 13 on Recording Attendance). Students who have sought and been given permission to be absent in order to gain professional experience outside Bird College, such as a Pantomime contract, will also receive a positive attendance mark under Authorised (Professional Experience).

Students receive a neutral attendance mark for classes cancelled by the tutor, for example when tutors are unwell and the class cannot be covered by another member of staff. Neutral attendance marks will also be received when students are not expected to attend specific timetabled classes, such as a Musical Theatre rehearsal.

A negative attendance mark will be received for Student Absence of timetabled teaching classes. Absence includes classes missed due to illness, as well as Authorised Absence due to a Personal Reason or to attend an Audition or a meeting with an external Agent. The College monitors these categories of student absence separately.

All students begin a new Academic Year with 100% attendance.

Students who attend every class will retain their overall attendance of 100% throughout of the Academic Year. A student's overall attendance will decrease from 100% as they begin to receive negative attendance marks for missing classes. As the Academic Year progresses, the weighting of each class will decrease: For example, if you miss one of twenty classes in Week One, your overall attendance will decrease by 5% to 95%. However, if you attended all of your classes in Weeks One, Two and Three but miss one of 20 classes in Week Four, your overall attendance will decrease by 1.25% to 98.75%.

Please note that Attendance Warnings received by students are carried over to following Academic Years. As an example, if a student receives a first formal Written Warning at the end of their first year of study, they will receive a

second formal Written Warning if their attendance does not improve at the start of their second year of study (see Section 16 on Sanctions for Unsatisfactory Student Attendance).

Some common examples of how absence is recorded:

Description	Mark / Code	Mark
Performance events (including rehearsals) OUTSIDE Bird College, but on behalf of the college, such as Pantomimes, Move It, Golf Clubs, Funerals, Weddings, etc.	E	Present
Helping at Bird College Open Days, during Registration and/or at College Auditions	R	Present
Helping with a College Show (Lighting / Scenery / Costumes), on-site Rehearsals	R	Present
Headshots being taken at College	R	Present
In-house auditions (Cruises/Disney/etc.)	Z	Neutral
Accompanying another student to hospital (Authorised by staff)	Z	Neutral
Physio Appointment (at College)	Z	Neutral
Job Interview (authorised by the College)	Z	Neutral
Physio Appointment (outside College) – P when evidence provided, otherwise absent	0	Absent
Job Interview (not authorised by the College)	0	Absent
Weddings and other family celebrations	P	Absent
Authorised absence form has been approved, but audition/meeting not through the College Agency.	1	Absent

15. Action taken due to Persistent Student Absenteeism

- a. Should a student be absent for more than 10 timetabled days, with no appropriate notification of the reason provided, the College will send a formal communication to the student (via email) inviting the student to attend a meeting to discuss their absence. For International Students being sponsored by Bird College on Tier 4 visas, you will be reported to UKVI and your sponsorship by the college may be withdrawn.
- b. Within 4 working days of sending the communications in ‘a’ above, should no satisfactory response (i.e. providing details for the absence/ non-engagement and confirming that they will be resuming attendance) be provided by the student, a second communication will be sent by the College (via email and posted to the student’s term-time address). This second communication will inform the student that unless they provide a satisfactory reason (including medical certification, if appropriate) within 4 working days, the student will be withdrawn from their programme of studies and relevant external stakeholders will be informed.
- c. All relevant communications and notes relating to attendance concerns will be maintained within the student’s records held at the college and in compliance with GDPR regulations.

16. Sanctions for Unsatisfactory Student Attendance

We have a responsibility to **ALL** our students to ensure they get the most out of their training and development at the college.

Students who are regularly absent or late will, therefore, be subject to the following disciplinary stages. The **Executive Team** run Attendance Reports fortnightly throughout the Academic Year.

Please note that students can receive a maximum of one Attendance Warning per calendar month:

Pre-Stage: Informal Verbal Warning

- Informal verbal warnings will be given to students by a member of **the Executive Team** when they become concerned about a student's absenteeism and when their attendance falls below 90%. Such verbal warnings are recorded, and students are expected to show immediate improvement in their attendance.

Stage 1: Informal Written Warning

- When a student's attendance becomes more of a concern and/or falls below 80% they will be contacted informally by either the **Assistant Principal (Quality Assurance)** or the **Assistant Principal (Student Wellbeing)**. Via an email response or in a face-to-face meeting, the student will be expected to explain the reasons for their absenteeism and to self-identify targets and strategies to initiate an immediate improvement in their attendance.

Stage 2: First Formal Written Warning

- Should a student's attendance fail to improve following their **Stage 1** Warning and/or fall below 75%, they will receive a First Formal Written Warning via email from the **Assistant Principal (Quality Assurance)**, outlining the expectations of **the Executive Team** at the College. Students will be expected to respond to the email and to explain why their attendance has failed to improve since their Stage 1 Warning. Targets from the **Assistant Principal (FE/HE QA)** may be set at this Stage.

Stage 3: Second Formal Written Warning

- Should attendance fail to improve following their **Stage 2** Warning and/or fall below 70%, students will be asked to meet with the **Principal & Artistic Director** and **one of the Assistant Principals (Quality Assurance or Student Wellbeing)** to explain why their attendance has failed to improve since their Stage 2 Warning. Attendance targets will be set.

Stage 4: Third and Final Formal Written Warning

- Should attendance fail to improve following their **Stage 3** Warning and/or fall below 60%, students will be asked to attend a meeting with the **Principal & Artistic Director** and **one of the Assistant Principals (Quality Assurance or Student Wellbeing)**. A Third and Final Written Warning will be given to the student, and further targets will be set, including a challenging attendance target for the following 10 days of classes.

Stage 5: Formal Withdrawal from Programme

Any student who does not meet the requirements of the Third and Final Written Warning will be Formally Withdrawn from their Programme of Study at Bird College. A letter informing the student of their immediate withdrawal will be provided in a meeting with the **Principal & Artistic Director** and **one of the Assistant Principals (Quality Assurance or Student Wellbeing)**.

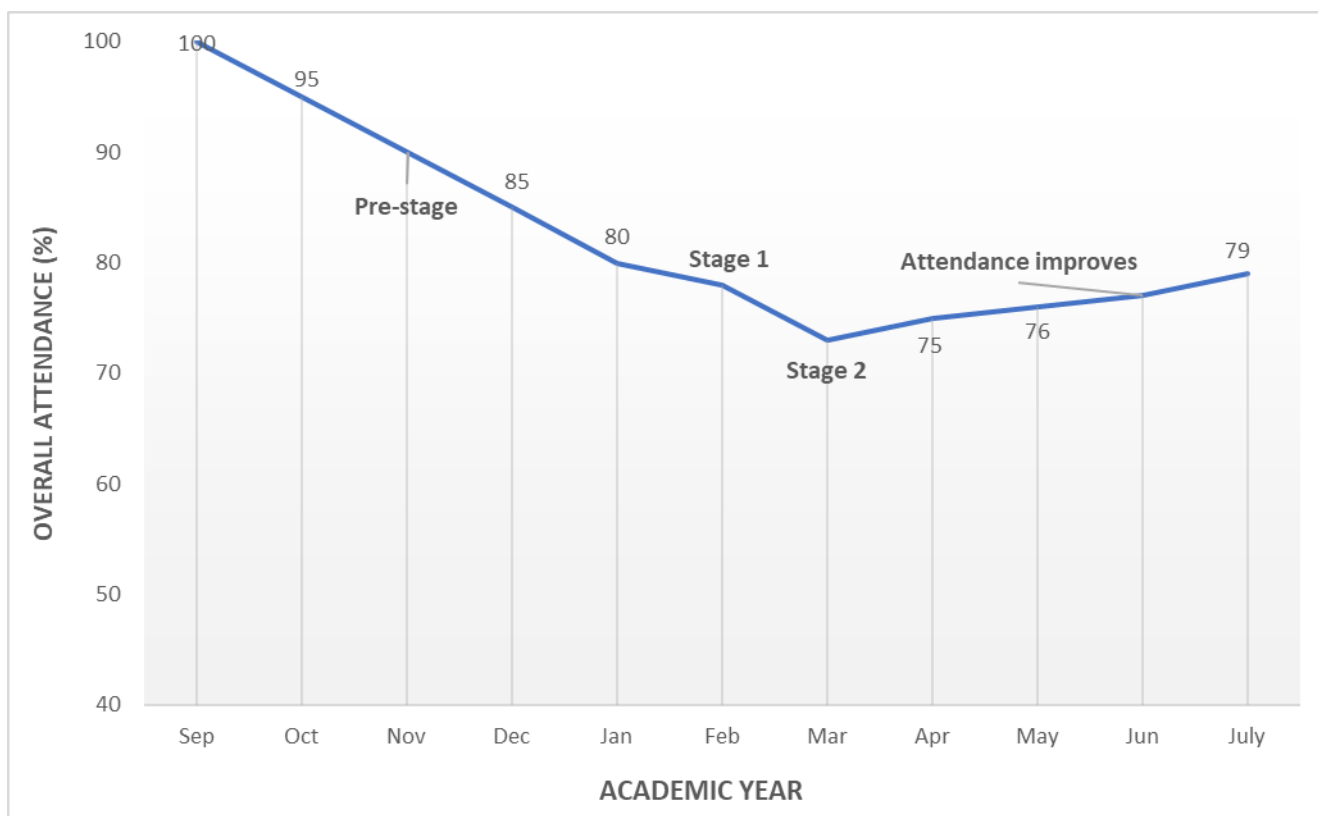
The procedure to Appeal against a Programme Withdrawal is set out in Section 18 (below).

If no appeal is submitted, the student will be informed that a Completion of Procedures Letter (CoP) will be issued to the student promptly, and not later than 28 days after the date of this meeting. The CoP letter will refer to Bird College's subscription to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (see section 20).

17. Summary of Sanctions:

When a student's attendance:	Warning Issued:	Actions:
Falls BELOW 90%	Pre-Stage: Informal Verbal Warning	The student is expected to show an immediate improvement in their attendance.
Falls BELOW 80%	Stage 1: Informal Written Warning	The student is expected to self-identify targets and strategies to initiate an immediate improvement in their attendance.
Fails to improve following your Stage 1 Warning and/or falls BELOW 75%	Stage 2: First Formal Written Warning	Targets from the Assistant Principal (Quality Assurance) may be set at this Stage
Fails to improve following your Stage 2 Warning and/or falls BELOW 70%	Stage 3: Second Formal Written Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Principal & Artistic Director and one of the Assistant Principals • Attendance Targets set
Fails to improve following your Stage 3 Warning and/or falls BELOW 60%	Stage 4: Third and Final Formal Written Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another meeting with the Principal & Artistic Director and one of the Assistant Principals • Further Attendance Targets set
Fails to improve following your Stage 4 Warning when Attendance targets were set	Stage 5: Formal Withdrawal from Programme	

A visual example of a student's Overall Attendance in an Academic Year and their receipt of Warnings:



18. Appeals against a Programme Withdrawal (Final Stage)

Students have the right to appeal against a withdrawal by default on the following grounds:

- (i) That there are extenuating circumstances relating to ill health or personal difficulties which the student was unable to raise prior to or during the escalation procedure detailed in 'Sanctions for Unsatisfactory Student Attendance' (above) of this Policy.
- (ii) That the information held by the College relating to the student's attendance and/or engagement is incomplete or inaccurate, and the student was not in a position to correct this information at an earlier stage;

Students wishing to appeal must show a compelling reason why this information could not be made available before the decision to withdraw was reached and provide documentary evidence in support. Where the student could have made the information available prior to the decision being made, such evidence cannot normally be accepted as grounds for appeal.

No appeal can be made where an interruption of study has been requested and granted during the Engagement Monitoring Escalation process but has been rejected by the student.

How to Appeal:

Appeals must be received no later than 14 calendar days after the date of email notification of the withdrawal. An acknowledgement email will be issued on receipt of the appeal.

Appeals received after the 14 calendar day deadline will be deemed out of time and will not normally be considered. A Completion of Procedures letter including details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 20) will be issued.

In exceptional cases only, a late appeal may be considered provided that it is accompanied by detailed and supported reasons for the late submission.

You will be provided with a **Student Attendance Policy Appeal Form** at the point of your withdrawal from Bird College. The appeal should be submitted in writing using the **Student Attendance Policy Appeal Form** and emailed to the Assistant Principal (Quality Assurance) at donna.campbel@birdcollege.co.uk. Procedures for submitting the form are outlined in the accompanying Guidance for Students.

Original evidence must be provided in support of the appeal and listed on the Appeal Form. If evidence is unable to be provided with the appeal form, it must be submitted no later than 7 calendar days after submission of the appeal form.

Consideration of the Appeal:

The appeal will be reviewed by the appropriate senior College colleague and a response to the student will be provided within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

The following decisions can be made:

- (i) To dismiss the appeal if it is determined that no substantive case has been established. The appeal procedure within the College will be at an end, in which case the student will be given the reasons for the decision in writing. This will contain a Completion of Procedures statement including details of the OIA Scheme.
- (ii) To uphold the appeal and request Student & Academic Services to reinstate the student's registration with or without a recommendation that the student be granted a retrospective period of authorised absence.

The College may specify conditions of reinstatement and the consequences of the student failing to adhere to these conditions. Should subsequent failure to adhere to these conditions result in the student's withdrawal, the student has a further right of appeal on the grounds detailed above.

- (iii) To rescind the withdrawal decision and offer a period of interruption in light of relevant issues which may be raised in the appeal submission.

If the offer of interruption is rejected by the student, the original withdrawal decision stands. It will also be deemed that the offer has been declined if the student fails to respond by the deadline. The student will be given a Completion of Procedures letter containing details of the OIA Scheme (see Section 20).

If the issues raised within the appeal submission are considered to potentially impact on the student's ability to study on return to the university, the College may refer the case to its Fitness to Study procedure.

19. Student Advice (BA Students only)

Students on the BA Programme at Bird College can seek independent, free, and impartial advice from the Greenwich Students' Union (GSU) Advice Service:

<https://www.greenwichsu.co.uk/advice/>

20. External Adjudication by Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

Bird College subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints and appeals. Students who have been issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter from College may be able to complain and apply for a review of your Withdrawal to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](#), providing that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules.

Students will need to send a complaint form to the OIA within twelve months of the date of the CoP letter. This form can be downloaded from the OIA website:

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>

21. Document Control

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