Absence Policy

1. Context

The CHARM-EU MSc in Global Challenges for Sustainability is an 18 month programme currently offered by five partners of the CHARM-EU alliance.

Full and punctual attendance is expected and required by all students participating in this MSc programme.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Absence Policy is to outline expectations, process and procedure in terms of student engagement with educational activities in the MSc.

The Absence Policy will help identify students who have exhibited patterns of unsatisfactory attendance, and describe the processes to assist these students to ensure that they have a positive learning experience with CHARM-EU.

3. Benefits

This policy supports and enhances student academic success and programme learning outcomes by recognizing active attendance and participation in the MSc as essential.

This policy provides clear guidelines for managing student absences, ensuring that all students are treated fairly and equitably, and that teaching and administrative staff have clear processes to manage absences.

This policy encourages students to take responsibility for their attendance in the MSc. Regular attendance is associated with module and phase assessment. This policy may help student performance in the programme.

This policy provides a means for CHARM-EU to identify students who may be facing difficulties in the MSc and provide them with support where needed.

4. Scope

This policy applies exclusively to students registered on the CHARM-EU MSc in Global Challenges for Sustainability.

This policy does not apply to any other CHARM-EU programmes including, but not limited to, micro-credentials, and online modules offered in the online course catalogue.

5. Definitions

Absence: An absence is defined as a situation whereby a student is not physically present in a timetabled educational activity within the face to face location of the hybrid classroom required for the completion of the MSc.

Students may not attend another face to face hybrid classroom than where they are placed for a Phase. If a student attends another face to face hybrid classroom, this is deemed an absence, unless there is prior approval by the Programme Board.

Students may not access the MSc from outside the hybrid classroom using online communication means. This is deemed an absence unless there is prior approval by the Programme Board or where occasional online attendance has been sanctioned within a student's CHARM-EU Needs Assessment and Reasonable Accommodations Report.

Notified absence: A notified absence is where a student notifies administrative and teaching staff using an absence notification form in advance that they will be absent for a less than 4 sequential days of the programme.

Long term notified absence: A long term notified absence is where a student notifies administrative and teaching staff using an absence notification form, and Module Coordinators via email, in advance that they will be absent for more than 4 sequential days of the programme.

Unnotified absence: An unnotified absence is where a student fails to inform administrative and teaching staff that they will be absent for a day of the programme using the absence notification form.

Timetabled educational activities: Any activities required for the completion of the MSc that are timetabled within the course descriptors (e.g. lectures, in-class workshops, field trips, Blended Intensive Programmes, examinations).

Unsatisfactory attendance: Unsatisfactory attendance is defined as

- More than 8 notified absences in a Phase and / or

- More than 5 unnotified absences in a Phase

Persistent unsatisfactory attendance: This is when:

- The threshold for notified or unnotified absences has been reached,

- A meeting between the student and Local Master's Programme Coordinator has been held,

- When remedial actions are not implemented within an agreed timeframe, and

- If agreed goals do not yield a change in attendance within a timeframe agreed in collaboration with the student.

Mitigating circumstances: Circumstances that are beyond a student's control and that have a significant and negative impact on their ability to complete educational activities. These circumstances are considered valid reasons and may warrant special consideration or accommodation such as illness, non-routine appointments, family or personal difficulty, caring responsibilities or CHARM-EU representation.

Needs Assessment and Reasonable Accommodations Report: The Needs and Accommodations Assessment Report details the reasonable accommodations and recommendations which should be fully provided to the student throughout the CHARM-EU programme.

Blended / hybrid programme: The delivery of the programme is defined as blended and hybrid in the course proposal and accreditation documentation. This is defined as using both online and in person elements.

6. Principles

Full participation in the MSc is necessary for students to gain maximum benefit for their educational experience.

Absenteeism can negatively affect the student achieving their learning outcomes. Persistent absenteeism can indicate that a student is experiencing a personal or programme related difficulty for which additional support may be available.

Absenteeism can negatively affect other students in the class due to the high degree of group work activities and group assessments in the MSc.

Payment of Erasmus grants may be contingent on verification of students' attendance on the course by a university at regular intervals throughout the academic year.

Keeping track of absences has implications for emergency situations (e.g. evacuation or fire drill) whereby health and safety personnel may check the presence of students against the list of those present and absent in a particular class.

This policy relates to full day absences. Students are expected to attend all educational activities on time.

CHARM-EU may provide a Needs Assessment and Reasonable Accommodations Report for a student. If a reasonable accommodation is provided to a student that conflicts with elements of this policy, the recommendations in the Report will take precedence over this policy (e.g. occasional online attendance for a timetabled educational activity).

7. Mitigating circumstances

The following mitigating circumstances are used to classify the rationale for the student absence.

Illness: Where a student is ill and cannot physically attend the classroom.

Non-routine medical appointments: Students must make every effort to arrange medical appointments at times that enable them to attend lectures.

Family or personal difficulty: In the case of a serious family illness, bereavement, or personal difficulty.

Representing CHARM-EU: Where a student is representing CHARM-EU at an external conference or activity.

Caring responsibilities: Where students care for family members (children, parents, siblings with special needs).

8. Policy

8.1. Student responsibilities

Students are responsible for familiarizing and understanding this policy, and its ramifications for their teaching and learning.

Students are responsible for attending all educational activities on time associated with the MSc as defined in Section 5.

Students are responsible for having knowledge of specific attendance requirements as defined in the course descriptors.

Students are responsible for notifying any absences to administrative and teaching staff using the absences notification form in advance of the educational activity, and ensure they do not have any unnotified absences.

Students are responsible for informing Module Coordinators of any long term notified absences. All data related to absences provided in the absences notification form is protected under EU General Data Protection Regulation

Students are responsible for notifying their group if they will be absent from a group work meeting.

Students are responsible for engaging with Module Coordinators, Local Master's Programme Coordinators, and the Programme Board to discuss absences where required.

8.2. Teaching Assistant Responsibilities

Teaching Assistants are responsible for checking the absences notification form each day and informing Teaching Staff where necessary of a student notified absence.

Teaching Assistants are responsible for logging unnotified absences at the end of each day on the absences notification form.

Teaching Assistants are responsible for checking the results of the absences notification form for students located in their institution at the end of each teaching week to ascertain any students that are reaching the threshold for unsatisfactory attendance. This includes both notified and unnotified absences.

The local Teaching Assistant is responsible for notifying a student when they are reaching the threshold for unsatisfactory attendance. They should cc the JVAO in this communication.

The local Teaching Assistant will notify a student who has 7 notified absences or 4 unnotified absences within a Phase.

In cases where the threshold of unsatisfactory attendance has been reached, the local Teaching Assistant will contact the Local Master's Programme Co-ordinator, ccing the JVAO.

8.3. Module Coordinator Responsibilities

For any long term notified absences, Module Co-ordinators, having received this information from the student, should contact the student and discuss any teaching and learning needs that they may have. If they cannot address these needs, the Module Co-ordinator should discuss this with the Local Master's Programme Co-ordinator.

8.4. Local Master's Programme Co-ordinator Responsibilities

The local Master's Programme Co-ordinator is responsible for discussing long term notified absences with a Module Co-ordinator. If the Master's Programme Co-ordinator cannot address these needs, the Programme Board should be consulted.

The local Master's Programme Co-ordinator is responsible for contacting a student who has reached the threshold for notified and/or unnotified absences. They will work with the student along with The Module Coordinator to set attendance goals, remedial actions, and/or ascertain if there are any additional supports needed for the student. The students' Mentor may be invited to attend where reasonable.

The Local Master's Programme Co-ordinator is responsible for notifying the Programme Board when a student reaches a threshold for unsatisfactory attendance and sharing information for the reasons for their unsatisfactory attendance.

8.5. Programme Board Responsibilities

The Programme Board are responsible for discussing the needs of a student who has a long term notified absence when discussions with the Module Co-ordinator and Local Programme Co-ordinator have not resulted in satisfying the teaching and learning needs of a student.

The Programme Board are responsible for discussing any students who have reached the threshold for unsatisfactory attendance, and decide on next steps to engage with the students.

This can include but is not limited to:

- Informing the Portfolio Assessment Committee (PAC) of persistent unsatisfactory attendance.

- This may be considered during the students' phase assessment which may have negative consequences for reaching satisfactory levels of Phase assessment attainment.

- This may involve remediation where necessary or relevant.

The Programme Board should ensure that no student representatives are present when these student cases are being discussed.

8.6. Portfolio Assessment Committee (PAC) Responsibilities

The Portfolio Assessment Committee (PAC) is responsible for sharing information about unsatisfactory attendance of a student to members of the committee that are reviewing student portfolios.

The Portfolio Assessment Committee may suggest remediation where necessary.

8.1. DEI Office responsibilities

The DEI Office is responsible for supporting inclusion-related issues with regards to student absences by providing a needs report where necessary.

9. Responsibility

The responsibility of updating this policy is with the Programme Board.

The responsibility of actioning this policy is with the individuals described in section 9.

10. Document Control

10.1 Date of initial approval: Programme Board 05/09/2024

10.2 Date policy effective from: 05/09/2024

10.3 Date of next review: February 2025