



## Student Radiographer Attendance Management Guidelines

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### Summary

There is concern that with poor attendance students will not be able to achieve the level of professionalism or standards set. This guidance describes the expectations of the professional body and gives advice on appropriate and robust student radiographer attendance management systems.

## Student Radiographer Attendance Management Guidelines

It has come to the attention of the College of Radiographers (CoR) that not all educational institutions have robust student radiographer attendance management systems. It is of concern that with poor attendance, students will not be able to achieve the level of professionalism or standards set out in the CoR's 'Learning and Development Framework for Clinical Imaging and Oncology' and 'Code of Conduct and Ethics'. It may also call into question whether they are able to meet the Health Professions Council's Standards of Proficiency.

The CoR regards an attendance of 90% in the planned clinical practice component of the course as being the desirable minimum and 80% attendance as the absolute minimum attendance levels to enable students to meet professional requirements satisfactorily. The CoR expects that students not meeting the above minimum attendance compensate for the time missed by extending their training period or, where appropriate, utilising holidays and study weeks.

The CoR also regards attendance at the planned academic components as very important and expects institutions to set out clearly their own minimum requirement. This should enable institutions to reflect the nature of their programme and the use of remote supported learning technologies employed. For those elements where students are required to be in attendance, CoR expects a minimum of 80% attendance.

The CoR believes educational institutions must be committed to developing and maintaining a positive approach to attendance by student radiographers. We recognise that poor attendance can have a detrimental impact on reaching the required levels of academic ability, clinical skills and professionalism to ensure that students develop into competent practitioners. Also, poor attendance has a detrimental effect on other students.

The CoR understands that in order to support a high level of attendance, educational institutions are committed to achieving a safe and healthy study/work environment for students, with a caring and supportive approach with those who are absent through genuine illness and other reasons.

Where attendance falls below the 80% attendance minimum standard, the following principles

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should be observed in all cases:

- Education Institutions' attendance management procedures should be consistent with their organisation's policies, in particular their Equality and Diversity policy
- Sympathetic and supportive ways should be found to allow students to 'catch up'
- No student should be dismissed for reasons of poor attendance or on the grounds of capability because of long-term absence without appropriate procedures being taken into account and followed

To support the development of effective absence management systems, course teams must be responsible for:

- complying with their particular university's attendance policy and procedures
- ensuring that the attendance policy is readily available and that it and the procedures relating to it are properly understood by students
- accurately monitoring attendance levels of students over the entire length of course
- ensuring that absence reporting procedures are complied with
- liaising with individuals who are absent on a long term basis and with those who display persistent short term absences
- ensuring support is given to encourage individuals back to the university after a period of absence
- regularly reviewing and monitoring the operation and effectiveness of the attendance policy and procedures
- providing up-to-date and accurate information on levels of absence for both clinical and academic components of the course to ensure the course team are fully aware of any issues
- maintaining contact with students during periods of absence of any duration

The normal expectation is that education institutions should follow procedural guidelines for managing short and long term absence. However, on occasions, and for exceptional/ other good reasons, there may be the need to vary the procedures to suit individual cases/circumstances. This should be at the discretion of the course director or other authority designated by the institution.

The CoR defines persistent short-term absence as intermittent absences normally attributable to minor and often unconnected ailments. Short-term absences do not normally extend beyond a week. Minimising short-term absence is important since it is this type of unplanned absence that can cause the most disruption in a student's education. In such cases, it is recommended that course teams consider early referral of an individual to an Occupational Health Practitioner and this should be set out in the university's policy and procedures. This is important as it may reveal an underlying cause for the absence pattern and so enable the institution to tailor support to enable the student to continue studying whilst meeting the minimum attendance requirement.

Informal discussions with individuals are encouraged to assess the full extent of and reasons for the absences, and to determine whether there is a need to move to a formal process. Formal action for inappropriate persistent short-term absence should follow a sequential process for formal investigation and action.

The CoR defines long-term absence as a continuous period of absence normally exceeding four calendar weeks. The management of long-term absence requires a different approach to that of short-term absence. Long-term absences can usually be traced to an underlying health or other condition or situation.

Students experiencing long-term absence should be treated in a sympathetic and supportive manner and procedures should aim to facilitate the return of such students to their studies as early as is practical.

Where a student needs to attend to an emergency situation, eg, sick child or dependent relative, then the procedures relating to special leave should be applied. Again, this should be supportive and

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sympathetic.

The CoR considers that knowingly making false declarations of sickness absence calls into question students' integrity and should lead to investigation, possibly disciplinary, when it is suspected or known that a false declaration has been made.

Where disciplinary action is taken against students, they must have the right to appeal against decisions made against them. The institution's appeals procedures should be clearly stated in their regulations, which should be made readily available to students.

## References

Health Professions Council, 'Standards of Proficiency - Radiographers' London, HPC, 2009

The College of Radiographers, 'Code of Conduct and Ethics' London: CoR, 2008

The College of Radiographers, 'Learning and Development Framework for Clinical Imaging and Oncology' London: CoR, 2008

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