

## Section 5 Suspension of study policy for taught degrees

### 5.1 Overview and criteria

- 5.1.1 This policy and procedure apply to undergraduate, graduate, taught postgraduate students, and postgraduate research students in the taught stage of their studies. The procedure for suspension for research students in any research stage is set out in the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#).
- 5.1.2 The University understands that there are some situations where it may be appropriate for a student to suspend their studies allowing a student to take an authorised break in their studies for a specified period. This decision requires approval and is normally given on the following grounds:
- Medical.
  - Compelling personal reasons.
  - Academic reasons.
  - Compelling financial reasons.
  - Pregnancy, maternity, and parental leave – for suspensions on these grounds also refer to [section 6](#).
- 5.1.3 Evidence is not normally required if the student's suspension does not recommend repeat teaching and/or module results to be set aside (voided). However, a personal statement must be provided to explain the reasons for suspension.
- 5.1.4 Evidence is required for applications to suspend studies that recommend repeat teaching, repeat placements and/or for module results to be set aside.
- a) Evidence includes, but is not limited to: a doctor's note, hospital letter or other qualified health practitioner's letter; a formal letter of explanation and statement from the student's academic tutor or Course Lead; bank statement/letter; supporting statement from the Disability Support and Inclusion team; funding body correspondence.
  - b) Evidence should relate to the reason selected for the suspension request.
  - c) Supporting evidence should be provided in English. Where the original document is in another language, the student must provide both the original document and a translation into English. Normally this need not be a professional translation – students may provide their own translation. Students can expect the University to check the accuracy of their translation. Student Visa holders must supply a professional translation of their evidence as this will be required for visa purposes.
  - d) Applications may be referred to the Special Cases Panel where evidence is required but has not been provided.
- 5.1.5 Students should bear in mind that if they do suspend their studies, the programme to which they return may be different in some respects from their original programme. The University may make changes arising from academic review, staff changes, external requirements, or resource constraints (refer to [section 2.1.10](#)). A programme will not normally be withdrawn at this point, but if it is necessary to do so, the University will make reasonable effort to help students to join a suitable alternative programme.

## 5.2 Temporary authorised absence

- 5.2.1 If a student needs a short period of absence from their studies of **less than 4 weeks** during term-time, the Associate Head/Dean of School may be able to authorise this. The student and their Associate Head/Dean of School must agree that the absence will not have any significant impact upon their studies. Students are advised to discuss arrangements relating to teaching sessions and other commitments. Students should refer to the 'Exceptional Circumstances Policy' (refer to [section 13](#)) regarding their eligibility for applying for extensions for assessments. Typical reasons for authorised absence include short periods of illness and personal difficulties. For further information relating to short periods of maternity/paternity leave refer to [section 6](#).
- 5.2.2 Students who are sponsored by the University under the Student Visa Route must be aware of and always adhere to the requirements of their visa and UK immigration rules during their studies. Student Visa holders who need a short period of absence from their studies of **more than 3 days** during term-time must follow the relevant procedure and complete a term-time absence request form. The relevant Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS) team email should be contacted about such absences.

## 5.3 Timing and duration

- 5.3.1 The normal period of suspension of studies is **1 year** in the first instance; and is **limited to a maximum of 2 years** over the programme. In exceptional cases, where the programme structure permits, a suspension may be granted for a shorter period.
- 5.3.2 Including all periods of suspension (and programme extensions), students must still complete all study and assessments within **24 months** following the standard period of study for their programme (see [General Regulation 1.15](#)). For further information on parental leave refer to [section 6](#).
- 5.3.3 Where a suspension of studies is for 1 year, the expectation is that the student will return to their programme at the same point in the next academic year.
- 5.3.4 Students will not normally be allowed to repeat periods of study longer than half of a module's teaching, except in exceptional circumstances with approval by the Special Cases Panel.
- 5.3.5 Where possible, students should apply to suspend their studies before the proposed absence start date. Where this is unavoidable suspension of study applications should normally be made no more than 1 month after their last date of engagement. Applications that are entirely retrospective will not normally be considered.
- 5.3.6 Students cannot suspend their studies if they have completed all the teaching for the final year of studies. Students who have been unable to complete their programme's final assessments in the normal timescale due to exceptional circumstances may apply for a programme extension (refer to [section 14](#)). Examples where a suspension of studies is not permitted, and a programme extension should be applied for if extra time is required include:
- Students completing reassessments for their final assessments where they need an extension to the resit deadline.
  - Postgraduate students within 6 weeks of their expected end date.
  - Students whose expected end date has passed.

## 5.4 Suspension of studies by the University

- 5.4.1 Under certain circumstances, the University may require a student to suspend their studies.
- Enforced suspension** – The relevant rules are set out regarding enforced suspension in the 'Support to Study' procedure (refer to [section 19](#)), the 'Fitness to Study' procedure (refer to [section 21](#)) and the [Discipline Procedure](#).
  - External resit** – where a student is required to resit assessments externally prior to being eligible for progression; students in this position are not eligible to attend classes and will simply resubmit assignments and/or resit examinations. Students who are externally re-sitting are not formally suspended and have more access to university facilities as detailed in [section 5.8](#) below.
  - Suspension prior to change of programme and/or programme restart** – where approval has been granted for a student to transfer from one programme to another or restart a programme at a time other than the end of the academic year. A student in Level 3 or Level 4 who suspends (either voluntarily or through enforced suspension), will be considered as 'restarting' their programme if they need to repeat substantial teaching and assessment, considered to be at least half the teaching, normally defined as a last attendance date in or after week 7 of the first semester. These timeline examples apply even if the student was not in attendance or is to return

to another programme following a transfer. A student may only restart a programme once (refer to [section 31.10](#)).

A suspension with a recommendation to restart the programme at either Level 3 or Level 4, where more than 60 credits have been failed after reassessment, will be referred to the Special Cases Panel.

- If the student is re-joining the programme at the point where the suspension occurred, repeat teaching and assessment is usually not necessary and so this is not considered a programme restart (for example, suspending in January and re-joining the following January).
- If the suspension occurs early in the first semester (defined as before week 7), it will not involve substantial repeat teaching and so this is not considered a programme restart (for example, suspending in early November and returning the following September).
- If the suspension occurred in or after week 7 of the student's first semester, it would involve substantial repeat teaching and it will be considered a programme restart (for example, suspension started in January and returning the following September).

## 5.5 End date

- 5.5.1 When a voluntary suspension of studies is applied for by a student the end date used is considered as the last date the student:
- attended a teaching session; **or**
  - attended an examination / timed assessment; **or**
  - submitted an assessment (excluding resits)
- 5.5.2 The date of a meeting with the School, for example, a Support to Study meeting, is not used for end date for voluntary suspensions.
- 5.5.3 When an enforced suspension of studies is processed the student's end date is recorded as detailed in [section 5.5.1](#) above.
- 5.5.4 End dates will be checked for accuracy by the School and Student Records team in Registry.

## 5.6 Fees and finances

- 5.6.1 Before requesting a suspension of studies, it is important that the student understands the financial implications that this may have. For more information, please refer to our [Financial Implication Factsheets](#) for Suspension of Studies for full time study and part time study.

## 5.7 International student on a Student Visa

- 5.7.1 If an international student on a Student Visa suspends their studies their visa status in the UK may be affected. Suspensions of up to 60 days can be taken without reporting to the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) if there is documented evidence in place and the School and Registry panel approve the short suspension. The University will report longer suspensions of studies (above **60 days**) to the UKVI and the student will be required to leave the UK as their Student Visa will then be curtailed. For more advice on immigration issues please contact the Visa and Compliance team by submitting a case via the [Student Hub](#).

## 5.8 Access to University facilities

- 5.8.1 Students will still have access to some university IT systems and email, but will not have access to physical library facilities, during their period of suspension from the University. Access to other university support is not normally required and will therefore be restricted.
- 5.8.2 Under certain circumstances students on suspension may have their IT accounts frozen or access to certain systems may be withdrawn with authorisation from the University Secretary and Registrar, Academic Registrar or Head of Registry.
- 5.8.3 Students are not normally expected to study, attend any teaching, or submit assessments during their suspension of studies. The exceptions are:
- Students who are externally re-sitting an assessment(s) – under these circumstances, students shall be required to submit summative work and/or attend examinations; students may seek guidance from tutors in relation to their reassessments but not attend further teaching sessions.
  - Students who are required to complete an assessment(s) immediately after their return from suspension may seek guidance from tutors in relation to their assessment(s) in the weeks preceding their return from suspension.
- 5.8.4 During a suspension of studies, students may find it helpful to stay in contact with an appropriate person in their School such as their Programme/Course Lead and/or Academic Tutor. This is not compulsory, but it can offer a good point of contact upon their return. It is the student's responsibility to initiate and maintain this contact.
- 5.8.5 Summary of access to facilities while studies are suspended:

Access to	Entitlement	Notes
Teaching	No	
Study advice / supervision	No (except in exceptional circumstances)	Exceptional circumstances include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externally resitting students.</li> <li>• The period of time immediately prior to return where a student has an assessment immediately after return.</li> </ul>
Email	Yes	Students are reminded to check their university email account regularly while their studies are suspended.
e:Vision	Yes	
Library (online and physical resources)	No (physical resources – except in exceptional circumstances) Yes (online)	Exceptional circumstances include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externally resitting students.</li> <li>• The period of time immediately prior to return where a student has an assessment immediately after return.</li> </ul>
Moodle	No (except in exceptional circumstances)	Exceptional circumstances include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externally resitting students.</li> <li>• The period of time immediately prior to return where a student has an assessment immediately after return.</li> </ul>
Disability support	No (except in exceptional circumstances)	Exceptional circumstances include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where this support is a condition of suspension.</li> <li>• Where this support is required to facilitate return to study.</li> <li>• Where a student was registered with the Disability Support and Inclusion team before suspending.</li> </ul>
Wellbeing support	No (except in exceptional circumstances)	Exceptional circumstances include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where this support is a condition of suspension.</li> <li>• Where this support is required to facilitate return to study.</li> </ul>
Students' Union services	Yes	

## 5.9 How to apply

- 5.9.1 If a student feels that they need to suspend their studies, they should first discuss the matter with their Associate Head/Dean of School and/or Academic Tutor. Students may also find it useful to discuss the matter with Student Wellbeing, Disability and Inclusion. The Students' Union Advice Service can be approached to discuss the process and implications of suspension where students may not yet be ready to approach university staff. There are financial consequences to suspending studies, which students must discuss with the Student Funding Advice team before making the decision to take time out.
- 5.9.2 Visa holding international students must contact the Visa and Compliance team by submitting a case via the [Student Hub](#) before applying to discuss the implications of suspending their studies.
- 5.9.3 Following these discussions, if the student decides that suspending their studies is the best option for their circumstances, they should complete the 'Suspension of Studies Application' online form in e:Vision and gather their supporting evidence (where required).
- 5.9.4 Completed forms, together with supporting evidence (if required), must be submitted online via a student's e:Vision account for authorisation. If students leave their studies without doing this, they may not be re-admitted to the University when they wish to return.
- 5.9.5 The student's Associate Head/Dean of School, or their representative, will need to authorise the 'Suspension of Studies' online form to support the student's request. The Associate Head/Dean of School, or their representative, will add a supporting statement to the form, confirm the student's last date of attendance/engagement and, where appropriate, provide recommendations regarding repeat teaching and/or repeat assessment. A decision will be taken by a Registry panel on behalf of the Academic Registrar.
- If the School has recommended that existing marks or non-submissions are set aside (voided), for assessments that were due prior to the suspension start date, then the application will be referred to the Special Cases Panel, or a Registry panel acting on behalf of the Committee, for consideration.
  - If the School has recommended that more than 1 semester is repeated then the application will be referred to the Special Cases Panel, or a Registry panel acting on behalf of the Committee, for consideration.
  - If the School has recommended a Level 3 or Level 4 programme restart and the student is eligible then the application would normally not require Special Cases Panel approval and can be recommended as part of the suspension of studies.
- 5.9.6 Where evidence is required – if there is no evidence or insufficient evidence attached and this is not provided in response to a request, the suspension of studies will be considered based on the documents provided. In some cases, this may mean requests for repeat teaching, or the voiding of marks are declined.
- 5.9.7 Students who are applying for a continuation of a current suspension of studies must include recent up to date evidence (if this is required under the policy) and/or a personal statement to support their new suspension of studies request. Refer to **section 5.1.3** for further guidance.
- 5.9.8 Any details and evidence supplied are treated in confidence and are for the purpose of giving enough information to consider the request. Evidence and specific details of the grounds for the suspension will not be disclosed to the funding body, although the University notification to funding bodies will include the general grounds, for example, medical/personal/academic/financial.
- 5.9.9 If the request to suspend studies is successful the student will be notified by email, which will confirm the dates of their suspension of studies, any conditions of resumption, arrangements and dates for outstanding assessments/reassessments and their new programme end date. Registry will communicate with the student's funding body.

## 5.10 Returning from suspension

- 5.10.1 The Student Records team in Registry will contact students by email approximately **4 weeks** prior to their expected return to university to check their intentions, ensure they can meet any conditions of return and to set re-enrolment processes in place. For teacher training programmes this is extended to 8 weeks to allow the returning student sufficient time to make a re-application for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- 5.10.2 Students on programmes that need to comply with safeguarding measures may be required to make a new application to the DBS if they have been absent from their studies for a period of 6 months or more.
- 5.10.3 In the case of a suspension of studies on health grounds students may be asked to attend a Return to Study case review meeting to determine if they are fit to return to their studies (refer to [section 21.4.18](#) of the Fitness to Study Policy).
- 5.10.4 International students on a Student Visa will be required to apply for a new visa before their return to studies following a suspension of more than 60 days. For more advice on immigration issues please contact the Visa and Compliance team by submitting a case via the [Student Hub](#).
- 5.10.5 Prior to return students are advised to contact their Programme/Course Lead and/or Academic Tutor about how they should prepare for returning to their programme and to discuss any potential support arrangements.
- 5.10.6 When returning students are advised to familiarise themselves with:
- Re-enrolment.
  - Assessment submission dates and/or examination dates.
  - Access to Moodle.
  - Module choices.
  - Access to their teaching timetable.
  - Accessing support from the Disability Support and Inclusion team, where appropriate.
  - Accessing other available support services – Student Wellbeing, Disability and Inclusion team, Student Funding Advice team, Academic Liaison Librarian, the Study Development team, the London Learning and Wellness team.
- 5.10.7 Students who do not reply to the University email by their expected return date will be assumed not to be intending on returning to their programme. Such students will be withdrawn from their studies at the University. They will normally be withdrawn from their programme (enforced withdrawal) with effect from their last date of attendance/engagement. If the student is eligible for a lower exit award at this point arrangements will be made for this to be ratified at the following School Assessment Board.
- 5.10.8 Students who are unable to return from their current suspension of studies may be able to request a further suspension by submitting another online application with new up to date evidence. Refer to [section 5.3](#) regarding the maximum periods of suspension available to students.

## 5.11 Repeating assessments

- 5.11.1 Students given permission to repeat assessments should note that they may use their previously submitted work for their own learning and reference, in the same way they would use third-party information, but students may not rework and/or resubmit their previous work for assessment when repeating a module or if the original assessment has been set aside (voided) as part of the suspension. This would be treated as academic misconduct and considered as self-plagiarism (refer to [section 27](#)).