

Christ Theological College

Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

Document Control

Version: 1.0

Date Approved: July 2026

Approved By: CTC Leadership Team

Policy Owner: Academic Dean

Review Cycle: Annual for the first two cycles

Next Review Date: March 2029

Applicable Programmes: All CTC micro-credentials at Level 4 and Level 5 (EQF / QF-EHEA), delivered online and validated by Union School of Theology

1. Introduction

Christ Theological College (CTC) teaches entirely online. Students meet as a cohort once a week, in the evening, for two hours by video conference, and study independently between those meetings using pre-recorded lectures and materials held on the College's learning platform. The programme is taken part-time over two years alongside work, family and, for many students, ministry responsibility. There is no campus, no timetable of daytime classes and no expectation that any student is ever physically present anywhere.

That shape of delivery makes attendance more consequential at CTC than at a campus institution, not less. A student who misses the weekly session has missed the only occasion in that week when they encounter their tutor and their peers directly; the recorded material continues, but the discussion, the questions and the community do not. It also makes attendance harder to define. Presence in a room is a simple fact. Presence in a video conference, from a kitchen table, after a full working day, on a domestic broadband connection, is a more complicated one. This policy is written to take that complication seriously rather than to import expectations designed for a different setting.

CTC therefore states two things plainly. First, it expects students to attend the weekly session and to engage with the material between sessions, and it monitors both. Second, it recognises that its students study in circumstances the College does not control shared rooms, variable connections, time zones, shift patterns, caring responsibilities and that a policy which ignores this would not be applied, and a policy that is not applied is worse than no policy at all. What follows sets requirements that CTC intends to enforce, and builds in the flexibility that makes enforcement reasonable.

2. Relationship to Other Policies

This policy is read alongside the following. The list is not exhaustive.

- CTC Student Handbook and programme handbooks
- CTC Extenuating Circumstances Policy

- CTC Learning Resources and Digital Infrastructure Policy
- CTC IT Guidelines and Procedures
- CTC Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy
- CTC Data Protection Policy
- CTC Student Code of Conduct
- CTC Termination of a Student's Registration Policy
- Union School of Theology validation and partnership documentation
- QAA, UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2024)¹
- ECTE, Micro-credential Providers: Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation (2023)²

3. Key Principles

3.1 This policy applies to all students enrolled on any CTC micro-credential, whether taken singly or as part of the two-year part-time route.

3.2 CTC expects students to attend every scheduled live session for every module they are taking, and to complete the independent study set between sessions.

3.3 Attendance is not an administrative formality. The weekly session is where teaching is tested against understanding, where students learn from one another, and where a tutor can notice that a student is struggling. A student who is absent is not simply behind on content; they are outside the learning community for that week.

3.4 CTC recognises the investment its students make. Most study part-time while working, many are supported by fees that the College subsidises, and all give up an evening a week for two years. The College's duty in return is to make the sessions worth attending, to follow up absence promptly and supportively, and to be straightforward about what is required.

¹ Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* (Gloucester: QAA, June 2024). The Quality Code is used by CTC as a reference point; CTC is not an OfS-registered provider and does not claim regulatory alignment beyond its UST/ECTE route.

² European Council for Theological Education, *Micro-credential Providers: Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation* (ECTE, 2023), https://ecte.eu/mcp_sg/.

3.5 Attendance monitoring at CTC exists to support students, and to protect the integrity of the award. It is not used as a disciplinary instrument in the first instance, but persistent unexplained non-attendance has academic consequences, set out at section 12.

3.6 Students are responsible for knowing their timetable, for joining sessions on time, and for telling the College when they cannot. CTC is responsible for publishing the timetable in advance, for keeping accurate records, and for acting on what those records show.

4. How CTC Delivers, and What Attendance Therefore Means

4.1 The pattern of delivery

Element	Arrangement
Mode	Online in full. CTC has no campus and no on-site provision.
Live session	One session per week of two hours, in the evening, by video conference (Zoom), for the duration of each module.
Duration of the programme	Part-time over two academic years.
Independent study	Pre-recorded lectures, readings and activities held on the CTC learning platform, to be completed between live sessions.
Equipment	Students study on their own devices and internet connections. The minimum technical specification is published at Appendix C of the Learning Resources and Digital Infrastructure Policy.

4.2 What counts as attendance

4.2.1 Attendance means joining the live session at the published start time and remaining present and available for its duration.

4.2.2 A student who joins more than 15 minutes after the start, or who leaves more than 15 minutes before the end, is recorded as late or as a partial attendance, with the reason where one is given. Two recorded partial attendances count as one absence for the purposes of section 5.

4.2.3 Being logged in is not attendance. A student who is connected but demonstrably absent from the session, not responding when addressed, not present at the device, is recorded as absent. Tutors exercise judgement here and record the basis for the decision.

4.2.4 Watching the recording afterwards is a valuable way of catching up and is expected of any student who misses a session. It does not convert an absence into an attendance. This is stated explicitly because it is the point most often misunderstood on an online programme.

5. Attendance Requirements

5.1 Full attendance is expected. CTC recognises that over a two-year part-time programme, occasional absence is inevitable, and the thresholds below exist for that reason not as an allowance to be spent.

5.2 A student must attend at least 75% of the scheduled live sessions for a module in order to be credited with that module.

5.3 Where a student attends fewer than 75% of sessions and extenuating circumstances have been accepted under the CTC Extenuating Circumstances Policy, a reduced threshold of 50% may be applied. A student who attends fewer than 50% of the sessions for a module will not normally be credited with that module, whatever the circumstances, because too little of the taught provision has been received for the learning outcomes to have been met through attendance.

5.4 These thresholds are aligned with those applied by Union School of Theology as validating partner, so that expectations across the partnership are consistent.³

5.5 Attendance is calculated per module, not across the programme as a whole. A strong record on one module does not offset a weak record on another.

³ Union School of Theology, Student Attendance Policy, version 1.3 (May 2025), clauses 5.1 and 5.5.2, which set a 75% attendance requirement and a 50% threshold where extenuating circumstances have been approved. CTC has adopted the same thresholds for coherence within the validation partnership, while defining attendance for a wholly online delivery model at section 4.2 of this policy.

5.6 A student who does not meet the attendance requirement for a module will normally be required to retake it with a later cohort. Where the shortfall is small and the student can demonstrate that the learning outcomes have nevertheless been met, the Programme Leader may instead set compensatory work; the decision and its reasons are recorded in writing.

6. Participation in Live Sessions, Including the Use of Cameras

This section sets out what participation means in practice. It is the part of this policy most specific to CTC's way of teaching, and it is written to be usable rather than aspirational.

6.1 General expectations

Students are expected to:

- join from a place where they can speak and be heard, and where they can give their attention to the session;
- be ready to begin at the published start time, with the platform already open and working;
- have completed the preparation set for that session;
- contribute to discussion when invited, and listen with respect when others are speaking;
- keep the microphone muted when not speaking;
- dress as they would for a class taught in person;
- not record, photograph, screenshot or share any part of a session, or any image of another participant.

These expectations are set out more fully in Appendix 5 of the CTC Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy and in the CTC IT Guidelines and Procedures. Recordings made by the College are governed by section 8.5 of the Learning Resources and Digital Infrastructure Policy.

6.2 Cameras

6.2.1 Students are expected to join the live session with their camera on. The College asks this because teaching a group it cannot see is materially harder: a tutor reads confusion, disagreement and disengagement from faces, and a cohort that never sees one another does not become a cohort.

6.2.2 A student may turn the camera off, without needing permission in advance and without any consequence for their attendance record, where:

- other people are present in the room or passing through it, particularly children or people who have not consented to appear;
- the student's surroundings would disclose something private about their circumstances;
- the connection cannot sustain video without the audio breaking up;
- the student is unwell, or there is a health, disability or personal reason;
- an adjustment has been agreed under section 5.5 of the Learning Resources and Digital Infrastructure Policy.

6.2.3 Where the camera is off, the student remains expected to participate by voice and in the chat, and to respond when addressed. Participation, not visibility, is the requirement; the camera is the normal means of participating, not the substance of it.

6.2.4 A student who needs to have the camera off for most or all of a module should say so to the tutor or Programme Leader at the start, so that it is understood and recorded. No explanation of the underlying reason is required.

6.2.5 CTC does not require the use of virtual or blurred backgrounds, but students may use them, and the College suggests them where the room is the difficulty rather than the presence of others.

6.2.6 Tutors do not ask a student to turn their camera on in front of the cohort. If a pattern of non-participation gives concern, it is raised privately.

The reason for stating this so precisely is that a camera requirement applied without exceptions falls hardest on students in shared housing, students with caring responsibilities and students on poor connections – which is to say, on the

students CTC most exists to serve. A rule that would be quietly ignored is written here as it will actually be applied.

6.3 Where participation is persistently absent

A student who attends but never contributes over an extended period is not engaging with the programme, whatever the register shows. The tutor raises this privately with the student in the first instance, and refers to the Programme Leader if it continues; the process at section 12 then applies, treating persistent non-participation in the same way as persistent absence.

7. Engagement with Asynchronous Learning

7.1 Attendance at the weekly session is one of two obligations. The other is the independent study set between sessions, which at CTC carries a substantial part of the taught content.

7.2 Students are expected to view the pre-recorded lectures set for each week before the session to which they relate, to complete the set reading, and to submit formative work by the dates given in the module handbook.

7.3 Engagement with independent study is monitored using the access and submission data available on the learning platform, together with tutor observation of preparation in sessions. Engagement data is used to identify students who may need support; it is not used as a substitute measure of attendance, and no attendance decision is made on platform data alone.

7.4 A student who has not accessed any module material for [three] consecutive weeks is contacted by the Programme Leader, whether or not their attendance at live sessions is satisfactory.

8. Absence, Notification and Extenuating Circumstances

8.1 A student who cannot attend a session should tell their tutor and the Programme Leader before the session wherever possible, and in any event within 3 days of it. Notification is by email to [address] or using the form at Appendix B.

8.2 A student may self-certify absence for up to 25% of the sessions in a module that is, absence for reasons of personal illness or short-term personal difficulty, notified but not evidenced. A brief written note is required; medical evidence is not.

8.3 Absence beyond the self-certification limit requires supporting evidence, submitted to THE Dean of students in advance or within 7 days of the absence. Evidence appropriate to the reason is accepted for example a medical note or appointment letter, a letter from a minister, employer, solicitor or social worker, or evidence of travel disruption or bereavement.

8.4 Where absence is known in advance for example planned surgery, a work commitment that cannot be moved, jury service or a family event abroad – the student tells the Programme Leader at the earliest opportunity, and the two agree in writing how the missed material will be covered.

8.5 Where absence is prolonged or serious, the student should make a claim under the CTC Extenuating Circumstances Policy. Claims are considered by Senior Leadership Team, and the outcome is reported to the board that makes the award decision. Evidence submitted after the end of the module in which the absence occurred is not normally accepted.

8.6 It remains the student's responsibility to obtain the material covered in any session they miss, and to complete any work arising from it. The tutor will point the student to the recording and to any additional material, and will offer a short catch-up conversation where the missed content is central to the module.

9. Technical Failure and Loss of Connectivity

Because all teaching is delivered online and students use their own equipment, technical failure is a foreseeable cause of absence rather than an exceptional one. CTC treats it accordingly.

9.1 Where the College's platform fails and the session cannot run, no student is marked absent. The session is rescheduled or replaced under section 5.8.1 of the Learning Resources and Digital Infrastructure Policy.

9.2 Where a student loses connection during a session and rejoins within a reasonable time, they are recorded as present. Where they cannot rejoin, they are recorded as a partial attendance and should notify the tutor by email the same evening.

9.3 Where a student cannot join at all because of a failure on their side, a power cut, a broadband outage, a device failure they notify the tutor as soon as they can. A first occurrence is recorded as a notified absence and no further action follows. Repeated occurrences are treated under section 5.4 of the Learning Resources and Digital Infrastructure Policy as a question about whether the student's arrangements can sustain the programme, and the options set out there are discussed with them.

9.4 A student who knows their connection is unreliable should tell the Programme Leader at the start of the module rather than after an absence.

10. Students Studying Outside the United Kingdom

10.1 CTC teaches a global and diaspora student body. Sessions are held at a fixed United Kingdom time, published before enrolment, and applicants are told the local time this represents in their own time zone before they accept a place.

10.2 CTC does not run parallel sessions at alternative times. Where the published time falls at an unreasonable hour locally, the College says so honestly at application stage rather than after a student has enrolled and paid.

10.3 Where a student is affected by circumstances specific to their location – sustained power interruption, restricted internet access, civil disruption – the Programme Leader discusses what is practicable and, where appropriate, agrees a temporary variation of the attendance requirement, recorded in writing and reported through the extenuating circumstances route.

10.4 Sessions falling on a public holiday observed by part of the cohort are considered in setting the timetable, and any session cancelled for that reason is not counted in the attendance calculation.

11. Recording and Monitoring of Attendance

11.1 The tutor records attendance for every scheduled session, at the session, using [the attendance record on the CTC learning platform/ the record at Appendix A.

11.2 Each student is recorded as present, late or partial, absent notified, or absent not notified. Where a student is late or partially present, the tutor records the reason if one is given.

11.3 The register is a formal academic record. It is completed within 24 hours of the session and is not amended afterwards except by the Programme Leader, who records the reason for any amendment.

11.4 The academic Dean reviews attendance records fortnightly across all live modules and alerts the Programme Leader to any student approaching the 75% threshold.

11.5 Attendance records are available to the board making award decisions, which may require them as evidence that the attendance requirement has been met.

11.6 The register is kept on CTC's SharePoint.

12. Action in the Event of Non-Attendance

CTC responds to absence in stages. The purpose at every stage is to find out what is happening and to keep the student on the programme.

Stage	Trigger	Action	By whom	Recorded
1 -Contact	One unnotified absence	A short, friendly email or message asking whether all	Tutor	Note on the attendance record

		is well and pointing to the recording		
2 -Conversation	Two consecutive unnotified absences, or a pattern of absence, or three weeks without platform access	A conversation with the student about what is getting in the way, what support is available, and what needs to happen; agreed catch-up work	Programme Leader	Written note to the student confirming what was agreed
3 - Formal warning	Attendance falling, or projected to fall, below 75% for the module	Written notification of the position, the consequence for credit, the extenuating circumstances route, and what the student must now do	Programme Leader	Letter or email held on the student file
4 -Decision	The module ends below the threshold	Determination under section 5.6: retake, compensatory work, or referral of extenuating circumstances	Programme Leader, reported to the award board	Decision and reasons on the student file
5 - Registration at risk	Sustained non-attendance across modules with no engagement despite contact at stages 1-4	Consideration under the Termination of a Student's Registration Policy	Principal	As set out in that policy

12.1 No student proceeds to stage 5 without having been contacted at stages 1 to 4 and given a reasonable opportunity to respond, unless they cannot be contacted at all.

12.2 A student may appeal a decision made under this section through the [(CTC Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure).

12.3 Where a student's absence has an obvious explanation that has simply not been notified, illness, bereavement, a crisis at work the College's first response is care, not process. The stages above exist to make sure someone follows up, not to generate correspondence.

13. Concern for a Student's Wellbeing

13.1 A change in attendance is often the first visible sign that something is wrong. Tutors are asked to treat it that way and to raise concerns rather than simply record absence.

13.2 Where poor attendance appears to arise from personal difficulty, the student is offered a conversation with [the Programme Leader or a named member of staff] and pointed to whatever support is available. CTC is a small college and does not provide counselling or clinical services; it says so plainly and helps students find appropriate external support, including through their own church or GP.⁴

13.3 Where there is a safeguarding concern, or a concern about a student's immediate safety, the CTC Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy applies and takes precedence over this policy. Concerns are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

13.4 A student in difficulty may be offered a temporary variation of attendance requirements, a period of interruption, or deferral to a later intake. These are ordinary and available options, not admissions of failure, and staff are asked to present them that way.

⁴ This limitation is stated deliberately. The CTC Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy makes the same point: the College does not represent that it can provide services it does not hold, because a student who believes support is coming may not seek it elsewhere.

14. Immigration and Visa Status

14.1 CTC is not a licensed student sponsor and does not sponsor students under the Student route.⁵ No CTC student holds immigration permission on the basis of study at CTC.

14.2 CTC therefore has no attendance-reporting duty to the Home Office, and none of the visa-related attendance provisions found in the policies of sponsoring institutions apply here. This is stated explicitly because CTC's policy is modelled on that of a sponsoring institution and the difference matters.

14.3 Because all study is online and no student is required to travel to the United Kingdom, CTC provision does not require a visa. Where an applicant asks about immigration status, CTC states its position accurately and does not give immigration advice.

15. Data Protection

15.1 Attendance and engagement records are personal data and are processed under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.⁶

15.2 Attendance data is used to support students, to determine whether module requirements have been met, and to review the effectiveness of provision. It is not used for any other purpose.

15.3 Information about the reason for an absence, particularly health information, is held separately from the attendance record itself and is shared only with those who need it. A tutor is told that an absence is authorised, not why.

⁵ The Student route requires the education provider to hold a sponsor licence issued by the Home Office and to be a recognised body or listed body, or to hold current educational oversight. See Home Office, Student sponsor guidance, Document 1: Applying for a licence. CTC holds no such licence and issues no Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 as retained in UK law, read with the Data Protection Act 2018. CTC's lawful basis for processing attendance data is the performance of its contract with the student and its legitimate interests in maintaining academic standards and supporting student welfare; special category data arising from extenuating circumstances claims is processed under Article 9(2)(a) or, where applicable, Article 9(2)(b).

15.4 Records are retained in accordance with the CTC Data Protection Policy.

16. Responsibilities, Approval and Review

Role	Responsibility
Governing Board	Approves this policy and receives an annual summary of attendance across the provision.
Principal	Accountable for the operation of the policy; decisions at stage 5.
Programme Leader	Day-to-day operation: monitoring, stages 1-4, variations, catch-up arrangements, reporting to award boards.
Associate tutors	Take the register at every session; follow up first absences; raise wellbeing concerns.
Registrar	Maintains records; carries out the fortnightly review; holds evidence for audit.
Students	Attend; prepare; notify absence; keep their contact details current.

This policy is reviewed annually for its first two cycles and biennially thereafter, and additionally following any change to the delivery pattern or to the requirements of the validating partner. Review considers the attendance data for the year, the number of students affected by the thresholds, and whether the camera provisions at section 6.2 are working as intended.

Version	Date	Author	Summary of change	Approved by
1.0	July 2026	NMH	Policy created for CTC's online part-time provision, adapted from the Union School of Theology Student Attendance Policy (v1.3, May 2025) with attendance redefined for a wholly online model, camera and participation expectations added, technical failure and	SLT

			international study provisions added, and visa sponsorship provisions removed as inapplicable	
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17. Communication of this Policy

17.1 This policy is published on the CTC learning platform and on the College website.

17.2 It is covered at student induction, and the attendance requirement and camera expectations are restated in every module handbook.

17.3 It is covered in the induction of every associate tutor, together with practical guidance on taking the register.

17.4 It is available in an alternative format on request.

Appendix A – Attendance and Engagement Record

Completed by the tutor at each session and submitted within 24 hours. P = present; L = late or partial; AN = absent, notified; AU = absent, not notified.

Module: _____ Tutor: _____ Session date:
_____ Session number: ____ of ____

Student name	P / L / AN / AU	Camera on / off	Contributed to discussion	Notes (reason given, connection problems, follow-up needed)

Session ran as scheduled? Yes / No – if no, state what happened:

Any student the Programme Leader should follow up?

Note: the "camera on / off" column is recorded for pattern awareness only. Having the camera off for a reason permitted under section 6.2.2 has no effect on the attendance record, and this column must not be used to challenge a student in front of the cohort

Appendix B - Absence Notification Form

For notifying an absence from a live session. Send to [address] before the session where possible, and in any event within 3 days

Field	Detail
Student name	
Module	
Date(s) of session(s) missed	
Reason for absence (brief)	
Is this self-certified, or is evidence attached?	Self-certified ☐ Evidence attached ☐
Do you wish this to be considered as extenuating circumstances?	Yes ☐ No ☐ (If yes, see the Extenuating Circumstances Policy)
Is there anything CTC can do to help you continue?	