
Ballyfermot College of Further Education

Student Retention Policy

Policies and Procedures 2023-2025

Version History

Version	Date	Revision Description	Originator
1	Mar 2022	P/DP Draft for Discussion	P/DP
2	Mar 2022	Updated draft and consultation with Administration Department	P/DP
3	June 2022	Update and publication after consultation	P/DP
4	May 2023	Update to document	P/DP
5	25th September 2023	Approved by the Board of Management	BOM

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1. Aim

The aim of the Student Retention Policy is to encourage and support students to complete their chosen course of study at Ballyfermot College of Further Education.

2. Objectives

BCFE is committed to:

- 2.1 Providing reasonable support and assistance to all students and those who indicate that they are experiencing difficulties with remaining on their course.
- 2.2 Complying with SOLAS and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) requirements in relation to recording student outcomes; including award determination and/progression to employment or further/higher education
- 2.3 Reviewing student retention regularly.
- 2.4 Effectively implementing this Student Retention Policy in a consistent manner with all students.

3. Policy Content

To ensure that students are supported in completing their course, the following steps should be taken:

3.1 Course induction should be completed by all students at which:

- (a) the course content is outlined;
- (b) the importance of attendance is emphasised;
- (c) the BCFE Student Participation Policy is explained and;
- (d) students are given a copy of the BCFE Code of Conduct

Prior to commencing any course, all students **must** complete the following forms which must be uploaded to their individual MIT Enrol account. Students will also receive a copy of the Students Handbook and Diary.

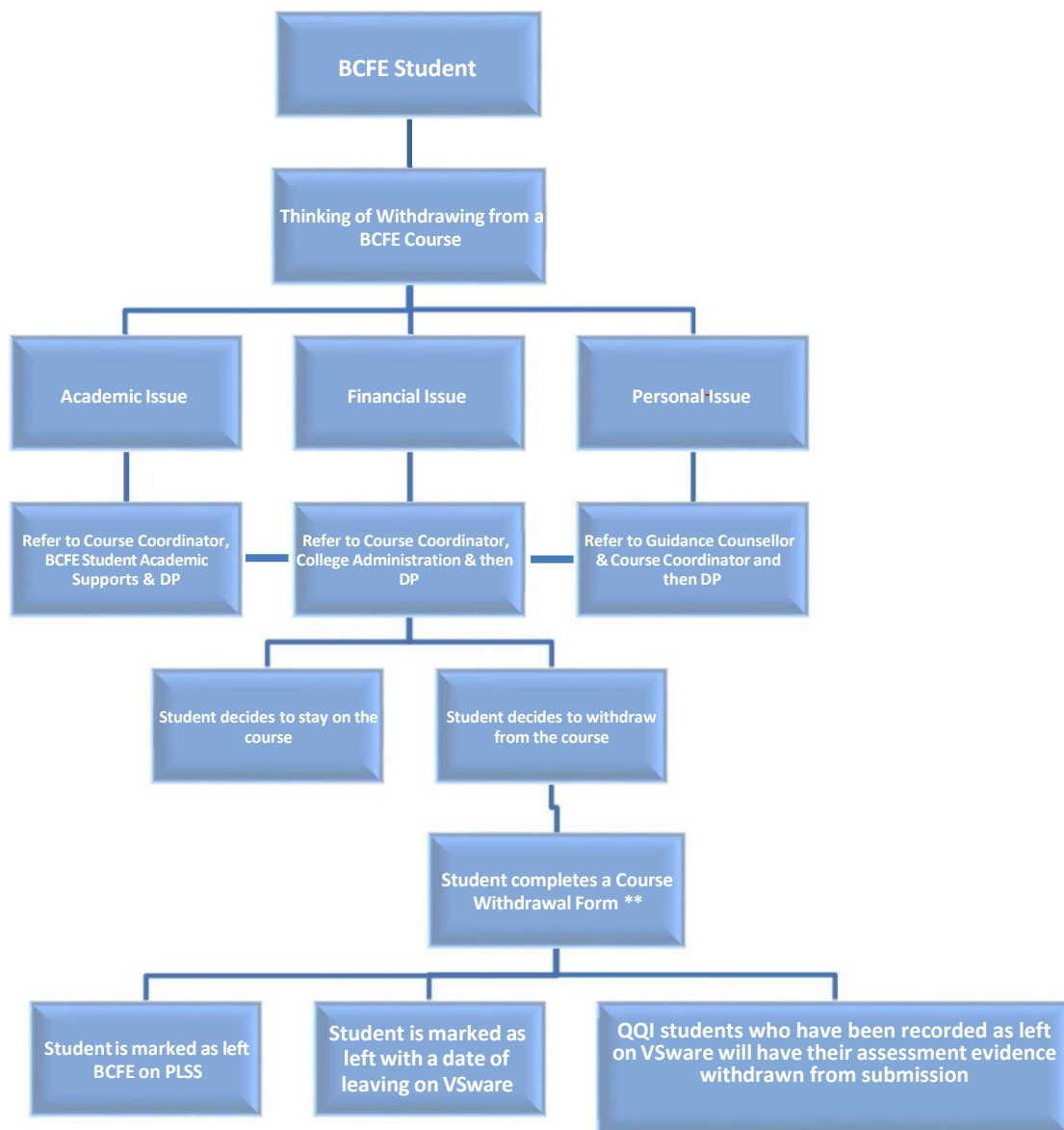
- 3.1.1 Computer and Network Usage Agreement Form
- 3.1.2 Media Release Form – Film, Video, Voice and Photography
- 3.1.3 Parental / Guardian Permission Form (Under 18 on date or registration)
- 3.1.4 PLSS (Programme Learner Support System) Learner Detail Form
- 3.1.5 Student Participation Form

- 3.2 Students should be fully aware of the outline of their course, the mandatory modules and other course requirements needed for a full award and the necessity to complete a relevant work placement where required.
- 3.3 The implications of poor attendance and punctuality will be outlined to students both in terms of the effect on their learning, eventual result and in relation to the payment of the SUSI grant, the Traineeship allowance, or any Department of Employment and Social Protection Benefit (DEASP). Students need to be aware that BCFE is bound to return attendance records to SUSI or DEASP on a regular basis.
- 3.4 Students will receive a schedule of assignments at the beginning of the academic year from the course coordinator. Subject teachers must arrange their courses around the agreed assignment schedule and reinforce assignment deadlines. Subject teachers are encouraged to integrate assessments across all modules where possible.

- 3.5** Where possible students should be facilitated in completing additional qualifications early in their course e.g. First Aid, Infection Control, Manual Handling, Health and Safety, Stage Pass (amongst others) assigned to their specific course.
- 3.6** All assignment briefs should be clearly written, marking schemes fully explained and guidelines for completion of assignments given to students. Students should be made aware of the range of marks for a Distinction, Merit, and Pass for the different awarding bodies who provide certification within BCFE (QQI, Pearson/BTEC, Dublin City University, and the University of Dundee. Students are required to submit their work using the relevant assignment brief.
- 3.7** The following core information will be included in the assessment brief/ assignment
- Course name and code
 - Subject (module) Title and Code (QQI only)
 - Teacher's name
 - Assignment Number
 - Title of Assignment
 - Assessment Technique
 - Weighting (if relevant)
 - Learning outcomes(s) being assessed
 - Feedback box
 - Assignment scenario
 - Assignment tasks
 - Assignment Guidelines
 - Marking Schemes/Assessment Criteria
 - Issue date
 - Submission/Deadline Date and Time
 - Plagiarism statement and student signature
- 3.8** Examinations (where relevant) should be refreshed annually.
- 3.9** Feedback (and timely feedback) is an essential element in student retention as it allows the student to ascertain how they are progressing. There should be a two-week turnaround in receiving feedback.
- 3.10** Students should be given quality feedback on each assignment they complete. Feedback can be either in written or digital form (email, Moodle, Teams, video or voice). Each subject teacher will outline their preferred method for giving feedback. Evidence that the student received the feedback will be retained by the subject teacher.
- 3.11** Students experiencing difficulty with assignments and course work in general should be referred to the relevant channel of the student support system through one of the Deputy Principals, Guidance Counsellors and/or the Student Support Officer (if appropriate). All staff should positively reinforce the availability of supports within BCFE to any student experiencing difficulty.
- 3.12** Subject teachers will take attendance of all their classes using VSware, at the beginning of each class so that an accurate record of attendance is available for each student and that patterns of non-attendance can be identified early on.
- 3.13** Students should be made aware/advised by the Course Coordinator regarding concern for their attendance when 3 days unexplained absence has occurred. A letter should be emailed to the student by the individual subject teacher at this stage. The course co-ordinator will contact the student if the record shows that the student has been absent for between 7-10 days without engaging in relation to the reason why. When 15 days absence has been accumulated then the Deputy Principal should be informed, and absent /unexcused letter should be sent to the student. This will be recorded on the students file in VSware.
- 3.14** If a student fails to respond and continues to be absent the Principal will formally remove the student from the register by letter/email. Students will be given an opportunity to discuss their situation with the Principal who can advised on intervention measures if necessary.

4 Procedures to be followed where a student is considering withdrawing from a BCFE course

If it becomes evident to any member of staff (admin staff, subject teacher, Guidance Counsellor, academic support, disability officer, Deputy Principal or Principal) that a student is considering withdrawing from a course based on difficulties they are experiencing, they should inform the Course Coordinator who should follow the process outlined in the diagram below.



5 A student who is considering withdrawing from a course

- 5.1 If a student makes it known to a member of BCFE staff that they are considering withdrawing from a BCFE course, they should immediately inform the student's course coordinator.
- 5.2 The course coordinator will arrange a meeting with the student and try to resolve the issue by advising, encouraging, and working with the student to refer them to the internal supports available within BCFE. Usually, these issues are easily resolved with the coordinator referring the student in the right direction to receive supports as soon as possible.
 - 5.2.1 Academic Support Officer
 - 5.2.2 Financial Support
 - 5.2.3 Guidance/Counselling
 - 5.2.4 Student Support Fund
- 5.3 If the coordinator cannot resolve the student's concern the student should be referred to the Deputy Principal who may be able to advise and guide the student further by referring them to external supports with the help of the Guidance Counsellor to encourage the student to stay on the course. In addition, the DP may suggest transferring to another course within BCFE if necessary.
- 5.4 The student will then decide whether to remain in BCFE or may choose to withdraw from their course.
- 5.5 Should they choose to remain the student must actively engage with the supports on offer otherwise they will be allocated to other students as these supports are finite.
- 5.6 Should a student choose to withdraw from their course any grant or financial implications associated with such a withdrawal will be explained to them.
- 5.7 Students withdrawing from a course will be required to complete a:
 - **Student Course Withdrawal Form** (Appendix 1)
- 5.8 The student will then be marked as left on MIT, PLSS and VSware.

6 Student Withdrawal Process

- 6.1 Students withdrawing from a course will be required to complete a 'Student Course Withdrawal Form'. (Appendix 1).
- 6.2 When a student is officially withdrawn, by completing and submitting a course withdrawal form, they will be marked as "left early" on BCFE's administration systems i.e., MIT, PLSS and VSware. QQI students who have been recorded as left on Vsware will have their assessment evidence withdrawn from submission.
- 6.3 All 'student course withdrawal forms' must be uploaded to students' individual MIT Enrol accounts.
- 6.4 BCFE are also required to notify SUSI or the DEASP in the event that a student withdraws from a course in BCFE.
- 6.5 For those students who are under the age of 18, BCFE is required to notify parents/guardians.

Appendix 1: Student Course Withdrawal Form

PART I: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

Student Name: _____	Mobile Number: _____
Course Name: _____	Code: _____
Coordinator: _____	

Reason for exit: Please the option that best fits:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Accident/Health | <input type="checkbox"/> | Enrolled in another FET Course | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Childcare Barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> | Enrolled in another HEI course | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Course Not meeting Needs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Financial Barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deceased | <input type="checkbox"/> | Retired | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dismissed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transport Barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Domestic Circumstances | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unknown | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employment Offer | <input type="checkbox"/> | Work commitments | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other (please specify) _____

I have spoken with my Course Coordinator and would still like to leave the course.

I understand that by leaving the course that any QQI assessment evidence will be withdrawn from submission.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

PART II: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE COURSE COORDINATOR

I have spoken with the student and advised them on all options available to them.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PART III: TO BE COMPLETED BY BCFE ADMINISTRATION

Student has been marked as "left early" on BCFE's data systems:		
MIT <input type="checkbox"/>	PLSS <input type="checkbox"/>	Vsware <input type="checkbox"/>
Name who updated administration systems: _____		