# Authorisation of Absences for Full-Time Students SOP

**SOP Number:**
041-08-2013

**Academic Year:**
2026/2027 ONWARDS

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July 2026

**Responsible Owner:**
Deputy Principal Curriculum

**Summary of Contents**
Full-time Further Education (FTFE), Higher Education (HE) and Training for Success (TfS) students may be in receipt of payments from DEL, FE Awards or the College in relation to their attendance. The various funding schemes allow for authorised absence. This SOP seeks to standardise the understanding of "authorised" absences for FT students

**Review Information (Responsible Owner):**
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~~No/Minor/~~Significant (delete as appropriate)

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CMT: 29 July 2026

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Date Policy Screened – Sept 2016

**Date of Last Accessibility Screening:**
July 2023

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## 1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

## 2.0 Background

Full-time Further Education (FTFE), full-time Higher Education (FTHE), Skills for Life and Work (SfLW) and Traineeship students may be in receipt of payments from DfE, FE Awards or the College in relation to their attendance. The various funding schemes allow for authorised absences to be included in determining the overall attendance. This SOP seeks to standardise the understanding of "authorised" absences for full-time students and to detail the storage and retention of same.

## 3.0 Scope

3.1 The SOP gives guidance to staff involved in the recording of student attendance via e-registers and those staff who process payments to students generated by e-registers and timesheets. It applies to all students attending FTFE, FTHE, SfLW and Traineeship programmes and provides guidance on student absence reporting procedures.

3.2 Authorised absence marks should only be used where a student instigates the absence. Absences where classes are cancelled, the tutor is absent, or students have been advised to engage in learning from home should use alternative appropriate register marks.

## 4.0 Procedure

The marking of Registers should be completed in conjunction with the Student Retention, Marking and Management of E-Registers SOP

### 4.1 Notification of Absence

**4.1.1** Students, or their parent/guardian, should notify tutors of absences as close to the absence as possible.

**4.1.2** Notification of absence can be provided by:

- Email
- MS Teams
- Phone call
- Letter
- Authorisation of Absence Form (Appendix 2)

**4.1.3** If a tutor receives a phone call notification of absence, they should record the details of the absence in the notes section on the Student Manager App (SMA) as evidence. This should include the date and time of phone call, who made the phone call (if not the student themselves), reason for absence and expected return date.

**4.1.4** If any other staff member, for example Customer Services or School Support, receives a phone call of absence, they should record details as per 4.1.3, and should email the tutor/s to inform them. It is the caller's responsibility to confirm which tutor/s should be notified of their absence.

**4.1.5** Written evidence should be provided by the student to support absences where applicable, for example, appointment letter, interview letter, medical sick line, etc.

## 4.2 Authorised Absences

**4.2.1** The following list includes examples of reasonable authorised absences. This list is not exhaustive:

- Illness or medical appointment (hospital/doctor/dentist) that cannot be arranged outside of class hours
- Domestic emergencies including family bereavement, family breakdown resulting in accommodation issue, caring crisis where student is a carer
- Attendance at a funeral, wedding or civil ceremony
- Attendance at interviews, examinations, skills competitions, careers and university open days
- Nationwide weather-related factors or transport disruptions
- Driving test or driving theory test
- Attendance at court or undertaking a community service order

**4.2.2** Students taking time off to go on holidays is not a reasonable authorised absence and should be recorded as unauthorised absence.

## 4.3 Marking of Absences

**4.3.1** The College has the right to turn down a request for 'authorised absence' if it is suspected that the reason provided for the absence is not genuine. The tutor should record why they do not consider the reason to be acceptable and retain on file. If the tutor is in doubt about the reasons submitted, they should discuss this with the course coordinator in order to ensure that a consistent approach is taken by all members of the course team in recording authorised and unauthorised absence. Students who arrive at class and, in the view of the tutor, seek to leave class early without good reason, such as the examples given in 4.2.1, should be marked as 'unauthorised absent'.

**4.3.2** Student should be marked as unauthorised absent if they have not made contact and provided an acceptable reason for the absence, however, upon a student's return to College, tutors can update the register mark to authorised absence if an acceptable reason for the absence is provided, and evidence supplied where applicable.

## 4.4 Storage and Retention of Evidence of Authorised Absences

**4.4.1** Details of all authorised absences must be recorded and retained for audit purposes and in the event of a Subject Access Request being received. Evidence must be retained securely and in compliance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act (2018) as it is likely that some evidence will include Special Category information. See General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Handbook

**4.4.2** Evidence relating to all authorisation of absences must be collected and retained by the course team for the current academic year plus seven years.

**4.4.3** To ensure secure storage and proper retention of authorised absences, these will be stored electronically on the Student Manager App (SMA).

**4.4.4** Tutors must upload all evidence of authorised absence to the student's account on the SMA, under the 'Document Vault' section as soon as it is received. (See Appendix 3 for instructions). This includes copies of absence notifications by email, MS Teams, letter or authorisation of absence form. Notification of absence by phone should follow 4.1.3.

**4.4.5** Once evidence is uploaded to SMA, the original evidence should be disposed of (confidential waste for hard copies, deletion of record for electronic copies).

## 4.5 Monitoring of Absences

**4.5.1** Students with repeated absences may need additional support. To support students and signpost to the appropriate College support services, tutors should be mindful of the following points when considering authorisation of absences:

- **Has the student had numerous absences prior to the current absence.**
- **Has the student used the same reason for authorised absence before** - A student who suffers a notified medical condition which repeatedly causes their absence from the course should have this documented by their GP or hospital.
- **Has the student made an effort to contact the College on the day of absence or as close to the commencement of absence as is practically possible**
- **Is repeated absence affecting the student's studies** - Staff should reach out to students who have not been attending to discuss the support services available to them. Students in need can be referred to the Learner Welfare Team via the Cause for Concern App where the issues raised will be dealt with confidentially and in a non-judgmental manner. Please see the student handbooks for further guidance on support services available – See Further Education Student Handbook 2025-26 and Higher Education Student Handbook 2025-26
- **What are the possible consequences of poor attendance** - Any student who is absent without an agreed leave of absence for four weeks will be assumed to have withdrawn from their course. HE students who wish to withdraw, can, in some cases, be offered a leave of absence. This will normally be for a minimum period of one semester and guarantees the student a place on the course if they return on the agreed date. HE students who withdraw will be charged tuition fees as per the Fees Policy - See Policies and Procedures. Any student can appeal a decision to remove them from their course due to attendance, by following the College complaints process – See Complaints and Compliments
- **Is the student on long-term absence** – Students on long term absence are at a risk of not achieving. Tutors should speak to their course co-ordinator if they have concerns about long-term sickness absence. Arrangements to engage in teaching and learning from home may be possible for some students in exceptional circumstances, however this will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It should be noted that the EMA fund is in place to assist with costs incurred whilst attending College and therefore does not support long term absences. Absences longer than three weeks should be assessed to see whether they should be categorised as long-term sickness. Students who are on maternity leave but are continuing to engage in remote study with a view to completing their course may be marked present (virtually) and are therefore eligible to receive EMA. Students who are on paternity leave may be marked as authorised absence for up to three weeks and are eligible to receive EMA.

## 5.0 Communication Plan

This Procedure will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff induction and training.

## 6.0 Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

## Appendix 1: Document Change History

| Version | Date | Change Detail |
|---|---|---|
| **1.0** | July 2023 | Transferred to new Accessibility Template |
| **1.1** | Nov 2023 | Removal of reference to the attendance mark for Sickness at 2.1 and 4.1 |
| **1.2** | August 2024 | Responsible Owner amended to “Deputy Principal Curriculum” |
| **1.3** | November 2025 | 4.1 addition of questions 6 – 8<br>Removal of references to Training for Success (TfS)<br>Q1 Remove - Attendance at SERC Youth Health Clinic<br>6.0 - Next Review updated to “Annually” |
| **1.4** | June 2026 | • 3.2 added under ‘Scope’.<br>• Five sections added under ‘Procedure’ – Notification of Absence, Authorised Absences, Marking of Absences, Storage and Retention, and Monitoring of Absences.<br>• Questions reformatted to points.<br>• References to 80% attendance removed.<br>• Age 18 reference removed.<br>• Phone calls are now an acceptable form of notification of absence.<br>• List of authorised absences streamlined and grouped.<br>• 4.2.2 added to confirm that holidays are not authorised absence.<br>• Links and references to related SOPs added.<br>• Authorisation of Absence Form moved to Appendix.<br>• Instructions on to upload evidence to Document Vault on SMA added as Appendix. |

## Appendix 2: Authorisation of Absence Form

**PRIVACY NOTICE:** Information gathered on this form will be processed within the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and used for the purpose of recording and managing absence. The College is permitted to process personal data where there is a 'lawful basis' to do so. This processing is necessary for the performance of your contract. Your information may be shared with relevant College staff for the purpose of recording and managing absence.

Further information on data protection and your rights are available on our website - https://www.serc.ac.uk/customer-privacy

**Student ID:** _____

**Student Name:** _____

**Course:** _____

**First Date of Absence:** _____

**Last Date of Absence:** _____

**Number of Days:** _____

**Nature of Absence:** _____

_____

_____

**Was supporting evidence submitted: Yes / No**

**Student's Signature:** _____

**Date:** _____

**Absence Authorised? Yes / No**

**If absence was not authorised, please state reason:**

_____

_____

**Course Tutor Signature:** _____

**Date:** _____

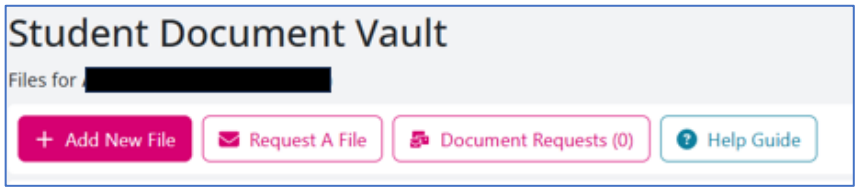
## Appendix 3: Instructions for Upload of Evidence to SMA

1. **Locate the student on the Student Manager App**

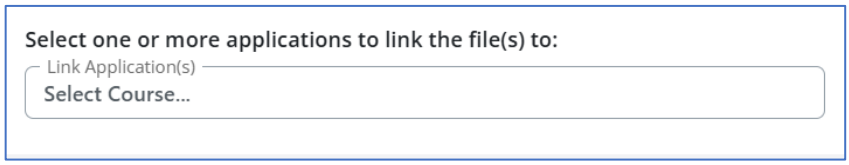
[Home - Student Manager]

2. **Select 'Document Vault'**

3. **Select 'Add New File'**

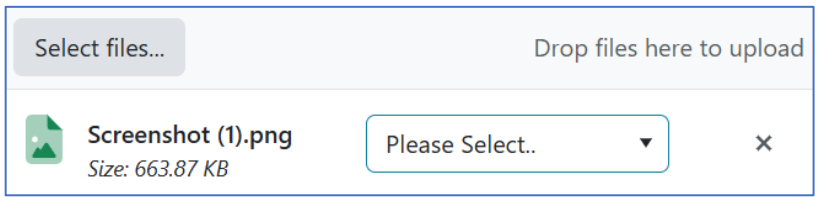


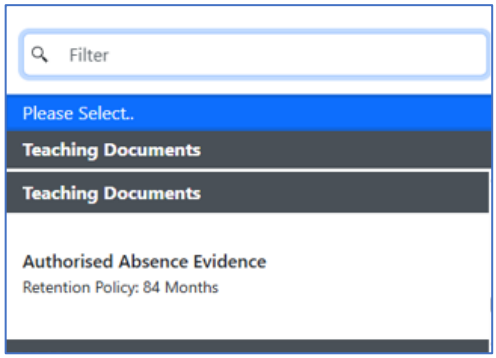

4. **Select 'Link Application' from dropdown list**



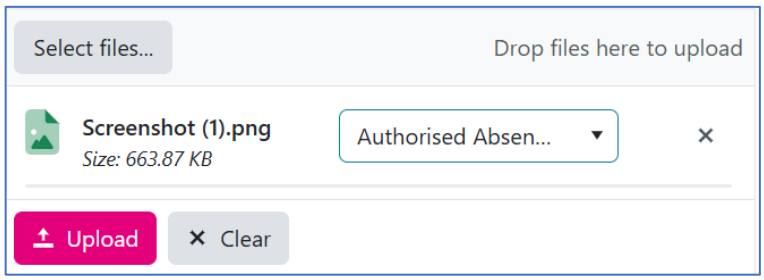

5. **Once course has been selected, you can either select and search for your evidence using 'select file', or you can drag and drop file to upload**

6. **Once evidence has been added, you need to search the dropdown menu and select 'Authorised Absence Evidence' under the Teaching Documents section.**

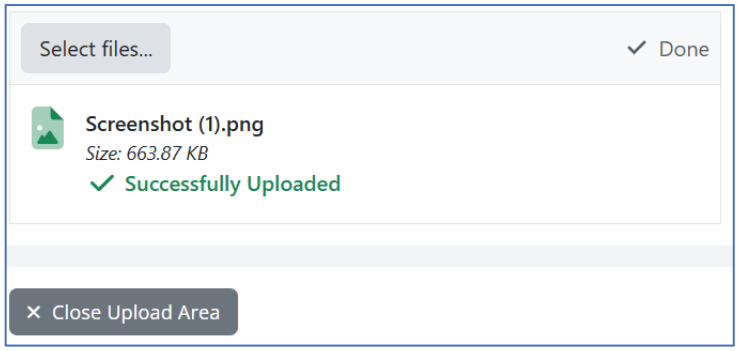


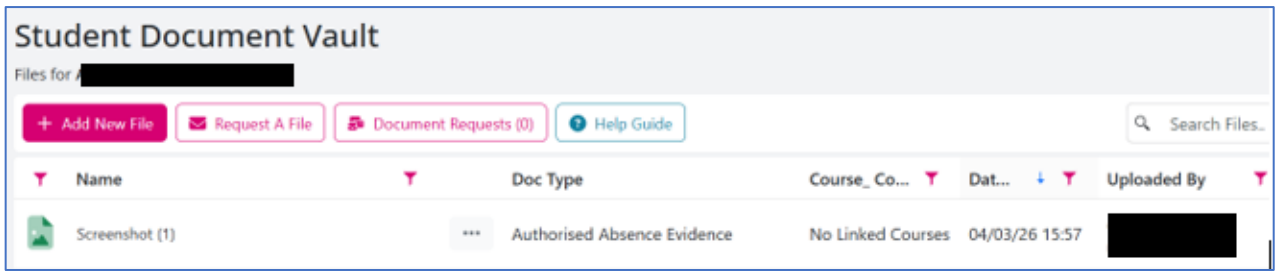



7. **Click ‘Upload’**




8. **Click ‘Close Upload Area’**




9. **Evidence should now appear on the document vault and will be retained in line with College Policy**