

University of Nottingham

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Academic Engagement Monitoring Code of Practice

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Introduction and context

The University of Nottingham is required to monitor the engagement of international students who are studying in the UK on a Student Visa. This Code of Practice sets out the responsibilities of all those who are involved in supporting student visa holders and the responsibilities of the students themselves.

While the University's aim is to support all students to engage fully, enjoy their studies and to achieve to their full potential, this Code of Practice sets out steps that must be taken if there is non-engagement or ongoing low engagement of students while they are in the UK under immigration sponsorship of the University.

This Code of Practice should be read alongside the Code of Practice for [University limitations on immigration sponsorship](#) and any other relevant policy or guidance referenced in this document.

1. Scope of the Code of Practice

This Code of Practice relates to the engagement of all student visa holders who are sponsored by the University at the UK campus. Student visa holders are categorised by the Home Office as Band 1 or Band 2:

Band 1: Study at a Higher Education Provider at RQF Level 5 and below (e.g. Foundation or pre-sessional study)

Band 2: Study at a Higher Education Provider at RQF Levels 6,7 and 8 (e.g. Bachelor, Master or PhD level)

If a student is studying a course which spans more than one level the Band is determined by the highest band at which they will study. University of Nottingham students will typically be in Band 2, apart from students studying some pre-sessional programmes.

This Code of Practice sets out:

- The responsibilities that University of Nottingham staff and students have in complying with UKVI requirements and, therefore, what is needed to comply with the requirements
- The systems that are in place to monitor academic engagement
- What information is recorded to confirm that students are academically engaging
- What actions will be taken when a lack of academic engagement is identified
- The maximum period of non-engagement before intervention will take place
- The robust systems in place to identify students who are not engaging, with specific emphasis on the different groups of students to whom monitoring applies
- When non-engagement or repeated poor engagement will lead to withdrawal of immigration sponsorship

2. Academic engagement

The University of Nottingham is required to ensure that all Student visa holders are actively engaging with their studies.

2.1 'Engagement' means that the students are actively and consistently following their programme of study.

2.2 To demonstrate engagement, Band 1 students must attend a minimum of 15 hours of daytime (08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday) classroom-based study per week. If a student does not achieve 85% attendance in any calendar month the University of Nottingham will review the student's attendance and annotate the student's record with the reasons for non-attendance, and note any interventions being taken to address this.

If a Band 1 student's attendance falls below 70% for three consecutive calendar months, the University will withdraw sponsorship.

2.3 Band 2 students are required to engage with their studies in a manner which is predominantly face-to-face and on-campus. Evidence of engagement, depending on the programme of study being undertaken, could include:

- Attending lectures, seminars or tutorials
- Undertaking required laboratory work
- Undertaking research or fieldwork
- Submitting essays, assignments and attending examinations

- Engaging with Moodle
- Attending scheduled face-to-face meetings with university staff, such as a Personal Tutor or PGR supervisor

This is not an exhaustive list. There may be other programme-specific activities which could demonstrate engagement.

2.4 The University will ensure that all taught courses remain within the UKVI limit of 20% timetabled remote delivery. The University will retain contact with students who have any remote delivery in their timetable through the use of a Student Engagement Dashboard which draws on activity data from Moodle, Echo360 and QR code check-ins for on-campus sessions. The University's teaching is delivered predominantly in person, as outlined throughout this Code of Practice.

3. Monitoring engagement: general principles for all students

The University is required to monitor the engagement of sponsored students.

3.1 Engagement monitoring starts on the day that a student completes initial registration at the University of Nottingham or on the day that a student 'switches' into student immigration status, whichever comes first. Engagement monitoring ends on the course end date as stated on the most recent CAS issued.

3.2 Engagement monitoring does not apply during university vacation periods or periods of PGR annual leave.

3.3 Vacation periods for undergraduate students are:

- Christmas/Winter vacation – the period between term one and term two
- Easter/Spring vacation – the period between term two and term three
- Summer vacation – the period between two academic years

Vacation periods for postgraduate (taught) students are:

- Christmas/Winter vacation – the period between term one and term two
- Easter/Spring vacation – the period between term two and term three

Postgraduate (taught) students do not have a vacation period during the summer months, because they are required to work on their dissertation.

Medical students, pre-sessional students and students who are on placements, may not typically be on vacation during the summer months and might be required to work during all or part of the Christmas/Winter and Easter/Spring vacations. These students will receive separate notification of vacation periods.

PGR students benefit from University closure days over Christmas/Winter holidays and over Easter/Spring holidays and have up to 25 days annual leave allowance under [University regulations](#).

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

3.4 The student is responsible for ensuring that they use their student visa as intended: to engage with all teaching materials and teaching sessions/supervisions with no significant gaps or absence and that they are making academic progress.

Where a student chooses to enter into employment, they are responsible for ensuring this is permitted within the terms of their visa and does not interfere with required academic engagement. Requests for an interruption of studies for the purposes of paid or unpaid work will not be approved.

3.5 Using lecture capture facilities as a substitute for in-person attendance is not permitted on the student visa. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they understand and meet the UKVI requirement to attend predominantly in-person.

3.6 The student must ensure that they live no more than 1 hour door-to-door commutable distance away from their site of study in order to facilitate regular and reliable academic engagement with their course of study.

3.7 The student is responsible for replying promptly to any communication about non-engagement and must attend any meetings arranged by the Visa and Immigration team to discuss their academic engagement.

3.8 The student is responsible for providing any required supporting evidence related to their failure to engage on request from the Visa and Immigration if contacted to discuss their academic engagement.

Responsibilities of the academic school/department

3.9 Engagement will be monitored by academic schools and departments

3.10 Within each academic unit, it is the responsibility of the Head of School (or Head of Department/Head of Research Group) to ensure that resource is appropriately allocated so that the academic unit can meet the University's minimum UKVI academic engagement requirements as set out in this Code of Practice. The expectation is that all academic schools will be complying with the principles set out in this Code of Practice and the [University regulations governing attendance and engagement](#) to identify and make contact with students who are not engaging with their studies.

3.11 Academic schools and departments will be expected to work with the Visa and Immigration team to identify and refer cases of concern at the earliest opportunity and, where appropriate, to support students with suitable re-engagement action plans.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

3.12 Escalated cases of non-engagement and ongoing poor engagement for student visa holders will be addressed by the Visa and Immigration team

3.13 Where a student visa holder does not engage as expected, they will be contacted by the Visa and Immigration Team who will arrange contact (usually a compulsory meeting) with the student.

Efforts will be made to support students to re-engage with their studies wherever possible. A reengagement action plan may be agreed between the student, academic school or department and the Visa and Immigration team. Alternative interventions such as interruption of studies and/or withdrawal from the course may be discussed and managed by the Visa and Immigration team together with the academic school/department.

If the student does not make contact with the Visa and Immigration team and/or does not

attend a compulsory meeting with the Visa and Immigration team without good reason or if they fail to agree to or adhere to a reengagement action plan, the University will withdraw immigration sponsorship.

3.14 If a student has sporadic academic engagement (for example, during a taught period they are not engaging for two weeks, then re-engaging and then stopping engagement again) and/or demonstrable ongoing low academic engagement following previous reminder communications about low academic engagement, the Visa and Immigration team will make contact with the student and arrange a compulsory meeting. The same interventions and implications on student immigration sponsorship will apply as those set out in 3.13 of this Code of Practice.

3.15 Where a student fails to meet University UKVI minimum attendance and/or engagement requirements, the Visa and Immigration Team will keep a record of any intervention (contact/correspondence with students) and any actions that are taken.

3.16 Although such cases will be rare owing to earlier intervention by the University, if any student visa holder reaches 60 days of non-engagement, immigration sponsorship must be withdrawn.

3.17 Where immigration sponsorship is withdrawn, the Visa and Immigration team will require Programmes teams in Registry and Academic Affairs to close the student record, withdrawing the student from their programme of study. The only exception may be where the course can be completed from outside the UK (i.e. submission of a final piece of coursework)

3.18 The Visa and Immigration team will work with the External Reporting team in Registry and Academic Affairs to ensure statutory reporting is complete. The University must report to UKVI for various changes of circumstances, but specifically in this context, where immigration sponsorship has been withdrawn owing to non-engagement and/or ongoing low engagement.

4. Undergraduate and postgraduate (taught) students

This section should be read together with section 3 of this Code of Practice.

Undergraduate and postgraduate (taught) student academic engagement will be managed by use of a Student Engagement Dashboard which pulls engagement data from a variety of sources, including Moodle, Echo360 and QR codes (from physical attendance at timetabled sessions and other ad hoc sessions as required).

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

4.1 The student is responsible for ensuring that they attend all teaching activities required for their studies and that they engage fully with all relevant teaching materials

4.2 The student is responsible for recording their attendance at lectures, seminars and/or tutorials or similar (e.g. labs) by scanning QR codes wherever they are available.

4.3 The student must not intentionally undermine the QR code system for themselves or others. Abuse of the QR code system (sharing or receiving of QR codes for the purposes of showing attendance in instances where attendance has not taken place) is a breach of the Student Code of Discipline and repeat offences will result in immigration sponsorship being withdrawn.

Responsibilities of the academic school/department

4.4 Academic schools and departments must be familiar with the current [Student Engagement and Attendance Code of Practice](#) and the principles set out there to manage undergraduate and postgraduate (taught) student engagement.

4.5 Academic schools and departments must be confident that they are providing QR code opportunities at every timetabled session (unless a specific exemption applies) to ensure that a student's physical engagement can be appropriately evidenced.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

4.6 The Visa and Immigration team will contact student visa holders who either do not engage at all or who do not attend in-person for 21 days. The Visa and Immigration Team will normally arrange a compulsory meeting with students meeting this threshold within 5 working days. The Senior Tutor will be informed.

4.7 The Visa and Immigration team will also contact student visa holders who have low attendance.

5. Postgraduate taught students: dissertation/ masters research project

PGT students who are studying on a student visa must attend a dissertation supervision meeting to discuss their progress **monthly** when there is no simultaneous teaching activity (normally June – August inclusive). In the case of 2 year masters courses, where the research project is longer, the same monthly requirement applies for the duration of the dissertation.

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

5.1 The student is responsible for engaging with their PGT dissertation supervisor and ensuring that they arrange and attend a **monthly** supervision meeting where there is no simultaneous teaching activity (normally June – August inclusive). Gaps between meetings must not exceed 60 days.

5.2 The student is responsible for noting that the dissertation period still falls in term-time and for ensuring that any absence during the PGT dissertation phase meets with the requirements of section 12: Absence, of this Code of Practice.

Responsibilities of the PGT Dissertation Supervisor (or nominee)

5.3 The PGT dissertation supervisor or their nominee must provide supervision meetings monthly to student visa holders where there is no simultaneous teaching activity (normally June – August inclusive). Gaps between meetings must not exceed 60 days.

5.4 Unless the student has been given formal permission to study at a different location e.g. because of a specific personal request (see section 12: Absence) or an academic course requirement (e.g. section 6: Placements and Study Abroad Students), PGT supervision meetings should normally be face-to-face and on campus.

The PGT dissertation supervisor must provide an attendance QR code for the student to scan to confirm their attendance at the PGT dissertation meeting and must ensure there is a separate record of any meetings which take place online.

5.5 Where a student's PGT dissertation supervisor is unable to meet with the student for any reason, the student should be supported to meet with an alternative member of academic staff (a 'nominee'), ideally in-person, to discuss their dissertation.

5.6 PGT dissertation supervisors should, where necessary, refer students to section 12: Absence of this Code of Practice where students are enquiring about taking more than 2 weeks absence from the UK during their dissertation period.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

5.7 The Visa and Immigration team will contact student visa holders who have no evidence of engagement in any given month during the dissertation/ masters project period.

5.8 The Visa and Immigration team will manage engagement concerns concerning PGT dissertation students in accordance with the principles set out in section 3.

6. Placement and Study Abroad Students

The University will normally continue immigration sponsorship of students during periods of placement or study abroad. The University is therefore required to ensure that students holding Student visas are engaging satisfactorily with this element of their studies.

Attendance on periods of work placement which are part-time or which are less than 4 weeks in duration will not be monitored. In such cases the university's standard monitoring process will be sufficient to demonstrate satisfactory engagement.

The University does not support student visa holders to undertake placement activity which is wholly online. Hybrid working arrangements are acceptable where working from home is balanced with in-person attendance at the placement providers location.

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

6.1 As a minimum, students are required to engage promptly with **monthly** academic engagement contact points from the University. Students who are required to do a placement as a regulatory requirement (e.g. Medicine) will likely expect more frequent requirements to be set by their academic school/department.

Responsibilities of the Placement Manager/Tutor or Study Abroad Lead

6.2 The Placement Manager/Tutor or Study Abroad Lead is responsible for overseeing the monitoring of academic engagement for student visa holders while they are on placement. This includes ensuring that:

- (as a minimum) monthly contact points are in place
- a system is in place for employers to report instances where a student is absent from their placement to them
- students respond in a timely fashion with gaps in engagement or evidence of engagement never exceeding 60 days
- cases are escalated to the Visa and Immigration team where students do not respond or engage in any given month
- academic engagement records showing monthly contact are stored locally in a manner which is readily and quickly available for audit.
- placement activity is always recorded on the placement screen on the student record

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

6.3 The Visa and Immigration team will contact student visa holders who have no evidence of engagement in any given month

6.4 With the exception of 6.3, the Visa and Immigration team will manage engagement concerns concerning students on placement or study abroad in accordance with the principles set out in section 3.

7. PGR Students

This section should be read together with section 3 of this Code of Practice.

The University of Nottingham must ensure the engagement of sponsored students who are completing a PhD throughout the period for which they are sponsored, which includes the thesis pending period.

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

7.1 The student is responsible for maintaining regular contact with their PhD supervisor (and supervisory team) and ensuring that they meet deadlines and produce work as discussed with their supervisor/s.

7.2 The student must attend a structured supervision meeting with their supervisor once per month. Gaps between structured supervision meetings must not exceed 60 days.

7.3 Unless the student has been given formal permission to study at a different location (refer to section 13. Studying Away) and this has been reported to the UKVI, supervision meetings must normally be face-to-face and on campus.

7.4 The student must ensure that they are clear whether they, or their supervisor will have the responsibility of submitting signed supervision reports on a monthly basis via the agreed process or system for their academic school/department.

7.5 The student is responsible for agreeing any annual leave with their supervisor in line with the permitted 25 day annual allowance and regulations detailed within the University Quality Manual.

Responsibilities of the PhD Supervisor

7.6 The PhD supervisor must ensure that the student is provided with a structured supervision meeting, in-person, once per month, including in thesis pending up to final submission. The supervisor must ensure that gaps between structured supervision meetings do not exceed 60 days.

7.7 The lead PhD Supervisor (or nominee) is required to complete a monthly PGR supervision record online which confirms academic engagement and academic progress details for their students in any given month.

7.8 The PhD Supervisor is responsible for monitoring and approving any annual leave request from their student, ensuring that only leave within the permitted 25 day annual allowance is approved in line with the regulations of the University Quality Manual.

7.9 The PhD Supervisor has overall responsibility for ensuring that supervision reports are signed off and submitted on a monthly basis via the PGR supervision record system, even though commencement of this process may be delegated to the student.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

7.10 The Visa and Immigration team will monitor the monthly reports submitted by Supervisors.

7.11 Reasons for a missed supervision meetings and/or the occurrence of regular online meetings will be considered by the Visa and Immigration team. If the reason raises a concern or if there is a risk that the gap between supervisions would exceed 60 days and/or supervisions are regularly being missed, the Visa and Immigration team will manage the case in accordance with the principles set out in section 3.

8. Pre-sessional students at the Centre for English Language Education (CELE)

Pre-sessional students who are studying below degree level are classed as band 1, and therefore subject to more specific monitoring requirements.

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

8.1 The student must aim to attend every timetabled activity.

8.2 The student must ensure their attendance is recorded at each timetabled activity they attend.

8.3 If the student is unable to attend a timetabled activity (for example, because of ill health) the student must contact their Course Tutor as soon as possible.

Responsibilities of Centre for English Language, School of Education

8.4 CELE will ensure that attendance is recorded in every class for students attending pre-sessional programmes.

8.5 Where student attendance falls below 85%, CELE must review the reason for the student's absence and remind students via email about their visa responsibilities. The student's record must then be annotated with the reason for the non-attendance and the steps being taken to improve the student's attendance.

8.6 Where a student's attendance falls below 70% for two consecutive months, CELE will send a formal final warning to the student that failure to increase attendance to 85% may result in the withdrawal of their visa. The final written warning will also be shared with the Visa and Immigration team in any individual case. If the student does not re-engage and reaches a third, consecutive month of 70% attendance, immigration sponsorship will be withdrawn.

8.7 If a student fails to attend at all for 14 consecutive days, CELE will send a formal final warning to the student that failure to immediately re-engage with the course will result in immigration sponsorship being withdrawn. The final written warning will also be shared with the Visa and Immigration team in any individual case. Students who fail to attend at all for 21 consecutive days will have their immigration sponsorship withdrawn.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

8.8 If attendance drops below 70% for two consecutive calendar months the Visa and Immigration team will arrange to meet the student and review whether continued immigration sponsorship is appropriate.

8.9 If attendance drops below 70% for three consecutive calendar months the student's immigration sponsorship must be withdrawn by the Visa and Immigration team

8.10 If a student fails to attend for 21 consecutive days, immigration sponsorship will be withdrawn by the Visa and Immigration team

8.11 The Visa and Immigration team will inform UKVI in the event that a student's immigration sponsorship is withdrawn

9. Student Union Sabbatical Officers

A student sabbatical officer is a full-time, elected and salaried executive union position. A student maybe a sabbatical officer during their course or in the academic year immediately after they graduate. The Sabbatical Officer role can only be supported under the student immigration route for a maximum of two years

Responsibilities of the Sabbatical Officer on a student visa

9.1 If a student will take up the role of Sabbatical Officer during their course of study, they must inform the Visa and Immigration team before commencing the role so that statutory Home Office reporting requirements can be undertaken.

9.2 If a student wants to take up the role of Sabbatical Officer at the end of their course and their immigration permission is due to expire, they must request a new CAS from the University in order to make a new student visa application as a Sabbatical Officer.

9.3 If the student is re-elected at the end of one year they must apply again with a new CAS. The student cannot apply again for a third year, unless the post is with a different institution or at a national level with the National Union of Students.

9.4 If the student undertakes any additional work outside of their Sabbatical Officer role then it must be in line with the UK immigration rules

Responsibilities of the Students' Union

9.5 If there are any change of circumstances affecting the Sabbatical Officer's ability to engage with their Sabbatical Officer role at any point during their tenure, these must be reported to the Visa and Immigration team for advice, guidance and compliance purposes.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

9.6 If a student takes up a Sabbatical Officer post during their studies, the Visa and Immigration team must notify the UVKI of the change of circumstances.

9.7 If a student ceases to undertake the recognised role of Sabbatical Officer for any reason during their tenure, the Visa and Immigration team will be required to stop immigration sponsorship.

10. Reassessments: Undergraduate

Students might be required to retake an element of their course. If an undergraduate student is required to complete a reassessment in the summer assessment period there are no monitoring requirements because they will be studying for the reassessment during a vacation period.

If an undergraduate student is sponsored to repeat (first sit or resit) part of their degree with attendance, in line with the [University limitations on immigration sponsorship](#), the following principles will apply:

10.1 If attendance is required in both semesters, attendance monitoring will be as set out in Section 3 above.

10.2 If attendance is required in semester one only, they will attend for that period and their attendance will be monitored as set out in Section 3 above. Immigration sponsorship will be withdrawn at the end of the semester, the student will be required to leave the UK until the next academic year starts. The student will be required to reapply for a new visa for their return.

10.3 If attendance is required in semester two only, the student will be required to leave the UK for semester one as their sponsorship will be withdrawn. They will be required to reapply for a visa to return UK and study in semester two when their attendance will be monitored as set out in Section 3 above.

11. Reassessments: Postgraduate taught

Students might be required to retake an element of their course. If a postgraduate taught student is required to complete a reassessment without attendance in the summer assessment period they may or may not be working on their dissertation at the same time. Either way, there will still be a requirement for them to engage with activity in the virtual learning environment and this will be monitored.

For reassessments without attendance that will take place in the January immediately before their visa expiry, students can complete these assessments within the period of extant leave (remaining valid visa). The University will not monitor engagement of students in this situation as this will fall after the course end date on their CAS and they will be studying for the reassessment during a vacation period

For reassessments without attendance that will take place after the student's student visa expires, the student will be required to leave the UK and return on a visitor visa where assessments are in-person. The student will lose eligibility for the Graduate Immigration Route visa.

The University will not normally sponsor postgraduate taught students for reassessments in attendance in line with the [University limitations on immigration sponsorship](#).

12. Absence

12.1 For immigration compliance purposes at the University of Nottingham, absence is defined as both:

- absence from teaching/research activity while *in* the UK and;
- absence from the UK, e.g. delayed return to the UK from vacation.

12.2 The maximum period of permitted absence for student visa holders during term-time is **2 weeks**. This is 10 working days.

12.3 The only exceptions to 12.2 are:

- a) Where a PGT student in their dissertation/masters project period (defined in section 5 of this Code of Practice) has made a specific request, with no objection from their academic school or the Visa and Immigration team, and will continue to work on their dissertation during a limited period of absence (maximum 60 days) from outside the UK (see 12.8)
- b) Where a PGR student is making use of their annual leave allowance, in line with University regulations and in agreement with their Supervisor
- c) Where a PGR student is making use of the Studying Away regulations as detailed in section 13 of this Code of Practice.

12.4 As per 3.5 of this Code of Practice, studying in a manner which is akin to distance learning is prohibited on the student visa route and so the timeframes given above must be adhered to.

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

12.5 The student is responsible for their own academic engagement and for acknowledging and understanding the University expectation that they must attend all teaching activities necessary for their studies ([regulation 1.3](#))

12.6 The student is responsible for informing the University on the first day of absence about any absence up to 2 weeks maximum duration. No further action is required providing that the period of absence will not exceed 2 weeks.

12.7 Any student needing or desiring a longer absence than 2 weeks (and outside of the exceptions listed in 12.3) will be required to voluntarily interrupt their studies.

12.8 Students who are covered by 12.3 a) are responsible for requesting and gaining approval for any such absence via the MS Form and process detailed here: <https://forms.office.com/e/BtNJisT9Yn>. Students are advised via this process that absences of longer than 60 days require immigration sponsorship to be withdrawn.

Responsibilities of the academic school/department

12.9 The academic school/department is responsible for ensuring staff in their academic unit are familiar with the limitations on absence for student visa holders and that staff refer relevant students to this Code of Practice where the student expresses a desire or need to take an absence which exceeds 2 weeks.

12.10 Cases of students who fall into 12.7 of this Code of Practice which come to the attention of the academic school must be referred to the Visa and Immigration team.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

12.11 The Visa and Immigration team will moderate requests for term-time absence from student visa holders. Absence for the purposes of paid or unpaid work will not be approved.

12.12 The Visa and Immigration team will be required to withdraw immigration sponsorship for students who are seeking absence which falls outside the parameters of this Code of Practice.

13. Studying away from Campus (including data collection/field work) - PGR students only

Responsibilities of the student visa holder

13.1 The student is responsible for requesting permission to study away from Campus, in advance, where this occurs at any point during their studies (including the thesis pending period) and where the duration will exceed 4 weeks. Full details are provided in the University regulations which govern [postgraduate researchers studying away/in outside organisations](#).

Responsibilities of the PhD Supervisor

13.2 The PhD supervisor has responsibility for ensuring that the students they supervise are made aware of their requirement to request permission to study away from campus where applicable.

Responsibilities of the Visa and Immigration team

13.3 The Visa and Immigration team will moderate requests from PGR student visa holders who request to study away from campus

13.4 The Visa and Immigration team will be required to withdraw immigration sponsorship for students who are seeking permission for studying away which falls outside the University [limitations on immigration sponsorship](#).

14. Other resources

- [Quality Manual: Regulations governing attendance](#)
- [Limitations of immigration sponsorship \(UoN\)](#)
- [UKVI guidance for sponsors \(Home Office\)](#)