

FURTHER GUIDANCE ON RETURNING ENGAGEMENTS

THE ENGAGEMENT ENTITY

The Engagement records a student's commitment to an educational aim (qualification or credit) and its realisation over time.

If a student studies for multiple educational aims with a provider, they may have more than one Engagement, either concurrently or consecutively.

In general, a Student will have more than one Engagement if they have more than one distinct educational aim.

ENGAGEMENT ENTITY PRINCIPLES

In determining when an Engagement should be created or closed, the following principles should be taken into account. The further guidance in this document gives more context and examples in relation to these principles.

1. An Engagement is opened when a student is studying. If a student has started a Course (for example by attending a class or lecture, accessing online materials, or attending a freshers' or induction week), then the student is in coverage, even if they are not yet registered.
2. A student can have multiple, parallel commitments to different educational aims, and therefore multiple valid Engagements open concurrently.
3. Multiple records for the same student would be open concurrently in the following circumstances:
 - a. They are actively studying at multiple levels
 - i. There is an exception here when the record is flagged as an intercalation (StudentCourseSession.INTERCALATION = 01), in which case multiple levels are permitted for the same Engagement (unless they are at different providers).
 - b. They are actively studying multiple credits or qualifications which are independent i.e. they cannot be counted towards the same qualification.
 - i. There is an exception here when the record is flagged as an intercalation (StudentCourseSession.INTERCALATION = 01), in which case independent credits or qualifications are permitted for the same Engagement (unless they are at different providers).
4. The Engagement is closed when either:
 - a) The student withdraws from their educational aim
 - b) The student completes their educational aim and there is no evidence that they intend to continue studying as part of a coherent progression
 - c) A student previously reported as dormant indicates they will not return to study or there is no evidence that they return to study. It is not usually expected that an Engagement will be dormant for more than 2 years.
5. An Engagement can be reopened where:
 - a) The student withdraws and restarts study on the same educational aim within a year of their end date
 - b) The student completes their educational aim and continues studying as part of a coherent progression within a year of their end date. See the 'Coherent progression' section below.

LEVEL

The guidance regarding Engagements references levels in several cases. For the purpose of this entity, levels are defined broadly as:

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate Taught
- Postgraduate Research

When determining if the different qualifications fall within the same level, providers should refer to the guidance of the relevant funding council/regulating body.

DORMANCY

If a student takes a break in learning and returns to study towards the same aim of qualification or credit, this is considered part of the same Engagement. For a student to be considered dormant, the provider must know that they have the intention of returning to study following a break in learning. If there is no evidence of the intention of returning to study, they are considered to have left and a Leaver entity should be returned, see 'Withdrawals' below. If the student then returns to study towards the same aim of qualification or credit (returning more than 12 months after the Leaver.ENGENDDATE), a new Engagement would be created to record this, with new EntryProfile information.

It is not usually expected that a student would be dormant for more than two years (24 months after the SessionStatus.STATUSVALIDFROM that recorded the student as dormant) and return to the same Engagement however an Engagement can be dormant for longer than this where there is evidence that the student intends to return which could be used at audit

TRANSFERS

If a student transfers between educational aims at the same level, this is considered part of the same Engagement. If a student transfers between educational aims at a different level, the first Engagement must be closed, and a new Engagement must be returned to record the new aim.

COHERENT PROGRESSION

Coherent progression within a level

Students may progress from their original educational aim within the broad level descriptions (Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research) to a higher qualification level (e.g. level 4, 5 or 6).

In these cases, the activity can be considered part of the same Engagement where the student continues studying on the new educational aim within a year of the end date of the previous educational aim. Alternatively, if the provider does not consider the activity to be a coherent progression, a new Engagement can be returned.

For example:

- A student signs up to complete an HNC. On completion they decide to immediately continue to study an HND. This would be returned as part of the same Engagement with an updated qualification aim and expected end date.
- A student signs up to complete an HND. Part way through their study they decide that they will continue to complete a First Degree. This would be returned as part of the same Engagement. The Engagement's qualification aim and expected end date would be updated at the point the provider was aware of this change.
- A student signs up to complete a PGCert and on completion does not indicate that they wish to continue study, their Engagement is therefore closed with a Leaver record. Six months later they decide to continue their studies to gain a Masters, the credits they

gained from the PGCert will count towards this. The previously closed Engagement can be reopened by returning the Engagement without the Leaver record and updating the qualification aim and expected end date to reflect the new intention.

- A student signs up to complete a standalone module for credits at level 4 and on completion does not indicate that they wish to continue study, their Engagement is therefore closed with a Leaver record. 10 months later they decide to sign up to another standalone module at the same level. This and the previous module can both count towards gaining an undergraduate qualification. The previously closed Engagement can be reopened by removing the Leaver record and updating the qualification aim and expected end date to reflect the new intention.
- A student signs up to complete an HND and on completion does not indicate that they wish to continue study, their Engagement is therefore closed with a Leaver record. 18 months later they decide to complete another year's study to gain a First Degree. As more than a year has passed, a new Engagement must be returned to record this additional study with an updated start date and EntryProfile.
- A Research student studies a '1+3' course where they study a Research Masters followed by a PhD. As they remain at the same level, this would be one Engagement. If the student was awarded the Research Masters after the first year, this would be returned as an interim award.

Coherent progression between levels

In some cases a student may study across the broad level descriptors (Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, Postgraduate Research) as part of the same Engagement due to this being considered a coherent progression. For example:

- Integrated Masters courses: if the student's intention is to complete an integrated masters, all of this activity is part of the same Engagement even through students study across undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels
- Research students who study at a postgraduate taught and postgraduate research level: if the progression from the postgraduate taught to postgraduate research level is part of the same coherent interaction with the provider, this is returned as one Engagement. For example, if students apply to/intend to study across both levels from the outset. This may apply to '1+3' postgraduate research courses.

INTERCALATION

Where a Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary student takes time out from their programme to study for qualification or credit that does not count towards their main qualification, with the intention to return to their programme on completion, this is considered intercalation. Intercalation could take place at the same provider or a different provider.

Intercalation at the same provider

Where a student undertakes intercalation at the same provider at which they are studying their main programme, this should be returned as one Engagement, even if the intercalation is at a different level to the student's main qualification aim.

To identify the intercalating period, the StudentCourseSession would be associated with a course with the qualification aim that the student is intercalating onto and the StudentCourseSession.INTERCALATION field would be returned to indicate that the StudentCourseSession is an intercalation.



Example:

A student is studying for a medical degree. In their third year they intercalate to the final year of a BSc in Biology before returning to continue their medical degree.

StudentCourseSession	1	2	3	4
Qualification	Medical degree	Medical Degree	BSc Biology	Medical Degree
Engagement.NUMHUS	1	1	1	1
StudentCourseSession.YEARPRG	1	2	3	3
StudentCourseSession.INTERCALATION	N/A	N/A	01	N/A

All the activity is part of the same Engagement so the Engagement.NUMHUS does not change. In the third year the associated Qualification.QUALCAT refers to the First Degree that the student is intercalating onto.

The StudentCourseSession.YEARPRG is returned in relation to the programme the student is on in each StudentCourseSession. So in StudentCourseSessions 1, 2 and 4, the student is on the medical degree. In the third StudentCourseSession they are on the third year of the BSc so YEARPRG is 3.

StudentCourseSession.INTERCALATION is returned in the third StudentCourseSession.

Intercalation at a different provider

If a student is studying at provider A and intercalates at provider B, provider A does not need to return the student during the period of intercalation. Before the student intercalates at provider B, provider A would return the SessionStatus entity with a SessionStatus.STATUSCHANGEDTO of 03 'Intercalate' to indicate the student will be intercalating at another provider.

Provider B would return the student during this time. Provider B would return the student's start date, expected end date, aim and year of programme to reflect the time being spent at provider B only and not take into account the activity at provider A.

StudentCourseSession.INTERCALATION must be returned by provider B.

CONCURRENT STUDY

A student may be studying towards more than one distinct qualification aim at the same time. These would be treated as multiple Engagements where:

- The qualification/credit aims of the courses are at different levels
- The credits being studied cannot be counted towards the same qualification

WITHDRAWALS

When a student withdraws from their studies this would be reported by returning the Leaver entity with the appropriate end date and reason for ending values.

If the student returns to study at the same level within a year, the previous Engagement can be reopened with the appropriate aim and expected end date returned for the student's new intentions.

If the student returns to study after more than a year, a new Engagement would need to be returned with an updated start date and EntryProfile.



MODULE BY MODULE STUDY

In some cases students may sign up for study on a modular basis, whether this be intending to study a single module, a small number of modules or a full qualification. This will include but is not limited to the following scenarios:

- A student signs up to study a single module at a provider. On completion they have the option to study additional modules or change their aim to be a specific qualification
- A student intends to complete a qualification (e.g. a first degree) but signs up for each module that leads to this aim independently and may have breaks in between modules
- CPD provision where students may study a standalone module or a few modules

When returning this provision, the same principles of returning an Engagement apply so the following should be taken into account:

- The Engagement represents the student's intention. So if they have signed up to do a single module, their aim would be credits at the relevant level. If they have signed up to do a full qualification, their aim would be this qualification
- If part way through study the student changes their intention, for example they began studying for credits but then decide to aim for a PGDip, this is considered part of the same Engagement provided that the original aim can count towards the new aim. For example, the credits being studied as part of the original aim will contribute towards the student gaining the PGDip
- When a student completes their intention (this could be a single module) and there is no evidence that they intend to return to continue study at the same level, their Engagement must be closed with the return of the Leaver entity
- If they subsequently return to study at the same level within a year of their end date, the previous Engagement can be reopened with a new aim and expected end date.
- If when the student completes their intention there is evidence that they intend to return, for example if they completed a single module but have indicated that they intend to continue on to do additional modules, their Engagement should not be closed. If they are not immediately continuing study, they should be recorded as dormant
- It is not usually expected that a student would be dormant for more than two years and return to the same Engagement however an Engagement can be dormant for longer than this where there is evidence that the student intends to return which could be used at audit.
- The associated StudentCourseSessions must represent a year of study starting from the student's original start date. So if the student takes breaks and returns to study, the StudentCourseSessions must still record the activity in year long periods, the StudentCourseSessions would include periods of dormancy if the student took breaks.