University of Gloucestershire: “the simplest, most cost-effective way to monitor attendance”

For the University of Gloucestershire, recording and analysing student attendance is a key part of its strategic approach to delivering a first-class student experience.

Tracking engagement with lectures, tutorials and even non-timetabled events like careers sessions helps staff identify individuals whose attendance is poor and who might need extra support with the work, their personal circumstances or both, so the university can offer help before problems get bigger.

Since early 2020 the university has used the Checkin+ tool to make monitoring attendance easy and accurate. It is an online tool that students use on their laptop, tablet or smartphone and so, when the lockdowns started in March 2020, students continued to register their attendance in the same way and teaching staff could check easily who was engaging with their learning despite the disruption.

Inevitably, levels of engagement with university systems dipped while staff and students adapted to their sudden change in circumstances, but Checkin+ enabled the university to identify individuals who didn’t get back on track quickly and to offer additional support.

Evidence of student engagement
Institutions can simply plug the Checkin+ tool into their existing timetabling and student records systems to create an effective electronic record-keeping system or, as in Gloucestershire’s case, integrate it with an existing learning analytics solution to improve their performance metrics. Students register attendance using a four-digit access code and the system records this, as well as whether they arrived late, left early or notified staff in advance if they couldn’t attend.

As public health mandates changed during 2020 more people returned to campus, but some still work remotely and patterns of attendance may continue to vary in future. The university uses the Checkin+ data to help them check that remote learners are OK and making progress.

Checkin+ is also helping staff to keep course modules under review and make sure they are delivering what students need. The learning

“When students and staff had to leave campus and work from home in early 2020 we knew we’d need to do more to care for students... Checkin+ is a quick way for students to register their involvement in learning events, whether in person or online. It’s an ideal registration system for blended learning.”
Rob Blagden, director of library, technology and information (LTI)
Case study: University of Gloucestershire, Checkin+

The analytics solution combines the information with other data – about use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and the library, for example – to look out for areas that show low levels of engagement across the student cohort. If evidence like this emerges, staff can decide whether to introduce new resources, try a different teaching approach or work on a refresh to keep course content relevant and engaging.

"Checkin+ gives us data that helps us plan better," says Rob.

Efficient, cost-effective reporting

Having robust, detailed information about who has been on campus when, where and with whom has also saved the university money, because it hasn’t had to invest in a standalone track and trace system during the ongoing pandemic.

Checkin+ is also simplifying Tier 4 visa immigration reporting. The Home Office requires evidence that international students are engaged with their course and supplying this can be time-consuming for institutions if the information is in multiple systems, is patchy or calls for more clarification. At Gloucestershire, however, Checkin+ data and information from other analytics streams allows staff to send detailed reports to the immigration compliance team at the touch of a button.

Why attendance monitoring matters

“We are convinced that attendance is an important marker for engagement, and that it has an impact on student attainment,” says Rob. “We are working on quantifying the effect attendance has on outcomes, so it is important that we have accurate attendance information and Checkin+ is the simplest, most cost-effective way to get it.”

He believes the best way to achieve student and staff buy-in for attendance monitoring is to choose a simple system and to explain how students benefit when targeted support can be provided in a timely way.

We want to enable student continuation, completion, and progression – the Jisc solutions ensure minor difficulties are quickly spotted and resolved,” comments Rob. “From a university perspective, Checkin+ has helped us develop a clear attendance policy for students and give them clear expectations about why and how we will respond to support them if the data suggests that all is not well.”

“We can do our Tier 4 visa reporting direct from the data our systems routinely gather and analyse. Our priority is getting any students who are slipping to re-engage with their learning, but we must also be compliant and Checkin+ makes this much easier.”

Rob Blagden, director of library, technology and information (LTI)

Find out more about attendance monitoring, please:

- register your interest by sending us an email (data.analytics@jisc.ac.uk)
- or give us a call: 0333 015 1165
- visit our data analytics web pages https://www.jisc.ac.uk/data-and-analytics