

Policy

Interruption, Withdrawal or Transfer of Studies

Policy and Procedure

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Background

- 1 This policy articulates the expectations of the University with regards to interruption of studies (voluntary academic suspension), withdrawal or transfer of studies (either internally or externally). It should be used in conjunction with *Mitigating Circumstances Policy*, *Academic Assessment Regulations*, *Pregnancy & Maternity Policy (Students)*, *Payment and Debt Procedures (Students Paying Home and EU fees)*, *Financial guide for International Students*, and may be superseded by these policies or procedures should the situation warrant it.
- 2 In addition to this procedure the University may, in exceptional circumstances, have grounds to suspend or withdraw a student from their studies. Please refer to the appropriate policies and regulations which includes but it not limited to: *Fitness to Study*, *Fitness to Practise*, *Student Disciplinary Procedure* and *Academic Misconduct*.
- 3 All students are encouraged to contact their personal tutor and school registrar for support and guidance if they find themselves in times of personal difficulties. Independent advice and support can be sought from the Students' Union Advice Centre.
- 4 There are a number of support services/mechanisms available to students. The table below lists them with their particular area of support and initial contact details.

Support Service/ Mechanism	Area of Support	Contact details
Accommodation Office	All queries relating accommodation, particularly University halls managed and the Head Tenancy Scheme	accommodation@bucks.ac.uk 01494 603 063 Accommodation Weblink
Careers, Enterprise & Employability	Complete careers and employability service from CV checking to interviews, applications and career planning	careers@bucks.ac.uk 01494 605 185 Careers Weblink
Counselling Service	Confidential free counselling service available to all students	counselling@bucks.ac.uk 01494 605 018 Text 07757 101 234 Counselling Service Weblink
Course/ Programme Leader	Contact for academic issues relating to the course	Please contact your school office if you do not have these.
Disability Service	Support and advice relating to disability including reasonable adjustments for disclosed conditions	Disability.service@bucks.ac.uk 01494 605 049 Disability Service Weblink

Support Service/ Mechanism	Area of Support	Contact details
Learning Development Unit (LDU)	Specific academic skills support	ldu@bucks.ac.uk 01494 603 070 LDU Weblink
Compliance and Administration Team	Contact for visa support and post-enrolment monitoring of Tier 4 students.	Compliance@bucks.ac.uk 01494 605 010
Multi-Faith Chaplaincy	Spiritual guidance and pastoral support	multifaithchaplaincy@bucks.ac.uk phone 01494 603 024 text 07544 750 793 Multi-faith Chaplaincy Weblink
Personal Tutor	Contact for academic issues relating to the course and pastoral support	Please contact your school office if you do not have these.
Academic Registry	Main point of contact for all students providing advice and support for all course and regulatory issues.	Student & Course Administration offices are located in: High Wycombe E2.08 High Wycombe E3.08 High Wycombe E4.08 Uxbridge 2 nd Floor reception
Student Centre	Student Finance and record administration. Contact for all finance queries including fees, student loans and financial support packages.	Student.centre@bucks.ac.uk 01494 603 020
SU Advice Centre	Impartial, confidential advice and support from the Students' Union	suadvice@bucks.ac.uk 01494 603 016 (HW) 01494 605 180 (Uxb) SU Advice Centre Weblink

Definitions

- 5 The definitions listed below will be used throughout this document and are the common understanding of these terms within Buckinghamshire New University.
- 6 **Withdrawal:** Student is formally leaving the course with no intention to return to studies at Buckinghamshire New University within the permitted registration period. N.B. a student leaving Buckinghamshire New University to join a course at another institution must formally withdraw prior to enrolment at their new institution.
- 7 **Interruption of Studies:** Student has requested, and has been granted, temporary leave from the course, with the intention of re-joining with a subsequent year group.
- 8 **Internal Transfer:** Student has requested, and has been granted, a move to another programme within the institution, or partner organisations. This would normally be completed at the beginning of a year and may require some additional credits/modules to be undertaken to meet the new programme requirements.

Withdrawal from the University

- 9 Students have the right to withdraw from their studies at any time however, withdrawal is a permanent step which cannot be reversed and it is considered best practice to undertake an interview with each student before the withdrawal is finalised to ensure that this is the most appropriate action. Students should especially be made aware of the financial implications of withdrawal. Formal withdrawal is initiated by completion of the Withdrawal Form.
- 10 When a student withdraws from the University he/she will be awarded any credits accrued and therefore any exit award that they have earned, subject to the decision of an Assessment Board.
- 11 If eligible for an exit award, this will be awarded as appropriate either at a), the point of withdrawal by Chair's Action if all marks have already been confirmed through the University quality assurance processes (for example if a student withdraws at the beginning of an academic year or stage) or b), at the next appropriate Assessment board if summative assessment has been undertaken that has yet to be ratified.
- 12 Students will remain liable for any fees that are due for the study period, normally the term in which they withdraw (please see *Payment and Debt Procedures (Students Paying Home and EU fees)* or for international students the liability is listed in the relevant *Financial guide for International Students*). They will also cease to have entitlement to bursaries or loans granted on the basis on enrolment. Specific guidance should be sought from the funding organisation and relevant administrative office of the University.
- 13 Once withdrawn, the student will not be eligible to access the University property or its services, except where permitted to do so as a member of the public.
- 14 Should a student, once withdrawn, decide that he/she wishes to resume their studies; he/she should follow the normal admissions processes. In some cases exemption from completing the full course due to credits already obtained may be granted. This should be discussed with the admissions tutor at the point of application and, dependant on

programme, may be subject to ratification through the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Process (CATS).

Interruption of Studies

Request to Interrupt Studies

- 15 Students are entitled to request an interruption of studies. All students requesting an interruption of studies should contact their personal tutor and/or programme/course/year leader to discuss their situation and the options open to them. This will include discussions about any outstanding assessments to be taken, return date and other aspects such as potential fee or bursary implications and must include the School Registrar. In programmes which include work-based or work-related elements these will also be considered. It may be necessary to invite other members of staff such as those from the Compliance and Administration Team or Student Centre to the meeting for issues such as visa status and financial implications. Additional support can be provided by the support services/mechanisms listed above, see paragraph 4.
- 16 When students interrupt their studies there may be implications regarding accommodation which will include eligibility to remain in University managed halls. Please contact the accommodation office for help and support.
- 17 Whilst the University will endeavour to aid students in their studies there may be certain programmes which will limit the range of help and support that may be given. This may include the length of interruption of studies, the point at which an interruption of studies must be taken, the date of return or flexibility on return to studies. For this reason it is important to discuss any decision to interrupt with the Personal Tutor/ Programme/Year Leader.
- 18 Students should be advised that that when they return to their studies they will be governed by the curriculum and the rules and regulations in force at the time of their re-enrolment.
- 19 This may mean that a student will not be able to return to the same course, if the programme is no longer being offered, or it may have significantly changed. Refer to the return to studies section below.
- 20 The University is not obliged to grant an interruption of studies request. The decision will be based on each individual situation and the programme the student is studying. Until receiving confirmation of a granted request to interrupt their studies, students are advised they must continue on the programme as though it will be rejected. The authorised tutor will make the decision in as short a period as possible, usually within 1 week.
- 21 As stated in the definition of interruption of studies, the University may suspend a student from his/her studies under the policies and procedures listed in paragraph 2.
- 22 Formal action to interrupt a student's studies will be initiated by completion of the Interruption of Studies Form which should be returned by the student to the School Office.
- 23 When a student interrupts his/her studies he/she will remain liable for any tuition fees in that fee period, which will normally equate to a term. Please see *Payment and Debt Procedures (Students Paying Home and EU fees)*, or *Financial guide for International*

Students. Where programme fees are part of a contract with a third party, the terms of the contract will determine the liability for fees.

- 24 Students may be permitted to interrupt their studies for a maximum of two calendar years, subject to the stipulations of the programme of study. The initial period will normally be for one calendar year. Should an extension to this period be required, an additional request must be submitted and granted. Students enrolled on modules/courses consisting of less than 60 credits (short courses) may be permitted to interrupt their studies for a maximum of one calendar year, unless otherwise specified in programme specifications.
- 25 If the period extends beyond the two years (or programme specific limit), the student will be withdrawn from the programme. Should a student wish to return to his/her studies at a later date, they would have to apply through the usual application channels. Credit for previously completed modules may be given, dependent on the course, length of time away from studies and any specific regulations relating to the programme and may be subject to ratification through the CATS process.
- 26 An interruption of studies cannot be 'backdated'. Requests to retrospectively apply an interruption of studies will not usually be granted except in the most extreme circumstances. The interruption of studies will be actioned from the date of submitting the request and should a student feel that their studies, and any assessments due to be undertaken, previous to this date have been affected by mitigating circumstances they should follow the process for submitting a claim to the mitigating circumstances panel.
- 27 Students who have interrupted their studies will not be permitted to submit any work for assessment, undertake an examination of any type or attend work/clinical placements.
- 28 The University will provide a package of support for students who have interrupted their studies which will include access to the virtual learning environment, restricted access rights to the Library as an external borrower and general access to University buildings. This will include visiting the Students' Union facilities, faculty offices, and Gateway building, but specifically excludes labs, workshops and classrooms.
- 29 Students will be entitled to seek support and advice from any of the services listed in paragraph 4 whilst they have interrupted their studies. Full details of the entitlements are listed in appendix 1, *Support during interruption of studies*. Appendix 2 is a flowchart to show the procedure to follow.
- 30 The results for all assessments due to be undertaken prior to the point at which his/her studies have been interrupted, which will include non-submissions, will stand on the student's return to study.

Return to Studies

- 31 Whilst the University would expect them to do so, it will not be assumed that a student is returning to studies. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the University to state that they wish to return.
- 32 The school registrar will attempt to contact all interrupted students a minimum of two months prior to the return date indicated at the point of interruption. This does not preclude that students must contact the school registry team a minimum of one month prior to the re-start date which was agreed at the point of interruption. The earlier the

notification of an intention to return to studies is made, the more likely that the return can be smoothly organised. Due to the nature of programmes in some subject areas the minimum notice period may be extended. This information will be provided at the point of interruption.

- 33 If the original interruption was due to ill health and/or disability, confirmation that the student is well enough to return to study should be obtained prior to re-enrolment and must be discussed with the Programme leader. This may require occupational health clearance or consultation with Disability Service.
- 34 Students will be expected to return at the start of a study period. This may relate to an academic year, semester or term and may be tied to other programme components such as work placements. The date of return will be agreed between the student and programme leader in consultation with the school registrar and other relevant staff such as the Student Centre and the University Finance department.
- 35 The date of return to studies will be dependent on a place being available in the cohort to which the student is returning. This may be limited by factors such as placement availability.
- 36 Tuition fees will be payable, as per *Payment and Debt Procedures (Students Paying Home and EU fees)*, for the tuition fees period, normally term, in which the student returns to studies. This may be an increase on the previous fees paid. All tuitions fees and to the university must be paid in full prior to re-enrolment.
- 37 As stated in paragraph 30 above, the result/marks awarded in all assessments due to be undertaken prior to the interruption of studies will stand. The exceptions will be:
 - a. If the programme of study has been amended during the period of interruption, a tailored programme of study may be approved, in line with current University regulations, or the student may have to repeat a period of study, for example re-starting the academic stage or level.
 - b. If the student has made a successful claim for mitigating circumstances. In this case a student will be permitted to either restart the year (fees liability to be agreed with Head of School and University Finance Department) or retake the assessments in line with *Academic Assessment Regulations*.
- 38 Students returning to study will be subject to the validated curriculum, regulations, policies and procedures current at the point of return. Should a programme no longer be offered, or have been significantly amended, on return to studies a student may be required or wish to transfer on to another programme. Transfers will be dependent on the compatibility of the studies already undertaken and the new programme content.
- 39 If a student does not contact the University after the agreed period, or respond to communications from the registrar, they will be withdrawn.

Internal transfer

- 40 A student wishing to transfer to another programme of study within the institution will normally only be permitted to do so prior to the start of an academic stage or level.
- 41 A student who wishes to transfer after commencement of their studies, will only be allowed to do so within the first three weeks of the course stage or level with the express permission of the incoming course team.

- 42 Students wishing to transfer will be required to explain their reason for transfer either through a formal interview with the new programme leader or by written submission.
- 43 Students are expected to discuss their intent to transfer with the 'outgoing' programme/course leader.
- 44 Transfer to a new course may require additional credits to be undertaken to complete the new programme of study. The student would be liable for any additional fees this would incur.
- 45 On transfer the student will be governed by the regulations of the new course.

Additional areas to note

International Students

- 46 Students that require a valid visa to study in the UK must also comply with the conditions of their visa and the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Should a student request an interruption, withdrawal or transfer of studies, full consultation must be made with the Compliance and Administration Team to ensure that the student and the University remain within lawful boundaries.
- 47 On withdrawal international students will remain liable to the full year of fees and the University will retain the deposit unless the reason for withdrawal of studies is a visa refusal.
- 48 The Compliance and Administration Manager is obliged to inform the UKVI of any change to status such as interruption or withdrawal of studies. An interruption or withdrawal of studies would usually mean that the student visa is no longer valid and the student will need to return to their country of origin.
- 49 International students whom wish to transfer to another course must ensure that they will not be extending their studies beyond the specified limits of their visa.

Pregnancy, Maternity/Paternity Leave

- 50 This document should be read and actioned in conjunction with the specific guidance document *Pregnancy and Maternity Policy (Students)* and with reference to any programme specific guidance regarding pregnancy whilst on a programme of study.
- 51 The University is required to provide appropriate support and guidance to students who are pregnant or wish to return to their studies following a period of maternity/paternity leave.
- 52 As stated in paragraph 17, while the University will endeavour to aid students in their studies there may be certain programmes which will limit the range of help and support that may be given. This may mean that for particular courses maternity leave from the programme may need to be started at an earlier point due to potential health and safety risks to mother and child, or to the general public in the case of a placement for example. This should be fully discussed at the point of notification of the pregnancy to the Programme leader.

Appendices

Support during Interruption of Studies

- 1 The University recognises that during a period of interruption of studies it is important that students maintain contact with the University and being able access pastoral and academic support is vital to a successful return to study.
- 2 Though not attending classes whilst a student has interrupted his/her studies, he/she is counted as a registered student of the University for official purposes as he/she remains on a programme of study. *N.B. Students who have interrupted their studies that form part of a contract, dependant on the terms of the contract, will cease to be listed as 'on=course'. This includes pre-registration nursing courses.*
- 3 The University has agreed a support package details of which are listed below.

Access to	Entitlement
Academic staff	Limited access, only to make preparations for return to study
Accommodation	Cannot normally live in University accommodation Can access support and advice
E-mail	E-mail account will remain 'live'. All students are reminded to access this account on a regular basis or set up auto-forwarding to a regularly used personal account.
Library	External borrower status, allowed to borrow up to 4 books, further details can be obtained from library help desk.
LDU, Disability Service, Careers and Employability Service, Counselling & Multi-faith Chaplaincy	Can access for support and advice
Compliance and Administration Team	Can access for support and advice. Please note that international suspended students are not normally entitled to remain in the country.
School Office	Can access in relation to suspension, return or transfer
Student Centre	Can access for support and advice, including issues with tuition fees and Student Finance England
Students' Union facilities	Entitled to be on teams Entitled to be on societies Entitled to access the Venue
Students' Union Advice Centre	Can access for support and advice

Access to	Entitlement
Virtual Learning Environment	Access to account and modules as enrolled at the point of suspension. Students will not be able to access new modules or work for the forthcoming year.
University Buildings	General access areas and Library. No access to workshops or laboratory space.

- 4 Contact details can be found at paragraph 4 of the main document.
- 5 With regards to the status of students who have interrupted their studies for all other purposes, such as council tax liability, they should take advice from student support services or public bodies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- 6 Students who have interrupted their studies under this policy will be entitled to retain their student ID or 'Bucks card' as this is required to access University buildings.



