**PROCEDURE 01**

**TIER 4 STUDENTS – AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

**Created Date: 06/01/2016**

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**OVERVIEW**

Home Office policy requires the University to confirm that students are ‘maintaining contact’ with the institution during their studies. This is done in conjunction with the “Attendance Monitoring Policy”.

All Tier 4 student need to get formal approval from the University for any period of absence outside University holiday periods of 5 days or more. (This includes taking leave due to pregnancy). Failure to do so may have direct implications on the student’s visa and could result in their Tier 4 sponsorship being withdrawn.

All University students will request a period of absence from their School Office. This will be considered by the Programme Leader and if approved all Tier 4 students will be referred to the VIS team for approval or rejection. This is all done online via e:Vision & SITS.

**GUIDELINES**

1. All students must apply for authorised absence ***prior to the date*** on which they wish the absence to start. The exception will be in the case of an emergency where the authorised absence can be requested at that time.
2. The absence request will be considered by the School. The judgement about whether it is academically appropriate for a student to be allowed a period of absence should be taken by the Programme Leader. In addition the School Office in conjunction with the PBI/IS team must ensure that the student will have sufficient leave to remain, on their current Tier 4 visa, to cover the requested period of authorised leave.
3. **Depending on the dates and period of leave it may not be possible to grant a period of authorised absence. The Home Office has strict guidelines relating to ‘academic progression’.** So for instance, a student may request a period of authorised absence which means that the return date:

* **is after the start of the next academic period**. In this case a judgement must be made regarding whether or not the student will have missed too much of the programme to resume their studies at that point. So they would need to wait until the start of the next academic period. Typically the University does not allow students who have missed more than the first three weeks of a new Academic Year to enrol.
* **their remaining modules are not running during the period when they intend to return.** In this case they would need to wait until the start of the next academic period when the modules were running.

1. **The student will complete an authorised absence request form and return this to the School.**
2. **The school will complete the study suspend task on e:Vision. Tier 4 students will be sent notification that their request is being dealt with by the PBI team as an auto-email during the e:Vision task.**
3. **PBI team will:**

Consider the request using E:vision task and will respond accordingly.

A SAB record will be created when the online form is completed. This will be created for each individual absence requested.

* **5-28 days = authorised leave**. Student status will be changed to **CAL** (currently on authorised leave). No info will be reported to UKVI. Student can re-enter UK using existing visa.
* **29-60 days = authorised leave.** Student status will be changed to **SSAL** (study suspend authorised leave). Change of circumstances will be sent to UKVI. Student can re-enter UK using existing visa. It should be noted that the general expectation would be that such a lengthy absence of study is likely to prevent the student from submitting assignments or undertaking examinations and therefore in effect the student is suspending their studies during this period (unless there is exceptional reasons for why the student might be expected to successfully undertake these upon their return). Consideration must therefore be given as to when it is most appropriate for the student to recommence their studies. This may be a period in excess of 60 days in which case the process below will apply.
* **61+ days = suspension of study**. Student status will be changed to **SSO** (study suspended overseas). Sponsorship will be withdrawn and new visa will be required to re-enter the UK. UKVI will curtail existing immigration permission.

1. All students returning from a period of authorise absence will be contacted by the Tier 4 Compliance Team prior to the anticipated date of return. The student will be advised of the actions they must complete to re-engage with their studies and to enable their student record status to be updated to current.

* **5-28 days:** 
  + The student will be contacted to confirm return date.
  + On return student will attend face to face check.
  + Once face to face check is completed status in SITS will be changed to C.
* **29-60 days:**
  + 5 days prior to the expected return date student will be contacted to confirm return date.
  + On return student will attend face to face check.
  + Once face to face check is completed status in SITS will be changed to C.
* **61+ days:**
* 28 days prior to the expected return date student will be contacted to confirm return date.
* CAS will be issued to enable the student to apply for a new Tier 4 visa
* On return student will attend face to face check.
* Once face to face check is completed status in SITS will be changed to C.

1. If following a period of authorised absence a student decides they **will not return** to their studies, the relevant reporting to the Home Office will be completed and the Tier 4 sponsorship will be withdrawn. The student will be awarded out at the next Programme Board and their student record closed off.