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*Cork Education and
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ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR COLLEGE ADULT LEARNERS

The Learner Attendance and Punctuality Policy has been developed as part of the College's commitment to providing a supportive learning environment which enables all enrolled learners to achieve their full potential.

Attendance is a key component in Learner achievement, progression, and preparation for employment. Regular attendance and academic attainment are closely linked. Learners who actively participate in their learning by attending their scheduled classes regularly are more likely to:

- Enjoy a rewarding experience in which their knowledge, skills and abilities are developed.
- Successfully complete their course.
- Attain better results.

The College expects Learners to attend all scheduled classes and activities to successfully complete their course. Employers have high expectations with regards to attendance and punctuality in the workplace. We similarly have high expectations for our Learners in relation to their attendance and punctuality.

Every course or activity requires a commitment to attend **ALL** parts of the programme on offer fully and punctually. Any learner unable to fulfil this commitment may be requested to leave the course or activity.

The College recognises that certain extenuating circumstances can impact on a Learner's ability to attend, for example:

- Significant illness
- Emotional trauma
- Recent bereavement of a close family member/friend
- Terminal illness of a close family member
- Tragic circumstances which directly affect the candidate e.g. severe accident
- Domestic crisis

The College will treat all genuine instances of reduced attendance in such circumstances in a reasonable manner, and will seek to support the Learner concerned, insofar as is possible, to ensure that they can re-join their course/class fully without impacting negatively on their own, or their fellow Learners' studies.

It is College policy that all Learners are expected to be in attendance and on time for ALL classes and scheduled activities. Attendance, which falls below appropriate standards, where there are no extenuating circumstances, is not acceptable, and will be dealt with as described in this policy.

College Commitment

The College will record, monitor and report on the attendance of all Learners and will maintain attendance records in accordance with the Colleges obligations to other organisations and bodies, including Cork Education and Training Board, The Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS.

As part of the Learner support system within the college, there are regular reviews of Learners' progress on their programme, including a review of attendance, the completion of assessment requirements and the Learners' academic attainment. These reviews serve to assist Learners in managing their involvement and engagement with their course and to identify areas where

action is required either to assist in the achievement of their academic aims or, where Learners are failing to engage with the course, advising them on alternative study and/or career options.

Records of verbal and written communications with learners with regards to attendance will be kept in order to identify patterns of non-attendance, and these records will be used to support the College in its management of learner attendance and punctuality.

In the event of unsatisfactory attendance, the College is committed to advising Learners on the supports available to them, including the College's Guidance Counselling Service, Disability Support Officer, VTOS Coordinator, Susi Grant Officer etc.

At the commencement of the academic year, the college will inform all Learners of the identity of the Designated Person for their course with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Learner Responsibility

Learners are expected to:

- Attend punctually for all their timetabled classes
- If Learners arrive late to class, the onus is on the Learner to ensure that their attendance is recorded. (*Please note, the determination of whether a Learner arriving late for class will be allowed to enter and participate is at the teacher's discretion¹*)
- Report any absence due to illness or other reason to the Designated Person on the first and any subsequent day of absence.
- Avoid unnecessary absences.
- Medical and other personal appointments, except in the case of emergency, should be scheduled for outside of timetabled class activities.

Notification of Absence

The following procedure applies in respect of notifying the College of any absence, both planned and unplanned;

- Provide prior notification to the Designated Person in the event of foreseen absences.
- Contact the Designated Person as soon as possible in the case of unforeseen absences no later than 11 am on the day of absence and where possible indicate the number of expected days absence.
- Medical Certificates / evidence must be provided within the first week of absence to the Designated Person for absences in excess of **3 consecutive timetabled days**.
- Medical certificates must be signed and stamped/be on headed paper by a duly qualified medical practitioner registered with the Irish/UK Medical Council/Dental Council of Ireland and must cover a period of up to but no more than one week.

- Medical Certificates which are undated, backdated, illegible or outside the acceptable guidelines will not be accepted by the College.
- Retrospective Medical Certificates will not be accepted by the College.

Grant Schemes

There are two grant schemes, SUSI and VTOS in operation for Learners, the payment of which is dependent on specific attendance requirements. Specific requirements are outlined below in respect of absences and consequences for payments.

SUSI Grant

For those Learners in receipt of the learner maintenance grant (SUSI grant), payment is made subject to satisfactory participation and attendance on the course. Learners absent for **5 days or more in a monthly period (which may be aggregated to include partial attendance)** will not receive a grant payment. This is subject to an appeal process if the Learner wishes to appeal the non-payment.

SUSI will pay the grant-holder's maintenance grant in monthly instalments (in arrears), during the academic year. Payment is made subject to satisfactory participation and attendance on the programme. The College is fully aware of the financial support that maintenance grants play in enabling learners to pursue full time education. The college's attendance policy aims to be learner friendly. It adheres to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines which allows payment of grants subject to "satisfactory participation and attendance."

- Learners must comply with the Notification of Absence requirements set out in this policy.
- Eligible Learners will not receive grants if they have been absent **five days or more** during a calendar month.
- Regular of attendance is required to continue to receive grant payments, irrespective of medical certification.
- Learners, who have long term absences due to illness, will cease to receive grant payments.
- All communications with regards to grants should be directed to the Susi Grant Officer.

A Learner can make a written appeal against the non-payment of grants using the official Maintenance Grant Appeal Form. (These are available from the Main Office)

In the event of an appeal not being successful, a Learner can make a final appeal to the College Principal.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

It is a condition of acceptance on the VTOS Programme that each participant attends and participates fully (min. 80%), in all timetabled classes and activities.

- Participants must comply with the Notification of Absence requirements set out in this policy.

- Participants who have been absent without satisfactory explanation for **10 consecutive timetabled days** will be deemed to have self-opted out of the programme and their VTOS place and attendant payment will be terminated.
- Re-admission to the programme can only occur with the permission of the VTOS Co-ordinator.

Unsatisfactory Attendance

Where a Learner's attendance is unsatisfactory, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

- The Designated Person will contact the learner to seek an explanation for their unsatisfactory attendance.
- Learners may be invited by College Management to discuss how their attendance will be improved and any support that they may require to achieve this.
Learners who have been absent without satisfactory explanation for **10 consecutive timetabled days** without contact with the College will be deemed to have opted out of the course.
- Re-affirmation of enrolment can occur only with the permission of College Management, who has overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting attendance in the first instance.
- Where a Learner has missed a significant amount of time, which in the opinion of College Management will result in them being unable to participate effectively on the course, the learner may be contacted by College Management to advise against resuming their place on the course in the current year.
- College Management has the power to terminate the Learner's college place on the basis of attendance.
- Staff writing references for learners (for colleges, universities, employers etc.) may factually refer Learners' record of attendance

Appeal of Termination

An appeal against the decision of College Management to terminate placement on a course based on the Learners record of attendance, shall be put in writing by the Learner to the Board of Management (BOM) of the College. Any such submission must include the rationale for the appeal.

- Note: A record of the Suspension and/or Expulsion will be retained the Learners file in accordance with Cork ETB Data Retention Schedule for Centres.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

All records in respect of attendance will kept in accordance with the Colleges and CETB's Privacy Statement and Data Protection Policy and Procedures.