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Section 7 Suspension of study policy for taught degrees

7.1 Overview and criteria

- 7.1.1 This policy and procedure apply to undergraduate, graduate and taught postgraduate students. The procedure for suspension for research students is set out in the 'Code of Practice for Research Degrees' (<https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/research/research-degrees/>).
- 7.1.2 The University understands that there are some situations where it may be appropriate for a student to suspend their studies. A suspension of study allows a student to take an authorised break in their studies for a specified period of time. This decision requires the approval of a Registry Panel on behalf of the Academic Registrar and is normally given on the following grounds:
- Medical
 - Compelling personal reasons
 - Academic reasons
 - Compelling financial reasons
 - Pregnancy, maternity and parental leave
- 7.1.3 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.
- 7.1.4 Applications to suspend studies that recommend repeat teaching and/or for module results to be set aside **must** be submitted with relevant supporting evidence.
- 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 tutor; bank statement/letter; supporting statement from the Disability Advice Team; Funding body correspondence.
 - b) 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. International students who require Student Visas must supply a professional translation of their evidence as this will be required for visa purposes.
- 7.1.5 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 (see **section 2.3.2**). 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 provide a suitable alternative programme to or help students to apply to an alternative programme at another institution.

7.2 Temporary authorised absence

- 7.2.1 If a student needs a short period of absence from their studies of **less than four weeks** during term-time, the Associate Head may be able to authorise this. The student and their Associate Head 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' (see **section 16**) regarding their eligibility for applying for extensions for assessments. Typical reasons for authorised absence include short periods of illness and personal difficulties.
- 7.2.2 Students who are sponsored by the University under the Student Visa Route must be aware of and adhere to the requirements of their visa and UK immigration rules at all times during their studies. Student Visa holders who need a short period of absence from their studies of **more than three days** during term-time must follow the relevant procedure and complete a term time absence request form. The relevant School admin email should be contacted with regard to such absences.

7.3 Timing and duration

- 7.3.1 The normal period of suspension of studies is **one year** in the first instance; and is **limited to a maximum of two years** over the programme. In exceptional cases, where the programme structure permits, sometimes a suspension may be granted for a shorter period.
- 7.3.2 Including all periods of suspension, students must still complete all study and assessments within **24 months** following the standard period of study for their programme (see **General Regulation 1.10**).
- <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/>
- 7.3.3 Where a suspension of studies is for one year, the expectation is that the student will return to their programme at the same point in the next academic year.
- 7.3.4 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 Committee, since this may give an unfair advantage over other students. Any requests to repeat more than half of the teaching will need to be supported by evidence that the previous teaching period was damaged by exceptional circumstances prior to suspending.
- 7.3.5 Students may be required to pay [internal repeat fees](#) if approval is given to repeat more than half of the module's teaching.
- 7.3.6 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 one month after their last date of attendance. Applications that are entirely retrospective will not normally be considered or approved.

7.4 Suspension of studies by the University

- 7.4.1 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 'Standards Review' procedure (refer to **section 25**), the 'Fitness to Study' procedure (refer to **section 26**) and the 'Disciplinary' procedure (<https://www.yorks.ac.uk/students/policies-and-documents/behaviour-and-discipline/>).
 - External resit** – A student may be required to take a suspension of studies if they are required to externally resit assessments out of residence in order to meet their academic progression requirements. If modules are failed that mean a student cannot progress to the next level of their programme, and they still have a resit opportunity left, they may be eligible to resit externally. If eligible, the student's studies would normally be suspended for an academic year whilst they complete the outstanding reassessments as an external candidate. The student will need to successfully pass the academic progression criteria in order to recommence their studies the following year. Students completing reassessments as external candidates will not be eligible to attend classes and will simply resubmit assignments and/or resit examinations. If studies are suspended, students do not enrol to attend classes during this period, there are no tuition fees payable but students will be required to pay the resit fee(s).
 - Change of programme and/or restart** – Suspension of study is also granted if a student transfers from one programme to another and/or restarts their programme the following academic year; this would be marked on the student's 'Change of Programme' form or 'Suspension of Studies' form. As part of the suspension of studies application the student should supply a statement of credible commitment to re-engage with study following their return.

For first year students who suspend (either voluntarily or through enforced suspension), a student will be considered as 'restarting' if they need to repeat substantial teaching and assessment. 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 35.9**).

- 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 restart (e.g. suspending in January and re-joining the following January).
- If the suspension occurs early in the first semester (defined as before week 7), it would not involve substantial repeat teaching and so this is not considered a restart (e.g. suspending in early November 2021 and returning the following September).
- If the suspension occurred in or after week 7 of the student's first semester, it will involve substantial repeat teaching and it will be considered a restart (e.g. commenced suspension in January and returning the following September).

7.5 Fees and finances

- 7.5.1 Before requesting a suspension of studies, it is important that the student understands the financial implications that this might have:
- <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/student-records/documents/Suspension-of-Studies-Full-Time.pdf>
 - <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/student-records/documents/Suspension-of-Studies-Part-Time.pdf>
- 7.5.2 If students have financial support from Student Finance England, or other funding body, the University will inform the body of the period suspension. Payments from Student Finance England will usually stop during a student's period of absence.
- 7.5.3 For more advice on accommodation issues please contact the Accommodation Office at accommodation@yorksj.ac.uk.
- 7.5.4 While suspending studies, students are still exempt from Council Tax (full time students only).
- 7.5.5 Please note that suspended students are not normally able to claim any state benefits. For further financial guidance contact the Student Funding Advice Team (<https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/students/your-finances/>)
- 7.5.6 Tuition fees paid in advance for a period of suspension will be held by the University to be credited against future fees. Enforced suspension may have to be repeated at a student's own cost.
- 7.5.7 If approval has been given to repeat more than one third of a module's teaching, following return from suspension of studies, internal repeat fees for tuition will normally be charged for the repeated period of study.

7.6 Access to university facilities

- 7.6.1 Students will still have access to university IT systems, email, and library facilities during their period of suspension from the University, but access to other university support will be restricted.
- 7.6.2 Students are not normally expected to study, attend any teaching, or submit assessments during their suspension of studies. The exceptions are:
- a) Students who are externally re-sitting an assessment(s) – under these circumstances, students shall be required to submit summative work and attend examinations; students may seek guidance from tutors in relation to their reassessments but not attend further teaching sessions. Students who externally resit assessments are liable to pay the resit fee. Further information on how to pay resit fees is found on our webpage:
 - <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/students/exams-and-assessment/reassessment/>
 - b) 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.

7.6.3 Summary of access to facilities whilst studies are suspended:

Access to	Entitlement	Notes
Teaching	No	
Study advice / supervision	Yes (limited)	For externally resitting students, and students returning to complete assessments immediately after return, guidance may be sought in the weeks preceding an assessment (refer to points above)
Email	Yes	Students are reminded to check their university email account regularly whilst their studies are suspended
e:Vision	Yes	
Library	Yes	
Moodle	Yes	Moodle will be available for externally resitting students
Disability support	In certain circumstances	Only where attendance is a condition of suspension or to facilitate return to study
Wellbeing support	In certain circumstances	Only where attendance is a condition of suspension or to facilitate return to study
Student advice	Yes	

7.7 How to apply

- 7.7.1 If a student feels that they need to suspend their studies, they should first discuss the matter with their Associate Head and/or Academic Tutor. Students may also find it useful to discuss the matter with Student Wellbeing, Support and Access. 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.
- 7.7.2 Visa holding international students must contact the Visa and Compliance Team before applying to discuss the implications of suspending their studies (visa@yorks.ac.uk).
- 7.7.3 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' form and gather their supporting evidence (where required).
- 7.7.4 Completed forms, together with supporting evidence (if required), must be submitted to the student's School. If students leave their studies without doing this, they may not be re-admitted to the University when they wish to return.
- 7.7.5 The student's Associate Head will need to sign the 'Suspension of Studies' form to support the student's request. The Associate Head will add a supporting statement to the form, confirm the student's last date of attendance and, where appropriate, provide recommendations regarding repeat teaching and/or repeat assessment. The School will forward the application form and evidence to Registry. 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 Committee, or a Registry panel acting on behalf of the Committee, for consideration.
- 7.7.6 If there is no evidence or insufficient evidence attached the request will not be considered until relevant evidence has been received.
- 7.7.7 Students who are applying for a continuation of a current suspension of studies must include recent up to date evidence (if this is required) and/or a personal statement to support their new suspension of studies request. Refer to **section 7.1.3** for further guidance.
- 7.7.8 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 i.e. medical/personal/academic/financial.
- 7.7.9 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, and their new programme end date. Registry will communicate with the student's funding body.
- 7.7.10 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 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 (visa@yorks.ac.uk).

- 7.7.11 During a suspension of studies, students may find it helpful to stay in contact with an appropriate person in their School such as their Associate Head 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.

7.8 Returning from suspension

- 7.8.1 The Student Records Team will contact students by email approximately **one month** 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.
- 7.8.2 In the case of a suspension of studies on health grounds students are normally asked to provide medical evidence that confirms they are fit to return to their studies. In this case students must supply an appropriate medical certificate to Registry prior to return.
- 7.8.3 International students on a Student Visa will be required to apply for a new visa before their return to studies following a long suspension. For more advice on immigration issues please contact the Visa and Compliance Team (visa@yorks.ac.uk).
- 7.8.4 Prior to return students are advised to contact their Associate Head and/or Academic Tutor about how they should prepare for returning to their programme and to discuss any potential support arrangements.
- 7.8.5 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 Advice Team, where appropriate
 - Accessing other available support services – Wellbeing Team, Student Funding Advice Team, Study Skills
- 7.8.6 Students who do not reply to the University email by their expected return date will be assumed that they no longer intend to return to their programme. Students will be withdrawn from their studies at the University. Their enrolment will normally be terminated with effect from their last date of attendance. 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 Progress and Award Examination Panel.
- 7.8.7 Students who are unable to return from their current suspension of studies may be able to request a further suspension by submitting another application with new up to date evidence. Refer to **section 7.3** regarding the maximum periods of suspension available to students.

7.9 Repeating assessments

- 7.9.1 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. This will be regarded with the same severity as plagiarism in general in submitted work (refer to **section 23**).