

STRATEGIC POLICY FOR ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT ENHANCEMENT

Comprehensive Executive Version — Full 14-Section Summary

PREAMBLE. VFSTR is committed to academic excellence, active learning, and holistic student development. This policy institutionalises systematic, data-driven mechanisms to monitor, support, and improve student engagement across all programmes, drawing on international best practice (Bournemouth University and University of Southampton attendance/engagement policies) adapted to VFSTR's context. Engagement is understood broadly — not physical attendance alone, but intellectual participation, assessment performance, digital-platform use, mentorship interaction, co-curricular involvement, and research activity — so that every student is supported to reach their full academic potential.

SECTION 1 — SCOPE & PURPOSE

- **Scope:** All full-time/part-time UG (B.Tech, B.Sc., BBA, BCA), PG taught (M.Tech, MBA, MCA, M.Sc.), PG research (M.Phil./Ph.D.), lateral-entry/integrated/distance-hybrid students, and government scholarship/fellowship holders with attendance obligations.
- **Core purpose:** Support every student to engage meaningfully; set clear engagement expectations; create early-warning systems for at-risk students; ensure UGC/AICTE/NAAC/NBA compliance; protect institutional integrity and accreditation.
- **Objectives:** Minimum 75% attendance (UGC/AICTE norm) with strategic target 85%+; cut dropout/low-engagement by ≥25% within 3 years; systematic early intervention to improve retention/completion; measurable GPA/CGPA improvement linked to engagement; a positive, inclusive, intrinsically-motivating learning environment.

SECTION 2 — DEFINITIONS

- **Academic Engagement:** Active participation — attendance, timely submissions, exams, LMS/Moodle use, mentor interaction, library/e-resource use, co-curricular participation, mandatory training/internships/placements.
- **Attendance:** Physical or virtual presence in scheduled teaching-learning activity — the primary measurable indicator.
- **At-Risk Student:** One whose data/performance/circumstances suggest danger of failing requirements, withdrawal, or welfare concerns.
- **Engagement Intervention:** A structured, documented support action for insufficient/declining engagement.
- **Programme Team:** HoD, Programme Coordinator, Class Advisors/Mentors, Course Faculty, Department Admin Staff.

SECTION 3 — POLICY PRINCIPLES

- **Student-Centred Support:** Interventions support, not punish; begin with empathetic inquiry into wellbeing.
- **Early Identification:** Intervene at the earliest sign of disengagement.
- **Graduated Response:** Proportionate escalation — informal encouragement → structured, documented pathway → withdrawal only in extreme, persistent cases.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Based on AMS/LMS analytics, assessment records, mentor logs.
- **Equity & Inclusion:** Reasonable accommodation for disability/health/protected characteristics; no discriminatory application.
- **Transparency:** Clear notice of expectations from admission/orientation; no adverse action without notice and opportunity to respond.

SECTION 4 — ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **VC/Pro-VC (Academic):** Strategic leadership, policy approval, annual outcome review.
- **Dean–Academic Affairs:** Policy ownership; chairs Academic Engagement Review Committee; monitors university trends; reports to Academic Council.

- **HoD:** Departmental responsibility; reviews fortnightly reports; directs interventions; escalates persistent cases; ensures attendance-capture compliance.
- **Programme Coordinator/Class Advisor/Mentor:** Fortnightly monitoring; first-level mentor meetings; documents in Student Engagement Record; refers to welfare/counselling/financial aid; reports at-risk students to HoD.
- **Teaching Faculty:** Accurate session-wise AMS/biometric attendance; notify advisor below 80%; never falsify records (serious disciplinary offence); foster inclusive engagement.
- **Students:** Maintain own attendance/engagement; use authorised attendance methods (proxy attendance is a disciplinary offence); notify advisor of anticipated absence with documentation; engage with support services.
- **Student Welfare Office/Counselling Centre:** Pastoral/psychological/welfare support; liaises with faculty (with consent); reports systemic barriers to Dean–Student Affairs.
- **Examination & Evaluation Cell:** Identifies attendance shortfalls pre-exam; administers condonation per UGC/AICTE norms; maintains assessment records.

SECTION 5 — ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS & MONITORING

- **Minimum attendance:** 75% per UGC/AICTE norms; medical/emergency exemptions require prior departmental approval.
- **Data sources:** Biometric/RFID/app attendance; assessment/assignment/lab records; LMS analytics (logins, uploads, discussions); library access logs; mentor interaction records; placement-cell engagement; research milestone records (PG); co-curricular/NPTEL/certification participation.
- **Monitoring cycle:** Daily faculty capture → weekly Class Advisor summary → fortnightly HoD dashboard review (flags <80%) → monthly Dean's-office pattern analysis → end-of-semester final percentage for exam eligibility/condonation.

SECTION 6 — INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK (5 TIERS)

Wellbeing-first, tiered escalation; each stage aims to re-engage, not penalise.

- **Tier 1 – Early Alert (80–85% or 2-wk sudden absence):** Faculty/mentor informal chat; advisory email/SMS; brief digital note; expect re-engagement within 1 week.
- **Tier 2 – Formal Concern Notice (<80% or no Tier-1 response):** Written notice to student (+parent/guardian for UG); mandatory mentor meeting in 5 working days; welfare referral if needed; documented action plan; expect recovery within 2 weeks.
- **Tier 3 – Departmental Review (<75% or persistent non-response):** HoD meeting (+parents for UG); signed Engagement Improvement Plan; placed on Academic Engagement Watch with weekly check-ins; exam-bar risk communicated; possible Support-to-Study/Medical Board/Financial Aid referral.
- **Tier 4 – Dean-Level Intervention (<65% or no Tier-3 improvement):** Dean's formal notice; appearance before Academic Engagement Review Committee; options include interruption of studies, medical leave, evening-programme transfer, or withdrawal; debarment process initiated if 75% unreachable; right to appeal.

- **Tier 5 – Withdrawal/Debarment (<60% or Tier-4 exhausted):** Academic Council decision on Dean's recommendation; formal exam debarment or withdrawal per Withdrawal & Readmission Policy; written notice with appeal/re-admission pathway; regulatory reporting to AICTE/UGC as required.

SECTION 7 — LEAVE OF ABSENCE & CONDONATION

- **Authorised absence:** Medical illness (certificate within 5 working days), bereavement/family emergency, inter-university/national/international representation with prior approval, official institutional duty, court/civic duty — approved in advance or documented within 5 working days; repeated undocumented retrospective claims may be refused.
- **Condonation:** Up to 10% shortage may be considered jointly by Examination Cell and HoD if overall attendance $\geq 65\%$, shortage is evidenced, genuine re-engagement effort with no disciplinary record, and request filed within 5 days of semester end. Discretionary, not a right.

SECTION 8 — STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- **Mentorship:** Dedicated mentor from induction; ratio $\leq 1:20$; ≥ 4 documented meetings/semester; mentor training in active listening/mental-health first aid; engagement outcomes feed faculty appraisal.
- **Digital engagement:** Mandatory AMS with real-time dashboards; LMS for all content/communication; Parent Portal for UG attendance/grades; automated alerts at 85/80/75% thresholds; predictive analytics for proactive mentor alerts.
- **Pedagogy:** FDPs on engagement strategy, active/flipped/problem-based learning; regular student feedback; hackathons, project- and industry-integrated learning.
- **Welfare infrastructure:** Expanded Counselling & Psychological Services; anonymous helpline/online counselling; financial hardship fund; peer mentoring/buddy programmes (esp. first-year, rural/underserved); mental-health awareness campaigns.
- **Research-student engagement:** Fortnightly supervisory meetings; quarterly Research Progress Seminar; Annual Progress Review as stipend/continuation prerequisite; methodology/writing/ethics workshops; peer researcher community.
- **Co-curricular:** Calendar avoids academic-timetable conflict; attendance credit (within regulatory cap) for sanctioned participation; structured leadership roles in clubs/councils/societies.

SECTION 9 — SPECIAL CATEGORIES

- **Disabilities:** Reasonable adjustment per RPWD Act 2016/UGC guidelines; case-by-case Student Support Agreement, reviewed each semester.
- **Medical leave:** Attendance clock paused for authorised leave; mentor meeting and re-integration plan on return.
- **Academic probation:** Weekly mentor check-ins, mandatory remedial coaching, monthly HoD/Dean review.
- **International students:** Full regulatory monitoring; International Relations Cell reports per immigration rules.
- **Scholarship/fellowship holders:** Subject to scheme-specific attendance conditions in addition to institutional minimums; Scholarships Cell coordinates monitoring.

SECTION 10 — APPEALS & GRIEVANCE

Right to appeal attendance calculation, intervention decisions, debarment, or withdrawal:

- **Step 1:** Written appeal to HoD within 5 working days, with evidence.
- **Step 2:** HoD convenes review panel (HoD, mentor, peer faculty) within 7 working days.
- **Step 3:** Escalation to Dean–Academic Affairs within 5 working days if unresolved.

- **Step 4:** Dean's decision final institutionally; exceptional escalation to Academic Council.
- **Natural justice:** Clear written explanation, fair hearing, impartial reviewer, reasoned written decisions at every stage.

SECTION 11 — DATA MANAGEMENT & PRIVACY

- **Collection/storage:** Accurate, current, access limited to authorised staff, retained per regulatory/Data Retention Policy, used only for defined purposes.
- **Student privacy:** Induction/Handbook disclosure of what is collected, who accesses it, how it's used, and rights to access/correct data.
- **Parental sharing:** Routine sharing for UG students below 18; for adults, only with explicit consent except serious welfare/safety concerns.

SECTION 12 — MONITORING, REVIEW & REPORTING

- **Reporting cadence:** Weekly faculty→advisor; fortnightly advisor→HoD (at-risk list); monthly HoD→Dean; semester-end Dean→Academic Council; annual Dean→VC Strategic Engagement Report.
- **KPIs:** Avg. attendance $\geq 85\%$; below-75% cohort $<10\%$ /semester; Tier 1/2 re-engagement success $>80\%$; retention $\geq 95\%$; engagement–CGPA correlation tracked annually; mentorship satisfaction $\geq 4.0/5.0$.
- **Policy review:** Biennial review by Academic Engagement Review Committee (Dean-chaired), approved by Academic Council; interim revisions as regulatory/institutional needs arise.

SECTION 13 — RELATED POLICIES & REFERENCES

Student Code of Conduct • Examination Regulations & Conduct Policy • Withdrawal & Readmission Policy • Policy on Students with Disabilities (RPWD Act) • Counselling & Psychological Support Policy • Data Management & Privacy Policy • UGC M.Phil./Ph.D. Regulations (2022) • AICTE Attendance Norms • NAAC Assessment & Accreditation Manual (2022) • Bournemouth University Academic Engagement & Attendance Policy (v3.0, 2025) • University of Southampton Academic Engagement & Attendance Policy (2023).

SECTION 14 — APPROVAL & AUTHORISATION

Approved by the Academic Council on the recommendation of the Dean–Academic Affairs and Vice-Chancellor/Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic). This executive version summarises the complete policy document VFSTR/ACD/ENG/2025/01, Version 1.0, July 2025, retaining every section, principle, role, threshold, tier, and KPI of the full text.

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