

Student Interruptions and Withdrawals Policy

Version Number 1.2

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Quality and Enhancement Office

1.0 Purpose

This policy outlines the principles and regulations governing interruptions to study and withdrawals from study.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all students registered on taught or research programmes at the University of Salford.

3.0 Policy

3.1 Attendance and Participation

Student attendance and participation contribute to student success. If students are unable to attend and participate in studies, then students are unlikely to achieve their potential.

If circumstances arise which prevent students from attending and participating, it may be appropriate for students to consider an interruption of study to resolve the issues that are affecting attendance and participation.

In exceptional circumstances, students may decide that they do not wish to either return to studies or continue with studies.

3.2 Definitions

An **interruption** of study means a formal break from study for a specific period of time with the intention to resume study at a future date that has been agreed by the University. For students registered on a higher or degree apprenticeship programme, an interruption of study may also be referred to as a 'break in learning'.

Withdrawal from study means that a student has decided to discontinue study at the University with no intention of returning.

3.3 Advice and Support

Before submitting a formal application for an interruption to study or withdrawal from study, students must seek advice and support. Advice and support is available from the following:

- Personal Tutor and Programme Leader;
- Supervisor and Personal Tutor (for research students);
- Thinking of Leaving Workshops run by the Counselling and Wellbeing team.
- askUS;
- School Offices.

In addition, independent advice is available from the Students' Union Advice Centre.

Students contemplating an interruption or withdrawal must ensure that they are aware of any implications for funding, visas or accommodation. Guidance is available from askUS.

3.4 Interruptions of Study

During a period of interruption, a student's registration on the programme shall change and they shall not have the same entitlements as fully registered students.

Students registered on Higher or Degree Apprenticeship programmes may take a formal 'break in learning' if they plan to resume their studies at a later date and the duration of the break in study is expressly agreed by the University and their employer. Throughout the apprenticeship any changes in circumstances or breaks in learning must be reported to the University.

The University is required to notify the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) of interruptions for students sponsored under Tier 4 of the Points Based Immigration System where the University has issued Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). Tier 4 students who interrupt their studies **may be required to leave the UK**, even if interrupting because of personal or medical reasons.

3.5 Access to Services During a Period of Interruption

Students on a period of interruption will be able to access the following services to facilitate return to study:

| Service | Outline of Service Provided |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Information Technology/Services | Student Email |
| Student Experience and Support | Assistance from AskUS and the Wellbeing and Counselling Services Access to careers and enterprise advice and information |
| Library Services | Access to library buildings and to some library resources including: reference access to the full Library collection; limited borrowing rights; access to a sub-set of electronic resources through a dedicated terminal during staffed hours. Access to Skills for Learning training courses |
| School | Access to advice from Programme Leader and/or Personal Tutor |
| Access | Access to relevant University buildings |

During a period of interruption, students will not be able to:

- Attend classes;
- Access tutorial support or supervision;
- Continue with research;
- Take assessments;
- Access Blackboard (the Virtual Learning Environment).

3.6 Process to Request an Interruption

A formal request for interruption including the period of interruption must be submitted to the student's School using the online [student portal service](#) along with any relevant evidence of the circumstances relating to the reason for interruption. If this is not possible, the student should submit a request to their School in writing. Upon receipt of a formal request, a check will be undertaken to see if a student has sought advice and guidance.

3.7 Period of Interruption

The period of interruption for students is normally up to one year and exceptionally up to two years. Where a programme can accommodate an interruption for a period of less than one year, Schools have discretion to approve an interruption of this kind. Interruptions for postgraduate research students will only be approved in three month blocks.

Students need to be clear about the financial impact of their period of interruption, especially if they are in receipt of funding from the Student Loan Company.

3.8 Process to Consider and Confirm an Interruption Request

For students on taught programmes, requests for interruption will be considered by the Associate Dean (Academic) or nominee within the student's School. For students on research programmes, requests for interruption will be considered by the Associate Dean (Research) or nominee within the student's School and noted by the School's Research and Enterprise Committee.

An interruption of study is a serious step for any student so all requests are considered on an individual basis. The following are examples of circumstances which may be acceptable circumstances for an interruption. This list is not definitive and even if a circumstance is listed, it does not mean that a request for interruption will be approved:

- Significant health or wellbeing issues of a student;
- Significant illness of a close family member;
- The death of a close family member or friend;
- Caring responsibilities;
- Extreme family or financial circumstances which have had a significant impact on a student;
- Military service including students who are undertaking military service as reservists;
- Jury service;
- Maternity or adoption leave;
- Elite athletes who are required to attend sporting events/fixtures on behalf of their country;
- Significant changes in work commitments (for part time students only);
- Situations where students are unable to progress academically such being unable to find a placement or delays with third party processes such as DBS checks.

Interruptions would not normally be approved in the following circumstances:

- If a programme is being withdrawn and there are no future cohorts for a student to join upon return from an interruption;
- Where an interruption is requested immediately before the start of examinations or submission of assessments, simply as a means of avoiding failure in or postponing assessments, as this would provide these students with an unmerited advantage, if there is a genuine reason why a student cannot complete an assessment, it may be appropriate to use the Personal Mitigating Circumstances Procedure;
- Vacations;
- Employment that does not contribute significantly towards the student's programme of study;
- Poor planning and time management.

The University will confirm the outcome of the request in writing, including the start and end date of the period of interruption. This communication will also confirm the student's academic or assessment position at the point of return including:

- Outstanding assessments which need to be completed in order to complete the relevant level or stage of a programme;
- Future assessment dates (if known);
- Confirmation of which assessment attempt a student will have reached upon their return to study (for example first attempt or replacement first attempt);
- Any relevant supervision arrangements or changes to personal tutor arrangements upon return;
- Whether or not programme changes may affect the availability of modules on return to study.

3.9 Retrospective Interruptions

Interruptions cannot normally be submitted retrospectively and will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

3.10 Last Date of Attendance for Students on an Interruption of Study and Funding

The last date of attendance/engagement before an interruption will be notified, where relevant, to funding bodies/organisations. If students are in receipt of funding whilst not attending and engaging with their studies, this may be considered as fraud.

Students are required to pay any outstanding tuition fees up to the point of taking an interruption.

3.11 International Students

If a student who is sponsored under Tier 4 interrupts their studies for 60 days or more, the University must inform the Home Office and their visa will be withdrawn. This means the student will need to return home and apply for another visa to come back when they are ready to return from their interruption.

If a student who is sponsored under Tier 4 interrupts their studies for less than 60 days, the student does not need to surrender their visa; however, this is recommended. If the student

chooses not to surrender their visa, the student forfeits the right to an extension to their programme.

Further advice is available from the Home Office Compliance team.

3.12 Communication with Students during an Interruption

During a period of interruption the University will, at periodic intervals, communicate with students via their University of Salford email account to provide relevant information. In addition, the University will also communicate with students approximately six weeks in advance of their return to studies to make arrangements to return following the period of interruption. This may include a return to study meeting with a Programme Leader or Supervisor. On return to the University, students shall be provided with an appropriate induction. Depending on the programme this may include attendance at sessions to update knowledge, an update on programme changes or other issues which may impact on studies. Students will be required to confirm their intention to return one month before the expected return date. If a student does not confirm intention to return and subsequently re-register, they will be withdrawn from their programme.

3.13 Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes

The [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#) and the [Academic Regulations for Research Regulations](#) will provide guidance on which regulations will apply following a period of interruption.

3.14 Process to Request and Confirm a Withdrawal from Studies

A student who wishes to request a withdrawal from their programme of study must formally notify their School as soon as possible through the online system. If this is not possible, the student should submit a request to their School in writing. Students must seek advice and guidance.

The University will confirm to the student in writing that a withdrawal has been processed.

3.15 Intermediate Terminating Qualifications

If a student has withdrawn, the University will review a student's academic profile to determine if sufficient credits have been accumulated to award an intermediate terminating qualification in line with the Academic Regulations.

3.16 Last Date of Attendance for Withdrawn Students and Financial Implications

The University will use the last date of attendance/engagement to determine tuition fee balances.

The last date of attendance/engagement will also be notified, where relevant, to funding bodies/organisations to determine any student loan or bursary overpayments. If students are in receipt of funding whilst not attending and engaging with their studies, this may be considered as fraud.

3.17 Monitoring and Review

An annual overview report detailing the number of students interrupting and withdrawing and along with reasons will be considered by SELTEC.

4.0 Related Documentation

The following University Policies can be found in the University Policy & Procedure pages [University Policy & Procedure pages http://www.salford.ac.uk/policies](http://www.salford.ac.uk/policies) or via the direct links below:

- [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#)
- [Academic Regulations for Research Programmes](#)
- [Code of Practice for the Conduct of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Personal Mitigating Circumstances Procedure](#)
- [Pregnancy, Maternity, New Parenthood and Adoption Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Student Engagement, Participation and Attendance Policy](#)
- [Tuition Fee Policy](#)

- [Guidance for Students Considering Interruption or Withdrawal](#)
- [Guidance for Staff Considering Requests for Interruption Only](#)
- [Guidance for Staff Considering Requests for Withdrawal Only](#)

| Document Control Information | | | |
|---|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| Revision History incl. Authorisation: (most recent first) | | | |
| Author | Summary of changes | Version | Authorised & Date |
| Annette Cooke | <i>Additional guidance is included regarding circumstances which may or may not be considered acceptable for an interruption of studies. Students should include evidence of circumstances upon application for an interruption. Additional guidance regarding implications for international students included. Reference to apprenticeships also included</i> | V1.2 | Annual update July 2017 |
| Annette Cooke | <i>Additional clarification regarding the permitted length of time for PGR students and transfer to revised Policy framework template including Equality Assessment Analysis</i> | V1.1 | 6 September 2016 |
| Policy Management and Responsibilities: | | | |
| Owner: | This Policy is issued by the Head of Quality and Enhancement, who has the authority to issue and communicate policy on student interruptions and withdrawals and has delegated day to day management and communication of the policy to the Quality and Enhancement Manager. | | |
| Others with responsibilities (please specify): | All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy. | | |
| Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams: | | | |
| Equality Analysis (E&D, HR) Equality Assessment form | 1. <i>Update 1 July 2017</i> | | |
| Legal implications (LPG) | 2. <i>N/A</i> | | |
| Information Governance (LPG) | 3. <i>N/A</i> | | |
| Student facing procedures (QEO) | 4. <i>Spring 2017</i> | | |
| UKVI Compliance (Student Admin) | 5. <i>Spring 2017- additional guidance for international students added</i> | | |
| Consultation: | | | |
| Staff Trades Unions via HR Students via USSU Relevant external bodies (specify) | 1. <i>USSU consulted during development of policy</i> | | |
| Review: | | | |
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| Document location: | University Policy & Procedure pages http://www.salford.ac.uk/policies | | |
| The owner and author are responsible for publicising this policy document. | | | |