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| SUSPENSION OF STUDY (POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS) | |
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# Definition and process

* 1. Suspension of study is taking a break from studies. Students may request a period of suspension at any time during their studies, for any reason. Suspension of study may be planned, in the case of time off to travel or work, or be in response to illness or personal problems which are affecting the student’s ability to study effectively.
  2. Students **should** discuss their wish to suspend their studies with their supervisor (or second supervisor) in advance of making a formal request to Research Degrees Committee, via the Doctoral College. If the student does not wish to speak to their Supervisor, they are encouraged to discuss their suspension with the Student Life Team to ensure they understand the process and the implications of suspending.
  3. Students **must** apply in writing, using the appropriate form (Postgraduate Research Students - Special Cases Form, available from the Doctoral College website). Students are not required to provide evidence of the reasons for their request, however students suspending due to health reasons are encouraged to do so as they may be eligible for additional finance (see section 7). The student **must** supply the completed documentation to their home academic unit. Once supported by the academic unit, the form **must** then be forwarded to the Doctoral College, for approval by Research Degrees Committee and so that the student’s record can be updated accordingly. If a request is refused by the academic unit this will be reviewed by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) for final decision. If a request is refused by RDC then the reasons for that decision **must** be made clear to the student. The student would have the right to appeal the decision as per the academic appeals code of practice.
  4. It is the student’s responsibility to provide their last date of engagement within the suspension form. The last date of engagement for PGR students is defined as the last date the student carried out any work or research, or met with their Personal Supervisor. It is the responsibility of the Personal Supervisor to inform the Doctoral College if they do not agree with the date the student provided. The suspension request would then be amended to reflect the correct date. If the student disagrees with this date, and it affects their fees, the student would be required to submit evidence of their last date of engagement to Registry Services for a decision.
  5. There are specific issues in relation to international students and suspension of study, which may cause visa and immigration problems for the student. For this reason, all international students **must** see the University Immigration Adviser before submitting their suspension of study form to the academic unit. The Immigration Adviser will sign the form to indicate that the student has been given the appropriate advice.
  6. Students requesting extensions of suspension of study will be expected to provide evidence of the ongoing problems affecting their return to study.
  7. The reason for the suspension of study is required, as this is used on statistical returns and is required by UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration).
  8. All students who suspend their studies are contacted by the Doctoral College prior to their return to study, to clarify their intentions and fitness to return.
  9. If, during a period of suspension, there is a modification to a programme, the nearest alternative(s) will be offered to the student. Any significant change to a programme, during a period of suspension, will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

# Retrospective suspension of study

* 1. Students studying on a student visa are not permitted to apply for or be granted a retrospective suspension of study. Students and academic units are advised to seek advice from the University Visa Compliance Team as soon as this issue arises.
  2. Suspension of study is expected to be applied for in advance, or at the start of any problems affecting studies.
  3. However, if the suspension of study is for reasons of illness or personal problems, it may be the case that students do not immediately take the decision to suspend their studies, and do not inform their academic unit for the reason for their absence.
  4. Applying for retrospective suspension of study does present extra problems related to the funding that the student and the University has received, and for the student record and statistical returns. Students may have to repay part of any support funding already received. In addition, students who have received Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) support may experience funding difficulties if retrospective suspension of study is approved - the student **must** contact Student Support and Experience in advance to discuss this.
  5. Retrospective suspension of study **must** therefore be seen as exceptional, and when applied for, **must** come with the full support of the academic unit, and with clear evidence of the rationale behind the request. All requests for retrospective suspension of study **must** be approved by Research Degrees Committee (RDC).
  6. There **must** also be a clear rationale shown as to why the request is for a retrospective suspension of study (confirming that the student was effectively not in attendance) and not a request for a repeat period (where the student was in attendance but had their ability to study affected by their circumstances).

# Suspension of study on grounds of risk

* 1. A candidate on any University of Hull programme, wheresoever located, who is judged, on substantial evidence, to be unfit to study by reason of posing a risk to themselves or others may be required to suspend those studies even in the absence of the candidate’s consent.
  2. The process for instigating such a compulsory suspension of study is different to that described in this Code of Practice, and can be found in the relevant programme regulations. Such students are subject to different entitlements and responsibilities, in particular they ‘shall not be entitled to use University facilities and services or be present on the University campuses’. See the programme regulations for full details.
  3. In exceptional circumstances where the student is an overseas national and subject to immigration controls, if it is deemed that the student’s continued participation in their studies represents a risk to the University’s Highly Trusted Sponsor licence, the Registrar may compel a student to take a period of suspension of study. This action will only be taken when the Registrar receives a recommendation from the Visa Compliance Manager to do so. The Registrar will, together with an independent third party (the Director of the Doctoral College or nominee), review the case and decide whether or not the evidence is sufficient to action the recommendation. If it is deemed appropriate to action the recommendation, the student will be written to outlining the reasons why and given the opportunity to appeal the decision. The appeal paper work **must** be submitted within five working days with a final decision communicated to the student within two working days.

# International students

* 1. International students who wish to suspend their studies **must** be made aware that this may have implications for their immigration status in the UK, as they will normally be required to leave the UK. The University is required, under the terms of its licence, to report any student (studying on a student visa) who suspends their studies. It is a requirement that international students consult with the Immigration Adviser before submitting the suspension of study form to their academic unit. The Immigration Adviser will sign the form (or otherwise confirm, e.g. by email) to indicate that the student has received appropriate advice.

# Academic issues regarding suspension of study

* 1. Students who are suspending their studies are defined as taking a break from study. As such, they are not registered students and are not entitled to receive any tuition or supervision.
  2. Research students who suspend their studies **must** also suspend their studies from the Postgraduate Training Scheme (PGTS). The Doctoral College will ensure that, where a suspension of study is approved, students are shown as suspending their studies on both their main degree and the PGTS.
  3. If the student has outstanding assessments or examinations, they may request to take those assessments whilst they have suspended their study. No students **should** be compelled to undertake assessments during a period of suspension (of study), and this issue **must** be discussed at the time of the suspension of study request. The final decision as to whether the student is permitted to take outstanding assessments rests with the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee. Academic Units **must** be particularly aware of students suspending their studies due to health problems, and take into account that such students may not be fit to take assessments during this period of suspension (of study). However, if the student is an international student then advice **must** be sought from the Visa Compliance Team prior to the assessments being taken.
  4. Students who normally have alternative arrangements for their assessments may have those arrangements affected by their suspension of study, particularly if those arrangements rely on the availability of DSA funding. Students in this position **must** discuss this with the Student Support and Experience team and their academic unit before suspending study.

# Access to services

* 1. Access to Hull University and Students’ Union (HUSU) services may be affected by the student’s period of suspension of study. Once the student’s status has been amended on the Student Information System, this information is transferred to other systems, e.g. to Students’ Union and Library / room access systems. The main affects are as follows:

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| **Accommodation** | Students who suspend studies and who live in University-owned accommodation will be required to leave the accommodation and re-apply before their return to study. |
| **Library** | . Students who suspend studies will retain full access to the library, however this can be amended for exceptional cases if required. |
| **Doctoral College** | Access to the Doctoral College is suspended during the period of suspension of study. |
| **24 hour PC lab** | Access to the 24-hour PC labs is dependent on the student’s Library access. |
| **IT services** | Whilst suspending studies, students retain their ICT user account and their access to the Student Portal. Students will retain access to the virtual learning environment (Canvas), and their student cards will continue to work on door access controls. These are the default positions, and can be amended for exceptional cases if required. |
| **Students’ Union** | Students who suspend their studies retain access to the Students’ Union advice centre, but are no longer members of the Union and, as such, lose all the rights of membership. As a result, they are not permitted to use the Union's licensed areas (bars), societies or sports teams. Students who suspend their studies can apply to the Union for associate membership if they wish, which will give them full access to some Union facilities. They can also apply to the Sports and Fitness Centre for a public membership of the facilities. |
| **Student Support and Experience** | Access to support from Student Support and Experience may be restricted for students who suspend their studies. Students who suspend their studies on grounds of a disability or ongoing health condition **should** contact Student Support and Experience in advance of their return to study. Any student who may require support during their period of suspension (of study) **must** contact Student Support and Experience prior to applying for suspension of study. |
| **Skills Team, Student Futures, Counselling Service** | Students retain access to the Skills Team, Student Futures and the Counselling Service whilst they suspend their studies. Some services are based in the Library for which physical access may be restricted (see above). |

# Financial consequences of suspension of study

* 1. There are many financial consequences for students who suspend their studies. Students with queries regarding their entitlements and liabilities whilst suspending study **should** contact either Student Support Services or the Student Union Advice Centre, preferably before applying to suspend their studies. Students studying on a T4 visa may also have additional costs relating to their visa status and **should** seek advice in advance.
  2. The following table outlines the main financial consequences to the student of suspension of study, and **should** be used when advising students.

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| **University Scholarship** | University PhD Scholarship students who are ill can receive their stipends for periods covered by a medical certificate of up to thirteen weeks within any 12 month period. |
| **Sponsors/Other Scholarships** | Sponsors may or may not be willing to continue financial support during a period of suspension of study. Students **should** check with their sponsors and the Doctoral College before requesting suspension of study. It is the responsibility of the student to inform their sponsor that they are suspending their studies and they are strongly advised to do so. |
| **Council Tax** | Council Tax exemption will be expected to continue for the period of suspension of study. Council Tax exemption certificates will be available from the Doctoral College as normal, although whether the student is, or is not exempt is a matter for discussion between the student and the relevant Local Authority. |
| **Access to Learning Fund (ALF)** | Students will still be eligible to apply for the Access to Learning Fund. |
| **Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)** | Students receiving Disabled Students Allowance will have this funding suspended. Students receiving support funded through the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), such as note-taking, mentoring or specialist study skills tuition **should** be aware that this support will be suspended during the period of suspension of study. Students who have assessments to undertake during the period of suspension of study, and who would normally have a support worker for these assessments, **should** discuss this with Student Support and Experience well in advance. |
| **Students receiving an NHS Bursary** | The guidelines are particularly complicated in this area and students **must** check with the NHS Student Grants Unit via email [nhsbsa.sbaccounts@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.sbaccounts@nhs.net) |
| **Students receiving money from the TDA** | Contact the Teaching Development Agency for further information at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) |
| **Welfare Benefits** | Students will not generally be entitled to welfare benefits (unless they already have entitlement), as the government considers them to be a full-time student until they complete their course. Because of this lack of available public financial support, they may have no option but to work, unless they have another source of income. Students may be able to claim some benefits if unable to work (e.g. due to illness, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, etc.) |

# Authority

* 1. The University Student Experience, Employability and Engagement Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this Code of Practice.
  2. Partner institutions may use this Code of Practice for their own practices regarding suspension of study.

**Version Control**

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