



MERIDIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK

MBS | MERIDIAN
BUSINESS
SCHOOL
THE GATEWAY TO AFFORDABLE EDUCATION

MERIDIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL HONOUR CODE

'I pledge to support the honour system of MBS. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community, it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the honour code.'

Welcome Message

We thank you for choosing to study with the Meridian Business School. We are committed to providing UK higher education at an affordable price. We offer internationally recognised qualifications awarded by Edexcel.

London is one of the most exciting cities in the world with a vibrant mix of people and cultures and you will find plenty to keep you occupied and entertained outside of your studies.

At MBS we offer a modern, fit for purpose study site and facilities with friendly staff helping you to realise your potential in a welcoming and supportive environment

We wish you all the very best and look forward to welcoming you to be part of the MBS community.

Introduction

The Meridian Business School is an independent college registered as a private company in England and Wales to offer further and higher education to domestic, European and international students.

Meridian Business School offers a gateway to affordable UK education to students from around the world through its programme of Business, English, Healthcare and I.T courses that are valuable qualifications in their own right and may be used to apply for entry with advanced standing to a range of University degree programmes, subject to meeting their specific entry requirements.

Student Handbook

MBS issues a Student Handbook to each student during their Induction. The purpose of the Handbook is to provide each student with all of the necessary information about our internal codes of conduct, safety standards and procedures, internal policies and procedures and rules and regulations. Relevant policies and procedures relating to specific awarding organisations will be published and made available via our portal and website.

Vision and Mission Statement:

Our Vision:

- To provide a " Gateway to affordable education"

Our Mission:

- To provide affordable further and higher education opportunities for international students in the United Kingdom.
- To work with university and awarding body partners to provide globally recognised UK educational qualifications which encourage our students to achieve their full potential

Core Values:

Our 'core values' express what, as an organisation, we stand for and how we conduct ourselves in the pursuit of our objectives. Our core values have been developed in consultation with our staff and students. The following statements embody these values:

- As an educational organisation, we place our students and their interests at the heart of everything we do;
- We encourage our students to develop as independent and critical thinkers, with a responsible approach towards themselves and society;
- We will foster an environment characterised by trust, open and honest communication and respect for the individual;

We approach all our dealings with our students, staff, other stakeholders and external agencies and organisations with integrity, honesty and the highest ethical standards

Principles that guide our approach to international students

An inclusive environment

We seek to provide an inclusive environment where the needs of international students are valued and considered and met alongside those of other students in an integrated and embedded way.

Student engagement

We seek to ensure that international students are represented in student engagement activities and that their feedback is taken into account in making enhancements to existing policies and practice.

Clear and accessible information

We seek to ensure that the information we provide at all stages of the student lifecycle, from marketing and recruitment through to support for learning and graduation, is accessible to international students. This includes information on the institution's regulations. Where technical terminology is unavoidable, clear explanation should be provided.

Shared responsibility

We seek to take responsibility for meeting the needs of a diverse student body by ensuring that all of our staff are fully engaged with and committed to the task of meeting those needs.

Staff development

We seek to ensure that all of our staff working with international students have access to appropriate training and development opportunities, which support them in recognising and addressing the particular needs of international students.

Facilities:

Classrooms: The classrooms are centrally air-conditioned and equipped with modern fit for purpose furniture, digital projectors, screens and white boards

IT Facilities: There is an IT lab with a total of 50 high spec computers with internet connection and designated software recommended by our partner awarding bodies. There is access to printing and copying facilities in the Reception Area. Students may also access the WI-FI network throughout the study site using their own laptops, netbooks and tablets.

Intranet System/SAMS: We are developing an intranet community website for our students, staff and stake holders enabling them to access information from the Operations Team and our Academic staff as well as news updates and details about extra-curricular activities. Students are encouraged to use the intranet and our dedicated SAMS system to communicate with the Operations Team and to request specific support letters and permissions.

Webmail: All new students are assigned with a dedicated webmail id which they can use for all internal communication throughout the duration of their studies. Students can interact with their Module Tutors, members of the Operations Team and their fellow students and gain access to personal web space for document and course work storage.

Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle System): An internal VLE system is currently being developed and students will have access to learning materials, presentations, course updates, the academic planner, various feedback forms and reports and results once it is fully developed and operational.

Library: The College has a Library containing 800 text books. We operate a one week loan facility for all the books in our library. Students who are registered on degree level courses have access to our university partner's E-Libraries and VLE. We recommend that all our students register with appropriate professional bodies and subscribe to their services in order to enhance their learning opportunities

Additional support: The College endeavours to extend as much support as possible to our students and the Academic Board and other committees take full account of student feedback and requests and is tasked to respond in a sympathetic and timely manner.

- ❖ Additional tutorial support, revision sessions and repeated classes on request
- ❖ Extended hours of use in the Learning Centre and IT Labs
- ❖ Soft skills tutoring and mentoring
- ❖ Study Materials/Handouts
- ❖ Class and Student Representatives take part in the decision making process of the College through their participation in the MBS Committee system

Extra-Curricular Activities & Sports: The staff and student body organise a number of extra-curricular activities such as student quizzes, "MBS/MBS Got Talent" Shows and other social events. The College does not have any sports facilities on campus, although we have recently formed a cricket team which plays throughout London. The study site is conveniently located and has access to a number of entertainment facilities including a gym.

Student Common Room/Breakout Area: Students have a designated breakout area where they can refresh and relax during study breaks.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

Information and resources aimed at students

The British Council

Education UK website - information, advice and guidance aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.educationuk.org/

Comfort zone - a guide aimed at international students coming to the UK: www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/comfortzone

UKCISA

Information sheets for international students on aspects of life and study in the UK: www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php

UKCISA/PMI2

Prepare for Success - an online resource comprising learning activities designed to enable international students to prepare for their studies in the UK: www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/

The International Student Calculator - an online student lifestyle calculator designed to help international students to plan and manage their finances for study in the UK: www.studentcalculator.org.uk/international/

Course Deferral

MBS does not allow Course Deferral unless there are strong compassionate grounds which may be considered by the Director of Studies whose decision will be final and not subject to any appeal.

Change of Course

MBS will consider all reasonable requests by students to change their chosen course of study PROVIDED that the request is made before or at any time within the first four (4) weeks following the Course Start Date. Any decision is entirely at the discretion of the Director of Studies; is not subject to any appeal and is subject to the following conditions:

-

- The new course must be at the equivalent or higher QCF level
- The student must meet the new course entry requirements
- The student must pay any additional fee due in respect of the new course
- If the new course is charged at a lower fee no refund will be made by MBS.

Attendance and Reporting Requirements Policy

MBS is licensed by the Home Office United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to recruit students from abroad under TIER 4 of the Points Based System. UKVI requires international students in further education to attend at least 15 hours of “expected contacts” per week. Regular and consistent attendance is fundamental to academic success and the achievement of learning goals. All students must comply with current Immigration Rules and Guidance issued from time to time by UKVI.

Our Reporting Duties as a TIER 4 Sponsor

All sponsors must report the following information to UKVI: -

- If a student does not enrol on her/his course within 10 days of the date of enrolment we must tell UKVI within 10 working days
- If a student misses 10 “consecutive expected contacts” on their course of study without our reasonably granted permission, we must tell UKVI within 10 working days of the 10th missed contact.
- If a student stops their studies we must tell UKVI within 10 working days and give them the name and address of any new Education Provider.
- If we stop sponsoring a student for any other reason (for example, if the student moves into an immigration category with a different sponsor or one that does not need a sponsor, or their permission to stay in the United Kingdom ends because their course of study ends) we must tell UKVI within 10 working days.
- If there are any significant changes in a student’s circumstances - for example a change in the length of their course of study or a change of study location - we must tell UKVI within 10 working days.
- If we have any information which suggests that a student is breaching the conditions of their leave, we must tell UKVI within 10 working days.

According to UKVI Guidance “expected contact” includes: -

- attendance at any lesson, lecture, tutorial or seminar;
- attendance at any test, examination or assessment board;
- submission of assessed or un-assessed coursework;
- submission of “interim” dissertation/coursework/reports;
- attendance at any meeting with a supervisor or personal tutor;
- attendance at any “research method” or “research panel” meetings or “writing up” seminars
- registration (matriculation/enrolment);
- attendance at an appointment with a welfare/student advisor;

Authorised Absence

Students will not usually be given permission for extended leave of absence during term time. Students who take extended leave of absence without permission may be treated as having abandoned their course of study and reported to UKVI.

Students who leave the United Kingdom during their student visa risk being stopped by an Immigration Officer on re-entry to the United Kingdom. Enquiries may be made about the student’s attendance record. MBS are obliged to give accurate information about attendance to UKVI/UK Immigration Service. Students with poor attendance records may be refused re-entry to the United Kingdom.

MBS may at its discretion classify a missed attendance as “authorised” because of compassionate reasons, ill health or pregnancy –

Absence due to Compassionate Grounds

- Students may be granted leave on compassionate grounds at the discretion of the Director of Studies / Operations Manager depending on the individual circumstances.

Absence due to Ill Health

Students are advised to speak to a member of the Operations Team if they have any concerns about health or general well being.

If a student is going to be absent from a lecture or other appointment s/he MUST telephone MBS on 020 7403 2318 between 9.30am and 10.30 am and give the reason for absence.

Students who have been absent through illness for less than seven (7) must complete a Self Certificate Form when returning to College. Students who do not will be marked as absent. Persistent use of Self Certification without due cause can lead to disciplinary action involving suspension and dismissal from the College. Students who are absent with sickness for more than seven (7) days must get a letter ("MED 3") from their General Practitioner (GP) confirming illness. Students who do not will be marked as absent.

Absence due to Pregnancy

- UKVI Guidelines allows us to give leave of absence to students who are pregnant.
- If a student obtains confirmation from her GP or Hospital that she cannot attend college on medical grounds due to pregnancy/maternity we will treat the absence as being on health grounds.
- Leave to remain as a student will not automatically be extended because of pregnancy. If a student takes extended leave of absence because of pregnancy and her visa expires she can apply for an extension. UKVI will make a decision whether to extend the visa taking into account all of the usual considerations - attendance rate; examination/dissertation pass rate etc and also whether there is any medical evidence to support/justify the amount of time taken off.
- We are happy for students to continue to study whilst they are pregnant and after they have had their baby. However the student should make suitable child care arrangements so that she can continue to attend college for lectures and to take exams.

Consequences of taking extended leave

After any period of authorized absence MBS must judge whether a student will be able to pick up their studies again without having to repeat a previous period of study. Where a repeat of study is deemed to be necessary this is likely to be regarded by UKVI as a decision to "defer the course of study". MBS is required to report to UKVI any deferment of study with the likely result that the student's leave will be curtailed and the student will be required to return home and seek further leave in order to return to the UK to continue their studies.

Objectives of our Attendance Policy:

- To keep accurate records and use this data to maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality
- To encourage and assist all students to achieve the best possible levels of attendance and punctuality. (students who apply to extend their visa must demonstrate high levels of attendance and progression with their studies)
- To identify the rights, responsibilities and expectations of members of the MBS community regarding student attendance.
- To outline and explain our position regarding student attendance.
- To outline and explain MBS procedures for monitoring attendance.
- To outline and explain MBS procedures for dealing with unacceptable patterns of attendance.

- To minimize unauthorized absence by students
- To ensure the efficient operation of appropriate systems to enhance attendance and punctuality by students
- To provide guidance to students and to operational and academic staff of MBS
- **Attendance at lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, supervised study and examinations is required. Research shows that failure to attend classes can impair students' academic performance. Irregular attendance by a student can also seriously disrupt the work rhythm of other students in a group.**

Records of Attendance

MBS maintains records of individual student attendance in order to comply with its reporting requirement as a TIER 4 sponsor.

Warning Emails

MBS will monitor records of student attendance and send a reminder email to those students who miss consecutive expected contacts. A further warning email will be sent if a student continues to miss consecutive expected contacts. Students who miss ten consecutive expected contacts will be reported to UKVI. MBS seeks to encourage the best possible attendance by students. Students who miss expected contacts will be invited to attend an "Attendance Awareness Meeting" with a member of the Operations Team to discuss the reasons for the poor attendance and to discuss ways of improving performance in the future. Students who persistently fail to attend expected contacts will also be invited to attend an Admin Meeting at which they will have to explain their poor performance to their Module Tutors and the Compliance Officer.

Student Rights

MBS shall be open to all students who qualify under its admission criteria, regardless of race, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or gender. All students have equal right of access to the facilities and services of MBS, in accordance with the college policies.

Students have the right to ask questions and express their opinions without affecting their academic evaluations, as long as such does not interfere with the normal operations of their classes or infringe upon the rights of other students in their classes.

Academic staff at MBS will evaluate students' performances without prejudice.

A student has the right to a hearing within the established college procedures in all matters that can result in the imposition of sanctions for misconduct. However, MBS reserves the right to take such actions that reasonably ensure safety and security, including removing and/or suspending a student from the college pending final determination of any action.

In accordance with the college policy for all courses, a syllabus must be distributed in written form beginning on the first week of classes.

Students have the right of reasonable access to college administrators and academic staff during specified office hours. Students may deposit in writing any communication to their Module Tutor at the reception area.

Student Responsibilities

As a student, you have many rights in this College given to you through statutes, educational codes and college policies. You also have many responsibilities to yourself as

a student and to the College. Knowing your rights and responsibilities through an understanding of some of the important rules and policies will help ensure that your college experience will be a successful one.

Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure Policy

1. Purpose and scope

STUDENT CONDUCT

Students must maintain an appropriate standard of conduct. They must obey the general law and College Regulations, demonstrate respect for all persons on the study site and display mature conduct. MBS will maintain an environment conducive to teaching and learning and will treat students with consideration and respect.

Members of the teaching and administrative staff all share the responsibility for dealing with minor misconduct by students. The Director has the authority to respond to more serious breaches of conduct. The power to suspend or expel a student from MBS resides entirely with the Director.

Failure by students to maintain appropriate standards of conduct may result in the initiation of disciplinary action by MBS. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, students may be subject to disciplinary action in the event of: -

- Conduct disruptive to the teaching and learning process
- Failure to comply with the reasonable directions of MBS staff or faculty
- Failure to meet basic attendance requirements as stipulated for continuation in courses and programs.
- Falsification of any document or the supplying of false information to MBS
- Theft
- Unauthorized entry to College premises.
- Physical abuse or threats of violence, disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace
- Sexual harassment or racial abuse.
- Behaviour that significantly interferes with the College operations
- Behaviour that may endanger the health or safety of staff or students of MBS.
- Damage to or misuse of College property
- Plagiarism or cheating
- Use of mobile phone during the class duration.
- Access to inappropriate websites.
- Causing damage to college machinery, equipment, computers, books or other property.

This procedure is designed to help and encourage all students to achieve and maintain appropriate standards of conduct, attendance and performance. The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for everyone in our community. This policy should be read in conjunction with MBS's policy on **Attendance and Reporting Requirements** which covers MBS's statutory duties as a TIER 4 Sponsor of international students to record student attendance at "expected contacts" and report absences as required to the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

2. Principles

- Counselling will be offered to students, where appropriate, to resolve problems.
- No disciplinary action will be taken against a student until the case has been fully investigated.

- At every stage in the procedure the student will be advised of the nature of the complaint against him or her and will be given the opportunity to state his or her case before any decision is made.
- At all stages of the procedure the student will have the right to be accompanied by a student representative or fellow student.
- No student will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct.
- A student will have the right to appeal against any discipline imposed.
- The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the student's alleged misconduct warrants such action.

3. The Procedure

Stage 1 - improvement note: unsatisfactory performance

If a student's performance does not meet acceptable standards the student will normally be given an **improvement note**. This will set out the performance problem, the improvement that is required, the timescale and any help that may be given. The student will be advised that it constitutes the first stage of the formal procedure. A record of the improvement note will be kept for 12 months, but will then be considered spent - subject to achievement and sustainment of satisfactory performance.

Stage 1 - first warning: misconduct

If a student's conduct does not meet acceptable standards then s/he will normally be given a **written warning**. This will set out the nature of the misconduct and the change in behaviour required. The warning will inform the student that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change. A record of the warning will be kept for a period of 12 months but will then be considered spent - subject to achievement and sustainment of satisfactory conduct.

Stage 2: final written warning

If the offence is sufficiently serious or there is a failure to improve during the currency of a prior warning for the same type of offence, a **final written warning** may be given to the student. This will give details of the complaint, the improvement required and the timescale. It will also warn that failure to improve may lead to action under Stage 3 (dismissal from the college or some other action short of dismissal), and will confirm the right of appeal. A copy of this written warning will be kept by MBS but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 12 months - subject to achievement and sustainment of satisfactory conduct or performance.

Stage 3 - dismissal or other sanction

If there is still a failure to improve the final step in the procedure may be **dismissal** or some other action short of dismissal such as disciplinary suspension. Dismissal decisions can only be taken by the Director or the Director of Studies and the student will be provided, as soon as reasonably practicable, with written reasons for dismissal, the date on which the enrolment with the college will terminate and confirmation of the right to appeal.

If some sanction short of dismissal is imposed, the student will receive details of the complaint, will be warned that dismissal could result if there is no satisfactory improvement, and will be advised of the right of appeal. A copy of the written warning will be kept by MBS but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 12 months subject to achievement and sustainment of satisfactory conduct or performance.

4. Gross misconduct

The following list – which is not exclusive - provides examples of offences which are normally regarded as gross misconduct:

- theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of records;
- fighting, assault on another person;
- deliberate damage to MBS property;
- serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drug;
- serious negligence which causes unacceptable loss, damage or injury;
- serious act of insubordination;
- unauthorised entry to MBS computer or other confidential records;

If a student is accused of an act of gross misconduct s/he will be suspended for 10 days while the alleged offence is investigated. If, on completion of the investigation, MBS is satisfied that gross misconduct has occurred the student may be summarily dismissed from the college and removed from the roll of students following which MBS will notify UKVI within ten working days.

5. Appeals

- A student who wishes to appeal against a disciplinary decision must notify the Operations Manager or the Director of Studies in writing within 10 days.
- The student will be notified in writing of the date of the appeal hearing within a further 10 days.
- The Director or his duly appointed representative will hear the appeal.
- At the hearing any disciplinary penalty imposed will be reviewed by the Director and the student and/or his or her student representative or fellow student may make further representations.
- The decision of the Director will be notified to the student in writing and is final.

Student Complaints and Grievance Policy

1. Purpose of the procedure

MBS's aim is to ensure that students with a grievance relating to their stay with us can use a procedure which can help to resolve grievances as quickly and as fairly as possible. Academic grievances are dealt with by the specific grievance procedures adopted by our awarding bodies, details of which are available on their website and copies of which are contained in each student's Course Handbook.

2. Informal discussions

If a student has a grievance s/he should discuss it informally with the person responsible for the decision from which the grievance arises. We hope that the majority of concerns can be resolved in this way

3. Stage 1 – statement of grievance

If a student feels that the matter has not been resolved through informal discussion s/he should put the grievance in writing setting out

- A chronological account of the circumstances giving rise to the grievance

- The remedy being sought
- Copies of any relevant documents
- Statements from other people that relate to the grievance

Stage 2 – the grievance meeting

- Within 10 working days the Operations Manager or his duly appointed representative will respond in writing to the statement of grievance, notifying the student of the date of a meeting where the grievance can be discussed and at which the student will have the right to be accompanied by a student representative or fellow student.
- After hearing the grievance the Operations Manager or his duly appointed representative will notify the student in writing of his/her decision and the reason for it and confirm the right of appeal to the Director

Stage 3 – the appeal

- The student may appeal against the decision of the Operations Manager by sending written grounds of appeal to the Director within 10 working days of receipt of the decision.
- The student will be notified in writing of the date of the appeal hearing within a further 10 days. The Director or his duly appointed representative will hear the appeal.
- At the hearing the grievance will be reviewed by the Director or his duly appointed representative and the student and/or his or her student representative or fellow student may make further representations.
- The decision of the Director will be notified to the student in writing and is final and not subject to any further appeal.

Alcohol and Drugs Policy

No Student shall:

Attend College if under the influence of alcohol or drugs
 Consume any alcohol or drugs while on MBS's premises

Policy on Smoking

MBS recognizes the need to provide a healthy and safe working environment for staff, students and visitors. It also recognizes the strong medical evidence of a link between the smoking of tobacco, either directly or passively, and the serious risk of harm to health, and that the majority of staff and students want to work in a smoke-free environment.

The right to work in a smoke-free environment is supported by statutory duties under the Health and Safety to Work etc Act 1974 and, more specifically, under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. (These legal obligations only apply to workplaces and not to residential areas). In legal terms the producer of a hazard has an obligation to prevent others being exposed to that hazard. Therefore it is the obligation of smokers to prevent others from being exposed to environmental tobacco smoke.

In order to promote the health and safety of all members, the College will endeavor to ensure that all its premises are free from tobacco smoke. To this end, the smoking of tobacco will not be permitted in any College premises.

Safety Standards

Students enrolled at MBS will have an induction programme, which will include information about fire, health and safety policies on the first day of class.

Personal Property

MBS is not responsible or liable for the loss, theft, breakage, etc. of personal equipment, supplies, etc.

Mobile Phones

To avoid distracting other people or disrupting a class, mobile phones and personal alarms must be switched off during all classes and assessments.

MBS acknowledges the needs of some of its users to have mobile phones accessible while in the College. Thus, 'mobile tolerant zones' were introduced, and these areas exclude the labs and lecture rooms, where mobiles should be switched off at all times. In the mobile tolerant areas we require users to be sensitive to the needs of other users by:

- Using silent text messages
- Using the vibrating option on the phone
- Avoiding the use of ringing and key press tones
- Keeping all speech and telephone sound to a minimum

Changes in Circumstances

UKVI regulations require all students to notify the College of all relevant changes in their circumstances. This means that all students must notify the College as soon as possible of any

- Change of Address
- Change of email address
- Change of mobile telephone number
- Change of home telephone number
- You may do this in writing using a Change of Contact Details Form

All students are issued with a dedicated MBS community email address so that we can send you information about grade statements, examination results, registration materials and the collection of Award Certificates. You should use this email to make all communications with the College.

The College may carry out verification checks of your contact details from time to time and you must respond to such letters or emails with confirmation of your current contact details.

Support Letters

Students can request support letters from the Operations staff after Enrolment. Academic letters may include bank letters; council tax exemption letters; spouse or dependent letter; travel discount forms and permitted absence letters.

Zero Tolerance of abuse of staff

MBS adopts a zero tolerance policy regarding abuse of their staff. Students and visitors must behave with courtesy and respect towards all tutors and other members of staff and breach of this policy can lead to suspension and removal from MBS. Members of staff are instructed to deal with all requests for assistance from students expeditiously and with respect and courtesy and our staff has the right to expect the same in return.

Zero Tolerance of abuse of MBS property

MBS adopts a zero tolerance policy regarding abuse of MBS resources and damage to MBS property including unauthorised removal of books and learning resource materials and misuse of computers and internet and intranet facilities and breaches of this policy can lead to suspension and removal from MBS.