

Attendance rules for students

If you are on a student visa, the Irish government has stated that you need to attend a **minimum of 85%** of your lessons.

This is important for many reasons:

- 1) To help you focus fully on your studies in English
- 2) To avoid visa problems with the Irish Department of Justice
- 3) To allow you to be able to renew your visa

In school, it is important that you follow these rules as set out by the **Irish Government**.

Monitoring your attendance

Every day, your teachers will check your attendance in each class segment.

Your attendance each week will be recorded on our school database and will be available to the Department of Justice on request.

Punctuality

Class starts punctually at **09.00** every morning. If you have a problem arriving for **09.00**, you can enter the class until **09.15**. **After 09.15**, you **may not** enter the class (you must wait until the second lesson at 11.30) and the teacher will mark you **absent**.

Absenteeism

We understand that sometimes, students have problems and are unable to attend class. However, if you do not have a good reason for your absence, this may affect your attendance and cause problems with your visa.

There are certain legitimate reasons for absence, including, but not limited to:

1. Illness

If you are ill, we understand that you can't come to class. On the first day you are ill, you must email administration at info@ihgalway.ie. If you do not have access to email, you may call 091.381110 to inform us that you are ill and that you can't come to school.

If you are ill for more than 2 days, you must provide a doctor's certificate to prove the reason for your absence. In this situation, your attendance **will not be affected**.

2. Serious illness of a family member

In the case of serious illness of a close family member (mother, father, brother or sister), the following procedure must be followed:

- Email the administration at info@ihgalway.ie. If you are unable to access email, you may call 091.381110
- You must provide some evidence of the family member's illness
- The student welfare office will take the situation into consideration and respond to your request as soon as possible, depending on the nature and seriousness of the illness.

Please note that requests must be made by the student in question and not by a third party

“Freezing your course”

If it is necessary for you to return home due to the illness of a family member, the following procedure must be followed:

- Follow the steps above regarding illness of a family member.
- Request temporary leave from your course to be with your family member during their illness.

IH Galway will email the enrolments office to request that your course is “frozen” meaning that, you may take the remainder of your course at a later date.

If your request is accepted, your course will be *frozen* from the following Monday, for example, if you request is accepted on Wednesday 15th July, then your course will be *frozen* from Monday 20th July. This means that you will not lose any tuition and you will be able to complete your course at a later date.

3. Bereavement

In the unfortunate event of the death of a close family member, we understand that you will not be able to attend school. Please email info@ihgalway.ie or call 091.381110 to inform us of your bereavement and that you can't come to school.

In the case of an immediate family member's death (a spouse, parent, child, a person in a relationship of domestic dependency including same sex partners, brother or sister, a person who acted in loco parentis or was a guardian) 3 days' bereavement leave will be allowed.

In the event of an extended family member's death (a grandparent, parent-in-law, spouse-in-law) 1 days leave will be allowed.

No leave is allowed in any other circumstances.

Please note that requests must be made by the student in question and not by a third party

Important: Please note that it is **only** in these circumstances that your attendance will **not** be affected. If you do not provide a legitimate reason for your absence, the steps below will be followed.

Problems with attendance

If you can't provide a legitimate reason for your absence (see above), then you will be marked absent for your lesson and your attendance level will be reduced.

Warnings

First 6 weeks of your course

If you have more than 25% uncertified absence in the first 6 weeks of your course, this will be reported to GNIB/ INIS for their consideration. If your attendance is less than 75% immediately following the third week of your course, you will receive an e mail notifying you of this, so that you may work on improving your attendance and meet the required final minimum attendance of 85%

Every week

In a one week period, if you have attended less than 50% of your classes, IHGalway will send you an informal warning by telephone, text or by email.

Every Monday, IH Galway monitors attendance for all students requiring visas. This process takes account of each student's current attendance and projected final attendance. Please note that if your projected attendance falls below 85% **your case will be referred to the Garda National Immigration Bureau/ INIS for their consideration and the expulsion process will be initiated**

You will also receive your first warning, stating the following:

- your current attendance percentage
- your projected final attendance
- the steps that have been taken by IH Galway to inform you of this problem
- the consequences (including expulsion) of having projected attendance of less than 85% at the end of your programme

Problems with attendance – expulsion process

- Week 0- 1** Your projected attendance is calculated to be less than 85%
- GNIB/ INIS is informed
- You are informed by e mail that you are in danger of being expelled
- Week 1- 3** You must respond formally by e mail, within 10 working days of receiving this notification.
- In your e mail, please include the following:
- information about any exceptional circumstance which has affected your attendance.
 - Attach documents such as doctor’s certificate/ reports.
 - The reasons why you believe you should not be expelled
- Week 4** If you wish to discuss your case in person, may request a meeting with Martina Chiappin in administration.
- The final decision to expel you or not will be at the discretion of the Director of International House Galway. This decision will be issued in writing, by e mail in week 4 of the expulsion process.
- If you are expelled from International House Galway, you must stop attending classes immediately.
- If you accept the reason for expulsion and agree to leave the school, your expulsion is reported to GNIB/ INIS, your agent/ family members and embassy. You will not receive a certificate for your course of study.
- No refund of fees will be issued to you.

Appeals

If you do not accept this decision, you may appeal it in writing by e mailing the Director of IH Galway, Ms Mary Grennan at mary@ihgalway.ie within 5 working days of receiving notification of expulsion.

Final decision

In each student's case, the final decision to expel them or allow them to return to school will be made within 5 working days of their appeal. The student will be informed in writing of this final decision.

Appeal Successful

If your appeal is successful, you may resume your course on the Monday immediately following this decision. Your course dates will be extended so that you may recoup the lessons that you missed during the period of appeal.

Appeal Unsuccessful

As part of the expulsion process, your expulsion is reported to GNIB/ INIS, your agent/ family members and embassy. You will not receive a certificate for your course of study.

No refund of fees will be issued to you.

No further appeals will be considered.

Holidays and breaks

As a student on a course of 25 weeks of study, you will be entitled to ten weeks of holidays.

These holiday periods must be decided in advance of registering with the GNIB/ INIS and agreed with your school.

Procedure for scheduling breaks

- In the first week of your course, you will attend an induction for long term students which outlines your visa requirements
- The induction tutor will advise you about the best exam for you to take and the dates on which this can be taken
- Together with the induction tutor, you will select an exam and exam administration
- Together with your induction tutor, you will schedule your holidays
- The induction tutor will then e mail the student welfare officers with this information
- The student welfare officers will prepare your letter, outlining clearly your course, exam and holiday schedule.
- You may collect your letter the following day, and use this to register with GNIB / INIS

Please note that it is **not possible** change holiday periods outlined on your visa letter.

Unscheduled breaks

Please see absenteeism policies for details of unscheduled breaks. Leave due to illness of the student or illness or death of a family member are the only unscheduled breaks that will not affect attendance on the 25 week course provided the steps under the absenteeism policy are followed.

Complaints Procedure

We want to help you if you are not happy with any aspect of your experience at International House Galway. If you have a complaint, please come to reception at lunch time 13.30 – 14.30 and ask to speak to the appropriate manager:

Your Language Course

Examples of Legitimate complaints relating to your Language Course:

- You feel that you are in the wrong level
- You have received consistently incorrect information about language
- You have not had the opportunity to discuss your interests or language/ skills needs
- You have not been active enough in your lesson.
- Your lesson appears unplanned and chaotic
- You have focused on one aspect of language learning to the exclusion of everything else, for example you have only covered grammar lessons.
- Your teachers have consistently repeated material and appear not to be co-operating together.

Accommodation

Examples of Legitimate complaints relating to your Accommodation:

Host families

- Your house is consistently unclean
- Your host family do not speak to you
- Your host family do not include you in family activities
- The food you receive is sub standard

Apartments

- The facilities are broken/ not usable
- Your room is unclean
- Your bed linen is unclean

Social Programme

Examples of Legitimate complaints relating to your Social Programme:

- You do not receive information about the social programme on a daily basis
- The co-ordinators are not available to meet you at break time
- The tours are consistently badly organised
- Your input in the programme is not considered and not asked for.

Procedure for complaints

You can request to have a private meeting with the appropriate manager and your complaint will be recorded on a Client Service Action form by the manager. The manager will take notes and will read notes back to you to confirm the content of your complaint.

If possible, the manager will address the issue immediately.

If not, the manager will request another meeting with you the following day to discuss the situation and possible solutions.

It is the policy of International House Galway that the vast majority of the complaints are dealt with within two working days of the complaint being made.

Grievance procedure

As part of our commitment to the fairness, dignity and respect to all staff and students of International House Galway, IH Galway will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment. The aim of this policy is to identify what bullying and harassment is and what Action IH Galway will take if they need to deal with an offence of this nature.

Bullying

This has been defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour. This can be direct or indirect and verbal or physical. The behaviour can be conducted by one or more people against one person or more than one person and can be considered as having a negative impact on their right to dignity at work or in their course of study. Note that the behaviour must be repeated to be considered as bullying: one isolated incident may have a negative impact on the dignity of the individual, but is not considered bullying.

Harassment

This is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the following grounds:

- Gender
- Marital status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the travelling community

Sexual Harassment

This is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of people at work or in their course of study. It includes unwelcome, non-verbal, verbal or physical conduct based on the gender of a recipient which is offensive to the recipient or which cause the recipient discomfort, humiliation or interferes with their job or studies.

Victimisation

This occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another because he/ she has made a complaint to IH Galway in relation to harassment or bullying behaviour.

This policy is applicable to all IH Galway staff and students. This policy is also applicable to business contacts, contractors, suppliers or other business contacts of IH Galway.

As part of IH Galway's Code of Conduct, it is imperative that all staff, students and suppliers respects the dignity of all members of IH Galway. Please remember to consider equality grounds such as a person's gender, marital status, race, religion, age, Sexual orientation, member ship of the travelling community and disability.

Bullying or harassment may take the following forms:

Non-verbal abuse

Inappropriate looks or gestures, displaying emblems on clothing, exclusion, whistling, isolation at lunch breaks or social events are all considered as non-verbal abuse.

Physical abuse

Hitting, bodily contact that is abusive in nature, shaking fists in an angry way, damaging a staff or students' possessions.

This list is not complete and just serves as a guideline to staff and students. Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in an appropriate way.

Informal procedure

IH Galway is aware of and recognises the effects that bullying and harassment can have on its staff and students. However, IH Galway is of the view that an informal approach to solving matters can often be effective. In the first instance, an attempt should be made to address an allegation of bullying on an informal basis set out through the informal procedure described below.

If a student believes that he/she is being bullied, he/she should explain clearly to the alleged harasser or bully that he/ she finds their behaviour unacceptable.

If the student feels that this may be too difficult, s/he may then seek the advice or assistance of the student welfare officer.

The student or staff member may also discuss this issue with a contact person. The contact person may be a classmate or colleague or other person representing the students or staff. The student or staff member may request the assistance of the contact person in discussing the issue with the alleged harasser or bully. Any discussion with the alleged harasser or bully must be confidential, non-confrontational and see to resolve the matter in an informal, calm manner.

If the student or staff member decides that it would not be appropriate to approach the alleged harasser or bully either personally or through a contact person, they should then proceed to the formal procedure.

If the student or staff member has attempted to discuss the matter with the alleged bully or harasser and is not happy with the results, they should then proceed to the formal procedure.

Formal Procedure

In the situation where the informal complaint has failed and the harassment is repeated, the student or staff member should proceed to the formal procedure. International House Galway takes this situation very seriously and confirms the following in this regard:

- Where possible, all complaints will be investigated and appropriate action taken within 5 working days of the complaint being made
- The situation will be treated with the greatest confidentiality
- The situation will be investigated discreetly and sensitively by a competent person
- The investigator will examine the situation carefully and objectively with a view to deciding the best course of action.

Procedure

- An initial complaint should be made in writing to the Student Welfare Officer or the matter should be raised with the Director of International House Galway.
- Precise details of the alleged incidents of bullying or harassment and the names of any witnesses there may have been to those incidents should be included in the written complaint;
- The alleged harasser or bully will be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying and/or harassment has been made against him/her and he/she will be given a copy of the complainant's written statement;
- The alleged harasser or bully will also be told that he/she will be given a fair opportunity to respond to each and every allegation made against him/her;

- All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence possible to comply with the requirements of a fair investigation;
- Only individuals necessary to the investigation will be involved from the initial stages;
- A designated member of management or, if appropriate, a third party will be assigned to carry out an initial investigation into the complaint;
- If the complaint relates to harassment on grounds of age, race, religion, family status, marital status, disability, sexual orientation or membership of the traveller community or relates to sexual harassment, a team of at least two people will be appointed to investigate the complaint where possible;
- Where possible the investigator or investigation team will try to agree terms of reference and a time frame with the complainant and alleged harasser or bully in advance of the investigation;
- Interviews will be held with both the complainant and any witnesses to establish a thorough understanding of the facts of the alleged complaint, and a record of the meetings will be held;
- The complainant and the alleged harasser or bully may be accompanied to investigative meetings by any of the contact persons referred to above;
- All material received will be treated with the highest level of sensitivity;
- Where necessary parties to the procedure may in some cases be sent home with pay to enable parties to investigate the complaint;
- It may be necessary to interview other persons and if so the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to them. Any statements from witnesses will be circulated to both the person making the complaint and the alleged harasser or bully for their comments before any conclusion is reached in the investigation;
- When the investigation has been completed, the investigator or investigation team will present a written report to management;
- Both the complainant and the alleged harasser or bully will be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation and will be given the opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon by IH Galway;
- If IH Galway decides that the complaint is well founded, management will meet with the alleged harasser or bully to establish what action is to be taken
- Action can and may include counselling, monitoring, mediation and/or disciplinary action;
- Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with IH Galway's Disciplinary Procedure;
- Where a complaint is upheld against a non-staff, the investigation report may recommend appropriate sanctions against the non-staff or his/her colleague which could extend where appropriate in the circumstances to exclusion of that individual from IH Galway's premises, suspension or termination of service, suspension or termination of a supply service or other contract;

- In cases where it is discovered that the complainant made a false accusation of bullying and/or harassment, IH Galway may undertake counselling, monitoring, mediation and/or disciplinary action including dismissal (see malicious complaints below);
- Any party to the investigation who is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation is entitled to appeal;
- Any appeal should be made in writing and directed to the Director of IH Galway, within 10 working days of the conclusion of the investigation;
- The Board of Directors may nominate a third party to work with them on the appeal and will aim to notify the appellant of IH Galway's decision within a further 10 working days.

Malicious complaints

Malicious complaints (complaints which have no basis and are intended to impugn the integrity of another staff) are considered a very serious matter and will be treated under the disciplinary procedure and may lead to dismissal. A complaint that is not upheld by the formal investigation is not necessarily considered to be malicious without fear of ridicule or reprisal.

