

STUDENT SUPPORT INFORMATION NOTE (SSIN)

DETERMINING MODE OF STUDY

To Student Finance administrators and practitioners in institutions of higher education, further education and specialist colleges providing HE.

SSIN 02/24
February 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We have updated the assessing eligibility guidance and HEI portal to provide further clarity on determining mode of study, in particular how learning in the workplace can count towards regular attendance.

It is important that the correct mode of study is assigned to a course to ensure that students can access the correct level of funding. A course can have one of the following four modes of study:

- full-time in attendance
- full-time distance learning
- part-time in attendance
- part-time distance learning

Full-time and part-time

The Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 as amended (“the Regulations”) do not give definitions of full-time or part-time courses. However, students on a full-time course will normally attend/undertake a course for at least 24 weeks within the year, and for courses of two years or more, for a minimum of eight weeks in the final year. Students should be attending/undertaking their course for an average of at least 21 hours per week.

In-attendance courses

Whilst attendance is not defined in the Regulations, we would expect this to include study, lectures, seminars, tuition, learning in the workplace, and sandwich work-placements that do not meet the criteria to be sandwich year out, which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week (i.e. 504 hours over the duration of the year) for a full-time student.

Learning in the workplace

For the purposes of determining whether a course is a full-time course, the period for which the student is required to attend/undertake the course can include learning in the workplace where that learning forms a compulsory part of the course. Such learning is frequently a feature of foundation degree courses, but it may also occur in

other courses, e.g. teaching practice for teacher training courses, practical placements on veterinary degrees and clinical placements on healthcare courses. Learning in the workplace is a structured academic programme, controlled by HE providers, and delivered in the workplace by academic staff of the institution, staff of the employer, or both. Unlike work experience, which is one element of a course, learning in the workplace is an integral part of an individual's learning programme and must be subject to the same level of academic supervision and rigour as any other form of assessed learning. It includes:

- the imparting of relevant knowledge and skills to students,
- opportunities for students to discuss knowledge and skills with their tutors, and
- assessment of students' acquisition of knowledge and skills by the institution's academic staff, and perhaps jointly with an employer.

Learning in the workplace, in DfE's view, may be a substitute for learning that would normally take place within an institution. The actual machinery (whether lectures, tutorials, examinations or other means) is not crucial in identifying learning in the workplace, so long as knowledge and skills can be shown to be effectively imparted and assessed.

Distance learning courses

The Regulations define a distance learning course as:

'a course on which a student undertaking the course is not required to be in attendance by the institution providing the course, where required to be in attendance is not satisfied by a requirement imposed by the institution to attend any institution-

- (a) for the purposes of registration or enrolment or any examination;
- (b) on a weekend or during any vacation; or
- (c) on an occasional basis during the week'

Please note that if regular attendance is required, meaning the student must be at a specific place to study, the course is not distance learning. Regular attendance is not restricted to time spent on campus but can also include learning in the workplace, or sandwich work-placements.

Enquiries:

If you have any queries about this information note, please contact, in the first instance, the Student Finance England Practitioner Support Team – telephone 0300 100 0618; email SSIN_queries@slc.co.uk