

IH BELFAST ATTENDANCE/HOLIDAY POLICY

International House Belfast wants to ensure that students have access to high-quality courses and that they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. A key factor in achieving this is regular attendance and consistent punctuality, which we aim to promote.

This policy:

- aims to promote good punctuality and attendance.
- describes the disciplinary procedure in the case of poor punctuality or repeated absence.
- details who can request a holiday and how.
- sets out procedures for finishing a course early.

Key contacts

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Punctuality

International House Belfast is a relaxed school in many ways, but we understand that learners being late can have a negative effect on everyone. It is both disruptive and disrespectful to the teachers or coaches and to the other learners in the group who arrived on time, as well as having a negative effect on the learner's own development. Therefore, at International House Belfast, all sessions will start on time, and we expect everyone to be ready on time for them. However, we do understand that sometimes problems happen, especially with public transport. This policy explains our rules about learners arriving late.

- Students who have a problem on the way to their first session of the day and who ring or WhatsApp before the start of the session will be allowed to enter up to 15 minutes after the start.
- Students who arrive after 15 minutes will not be allowed to enter the session. They will have the option of being given some work to do by an academic manager.
- Student who are late frequently will be spoken to about this problem, and if it continues the school will remove the 15-minute rule and not allow the students to enter sessions if they arrive late.

Please note that these conditions do not apply to 1-to-1 classes.

Absence

Students at International House Belfast should endeavour to attend all classes. In some cases, students may apply for an authorised absence. This must be made to a member of management (see key contacts on page 1 of this policy) in advance.

Authorised Absences (in advance)

Please note that only certain reasons can be considered for authorised absences, for example:

- Medical appointments
- Police appointments
- Visa/passport office appointments
- Embassy appointments
- Job Centre appointments
- Religious holidays

Authorised Absences (unexpected)

For example:

- Sickness with a doctor's note
- Family emergencies

To have any of the above authorised, students must provide evidence, for example, a doctor's note or an appointment letter. Evidence of appointments must be given IN ADVANCE to a member of management.

Please note, all absences, even authorised absences, are non-recoupable.

Unauthorised Absences

These instances are examples of invalid reasons for absence:

- Leisure or work-related appointments and activities
- Non-urgent family appointments and activities
- Minor illnesses
- Any authorised absence that was not requested in advance

Sickness

If a student is sick they must inform the school as soon as possible via email/phone/Whatsapp. Absence due to sickness of up to 3 days does not require a doctor's note.

If someone else is paying for the course or if the student is under 18

If a third party pays for the course (embassy, work or school), we will inform them of an absence request, which they might refuse. For over-18s, the school will report any absence longer than 2 days. For under-18s all absences are reported to relevant stakeholders (parents, agents, embassy etc).

Disciplinary Procedure for Repeated Absence or Lateness

At International House Belfast we are proud of the courses we deliver and want them to meet the needs of our students. We recognise that part of our responsibility is having a robust attendance policy, which consists of:

- **Stage 1 - Initial Talk:** When a student's attendance falls below 90%, a member of management will speak to them to call attention to the attendance rate or poor punctuality and check any reasons for the falling attendance. The aim is to discuss the reason for the issue and find a solution.
- **Stage 2-Verbal Warning:** In the two weeks following the initial talk, the student's attendance or poor punctuality will be monitored. For continuing issues, a verbal warning will be issued by a member of management. Again, we will try to understand the reason for the issue to find a solution. Stakeholders such as parents or sponsors may be informed at this time.
- **Stage 3- Written warning:** In the two weeks following the verbal warning, the student's attendance or poor punctuality will continue to be monitored. For continuing issues, a written warning will be issued. Again, we will try to understand the reason for the issue to find a solution. Stakeholders such as parents or sponsors will be informed.
- **Stage 4 - Final warning:** In the two weeks following the written warning, the student's attendance or poor punctuality will continue to be monitored. For continuing issues, a final warning will be issued, noting that the next step is exclusion. Again, we will try to understand the reason for the issue to find a solution. Stakeholders such as parents or sponsors will be informed and counselled on the consequences of exclusion.
- **Exclusion:** Following persistent issues, International House Belfast will ask the student to leave the course immediately. No refund will be given. This is an extremely rare outcome, but it is possible. Please note that under certain circumstances and under its terms and conditions, International House Belfast reserves the right to accelerate the process.

Certificates

At the end of their course, students are given a certificate that shows the number of hours and type of course completed, the dates they attended and, where relevant, the level at which they were working. The certificate also states the exact attendance percentage.

Absence due to special circumstances

Students are entitled to 4 weeks for maternity. This is counted as holiday and those missed weeks can be added onto the end of their course. To apply for maternity leave we need a medical note. This note must be given a key contact (see page 1). Being absent from school to look after a child it is not an authorised absence. Students who require a holiday for any other special circumstances should discuss it with a key contact (see page 1).

Holiday allowances

Course duration	Holiday allowance
Up to 12 weeks	0 weeks
13-24 weeks	1 week
25-35 weeks	2 weeks
36-47 weeks	3 weeks

Holiday weeks will be added to the end of the course. Holidays can be requested by contacting a key contact from page 1 of this policy.

Holiday requests for under-18s must be made by a guardian or an authorised individual acting on their behalf. Where someone other than a student is paying for a course, permission must be granted by the relevant stakeholder.

Course Withdrawal

If a student or player has any doubts about continuing their course, they should discuss the issue with a member of management before making their decision. They will talk about these problems together with the student to help them decide. If a student decides to leave their course early, they must inform a member of management (see page 1) in writing of their reasons and give their final date at school.

If a student is on a visa and leaves the school earlier than their original course end date, International House Belfast may be required to inform the Home Office. This may affect the student's visa status.