

Attendance guidance for ‘International’ students

Sep 25, 2012. **What is happening?** Starting from the academic year 2012/13, students classified as ‘international’ for funding purposes are required to sign a weekly attendance check.

Why is it happening? The policy has been put into place to assist us in fulfilling requirements set by the UK Border Agency; each weekly sign in will be a contact point between you and the University showing that you are engaging academically and attending the course as required by your Tier 4 Visa. All international students are required to adhere to this policy, including international students who do not hold Tier 4 Visas as the university may be required to sponsor you in the future and will need to be able to verify your previous attendance.

The University of the Arts London feel that this is an important policy which allows us to continue to sponsor international students and make sure that we, as an institution, can protect and continue to provide your student experience in the UK.

How it will work? Each week during term time, you should come to the Information Centre between 9:30am-4:30pm Monday to Thurs-

day, or 9:30am-12pm on Friday to confirm your attendance.

PLEASE BRING YOUR ID CARD TO EVERY SIGN IN SESSION TO VERIFY YOUR IDENTITY. If you do not have your ID card, we will not log you as signing in.

What will happen if I do not sign in? If you do not sign in you risk being withdrawn from the course. If you miss one Sign In, you will be notified and reminded that you must sign in the following week. If you miss a second consecutive week you will again be notified and asked to explain your absence. We will also send you an Application for Authorised Absence form. This must be completed and evidence attached so that we can make a record that your absence is valid. Should you miss a third consecutive week you will be asked to attend a tutorial with a designated person to explain your absence and present evidence for your case. You must do this immediately to avoid further action. If you fail to make contact with the designated person within your college to explain your reasons for not attending and you do not sign in for a fourth consecutive week you will be withdrawn from the course.

Over the academic year if your attendance is sporadic, you will receive warnings from our Student Administration. If you ignore these warnings, you are at risk of being withdrawn from your course.

We expect you to sign in weekly and you must explain if you are unable to do so. You will be withdrawn if you miss the following number of Sign In sessions: Six or more Sign Ins over one term; Ten or more Sign Ins over two terms; Thirteen or more Sign Ins over three terms.

What is an Authorised Absence? If you feel that you will not be able to make the Sign In session designated to you please email **Tier4Compliance@xxxx.ac.uk** and ask for an **Application for Authorised Absence form**. If you are unwell and your illness continues into the second week, please **provide a letter from your doctor to verify your absence; if you do not have a medical certificate, we will not count your absence as authorised.**

Should you have a family issue or bereavement, please contact the above email address to explain your absence and whether or not your absence may be extended. Any queries concerning the sign in

policy and what is considered as an authorised absence should be directed to the above email address.

Placement Students: Students who are on work placements organised by the University are not be required to sign in weekly. However, we expect students on work placements to attend as required by their employer. In addition, there will be contact points that you must make during your placement. Your placement officer will tell you what you will need to do during your placement. Any work or work placements that you undertake out side of your course requirements is your own responsibility, you will still be required to Sign In and meet the immigration rules specified by your Tier 4 Visa.

Student Options: Should you feel that you are unable to continue attending your course and that you need a break from study for one reason or another please seek guidance from the administration team. Students are able to take Partial Year Outs and Academic Year Outs if they feel they are unable to continue to attend. For further information or help before and during your studies please contact student advisers who

are located with in the colleges or contactable by email student.advisers@arts.ac.uk.

If you are an MA student and you are completing your Final Major Project, Final Dissertation or Independent Project outside of the UK you must inform us that you are not within the country. **You cannot conduct any part of your study outside the UK without permission** from your supervisor and you must be aware that a **prolonged absence may lead to us withdrawing our sponsorship of your visa** as you will no longer be signing in.

If you have questions about this policy: If you have any queries about your course or when and where to Sign In, please check BlackBoard or query with the Administration office in your college.

If you want to know whether your absence is counted as authorised, please check this document first and then contact admissions if you do not find the answer.

If you have questions about your immigration position, you can talk to a Student Adviser or make an appointment in your college. **Regulations disseminated to International students, 2012**

“I sign in once a term and can travel in and out of the UK whenever it suits me.”

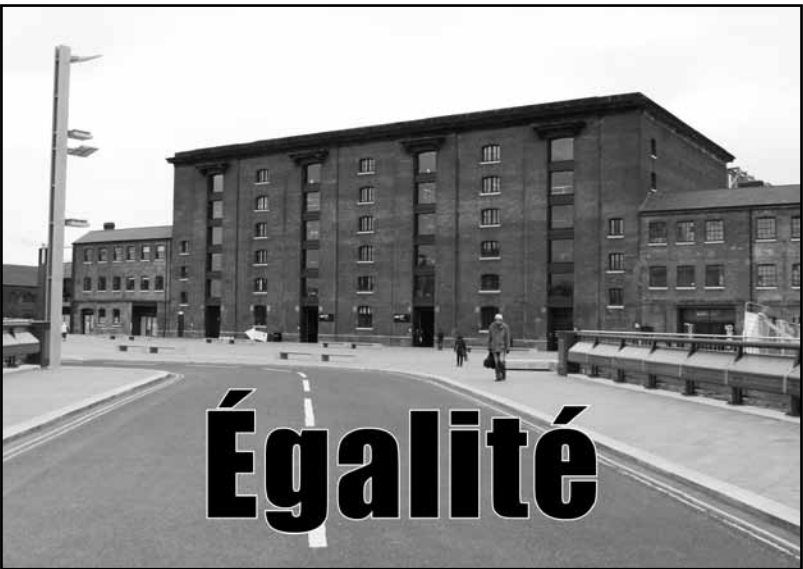
Canadian International PhD research student, Cambridge University

“I sign in every week at my university and registered with the police when I moved to London”

Chinese International undergraduate student, University of the Arts London



Artwork by Feline Vomitus, undergraduate student, University of the Arts London



Foreign students made to queue through the night

Hundreds of foreign students are having to queue outdoors through the night to register with the police on arrival to the UK, it has emerged.

International students from 42 countries living in Greater London are required to register within seven days at a single office in south-east London. The volume of students and a staff cut appear to be creating very long waits. The Metropolitan Police said it had extended the opening hours.

But a message on the website of the Overseas Visitors Records Office says students are starting to queue from midnight, even though the office does not open until the morning. It continues: “In the interest of health and safety we would kindly request that you do not start queuing at this time as it forces us to close our queues as early as 6.30am.” The website also warns there will be occasions when the office has to close at very short notice. “The students who are queu-

ing there are outraged that they are having to do this”

Daniel Stevens, NUS International Students Officer, Universities UK, said it had raised the matter at the “highest level” with the Universities Minister David Willetts. It said similar issues arose every year but that it seemed to be particularly bad this year in London, where a third of the UK’s 100,000 foreign students come to study.

The revelation comes after concerns about damage to the UK’s reputation with potential students abroad after a London university had its licence to recruit and teach international students revoked.

Daniel Stevens, filmed the queue in the early hours of the morning and sent the video to the BBC News website to highlight the issue. He said that some time before the office opens a member of staff comes out and starts counting the queue, letting some people in. Then much of the rest of the queue is turned

away, only to return the next night for more of the same.

Mr Stevens said: “The students who are queuing there are outraged that they are having to do this....It is absolutely unacceptable that students be asked to queue for hours, often in terrible weather, and be expected to arrive before 06.30 to have any chance of being seen.” Concerns that foreign students do not feel welcome in the UK have already been raised. He added: “A lot of these students have just arrived in the UK and they are new to the culture here. They want to be vocal but they are intimidated, particularly because the police are involved....The ones who are turned away are the most unhappy because they do not know what to do or whether they can start their courses.”

He said it was not clear why international students were being required to register in this way as the UK Border Agency already holds all

their details. And he pointed out that other foreign nationals were having to queue there as well, including foreign teenagers attending an English boarding school.

A spokeswoman for the Home Office said the way the UK Border Agency requirement to register overseas students is implemented is a matter for the local police. The Metropolitan Police said in a statement: “There have been lengthy queues recently at the Overseas’ Visitors Record Office at Brandon House, 180 Borough High Street, SE1.... This is usual for September and October, as the reopening of universities means an influx of students from countries whose registration with police is required by law.”

PR disasters: University and College Union general secretary Sally Hunt said such poor arrangements were damaging Britain’s international reputation. “At a time when we need to be attracting the brightest brains to this country, and

are already facing huge competition from other countries, we seem to be intent on committing PR disasters for the whole world to see. This footage is going to do absolutely nothing to improve the situation. We need a clear statement that the UK is open for business and welcomes foreign students.”

Chief Executive of Universities UK Nicola Dandridge said she had written to ministers about this seeking an urgent solution to the problem. “The immediate priority is to find a way of alleviating this issue in the short term. The current situation is unacceptable. We have supported government in ensuring that legitimate international students comply with the rules. But the government has a duty to them in return. These are often young people in an unfamiliar country. We want to welcome them here, and support them as they settle in.”

By Hannah Richardson
BBC News education reporter
First Published, BBC News 3/10/12

“Unlike International students (who need to apply for visas etc.) the limitations I experienced were very minimal.”

European Union undergraduate student, University of the Arts London

“Continued unauthorised absences may lead to your withdrawal from the course. If this happens, your withdrawal will be reported to the UK Border Agency and you will be required to leave the UK.”

Studying in the UK: two students, two stories

Rahel Zoller, German national: Coming from a very focused and refined Graphic-Design school in Germany, I came to London to find freedom and to break away from institutionalized habits. I wanted to learn and speak a second language fluently and saw studying abroad as a kind of prestige in my home country. I studied Art & Design and graduated with a BA in 2012.

As Germans we can enter the United Kingdom at anytime, without need of an explanation. The only

thing that is required to enter the UK is ID or a passport, which needs to be valid within six months of the expiry date. There are always pass controls at the external borders of the UK, unlike travelling on the continent where the majority of the EU countries have signed the Schengen Agreement. Which means, when I go back to Germany to visit friends and family, there are often long queues and hours of waiting with businessmen from London and vacationists from Turkey, for instance. Nevertheless, unlike

International students (which need to apply for visas, etc.) the limitations of an EU student are very minimal. The freedom of movement in the UK and London is important to me, and it is something that allows us to be associated with the land and the city.

Hova Su, Chinese national: I came to the UK because you could spend less time studying to get a degree. Apart from that I have no idea about England but Big Ben. I hoped I could get into a top university such as LSE or Oxford, but after I came

here I found out that they do not have foundation programmes.

To apply for a UK student visa I had to produce a bank statement, which proved that my parents have an account with 50,000 pounds. I had to also provide proof of my parents jobs and income, proof of the relationship between my parents and me, proof of study and scores of my high school, IELTS of 6.5 and an offer from the University. When I arrived in London I had to register with the police and it was really a nightmare. I waited in a

queue from 8 o’clock in the morning until 4 o’clock in the afternoon when I finished the registration. I have to sign in at my university once every week. Once I had the idea to live in a Tibet temple in Scotland for one week as part of my art project but I couldn’t because of having to sign in.

This is very different from studying in my home country. I have asked my friends in university in China and they said there is no difference between home and foreign students in China.