

Interruptions Policy

Approved by: Academic Board	Effective date: 1 August 2023	Next review: 1 June 2024
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Policy statement

The University is committed to supporting students who require time away from their studies due to personal circumstances, and where this will assist them in achieving the best academic outcomes in their studies. This document outlines the agreed University Policy for managing students' formal interruptions to study.

Who needs to know about the policy?

- Deans of Faculty and Pro Vice-Chancellors
- Heads of School and Department
- Faculty Professional Staff
- Academic and Professional Services staff who advise students, including those at Partner Institutions
- Personal Academic Tutors and Course Directors (or equivalent role)
- Students, including Apprentices and those studying at Partner Institutions
- Applicants

Purpose of the Policy

This Policy outlines the agreed University principles and arrangements for managing students' formal interruptions to study. It is for students and staff to be aware of. It outlines processes for approving requests, supporting students, impacts of taking interruptions and what to consider when students return to study.

Contacts

Registry Services is responsible for:

- Providing advice and guidance on the Policy
- Maintaining guidance documents
- Final stage processing of interruption requests

The team can be contacted by emailing: student.records@canterbury.ac.uk

Faculties and Partner Institutions are responsible for:

- Undertaking initial processing of Interruption requests
- Providing advice and assistance to students
- Operational training for staff on Faculty-stage processing steps

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University is committed to supporting students who need to temporarily suspend their studies for a specified period of time due to personal circumstances, and where this will assist them in achieving the best academic outcomes in their studies.
- 1.2. This Policy applies to all students on taught courses of study and research degrees, including those studying with Partner Institutions. The only section which applies to students on research degrees is Section 3; this includes: PhD courses and Professional Doctorates.
- 1.3. This Policy outlines the agreed University principles and arrangements for managing students' interruptions to study.

2. Definition

- 2.1. An interruption is a formally authorised break from studies (usually for a year) where registration as a student is temporarily suspended. It is normally for personal circumstances that temporarily impact a student's ability to study, which may include health reasons, maternity or paternity, financial circumstances or other personal reasons.
- 2.2. An interruption is different from a short (e.g. 1 or 2 week) authorised absence from studies, which is dealt with through an alternative route¹.

3. Research Degrees

- 3.1. The length of interruption for a research degree may be 3, 6 or 12 months and may occur in any month of the year, with resumption in any month.
- 3.2. Students will not pay fees during the period of interruption and will not receive supervision.
- 3.3. Students on a Student Route visa who interrupt for 60 or more days are required by the UKVI to return to their home country during the period of interruption², and re-apply for a Confirmation of Acceptance of Study (CAS) to return to study on their course.
 - 3.3.1. The University reserves the right to refuse to issue a further CAS if a student breaches UKVI rules by remaining within the United Kingdom during their interruption period.
- 3.4. A request for interruption is initially considered by the student's supervisor. Students should discuss

¹ Normally through either the University's Attendance Monitoring system or UKVI Student Absence Form (for students on a Student Route visa).

² See the UKVI Sponsored Students: Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure for full details on Student Route visa registration and attendance requirements.

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their interruption request with their supervisory panel prior to making the request. Applications for interruptions of study are authorised by the Research Degrees Board.

3.5. Following a return from interruption, students should meet as soon as possible with their supervisor to plan their return to study, researcher development training needs and research activity.

3.6. Full details on interruptions for research students are available in the Postgraduate Research Handbook on the Graduate College Blackboard. Students should contact the Graduate College for further advice on interruption of their studies.

4. Requesting an interruption

4.1. Where a student's last recorded date of engagement is dated after the teaching and formal assessment period for a module has passed, the module will be considered 'attempted' regardless of whether it is passed, not passed or deferred. The academic results for modules attempted prior to a student's interruption will continue to stand, regardless of the interruption.

4.2. Interruption from a student's current academic year may only be requested where the teaching and formal assessment periods for that year's modules have not yet finished. For example, for full-time students, a request to interrupt must be received before the end of the formal assessment period for the student's second Semester (e.g. Easter Semester for September intakes) or third Trimester (e.g. Trinity Trimester for September intakes) in that academic year.

4.3. Prior to submitting a request for interruption, students are expected to discuss their reasons for the interruption, and expected timing of return, with their Personal Academic Tutor (or equivalent at a Partner Institution)³. The Personal Academic Tutor will keep a record of any conversation with a student related to an interruption.

4.4. Prior to submitting an interruption request, Student Route visa students must discuss the implications for their visa with the University's Compliance Team.

4.4.1. Student Route visa students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses who interrupt are required by the UKVI to return to their home country during the period of interruption and re-apply for a CAS to return to study on their course.

4.4.2. The University reserves the right to refuse to issue a further CAS if a student breaches UKVI rules by remaining within the United Kingdom during their interruption period.

4.5. Students should also discuss their potential interruption with Student Wellbeing Services for advice on the implications, including consideration of fees and funding implications.

4.6. Students who experience personal circumstances that impact on their ability to engage with their studies may be able to be supported with Exceptional Circumstances or a Temporary Learning Agreement

³ Students on apprenticeship Courses are also expected to discuss any planned interruption with their employer.

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rather than committing to interrupting their studies.

4.7. To request an interruption of studies, it is expected that students will make the request by using the [Changes to Study](#) option in their [MyRecord](#) (i.e. 'Taking a break').

4.7.1. There may be specific instances where a member of the Course Team may submit the interruption request on the student's behalf (at their request⁴), where a system restriction prevents the student making the request themselves, through their MyRecord.

4.8. Interruption requests are expected to be made in a timely manner. Retrospective requests will only be approved in exceptional cases, where the request relates to the student's most recent academic year and the student's last recorded date of engagement supports such a request.

4.9. Requests to interrupt studies must be authorised by an appropriate member of academic staff in the relevant Faculty. This will normally be a Course Director (or equivalent role).

4.10. In considering an interruption for approval, Faculty staff are expected to take account of:

4.10.1. whether the student has attempted modules which are not yet passed, and the implications this may have for their return to study arrangements (see section 7);

4.10.2. whether the student has had previous periods of interruption during their current registration, and where they are in relation to their maximum period of registration⁵;

4.10.3. the last possible date of interruption for the student's current academic year;

4.10.4. fee liability points;

4.10.5. any Professional, Statutory, Regulation Body requirements;

4.10.6. any approved future changes to the course validation, curriculum or schedule for module teaching in the next academic year, which may impact the student on their return.

4.11. A date for the student's proposed return to study must be agreed at point of interruption.

4.12. An interruption will be recorded as commencing on the last recorded date of engagement with studies as held by the University⁶.

5. Length of interruption

5.1. The normal maximum length of any period of interruption is one year (two Semesters or three Trimesters).

⁴ This request must be in writing, from the student and clearly state their decision to Interrupt (along with all other details necessary to complete an interruption request). A copy of the request must be retained by the Course Team. **NB:** *statements from a student indicating a potential desire to interrupt, rather than a clear decision cannot be the basis for action under 4.7.1.*

⁵ Maximum periods of registration are set out in the [General Regulations for the Conferment of Awards](#).

⁶ In line with the criteria set out in the [Conditions of Student Registration](#).

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5.2. Periods of interruption longer than one year may be permitted in exceptional cases.

5.2.1. If a student wishes to request longer than a year's interruption, they must interrupt for a year in the first instance, and then make a subsequent request to extend the interruption beyond that year through a new Changes to Study interruption request (via MyRecord). This subsequent request must be submitted prior to the initial expected return date.

5.2.2. When considering requests to extend a period of interruption beyond one year, Course Directors must ensure agreeing to such an extended break from studies will not disadvantage the student academically or professionally, and the student is clear about any financial implications it may have.

6. Period of Course Registration

6.1. Periods of interruption count towards the student's maximum period of registration⁷, except where their interruption relates to paternity or maternity. Unless exceptional reasons apply, an interruption request cannot be agreed if it takes the student beyond their maximum period of registration.

7. Return to Study

7.1. Students will return only at the start of a Trimester or Semester, and may be required to demonstrate they are eligible to return to study⁸.

7.2. Students taking an interruption of study should be aware that the course curriculum and University Regulations may be subject to change while they are interrupted, and so they may return to an altered course structure or revised Regulations.

7.3. Students should agree with their Course team the plan for their return to study before the start of their interruption period. This should include agreeing arrangements regarding the completion of any outstanding reassessment (and, where applicable, deferred assessment) for attempted modules, when they return from interruption (in line with the [Regulation & Credit Framework](#)). These arrangements must ensure the student is neither academically advantaged nor disadvantaged compared to other students, and that the principles in 7.4 are applied (as appropriate).

7.4. The point of the academic year in which a student can return will depend on when they interrupt, which modules they have not yet attempted and whether they have outstanding (re)assessment to be completed for modules attempted but not passed at the point they interrupt. For some courses, depending on the course structure, alternative arrangements for return to study may be determined. The arrangements for a student's point of return to study will however normally be guided by the following principles:

⁷ See the [General Regulations for the Conferment of Awards](#) for details of the maximum periods of registration.

⁸ For example, for courses subject to Occupational Health Checks a student may be required to successfully complete this check before returning to study. A student may also be subject to Fitness to Study procedures in relation to their return.

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7.4.1. Students who interrupt **before** the end of the formal module assessment period for a Semester/Trimester will be required to return at the start of the Semester/Trimester in the following year where those modules are being taught, to re-start those modules⁹.

7.4.2. Students who interrupt **after** the end of the formal module assessment period for a Semester/Trimester¹⁰ and have **passed** all modules at the point of interruption (so have no outstanding (re)assessments), will be expected to return to study in the next academic year at the start of the Semester/Trimester when their remaining (un-attempted) modules are scheduled.

7.4.3. Students who interrupt **after** the end of the formal module assessment period for a Semester/Trimester¹¹ and have outstanding reassessments (or approved deferrals) for modules attempted but not yet passed at the point of interruption, are expected to return to study at the start of the Semester/Trimester when their remaining (un-attempted) modules are scheduled (as per 7.4.2) and take the reassessments (or deferrals) for their attempted modules without attendance at the next available opportunity.

7.4.3.1. For students with outstanding reassessment **only**, in exceptional cases it may be possible to agree they return at the start of the earlier, relevant Semester/Trimester to complete their reassessment as Reassessment with Attendance, before completing their remaining (un-attempted) modules. This option is not available where the student has deferred first assessment, or where the student had already attempted the module as Reassessment with Attendance before the point their interruption commenced.

7.5. A student who has an authorised interruption but does not return and does not re-register for their studies at the expected return point, will be assumed withdrawn from their course¹².

8. Access to University Services during Interruption

8.1. Students on an interruption are not able to: attend classes, access the e-library, borrow from the library, or submit (re)assessment.

8.2. Students on an interruption retain access to Student Wellbeing Support services, the library, Blackboard and their University computing account.

8.3. Students on an interruption can approach Student Wellbeing Services for advice and guidance, including assistance to apply for University hardship funds.

⁹ Any assessment submitted/sat for the module(s) in question in the year being interruption from will become void; students will be expected to attend the module in full (completing all assessment for the module) on their return to study.

¹⁰ Semester 1 and Trimesters 1 and 2.

¹¹ Semester 1 and Trimesters 1 and 2.

¹² In line with the [Conditions of Student Registration](#).

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9. Fees and Funding

9.1. Students who interrupt their studies will be liable for all fees due for the fee liability period(s) in that academic year up to and including the date on which the interruption commences.

9.2. When a student returns to study they will be liable for tuition fees for the academic year they return, for all fee liability periods due on or after their date of return. This will include any previously attempted (but not passed) modules being taken as Reassessment with Attendance on the student's return (7.4.3.1)¹³.

9.3. Taking an interruption from studies may have implications for the student on the number of years of tuition fee student loan eligibility available to complete their studies. Students are strongly advised to seek advice on student funding from Student Wellbeing Services prior to taking an interruption.

10. Support for students on an interruption

10.1. University and/or Partner staff will keep in contact with students on an interruption. Students will be expected to know who to contact regarding their return to study. This will normally be their Personal Academic Tutor (or equivalent in Partner Institutions).

10.1.1. If any changes occur to the course curriculum, schedule for module teaching or University Regulations during the student's interruption, the Course Team must ensure the student is made aware (prior to their return date) of the change, and any implications for their return to study.

10.2. Course teams will contact students on interruption prior to their return to study, normally 3 months prior to their proposed return to study date, to confirm return to study and agree re-orientation and support requirements.

10.3. Students will be provided with re-orientation support on their return to study, in accordance with University [Student Engagement in Learning Policy](#) and staff Student Retention & Success guidance. This support should engage the student with re-orientation activities and resources (online and face-to-face), and provide them with targeted support to progress (and engage with (re)assessment if necessary).

10.4. Students with Learning Support Plans are recommended to contact the relevant Student Wellbeing Services team at least 6 weeks before they are due to return. This will enable a meeting to be arranged to ensure support is in place for their return, including where it may be necessary to review the student's Learning Support Plan.

11. Third Party requests for interruption

11.1. On occasion the University may place a student on an interruption following notification by a third party (on behalf of a student) that the student is unable to engage with their studies or to make a request to interrupt themselves. Examples of where this action might be taken include (but are not limited to) severe

¹³ Reassessment (or deferral) being completed *without* attendance on the student's return would not incur tuition fees.

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illness/hospitalisation or imprisonment.

11.2. The University will undertake appropriate due diligence to confirm the authenticity of the third party request.

11.3. The Changes to Study Interruption request will normally be submitted by the Course Administrator, under instruction of the student's Course Director (or equivalent), and final approval of the request must be given by the Head of SITS Record Management (or their nominee) before the interruption can be implemented.

12. Related Links

- [Conditions of Student Registration](#)
- [Student Engagement in Learning Policy](#)
- [UKVI Sponsored Students: Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure](#)
- Student [Changes to Study](#) guidance
- [Staff Interruption guidance](#)
- [Regulation and Credit Framework](#)
- [Staff Student Retention & Success Blackboard](#)

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Policy Information	Description of Policy Information
Policy Title	Interruptions Policy
Department Owner	Registry Services
Policy Category	Academic Administrative Practice Students
Policy Owner	Director of Registry Services
Policy Administration	student.records@canterbury.ac.uk
Related University Policies	Conditions of Student Registration Student Terms & Conditions UKVI Sponsored Students: Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure Student Engagement in Learning Policy General Regulations for the Conferment of Awards Regulations for Taught Awards Regulations for Research Awards
Related University Procedures	University's Approach to Attendance Learning Support Plans
Approved by	Academic Board
Date Approved	3 October 2023
Date of Commencement	August 2023
Review Date	June 2021 July 2023 June 2024
Version	3.0
History of revisions of the policy	Version 1.0 Sept 20 Version 2.0 Sept 21 Version 3.0 Aug 23
Website Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on Changes to Study via the student page. • The Policy Zone for Students (also linked to from the staff policy a-z page)