



THE UNIVERSITY OF
BUCKINGHAM

MEDICAL SCHOOL

MB ChB

Attendance and absence FAQs

This document provides some advice on how to troubleshoot some of the more common issues encountered with attendance monitoring and recording of absences, and explains how the system works in various common scenarios, especially with respect to the use of absence forms. The preferred method of recording attendance is the 'EMER Attendance' mobile app and you should use this whenever possible, but a number of alternatives are provided when necessary. Note that attendance and absence monitoring requirements are the same in both Phases of the course: you are expected to sign in and out of all compulsory sessions and submit either a self-certification form or an exceptional absence request as appropriate for all absences, and it is entirely your responsibility to ensure that your attendance is correctly recorded.

Using the app

1 What is the preferred method of recording attendance?

We aim for the app to be the primary method of recording attendance for the entire student body, so please use this whenever possible. The card reader is provided as a backup only for exceptional cases when you are unable to use the app.

2 Is the app safe and is my data secure?

The app has been reviewed by the relevant authorities and approved for publication in the app stores, and does not contain any malicious code. It collects data only when you request it to and this does not include any personal or financial information, only your student ID number, the date/time and the GPS coordinates of your location. Collected data is stored in a secure system that is accessible only by authorised employees of the university and its partners, and will not be disclosed to any other party without your permission.

3 What devices can I install the app on?

The app is available for the Android and Apple iOS operating systems. There is no Windows Phone version as we believe no Medical School students currently own a Windows Phone. We recommend you install the app on your personal smartphone rather than the Medical School-supplied iPad, because you are more likely to have the former with you at all times. If you don't have a personal Android or Apple device, please install it on your iPad instead and ensure you bring your iPad to all compulsory sessions.

4 How do I install the app?

Go to the app store and search for "emer attendance". The app you need has a logo of a maroon circle containing a stylised letter E, and the author's name will be either Lloyd Thomas or University of Buckingham Medical School. Download and install this app the same way as you would download any other app.

5 Do I need to pay for the app?

No. It is provided free of charge to all registered students of the Medical School.

6 How much data does the app use?

Very little. Only a few bytes are sent to the server when you press the button and a few more bytes received in response. Please do not be afraid to use the app over 3G or 4G connections as it is extremely unlikely that it will cause you to exceed your data allowance.

7 Can I use the app on more than one device?

Not at the moment. It is possible to install it on multiple devices but as soon as you register a second device it will unregister the first one. We intend to add this ability in a future version.

8 Can I use the app for both phases of the course?

Yes. It works equally well for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 and we encourage its use throughout the entire course.

9 What settings do I need to enter?

You need your student ID number and the standard password you use to log on to university computers and webmail. The service URL is <https://emer.buckingham.ac.uk>. These settings only need to be entered once.

10 Do I need to log in to the EMER website?

If you visit the service URL with a web browser you will see a login page for a website. This part of the system is for staff use only and students do not have access to it. You don't need to log in here to use the app and attempting to do so will fail.

11 Why does it say 'Invalid username/password' when I know I entered my password correctly?

For security reasons, after you have entered your password incorrectly five times in a row your account will be locked and all further registration attempts will fail even if the password is correct. User accounts are managed by central IT Services and not by the Medical School IT department so please contact the IT Services Helpdesk and ask them to unlock your account.

12 What does 'attendance not verified' mean?

The app is unable to connect to the server, usually because you are not connected to the internet. Please check your internet connection by opening a browser and trying to view a web page. If no Wi-Fi is available in your location, you will need to turn on mobile internet services (3G or 4G).

13 When do I need to use the app?

The Medical School requires all students to sign in and out of all compulsory activities, so you should press the button when you first arrive on site and again when you leave after completing your day's study. You don't need to sign in for each individual activity on your timetable.

14 How do I sign in/out using the app?

Simply press the big maroon button with the E logo. If your sign in was successful it will confirm "Attendance registered" and display your location as a confirmation that you are in the right place. In future it is intended to display your timetable for the day in the app.

15 Where can I use the app?

You can use the app at any location you are expected to visit for compulsory sessions. These include the Medical School building, Milton Keynes, St Andrew's and Warwick Hospitals, and the various GP practices used for CSFC and Clinical Methods.

16 Where does the data from the app go and what is it used for?

The app connects to the Medical School's central EMER database, and the data it collects is used by authorised staff members only for the purpose of monitoring your attendance on the MBChB course as part of the Student Agreement you signed at registration.

17 Where does the app get its timetable information from?

Timetables are defined on the Moodle calendar for each unit or block by the curriculum administrators. Each activity has a location specified and can be defined as compulsory or optional. If you have any queries about your timetable, please contact the curriculum team.

18 How does the app know where I am?

It uses the GPS coordinates provided by your device's location services and compares these against the coordinates defined in Moodle for the location specified on your calendar.

19 I live in university accommodation or elsewhere in Buckingham. Can I sign in from home?

No. The location provided by your device is far more accurate than merely identifying which town you are in. You must be within a few metres of the defined location for your attendance to be recorded and you cannot cheat the system by signing in from home as all accommodation is out of range of the teaching locations.

20 Can I sign in to the Medical School from other areas of the university campus, e.g. the OTM or Hunter Street?

No. These areas are outside the defined ranges and you must be inside or immediately outside the Chandos Road Building.

21 How accurate is the location provided by the app?

This depends on the quality of the GPS system used in your device, but it is usually accurate to within a few metres. This is good enough to identify which room of a building you are in, which is more than sufficient for our needs.

22 What happens if I don't enable location services on my device?

The app requires location services to be enabled in order to function. It will fail to record your attendance if you disable these services and you will be marked as absent. When you first run the app it will ask you for permission to access your location and you must grant this.

23 What does 'location out of range' mean?

You are too far away from the location specified on your calendar and need to move closer to the site. If you get this error when you are in the correct location, it may be that your device has not yet identified your precise location, so wait a few seconds and try again. If you still get the message, it may be that the wrong location is specified on the Moodle calendar so please contact the curriculum team.

24 Whereabouts within the site can I sign in from?

Each location has a radius defined in Moodle that should be sufficient to cover the entire site, so you should be able to sign in from anywhere within that site, but not from outside it.

25 What happens if I sign in from the wrong location?

You will get the 'location out of range' error and the app will not save the record so you will be marked as absent until you sign in from the correct location.

26 What happens if no internet connection is available when I sign in?

You will get the 'attendance not verified' message and your attendance will not be registered. A future version will be enhanced so records will be stored locally and uploaded later when a connection is available.

27 I am connected to the university Wi-Fi network but the app is not working. What could be the problem?

Your device may have been placed in the remediation network. Open a web browser and try to visit a web page. If you are redirected to the notification page at ns500.buckingham.ac.uk, please follow the

instructions there to remove your device from the remediation network and allow full access. This network is managed by central IT Services and is unfortunately outside the control of the Medical School so any issues with it should be reported to the IT Services Helpdesk.

28 What happens if I don't sign in?

If you fail to sign in using any of the available methods you will be marked as absent. It is your responsibility to ensure you record your attendance at all compulsory sessions. Manual registers are no longer available so if you attend a session without signing in this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

29 What does 'No activity found' mean?

The system cannot find any compulsory timetabled activities for you on today's Moodle calendars. This most commonly occurs when all of today's activities are optional so attendance is not being monitored and you are not required to sign in. If you receive this message when signing in for a compulsory session, this is usually due to an error or omission in the Moodle calendar setup so please contact the curriculum team.

30 What does 'No location found' mean?

The system has found a timetabled activity for you but it does not have a location specified so it cannot verify you are in the correct location. Again this is a rare occurrence, so if you receive this message please contact the curriculum team.

31 Why am I being marked as late when I sign in on time?

The app uses your device's system time so it may be that this is incorrect. Make sure the timezone is correctly set and it is displaying the correct date and time.

32 Can I use the app to sign in retrospectively?

No. It always uses the current time when you press the button and it is not possible to specify a different time.

33 Do I need to re-register the app if I receive a new uCard?

No. The app does not use any uCard data and your student ID number will never change so the app will continue to work with the existing settings.

34 Do I need to re-register the app if I change my password?

No. The password is only used when you initially register the app, and a different method is used to authenticate attendance records. You will however need to change the password stored on your device for the UoB-Wifi network in order to continue using the university Wi-Fi.

35 If I have signed in using the app, do I need to swipe in using the card reader as well (or vice versa)?

No. Both systems record data to the same database. If you sign in using both, it will create two records that indicate you have arrived and then departed again. Use one or the other, but not both.

36 Can I submit absence forms via the app?

No, all it can do is register attendance. You will need to use Moodle to submit these forms. This facility may be added to the app in future if there is demand for it.

37 Why do I get a 'token expired' error when I try to sign in?

For security reasons, the token used to register your device expires after 30 days. You need to go to the Settings page and re-enter your login details to generate a new token for the next 30 days.

38 What happens if I lose my device or it gets stolen?

Please notify the Medical School IT department immediately. They will be able to remotely invalidate your registration on this device and prevent unauthorised users from using the app.

39 Can the Medical School provide me with training on how to use my device?

No. It was your decision to purchase this particular phone or tablet and is your responsibility to learn how to use it. There are so many different types of device that it is impossible for the Medical School to provide training for personal devices.

40 Who do I contact if I have queries or issues with the app?

Technical support information is available on Moodle at <http://medvle.buckingham.ac.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=6506>, and if your issue cannot be resolved by the information provided there please contact James Doughty (located in the front office, or email james.doughty@buckingham.ac.uk). For queries regarding your timetable and/or attendance requirements, if you are a Phase 1 student please contact the curriculum team located in the front office or portacabin, or if you are a Phase 2 student please contact the Block Administrators for your block (Lisa Alvarez and Grant Cairns at Milton Keynes, Victoria Richardson at St Andrew's or Lucy Heffer for Clinical Methods).

Using the swipe card reader

41 When should I use the card reader?

We encourage all students to use the mobile app whenever possible. The card reader is provided as a backup in Phase 1 for those students who are unable to use the app, e.g. because they have lost or forgotten their phone. This option is available only within the Medical School as card readers are not provided at any other location.

42 What does the beep mean?

The beep simply means the card reader has read some input and does not indicate your attendance has been registered. You must look at the outcome displayed on the screen to confirm whether or not your scan was successful, and the various status messages are explained below.

43 The number that appears when I scan is not my student ID number

This is correct. The number read by the scanner is the serial number of the card itself, usually an 8-digit number that starts with 1076. This number is embedded within the internal card data and is not printed anywhere on the card. When you scanned your card at registration and entered your ID number before receiving your iPad, this enrolled your card in the system and associated that serial number with your ID number.

44 My card number doesn't begin with 1076 and/or is less than 8 digits

Although most card numbers comply with this format, there are a few exceptions. Serial numbers are pre-programmed into the blank cards by the manufacturer and cards are issued randomly by Registry so don't worry if your card number is out of sequence.

45 The card number is not appearing in the box when I scan

Make sure the cursor (the flashing vertical bar) is in the input box before scanning, otherwise the scanned data will not be sent to the attendance page.

46 It says my card number is not recognised. What should I do now?

When a new card is scanned for the first time, it must be associated with your ID number in order to correctly identify you. Do not scan your card a second time but use the numeric keypad to type in your 7-digit ID number printed on the front of the card (e.g. 150xxxx). This will link this card number to your student record and you will be recognised next time you scan. If you believe you have received this message in error, please contact the Medical School IT department for assistance.

47 I haven't scanned my card yet and the screen is displaying the 'card not recognised' message. What should I do?

This usually occurs because the previous student has not paid attention to the response when scanning their new card and has walked away without entering their ID number. Do not enter your

student ID number as this will register this other student's card to you and record their attendance under your name. Instead enter a random seven-digit number (e.g. 1234567) to clear this message. The 'student not in database' message will briefly appear and then you should scan your card.

48 I can't type my ID number when requested to

Check that the green light on the keypad is lit. If it is not, press the 'Num Lock' key and the light should come on. Try typing your ID number again with the green light lit.

49 After typing my ID number it says 'student not in database'

You may have entered your ID number incorrectly. Try scanning your card again and ensure you enter your student ID number correctly. If you still have problems, contact the Medical School IT department for assistance. Please note that the database only contains medical students, so this error will also appear in the unlikely event of a non-medical student attempting to scan their card.

50 I have received a replacement uCard. Why is my card number not recognised?

As explained above, the number read by the scanner is the serial number of the card. This is unique to each individual card, so if you receive a new card it will have a different serial number that must be enrolled in the system the first time it is scanned.

51 When thanking me for scanning, it gives the wrong student's name

This is usually a consequence of not entering your ID number when prompted to, so someone else has entered their ID number and registered your card to them. This needs to be resolved as it means the system is recording your attendance under another student's name, so please contact the Medical School IT department for assistance.

52 The card reader won't scan my card and doesn't beep

The reader can get confused and temporarily shut down if too many cards are read in quick succession. Wait a couple of seconds and try again. If the card is in a holder, you may need to take it out for the reader to recognise it.

53 It says 'swipes from this location have been disallowed'

To ensure attendance records can only be created when you are actually present in the school, only the authorised swipe card machines are allowed to write to the database. If this message appears in error on an authorised machine, please contact the Medical School IT department for assistance.

54 It says 'scan failed'. Why does this happen?

The most common cause of this error is that you scanned too quickly after another student and didn't give the system time to finish processing that student's scan, so your card number was not

read correctly. You must wait until the thank you message disappears and the screen returns to saying 'scan card'.

55 It says I last scanned less than 5 minutes ago and my scan was ignored

The system can't distinguish between scanning in and out so it counts the number of scans to determine whether you are in or out at a given time (an odd number indicates in and an even number indicates out). To prevent accidental duplicate scans that affect this logic, there is a five-minute threshold and it will ignore another scan of the same card during this period – this is by design and is not a bug.

56 I lost or forgot my card and my phone. What should I do?

If you are unable to sign in using either of the electronic systems, you must go to the admin office and ask a member of staff to sign you in when arriving and leaving to avoid being marked as absent. This manual entry is available only as a short-term alternative in very exceptional circumstances with good reason, and if you have lost or damaged your card, you will need to obtain a replacement from Registry as soon as possible.

57 Can I type my ID number instead of scanning my card?

No. The number read by the scanner is not your student ID number but the serial number of the card. As this is not printed on the card or otherwise available to you, it is unlikely that you will know your serial number, and even if you do know it a special input format is required. If you try to type your student ID into the card number box, the system will not understand it and is most likely to give the 'scan failed' error.

General attendance/absence queries

58 Why is my timetable different from my friend's?

The Moodle calendars are set up so each student receives a personalised timetable that contains only the activities applicable to them. Most Phase 1 activities are the same for the entire cohort, but your timetable may differ from other students' for various reasons, for instance if they are in a different study group and attending a different CSFC venue, or are studying a different SSC. In Phase 2, each pair within a stream will do different activities so every pair of students will have a different timetable.

59 I have a medical appointment that clashes with a class. What should I do?

Medical appointments that are booked in advance and are not a result of a period of illness are classed as exceptional absence and not as sickness, so you should submit an exceptional absence request for this day and not a self-certification form. If you made an appointment during a period of absence and as a direct result of this illness, then the time spent at the appointment will count as part of your self-certification submission.

60 I was off sick and didn't attend a class. I haven't submitted a self-certification form yet so what should I do?

You must submit a self-certification form for your absence as soon as possible. Until you have submitted the form your absence will be recorded as unauthorised, but it will become an authorised absence once the form has been received.

61 I have submitted a self-certification or exceptional absence form. What happens when I don't sign in?

If you have submitted a form you will not be expected to attend for the duration of the dates specified on the form. The system checks for forms submitted by students who haven't signed in and if one is found your absence will be recorded as authorised. The only exception is if your exceptional absence request is rejected and you take the time off anyway; in this case your absence will be unauthorised.

62 I am a Phase 2 student and will be absent from my weekend shift. Do I need to complete an absence form?

Yes. Attendance at weekend shifts is compulsory and is monitored in the same way as weekday activities, so failing to attend one or both days of a weekend shift without submitting a form will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

63 Who do I need to notify of absence?

For Phase 1 students, if you are absent from a session at the Medical School you should also notify the Unit Lead(s) of the unit(s) you will be missing, and if you are absent from a CSFC placement you

must notify the relevant staff member at the surgery you were due to attend by email or phone as they do not have access to the absence forms. For Phase 2 students, you must notify your Educational Supervisor and Block Lead in all cases.

64 I arrived late for class. Do I still need to sign in?

Yes. If you fail to sign in you will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence. You will be marked as late but this will not affect your absence total. Continued lateness is a cause for concern though and you will probably be required to discuss your punctuality with the Student Support team.

65 I have arrived early to do some private study before class. Should I sign in now?

There is no harm in signing in early and you may find the app will respond more quickly as fewer students are using it at that time. Please remember, if you signed in when arriving early you should not sign in again when the class starts unless you have signed out in the meantime.

66 I arrived early and signed in then. Should I sign in again when the class starts?

If you have stayed in the class location since then and not signed out, the answer is no. If you sign in a second time the system will record this as a departure so it will show you as arriving early and leaving when the class started. If however you came in early, signed out and then returned for the class, you will need to sign in again. Remember that an odd number of records indicates that you are in and an even number indicates that you are out. If in doubt, please check at the admin office.

67 What happens if I sign out without signing in?

The system sees your first record of the day as your arrival time, so if you sign out without signing in it will record you as arriving at the finishing time and being several hours late. You must ensure you sign in when you arrive at the start of the session.

68 I am staying in the school after class for private study. When should I sign out?

Private study in the school is not compulsory so attendance is not monitored. You can either sign out immediately after the class finishes or when you leave after completing your private study. You may find the app responds more quickly if you sign out a little later once the majority of the class have left and there are fewer students using it.

69 I am leaving the school for a short break and then coming back. Do I need to sign out and back in?

No. It is expected that students will need to temporarily leave the school during their breaks, e.g. to use the toilet or get food and drink. You are expected to return before the class resumes but not required to sign out and in.

70 I came to class but I'm not feeling well and I need to leave early. What should I do?

Even if you attended part of the class, you still need to submit a self-certification form for this absence, otherwise you will be considered to have left early without permission. This partial absence will be counted as a full day in your absence total for the term. Similarly if you arrive late due to illness (e.g. you missed the lecture but felt well enough to come in later for group work), you should submit a self-certification form to justify your lateness.

71 Do I need to sign in and out when attending an optional taught session?

Certain taught sessions, for example revision classes in the final week of term and some SSC sessions, may be designated as optional by the Unit Lead and it is up to you whether or not you choose to attend, but please confirm in advance which sessions are optional and which are compulsory for each unit. If you do attend an optional session it is not necessary to sign in or out as attendance at optional sessions is not counted in your attendance statistics.

72 Do I need to sign in and out when attending for private study?

No. You only need to sign in when attending compulsory timetabled classes (lectures, practical sessions, group work etc.). Private study in the school is recommended but not compulsory so attendance outside of classes is not monitored.

73 Do I need to sign in and out when attending for an exam?

No. Exams fall outside the designated term times. All students are expected to attend all relevant examinations though and failure to attend will result in failing the exam and probable course termination as defined by the Code of Practice.

74 I signed in when I didn't need to, e.g. when attending an optional session or for private study. Do I need to do anything?

No. The system knows when the compulsory session times are and any records created outside of these times are completely ignored by the system and will not affect your attendance statistics.

75 What happens when I visit a hospital or surgery for my CSFC placement?

You will need to use the app to record your attendance at locations outside the Medical School as card readers are not available. If you are unable to do this, please contact a member of Medical School admin staff to indicate your attendance at the placement, providing evidence to confirm this.

76 How does the system know which Student Selected Component I am studying and when the taught sessions are?

Each SSC has its own Moodle calendar. You will be enrolled in your assigned SSCs in Moodle and will see only the calendars relating to those SSCs.

77 What happens when I am doing self-directed study for my Student Selected Component?

The compulsory and optional session times for your SSC are defined on the Moodle calendar. You will not be recorded as having unauthorised absences when you are carrying out self-directed study away from the school (e.g. in the library or at home) in the designated periods, but failure to sign in for a compulsory taught session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

78 I am doing a Biomedical Research Project SSC in the Clore Lab. How is my attendance recorded?

The Clore Lab is defined on the Moodle calendar as the location for this SSC so you should use the app to sign in from the lab.

79 I am doing the Library Project SSC this term. Do I need to sign in?

No. Library Projects have no compulsory taught sessions and are completed entirely through self-directed study. Attendance is not monitored but you are expected to carry out sufficient self-directed study in the designated periods to complete the project to a satisfactory standard, and failure to do so will result in failing the project.

80 How do I cancel a period of exceptional absence?

Once an exceptional absence request has been submitted it cannot be edited. If you wish to cancel a future period of absence, please contact a member of admin staff who will delete your request. You will then be expected to attend on the dates that were covered by the request.

81 I made a mistake with the dates on my absence form. How can I correct them?

Absence forms cannot be edited after they have been submitted so you should double-check the dates are correct before you press the submit button. If you do accidentally submit an incorrect form, please contact the admin office and give them the correct dates. They will either manually correct your submission or delete it and ask you to submit a new form with the correct dates. Including dates you were actually present in an absence form will mean your absence totals will be higher than they should be, which may lead to the Student Support team requesting a meeting regarding your attendance, so it is important that your submissions are correct.

82 How much absence am I permitted?

Please consult the Attendance and Leave Entitlements Policy for information on this subject.

83 There appears to be an error in my timetable. How can this be corrected?

Every effort has been made to ensure all timetables are correct, but if you do find an error please contact a member of the curriculum team and provide them with details of the error so they can correct it in Moodle if necessary.

Engagement reports

84 What are the end of term/block engagement reports I have received?

At the end of each term in Phase 1 and block in Phase 2, every student will receive an email containing their personal engagement reports for that term or block. These use the data collected from the various attendance register systems throughout the period to give you a summary of your attendance and punctuality and an overall engagement rating. Please contact the Student Support team if you have any queries regarding these reports.

85 What are the end of week attendance reports I receive in Phase 2?

Every Friday in Phase 2, you will receive an email that details your attendance for that week. You must share this with your Educational Supervisor as it forms part of their weekly report on your engagement with the programme.

86 Why are there are errors in my engagement report?

It is your responsibility to ensure you have correctly recorded your attendance, so these reports reflect the data you entered and any errors are yours. Unless firm proof of attendance can be provided, the attendance records will not be altered.

87 I was late arriving in Buckingham and registering at the start of the course. How will this affect my engagement report for term 1?

We understand that for various reasons students may be unable to register on the designated registration day and may arrive at a later date. We will create an exceptional absence form to cover the period between the start of term 1 and your arrival date and this will be considered an authorised period of absence. It will be recorded as an absence in the engagement report but please don't worry as it will not affect your academic record negatively, provided you have caught up on the work you missed.

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