Student Engagement Policy

Student Engagement Policy
Sponsor: Director of Student Journey, Quality, and Academic Partnerships
Version 1.1 (September 2026)
Next review: September 2029

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Version	Date Approved	Author / Owner Approving Authority	Summary of Changes	Next Review Date
1.0	September 2026	Head of Student and Programme Services	Initial Release	September 2029
1.1	September 2026	Director of Student Journey, Quality, and Academic Partnerships	Change in sponsor Title, Update to section 11.1	September 2029

Contents:

1. Purpose
2. Principles of Engagement
3. Minimum Engagement Requirements (all students)
4. Mode-Specific Evidence of Engagement
5. Non-Engagement and Risk Indicators
6. Engagement Intervention and Escalation
7. Use of Engagement Data for Reporting
8. Interruption of Studies
9. Grounds for Interruption of Studies
10. Interruption of Studies Process
11. Re-Engagement and Return to Study
12. Withdrawal based on non-engagement
13. Communication and Student Support

Annex A - Student Support & Wellbeing - Framework for Supporting Engagement and Continuation

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy sets out the minimum requirements for academic engagement that apply to all students registered with MLA College, regardless of programme, mode of delivery, or location.

1.2 Engagement expectations, intervention thresholds, and outcomes will be applied with due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where disability, health conditions, or other protected characteristics materially impact engagement.

1.3 The purpose of the Student Engagement Policy is to:

- Ensure students are actively progressing towards their educational aim
- Enable early identification and support for students at risk of disengagement
- Provide a consistent, auditable basis for engagement monitoring and reporting
- Support accurate reporting to external bodies, for example, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Office for Students (OfS)

1.4 This policy applies to all students of MLA College whether they are:

- Distance learners studying via an offline HTML Total Learning Package (TLP)
- Using (now or in future) an online Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

2. Principles of Engagement

2.1 **Engagement is evidence-based** - Engagement must be demonstrable through observable activity, not assumed intent.

2.2 **Engagement is mode-neutral** - Students studying offline and those using online digital systems are subject to equivalent expectations, even where evidence takes different forms.

2.3 **Engagement is continuous, not episodic** - One-off activity does not constitute sustained engagement; engagement must be maintained across the study period.

2.4 **Engagement is supportive, not punitive** - Monitoring exists to enable timely support and intervention, not to penalise students experiencing difficulty.

3. Minimum Engagement Requirements (All Students)

3.1 All students, regardless of delivery mode, must meet all the following baseline requirements:

3.1.1 **Commitment to Study -** Students must:

- Remain registered on their programme or module with an intention to progress
- Engage in study activity aligned to the academic calendar
- Notify the College of any anticipated pause in study

3.1.2 **Academic Communication -** Students must:

- Maintain regular academic or support contact, normally at least once every four weeks during active study periods
- Respond to communications from academic or professional services staff within 10 working days

- Participate in scheduled tutorials, supervision, mentoring, or review meetings where required

Acceptable evidence includes (but is not limited to):

- Email correspondence
- Records of calls or online meetings
- Tutorial attendance logs
- Supervisor or tutor notes

3.1.3 **Assessment and Academic Activity -** Students must:

- Submit all summative assessments by published deadlines or approved extensions
- Engage with formative activities where these form part of progression or monitoring
- Acknowledge and engage with academic feedback

Failure to submit assessments without communication or mitigation will normally trigger an engagement review.

4. Mode-Specific Evidence of Engagement

4.1 **Offline Distance Learners (No VLE Use)** - For students studying primarily offline, engagement may be evidenced through a combination of:

- Submission of drafts or final assessments
- Turnitin login and submission records (where applicable)
- Correspondence with tutors or support staff discussing academic progress
- Study plans, reflective logs, or progress updates
- Participation in tutorials, mentoring, or review meetings
- Tutor confirmation of meaningful academic dialogue

4.2 Where Turnitin or equivalent systems are used, students must:

- Submit assessments through the required platform
- Access originality reports or feedback where relevant

4.3 Turnitin data may be used as:

- Evidence of ongoing engagement
- A trigger for engagement review where inactivity is identified

4.4 Offline students are not disadvantaged by lack of VLE access but must still demonstrate engagement through alternative verifiable means.

4.5 **Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Users (Current or Future) -** Where a VLE is in use, engagement may additionally be evidenced through:

- Regular logins
- Accessing learning materials
- Participation in discussion boards or activities
- Completion of tracked learning tasks
- Analytics demonstrating sustained interaction

4.6 The presence of VLE engagement data does not replace assessment submission or academic communication requirements.

4.7 **Dual-Mode Engagement Model -** MLA College recognises that, during transition to or partial adoption of a VLE, two engagement pathways may operate concurrently:

Mode	Primary Evidence
Offline distance learning	Communication, submissions, tutor confirmation
Digital / VLE-supported learning	Analytics, submissions, online participation

4.8 Both pathways:

- Are considered equivalent for monitoring and reporting purposes
- Feed into the same engagement review and intervention process
- Are assessed against the same minimum engagement thresholds

5. Non-Engagement and Risk Indicators

5.1 A student may be flagged as at risk of disengagement if one or more of the following occur:

- No evidence of academic contact for 30 consecutive days
- No Turnitin or VLE activity for 30 consecutive days (where applicable)
- Missed assessment deadlines without communication or mitigation
- Failure to respond to college communications over a sustained period
- Inability to provide evidence of study activity when reasonably requested

6. Engagement Intervention and Escalation

6.1 **Decision-making and safeguards -** Engagement monitoring may be undertaken by academic teams and Student and Programme Services (SaPS). Decisions relating to compulsory interruption or withdrawal must be authorised by the Programme Manager (or nominee) and formally recorded. Oversight is provided through Annual Review reporting.

6.2 Where minimum engagement is not met, the College will apply a staged, supportive process.

Stage 1 – Supportive Check-In
Informal contact by your tutor(s) or your Student Support Officer offering support and clarification of expectations.

Stage 2 – Formal Engagement Warning
Issued by Student and Programme Services or Programme Manager if concerns persist.

Stage 3 – Engagement Review
Consideration of compulsory interruption or agreed re-engagement plan.

Stage 4 – Outcome
Interruption or withdrawal where engagement cannot be demonstrated within a defined period.

6.3 All decisions will be documented and applied consistently.

7. Use of Engagement Data for Reporting

7.1 Students will be informed at enrolment how engagement data is collected, monitored, and used for support, continuation analysis, quality assurance, and statutory reporting (including HESA, the OfS and Student Loan Company (SLC) as appropriate).

7.2 Engagement data collected under this policy may be used for:

- Internal monitoring and student support
- Progression and continuation decisions
- HESA, OfS and SLC reporting
- Quality assurance and enhancement activity

7.3 Data will be handled in accordance with data protection and confidentiality requirements.

8. Interruption of Studies

8.1 For the purposes of this policy, MLA College distinguishes clearly between Interruption of Studies and Withdrawal, as these represent different academic and administrative statuses with different implications for students and institutional reporting.

8.2 Where concerns relate primarily to a student's health, wellbeing, or capacity to study safely, cases may be referred to the Fitness to Study and Extenuating Circumstances policies. Engagement and interruption processes do not replace Fitness to Study safeguards or the provision for extenuating circumstances to be recognised and the student supported.

8.3 MLA College recognises that active student engagement is fundamental to academic success, progression and positive outcomes. Our approach to interruption is designed to:

- Support students experiencing challenges that temporarily prevent engagement,
- Provide clear, fair mechanisms for managing prolonged non-engagement, and
- Ensure accurate reporting and continuation outcomes consistent with HESA and OfS expectations.

8.4 During an interruption:

- The student remains linked to the programme but is not considered actively studying
- Assessment deadlines, progression timelines, and engagement expectations are paused
- The student is expected to re-engage within an agreed timeframe

  An interruption to study could, for students on SLC funded programmes of study, have implications for continued SLC funding for the duration of the interruption.

8.5 Interruption may be:

- Student-initiated (e.g. health, personal, professional reasons)
- College-initiated (e.g. sustained non-engagement, failure to evidence study activity)

9. Grounds for Interruption of Studies

9.1 An interruption of studies may be approved or initiated on one or more of the following grounds:

9.1.1 **Student-Initiated Grounds – Undergraduate and postgraduate taught and dissertation modules in accordance with the Extenuating Circumstances Policy**

- Physical or mental health issues
- Personal or family circumstances
- Professional or employment commitments
- Financial difficulty
- Temporary loss of access to study resources

9.1.2 **Compulsory Interruption for Non-Engagement Grounds (College-Initiated) – Undergraduate and postgraduate dissertation modules only -** The College may initiate an interruption where a student:

- Fails to meet the minimum engagement requirements set out in the Engagement Policy
- Has no verifiable academic contact for 30 consecutive days during active study
- Cannot provide reasonable evidence of ongoing study activity when requested

In such cases, interruption is used as a protective measure to prevent further academic disadvantage and to allow structured re-engagement.

The failure to submit assessments or an application for consideration of mitigating circumstances and/or provide any mitigation is considered under the academic regulations of the College and the appropriate validating partner.

9.1.3 **Compulsory Interruption for Academic Performance Grounds (College-Initiated) – Undergraduate and postgraduate dissertation modules only -** The College may initiate an interruption where the Ethics Committee does not grant approval for the student's dissertation to be undertaken.

In such cases, interruption is used as a protective measure to prevent further academic disadvantage and to allow structured re-engagement.

9.1.4 **Compulsory Interruption for non-payment of fees -** The College may initiate an interruption where the student has outstanding fees (either self-paying or sponsored) or for Undergraduate students, does not have a SLC approved status.

10. Interruption of Studies Process

10.1 **Initiation and Approval** - Interruption may be initiated by the student (via the Extenuating Circumstances Policy) or by the College. All interruption requests and actions must be:

- Reviewed by the Programme Manager in consultation with Student and Programme Services
- Recorded formally with reasons documented
- Time-limited and provided with an anticipated return date

10.2 **Duration and Conditions** - Interruptions are normally agreed for a defined period, typically up to 12 months, and may include an agreed return date.

10.3 Extensions may be granted where circumstances persist and evidence is provided.

10.4 While on interruption:

- Engagement requirements are suspended,
- Access to submission systems (e.g., Turnitin, VLE) may be paused, and
- Assessment deadlines and progression timelines are suspended.

11. Re-Engagement and Return to Study

11.1 To resume active study after interruption, students must:

- Confirm their intention to return, via the student portal or via email to Student Admin.
- Participate in a Return to Study meeting if required.
- Where interruption was prompted by non-engagement, provide evidence of readiness to re-engage (for example, demonstrable availability, confirmed support needs).
- Submit outstanding assessments from the previous module on which they enrolled

11.2 Students who fail to engage with re-engagement communications, or who do not meet agreed return conditions, may be processed for withdrawal in line with College regulations.

12. Withdrawal based on non-engagement

12.1 Withdrawal may occur where:

- A student initiates formal withdrawal,
- A student does not return from interruption within the agreed period and cannot demonstrate readiness, or
- Engagement monitoring indicates a sustained and irreversible lack of engagement with no reasonable mitigation.

12.2 Withdrawal actions are recorded formally, and students are advised of implications for their registration status, any outstanding academic obligations, and re-application criteria if they later choose to reapply.

12.3 Students may challenge the procedural application of engagement, interruption, or withdrawal decisions through the College's Complaints or Academic Appeals procedures. Academic judgement itself is not subject to appeal.

13. Communication and Student Support

13.1 Throughout interruption and withdrawal processes, the Programme and Student Services Team will:

- Communicate clearly with the student about status, expectations and options,
- Provide information about academic support, wellbeing services, financial implications and fee obligations, and
- Ensure that decisions are taken consistently, fairly and with appropriate documentation.

Annex A - Student Support & Wellbeing - Framework for Supporting Engagement and Continuation

Purpose and Strategic Context

This Framework sets out how MLA College supports student engagement, continuation, and progression through coordinated academic, engagement, and wellbeing support. It provides the operational foundation that enables the College's Engagement Strategy and Minimum Engagement Policy to function effectively in practice.

The Framework recognises that academic engagement is rarely disrupted in isolation. Challenges relating to wellbeing, personal circumstances, employment, or access to resources often present first as reduced engagement with study, assessment, or communication. The purpose of this Framework is therefore not simply to "support wellbeing", but to remove or mitigate barriers to engagement, enabling students to continue progressing towards their educational aim wherever possible.

This Framework applies to all students, regardless of delivery mode, including offline distance learners, those using digital submission systems such as Turnitin, and those studying through a future Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Engagement as the Organising Principle for Support

For the purposes of this Framework, engagement is understood in line with the College's Engagement Policy as demonstrable academic participation sustained over time. Engagement is used as a practical, measurable indicator to identify students who may require support.

Support and wellbeing activity within this Framework is therefore explicitly engagement-led. Reductions in engagement are treated as signals that a student may be experiencing difficulty, rather than as evidence of lack of motivation or commitment. The Framework ensures that engagement monitoring leads to supportive, proportionate action, rather than automatic escalation or punitive response.

Principles Underpinning Engagement-Focused Support

Support activity under this Framework is guided by a small number of core principles. Support is proactive and preventative, aiming to intervene early before disengagement becomes entrenched. It is mode-neutral, ensuring that students studying offline are not disadvantaged compared to those whose engagement can be digitally tracked. It is shared across the institution, recognising that effective support cannot sit solely within Student and Programme Services (SaPS). Finally, it is transparent and auditable, ensuring decisions can be justified to students, internal governance bodies, and external regulators.

Identifying the Need for Support

Where engagement or wellbeing concerns indicate a safeguarding or serious risk issue, escalation will occur immediately in line with the College's Safeguarding Policy. Engagement processes are not a substitute for safeguarding action.

Support needs may be identified through a range of academic and engagement indicators. These include sustained absence of academic communication, missed assessment deadlines, lack of submission activity via Turnitin or a future VLE, or concerns raised by tutors or Programme Managers. In all cases, engagement data is used as a starting point for dialogue, not a definitive judgement.

Students are also encouraged to self-identify and seek support at the earliest opportunity. Early disclosure of difficulties affecting engagement allows the College to respond flexibly and prevents unnecessary escalation to interruption or withdrawal processes.

Academic Support as a Core Engagement Intervention

Academic support is central to sustaining engagement. Regular, meaningful contact with academic staff helps students remain connected to their programme, understand expectations, and maintain momentum in their studies. Academic staff play a key role in identifying early signs of disengagement and in supporting students to re-establish effective study patterns.
Academic support may involve clarification of assessment requirements, guidance on study planning, feedback discussions, or structured check-ins aligned to key assessment points. Where appropriate, academic support is coordinated with Student and Programme Services to ensure a consistent and joined-up response.

Engagement and Continuation Support

Where engagement concerns are identified, Student and Programme Services may initiate structured engagement check-ins. These conversations focus on understanding barriers to engagement, clarifying expectations under the Engagement Policy, and agreeing practical steps to restore participation.

Where engagement has reduced significantly, support may involve the development of a re-engagement plan. This plan sets out realistic academic milestones, expected communication, and timescales for review. Re-engagement plans are documented and monitored, ensuring that students are clear about expectations and available support.

Wellbeing and Personal Support in Support of Engagement

The College recognises that wellbeing and personal circumstances can significantly affect a student's ability to engage with study. Within this Framework, wellbeing support is understood as a means of enabling continued or resumed engagement, rather than as a standalone service.

Support may involve sensitive discussion of how circumstances are affecting study, advice on balancing academic and professional commitments, or signposting to external services where appropriate. The College does not provide clinical services, but it does recognise its responsibility to respond appropriately and compassionately when wellbeing concerns impact engagement.

Where engagement cannot reasonably be sustained, interruption of studies may be used as a supportive mechanism, allowing students time to address their circumstances without academic penalty.

Support Following Non-Engagement or Interruption

Students who have experienced a period of non-engagement or interruption are supported through structured re-engagement processes. These processes focus on resetting expectations, reviewing academic standing, and agreeing realistic next steps. Re-engagement is treated as a supported transition, rather than a return to study without adjustment.

Where interruption has occurred due to engagement concerns, students may be asked to demonstrate readiness to re-engage before returning to active study.

Roles, Responsibilities and Resourcing

Effective implementation of this Framework depends on appropriate staff training and guidance. Staff involved in engagement monitoring, intervention, and decision-making will be supported to apply the Framework consistently, proportionately, and in line with equality and safeguarding requirements.

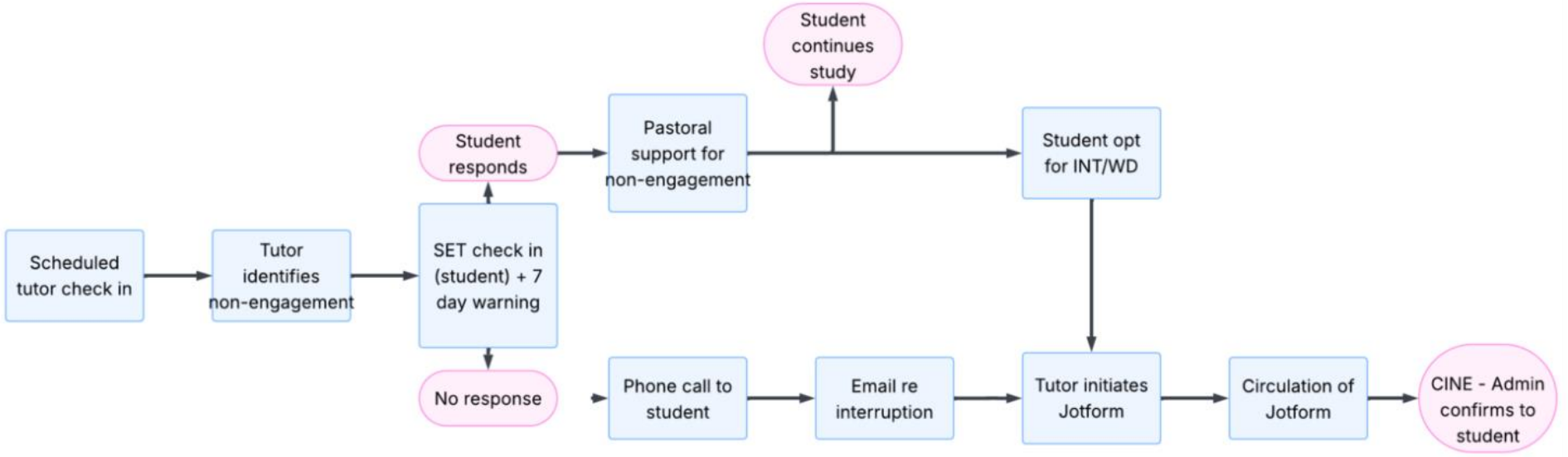
Supporting engagement through this Framework is a shared responsibility. Students are expected to communicate challenges affecting engagement and to engage with agreed support plans. Academic staff are responsible for maintaining academic contact, identifying early signs of disengagement, and contributing to re-engagement planning. SaPS coordinates engagement monitoring, intervention processes, and record-keeping.

The Framework explicitly recognises the need for dedicated engagement and liaison capacity to support coordination between academic and professional services teams. Without such capacity, there is a risk that engagement and support activity becomes fragmented or overly concentrated within SaPS. Resourcing requirements arising from this Framework must therefore be considered as part of strategic workforce planning.

APPENDIX A – Compulsory Interruption Process

1.1 Compulsory Interruption for Non-Engagement – First Occurrence

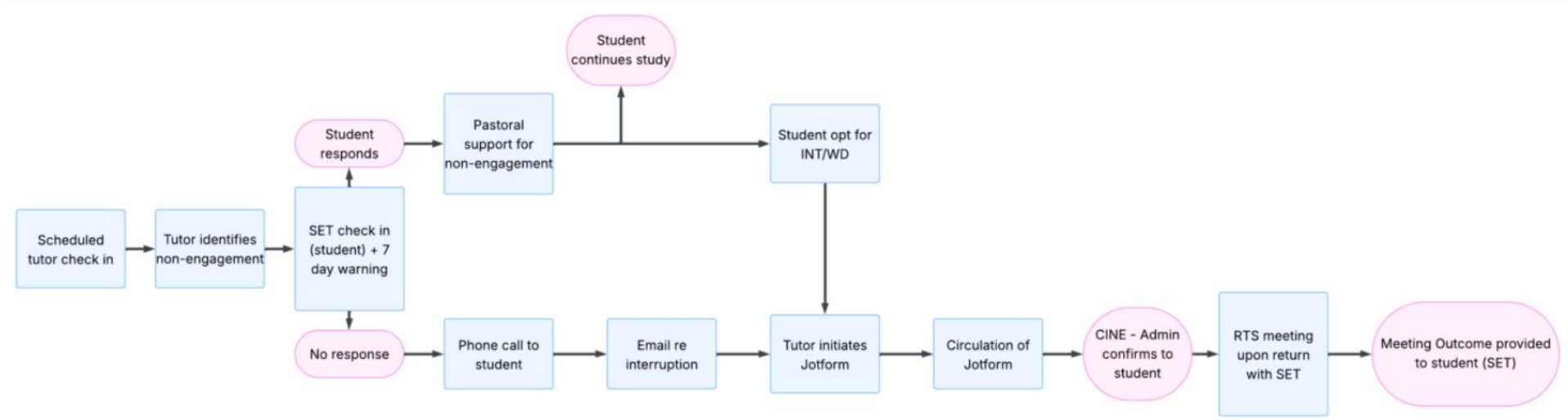
Applicable to Project students only before 50% of module.



SET – Student Experience Team
INT / WD – Interruption / Withdrawal
CINE – Compulsory Interruption for Non-engagement

1.2 Compulsory Interruption for Non-Engagement - Second Occurrence

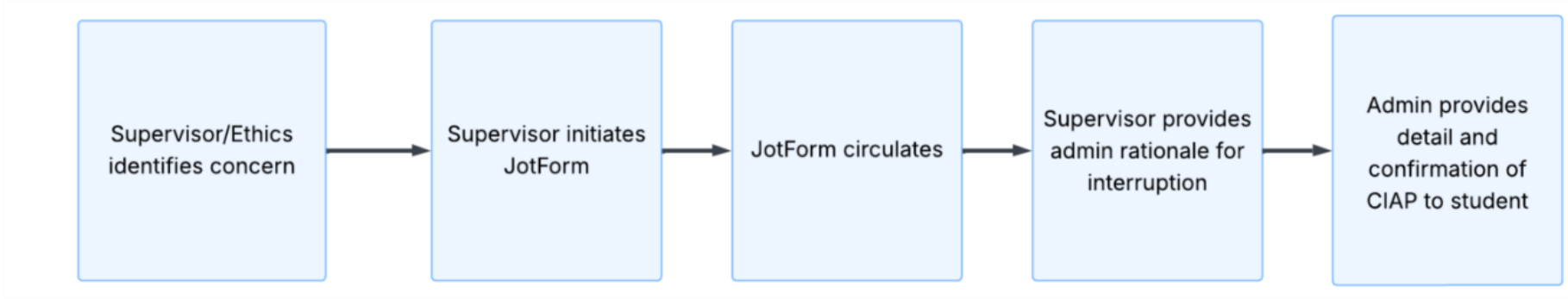
Applicable to Project students only before 50% of module.



SET – Student Experience Team
INT / WD – Interruption / Withdrawal
CINE – Compulsory Interruption for Non-engagement
RTS – Return To Study

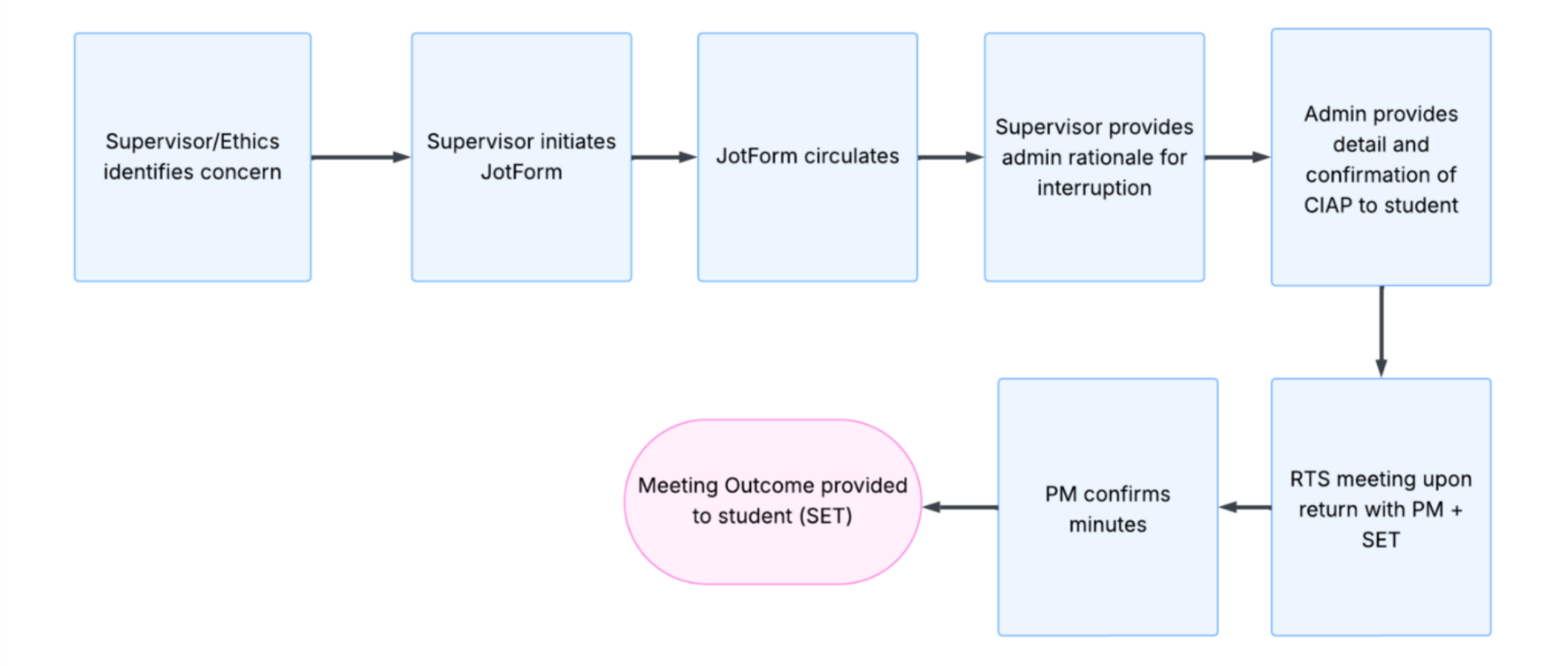
1.3 Compulsory Interruption for Academic Performance – First Occurrence

Applicable to Project students only before 50% of module.



1.4 Compulsory Interruption for Academic Performance – Second Occurrence

Applicable to Project students only before 50% of module.



SET – Student Experience Team
RTS – Return To Study
PM – Programme Manager

1.5 Grounds for Compulsory Interruption:

Compulsory Interruption for Academic Performance (CIAP)	Compulsory Interruption for non-engagement (CINE)
• No access to TLP in week 1 (projects) • No access to TLP in week 1 (FT GSD 13week modules) • Non-viable project (proposal and/or ethics stage)	• No response to supervisor or pastoral intervention (projects) • Non-submission of summative assessment before 50% point (projects)

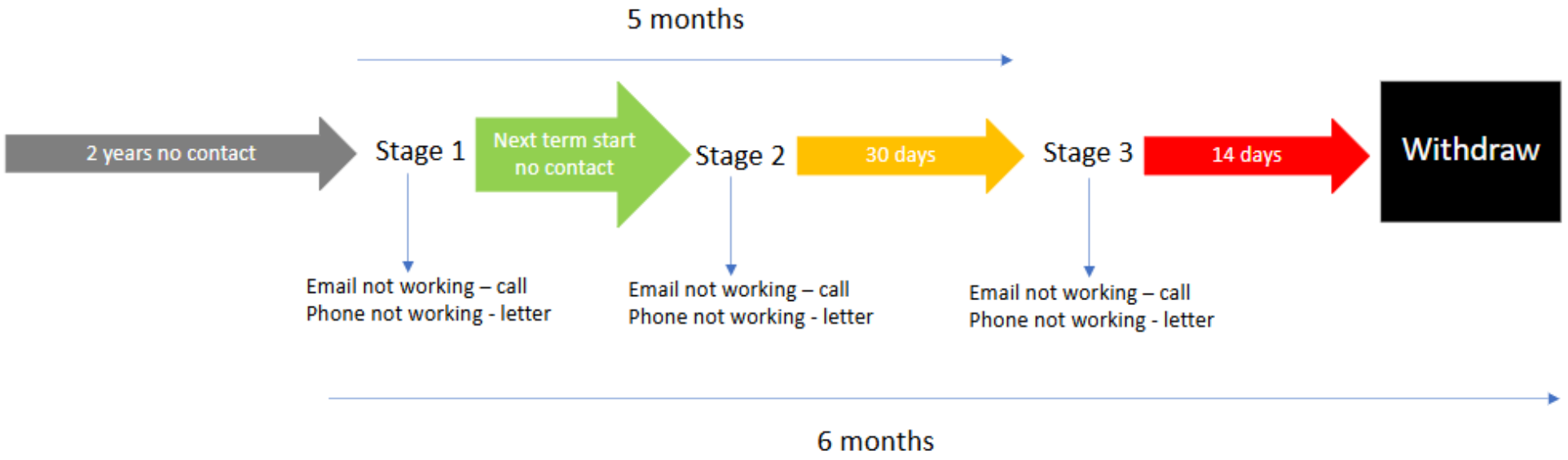
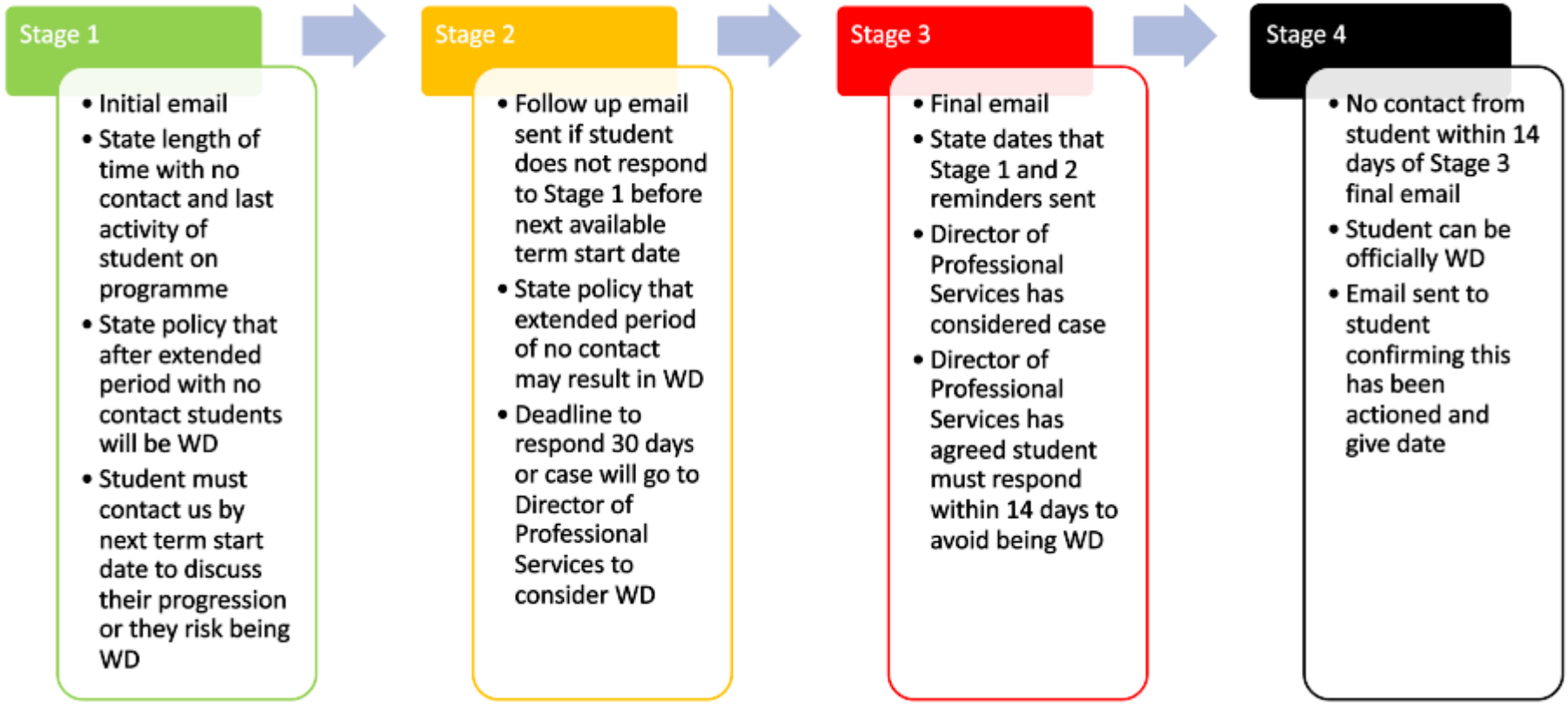
1.6 Addressing Student Concerns:

Access Course	13 – Week Modules	Projects
• **No access to TLP**: INT25ec if applicable/INT25 and fee if no grounds for EC • **Not engaging with tutor**: Pastoral support, warning and reminder of engagement **(SET)**	• **No access to TLP**: int25EC if applicable/int25 and fee if no grounds for EC • **Not engaging with tutor**: Pastoral support, warning and reminder of engagement **(SET)** • **Poor academic performance (formative/summative):** Tutor provides feedback, if student does not improve, fail/referral process initiated	• **No access to TLP**: int25EC if applicable/int25 and fee if no grounds for EC

INT25ec = Voluntary interruption before 25% with valid claim for ECs
INT25 = Voluntary interruption before 25% (fee applied)

APPENDIX B – Compulsory Withdrawal Process

1.7 Withdrawal for Non-Engagement Timeline



1.8 Withdrawal for Non-Engagement Communication Outline