

Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 13 - Procedures for the interruption and voluntary withdrawal of taught students

1. Procedure and sources of advice

- 1.1 Before making a decision to apply to interrupt or withdraw, students must consult with their Pastoral Mentor or Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor), who may give academic advice with respect to module availability and programme structure. Students are also strongly advised to consult with other sources available within the University, in order that they may be fully aware of the consequences of that decision, and other options, which may be open to them. Students who are funded by a Research Council, other funding organisation or an employer, or overseas sponsor should carefully consult the general regulations of their funding organisation/ sponsor if they need to interrupt their studies.

The following are useful sources of advice:

- a. **Financial Advice:**
- b. See [Student Fee and Bursary Regulations](#)
Contact [SID](#)
- c. **The Students' Guild Advice Unit:**
[Exeter Students Guild Advice](#)
Email [Students' Guild Advice Unit](#)
- d. **The Students' Union Advice Service** (For Penryn/ Truro-based students)
See [Students' Union Advice](#)
Email [Students' Union Advice Service](#)
- e. **International Student Support:**
See [Interrupting your studies](#)
Contact [SID](#)

2. Interruptions

International Students who are Tier 4/ Student visa holders: interrupting your studies can have serious consequences for your immigration status as the University may be required to report this interruption to the Home Office. This will lead to the curtailment of your visa. It is important that you receive advice on the implications of your decision,

which you can access by contacting the [International Student Support Office](#). The circumstances in which the University will report your interruption to the Home Office are outlined on our [International Student Support pages](#). If at any point in your period of study, subsequent to registration at the University, you are unable to demonstrate immigration permission to study, you will be advised to take a period of interruption until this issue can be resolved. See also Chapter 14 Procedures for Temporary Visa Interruption and Withdrawal.

- 2.1 The University defines interruption of studies to mean an entire cessation of academic study for a specified period. Periods of interruption do not count towards the timeframe for completion of a programme and a student is not required to undertake academic study, nor will they receive any tuition or supervision or be entered in to any examinations or other assessments, nor be required to pay tuition fees. During a period of interruption, a student's registration will be suspended until formal re-registration and resumption of studies. Please also see the Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy as detailed in 2.5 below.
- 2.2 Applications for interruptions to study should be made by the student through their Faculty (or delegated School) using an appropriate interruption form from [SID](#). If the Faculty (or delegated School) confirms their support for the interruption, they will initiate the process through [SID](#). The form should be approved by the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty (PVC), Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education (APVC-E) or nominee¹ and, if the student is residing in University accommodation, by the accommodation team.
- 2.3 During periods of interruption, students will remain as members of the University and as such will be subject to the normal student regulations whilst registration is suspended. However, Student Services are not normally accessible during a period of interruption with the exception of the Chaplaincy, Students' Guild/ Students Union and the Health Centre. Wellbeing Services are able to provide continued support for the first 4 weeks of an interruption. A student will normally retain access to Library facilities and their IT account will normally remain active during their interruption. Care should be taken to ensure that only appropriate communication with the student takes place during this period as they are advised not to engage with study for the duration of their interruption. Therefore, any urgent/ important communications with the student requiring response or attention should be sent to the student's personal email address

and any letters sent in hard copy to their home address where appropriate. On interruption, students must hand back their Unicard.

- 2.4 The University permits interruptions of study for part-time and full-time students, with good cause², normally for a minimum of one term, up to one year at a time in the first instance.
- 2.4.1 In exceptional circumstances, the start date of a period of interruption may be backdated to a maximum of four weeks prior to the date of application (excluding vacation periods for standard programmes).
- 2.4.2 Exceptions beyond four-week backdated interruptions may be made in appropriate situations with the approval of the APVC Education for UG/PGT programmes, and in consultation with the Faculty DPGR for Professional Doctorates on their taught element. For more information on PGR interruptions please refer to Chapter 5 of the Postgraduate Research Handbook, 'Periods of registration and changes to registration status for graduate research students'.
- 2.4.3 At the end of a first period of interruption, should a further period of interruption be required this can be approved by the Faculty by the APVCE (or delegated School) (again to a maximum of one year). A formal interruption form will need to be completed and the relevant approvals obtained. The maximum period of approval that may be granted for interruptions in total across the course of a programme should not exceed 2 years.
- 2.4.4 Where there are exceptional circumstances supported by the evidence-based mitigation process and the Mitigation Committee, the APVCE may permit a further exceptional period of interruption (beyond 2 years). Any request to the APVCE **should** outline how the circumstances have/will change in order for the student to succeed, and how this will be academically viable.
- 2.4.5 Where a continued interruption is not approved a student will be required to re-register or withdraw, but may apply to reinstate their registration at a later date. Reinstatement of study can only be approved up to a maximum of 2 years following withdrawal. Such a request will be considered by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty and will take account of the student's circumstances, the resources available within the Faculty (or delegated School) and the academic feasibility of continuing study after a prolonged absence.

- 2.5 Maternity/paternity/shared parental and adoption leave: Students who apply for interruption on the grounds of maternity/paternity/shared parental and adoption leave will not have the period of interruption for these types of leave counted towards their maximum number or total period of interruptions. Please also see the Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy.
- 2.6 Students should note that interruptions of study shall normally only be granted when academically viable. Where this is not the case a student shall be required to withdraw. Undergraduate students may not normally apply to interrupt in the summer term for resumption of studies at the beginning of the next academic year.
- 2.7 Students living in University accommodation should note that interruptions to their programme of study may result in them being expected to terminate their accommodation contract under its terms and conditions and they will need to vacate with immediate effect (normally within 7 days). If there are extenuating circumstances for requiring accommodation during an interruption period, the student should contact the Accommodation Office team via the [Student Information Desk](#) in the first instance.
- 2.8 Normally students interrupting for a year should resume study from the start of the module in which they originally interrupted, however the point of a student's return from interruption should be determined by the Faculty (or delegated School) on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the student, their Pastoral Mentor / Academic Tutor (also known as Personal Tutor) and Wellbeing Services where appropriate. Students who are currently resitting without attendance (on RWA status) may choose to interrupt their studies during their RWA year where they have evidence to support their request; any such requests should be considered carefully by the Faculty (or delegated School) on a case by case basis and in consultation with the student in order that the student understands any implications a period of interruption may have on their outstanding assessments.
- 2.9 Prior to resumption of their studies all students who interrupt due to medical circumstances will be asked to complete a self-assessment form. The self-assessment form will ask the student to provide details of their current state of health and for details regarding further support that they may require. Students may also be required to provide a medical certificate to confirm fitness to return to study.
- 2.10 Any student who:

- i. was interrupted following Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study at level 2 or above or Fitness to Study Procedures,
 - ii. has demonstrated exceptional circumstances under which it has been deemed necessary for a student to demonstrate their fitness to return to study,
- will also be required to provide a medical certificate (and to meet any costs incurred in doing so) indicating their fitness to study and meet with a Welfare Advisor upon their return in order to ensure that their ongoing support requirements during their studies can be assessed. If a student is unable to obtain medical evidence, the Wellbeing Team may convene a Case Management Panel to assess whether the student is fit to resume studies. If the Case Management Panel cannot be reassured of an improvement in the student's health and their safety in a University environment, a further interruption may be considered or if this is not possible, referral to the HWSS level 3 process.
- 2.11 Any student who is employed and registered on a programme in Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR) regulated by a PSRB and subject to the Fitness to Practise Policy will be required to provide employer confirmation of ability to return to study which may include meeting with an Occupational Health (OH) professional if they are interrupting based on medical grounds. This is to ensure they are fit to return to studies and are provided with the correct support to resume their studies.
- 2.12 Any student who is registered on any other programme regulated by a PSRB and which is subject to the Fitness to Practise Policy, will be required to meet with an Occupational Health (OH) professional (either via the University's OH Provider or via their employer) if they were interrupted on medical grounds, to ensure they are fit to return to studies and are provided with the correct support to resume their studies. A list of programmes which fall under the Fitness to Practise policy can be found [on the University Calendar](#).
- 2.13 Where repeat study is deemed necessary following an interruption, this must be approved in accordance with Chapter 11 – Consequences of Failure, in the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
- 2.14 Students shall normally fall under the University Conventions and Procedures currently applicable upon the resumption of their studies.
- 2.15 The University of Exeter will not assume any responsibility for students whilst interrupted from their studies at the University.

- 2.16 Prior to resumption of their studies all students will receive an email requesting confirmation of their intentions at the end of the period of interruption. Three reminder emails will be sent to personal and Exeter email addresses. Failure to respond to emails will result in students being deemed to have withdrawn. Faculties (or delegated Schools) **must** arrange for appropriate services to be made available to students prior to resumption of studies in order to facilitate their return. Additional student guidance can be found within:

Annex 1: Interrupted Students Guidance - Exeter

Annex 2: Interrupted Students Guidance - Cornwall

3. **Withdrawal from study**

International Students only: Withdrawal is always a difficult choice, but for international students it can also have serious immigration implications of which students are often not aware. The immigration rules are not lenient, and very rarely make allowances for compassionate circumstances. It is vital that international students are aware of the ramifications of their decision before it is finalised and understand what actions they must take after the withdrawal to ensure that they are allowed to study in the UK in the future. It is a requirement of the Immigration Office that only authorised University personnel in the International Student Support Office interview and sign off forms for students who wish to withdraw from their studies. For withdrawals relating to temporary visa interruptions, please see Chapter 14 - Temporary Visa Interruption and Withdrawal.

- 3.1 Students are permitted to withdraw from their programme of study at any time and for any reason but are reminded that any fees or fines outstanding must still be paid. Applications for withdrawal may be applied retrospectively up to a maximum of four weeks from the point of application (excluding vacation periods for standard programmes). Exceptions beyond this may be made with the approval of the APVC for UG/PGT programmes, or the Faculty (or delegated School) DPGR for Professional Doctorates on the taught element of their programme.
- 3.2 On withdrawing from a programme, registration is terminated, and the student ceases to be a student of the University.
- 3.3 IT accounts will be removed on withdrawal from study with immediate effect.

- 3.4 For information on termination of registration for postgraduate students see Chapter 7, 'Statement of Procedures: Periods of Study and Changes to Registration Status for Taught Postgraduate Students'.
- 3.5 When a student does not complete registration or ceases to attend without giving notice, the Faculty (or delegated School) should make reasonable efforts to contact the student and ascertain the reasons. If this is unsuccessful, the Faculty (or delegated School) will send the student an email stating they will be deemed as withdrawn. Notice of the withdrawal should be sent to the student's last known address (normally email address).
- 3.6 Students who are withdrawing are required to complete a withdrawal form through SID online which will be passed to relevant approvers in the Faculty and then passed to Student Records for processing. Once the withdrawal has been processed students will receive an email confirmation. Further details on completing the withdrawal form are found on the [Changes to Study](#) webpage.
- 3.7 Students who have had academic debt sanctions applied at the end of the previous academic year who have been unable to re-register due to debtor status by the start of the teaching term will be deemed to have withdrawn and will have their registration terminated as per the [Student Finance Regulations](#).
- 3.8 Students who do not re-register within 4 weeks of the designated registration period for their programme will be deemed to have withdrawn and will have their registration terminated as per the [Registration](#) principles.
- 3.9 Students who do not re-register after the end of a period of [interruption](#) will be de-registered and registration terminated.
- 3.10 In cases where a student makes unsatisfactory progress, the Faculty may make a case to the Dean of Taught Faculty for [withdrawal from the programme](#), as set out in the ['Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance'](#).
- 3.11 The University retains the right to terminate registration in cases where a disciplinary offence has been committed, a regulation has been broken or a student fails to complete or comply with a University procedure.
- 3.12 Students who have been deemed withdrawn or withdrawn involuntarily in relevant situations may seek [Reinstatement of Registration](#) in exceptional cases as per the existing policy.

¹ Faculty Student Handbooks will specify those members of staff who have delegated authority from the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty to approve interruptions and withdrawals. This would normally be Director of programmes and the Senior Education Partner.

² Good Cause normally means of positive benefit to a programme of study or personal, financial or medical circumstances.