

Procedures for Approving Interruption of Studies

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PRIFYSGOL
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Date	Supersedes	Description of Change
1 February 2021	2018 Version 1.1	Minor changes to timescales.
1 November 2018	2017 Version	General update.

Document Owner	Approved By	Date Approved	Review Frequency
Student Services.	Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee.	20 January 2021.	Every three years.

Note: In exceptional circumstances, and subject to approval by the Chair of the Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee, responsibilities assigned to Schools, Heads, of School, School Officers or School Committees in these Regulations may be assumed by the College, Head of College, College Officers or College Committees respectively, as appropriate.

Procedures for Approving Interruption of Studies



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This Procedure outlines how students can formally interrupt their studies.

Introduction

1. This document describes the procedures that must be followed when a student wishes to interrupt their studies. The procedures must only be used in cases where there are justifiable reasons why a student cannot continue with studies as planned.
2. The procedures apply to full-time and part-time students. Students must apply for an interruption to studies as soon as they are unable to continue with studies as planned.
3. The procedures **must not be used** to interrupt the studies of students under the following categories:
 - Approved short absences (e.g. short-term illness). Such cases should be treated as authorised absences on the assumption that students can continue with background work, can access electronic resources, and that appropriate extensions to coursework can be approved.
 - Situations that can be addressed through the University's procedures for dealing with extenuating circumstances.
 - Extensions to registration periods. Such cases should be considered under the procedures for extending a period of study.
 - Disciplinary cases. Such cases should be considered under the Ordinance for Student Discipline.
 - Academic misconduct cases. Such cases should be considered under the Academic Integrity Procedure.
 - Students who are in debt. Such cases should be considered under the procedures for dealing with debtors. Interruption of study will not be allowed simply as a means to avoid or delay paying outstanding debts.
 - Students whose studies may be terminated by Examination Boards according to the Regulations for Taught Programmes.
 - Students whose studies may be suspended or terminated by the University because of ill-health as defined by the General Regulations for all Students.
 - Students whose studies may be suspended or terminated by specific procedures approved as part of the approval/validation process for their course, including conditions imposed by professional bodies or sponsors.
 - Students in Healthcare Sciences whose studies may be interrupted by procedures that are in place to meet professional and commissioner requirements.
4. Interruption of study will only be approved for significant periods, normally representing the remainder of the academic session; that is, students will not be allowed to return to their studies within an academic session and can only resume their studies in the next academic session. The only exception is students on postgraduate research programmes who may be permitted to resume their studies

at the earliest practicable opportunity, provided that their programme of study or research allows. The length of the period of interrupted study for students on postgraduate research programmes will be recorded to the nearest whole month.

5. During a period of interrupted study, students will not be recorded as registered students of the University and will not pay fees.

How to apply for interruption of study

6. Before applying for interruption of study, students should consult with their personal tutor, senior tutor, course director, supervisor or head of school (or nominee) to discuss the circumstances and the academic implications of interrupting study. Students should also consider any other consequences of interrupting their study (e.g. accommodation contract or financial implications).
7. Students should consider whether interruption of studies is permitted by their sponsor or body responsible for professional registration. Approval of an application for interrupted study by the University does not guarantee that interrupted study will be permitted under a sponsor’s regulations, and students may have to apply separately for an extension from the sponsor. Students should also consider whether sponsors will require repayment of a stipend if studies are interrupted.
8. Applications for interruption of study must be submitted by students in writing. The application must include:
 - The reasons for requesting an interruption of study.
 - Evidence to confirm medical or personal circumstances.
 - The start date for the period of interrupted study.
 - The intended end date for the period of interrupted study (if known).

9. Applications must be submitted to the University’s Student Administration Section as follows:

Undergraduate Students:	Through Student Services.
Taught Postgraduate Students:	Through the course director or other named official in the school.
Postgraduate Research Students:	Through the supervisor, chair of supervisory committee, or other named official in the school.

10. Applications must normally be submitted before the start of the period of interrupted study or within 20 working days, where practically possible, of a student discontinuing studies for unavoidable reasons (e.g. an accident that prevented a student from continuing studies). Backdated applications (i.e. greater than 1 month) will only be considered under exceptional circumstances and where the student can show good reason why the request was not made at the appropriate time.

Criteria for approving interruption of study

11. Interruption of study will only normally be approved for the following reasons:

Ill Health	Applications must include a medical certificate or its equivalent.
Parental Leave	Applications must include evidence that parental responsibilities will prevent a student from studying.
Sabbatical Office	Normally applies only to a student elected to a sabbatical post in the University's Students' Union.
Work experience	For students on programmes that do not include a defined period of work experience: students must demonstrate that the work experience is relevant to the programme of study and applications must be supported by a statement from the prospective employer, and must be supported by the student's School.
Exceptional Professional Commitments	For students on part-time programmes: applications must be supported by a statement from the student's employer to confirm the exceptional commitments.
Study Abroad	For students on programmes that do not include a defined period of study abroad: students must demonstrate that the period of study abroad is relevant to the programme of study and applications must be supported by a statement from the host institution and must be supported by the student's school.
Compassionate Grounds	For situations where there have been significant changes in a student's personal, domestic, or family circumstances.
Financial Hardship	Applications will only be approved if financial hardship has been caused by changes in a student's personal circumstances, or due to any other factors outside the student's control.

Procedures for the consideration of applications

12. Applications will be processed by the Student Administration Section as soon as is practicably possible.
13. Where necessary, the Student Administration Section will discuss applications with a student's School, particularly to consider:
 - Changes to the structure and content of the programmes during the period of interrupted study.
 - Arrangements for assessment so that the student is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.
14. The Student Administration Section will ensure that students and their schools are informed of the outcome of the application. The information provided to the student will include:
 - The expected date of return to study.
 - The point in the programme of study at which the student will be permitted to return.

- Details of any conditions which must be satisfied before the student can return to the University.
 - Revised deadlines for completing the programme (where applicable).
 - Confirmation that:
 - 20 working days' notice of return will be required.
 - The student will not have access to the University's facilities.
 - On their return, University accommodation cannot be guaranteed.
 - That the programme may be discontinued before studies are resumed.
15. Outcomes of applications for interrupted study will be sent to students by letter, normally as an email attachment. Only the official letter may be used to confirm that interruption of studies has been approved.
16. The Student Data Team will normally inform the student's sponsor if an application is approved. In some cases, the student's school will ensure that sponsors and/or other organisations (e.g. professional bodies) are informed.
17. If a student is living in University accommodation, the Student Administration Section will inform the Halls Office that interruption of studies has been approved. Hall fees will be refunded as described in paragraph 22.
18. Applications that include extraordinary or particularly unusual circumstances may be referred to the Chair of the Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee for consideration.

Restrictions on applications

19. Interruption of study will only be approved for a period of up to 12 months. Students wishing to extend a period of interrupted study must submit a new application.
20. Applications received after the end of a student's registration period will not be considered. Any circumstances affecting completion of a student's studies after discontinuation of registration (e.g. completion of a research dissertation) must be addressed by applying for an extension and/or through School's procedures for mitigating circumstances.

Tuition and other fees

21. Tuition fees will normally be refunded on a pro rata basis. Fees paid by a third party (e.g. sponsor, Research Council, or loan company) will normally be refunded to the third party and not to the student.
22. University Hall Fees will be refunded as defined by the terms of a student's residence agreement and associated regulations. Accommodation fees paid by a third party (e.g. a sponsor) will normally be refunded to the third party and not to the student.
23. Any outstanding debts must normally be paid before the start of the period of interrupted study or to a schedule agreed by the University.

Return to study

24. Before a student returns to the University, the Student Services Section must be informed in writing. The letter/email must be sent a minimum of 20 working days before the intended date of return. If a student does not inform the Student

Services Section of the intention to return, the University may prevent the student from resuming studies.

25. Where the interruption of study has been approved on medical grounds, the student must normally submit a medical certificate a minimum of 20 working days before the intended date of return. For some courses, additional health checks arranged by the school may also be required. If a student does not provide a medical certificate, the University may prevent the student from resuming studies.
26. After a period of interrupted study, students must normally pursue the programme as offered at the time when the studies are resumed. For example, students returning to complete Level 6 modules after a period of interrupted study must follow those core and compulsory modules that have been defined for the academic year in which the student resumes study. Students may not normally repeat modules in which credit has been achieved.
27. If a student does not return to the University after a period of interrupted study and an additional period of interrupted study had not been requested and/or approved, the student's registration will be discontinued, and where possible, an exit qualification will be awarded. Students, whose studies have been discontinued, may apply to study on the same or a different programme at the University, but the application will be treated as a new application. Applications for accreditation of prior learning or credit transfer, based on study completed before the interruption of study, will be considered on their merits in accordance with the Regulations for Taught Programmes.

Deadlines for Completion of Programmes

28. Following a period of interrupted study students will be expected to complete their programmes within the deadlines specified below:

Undergraduate Students:	Within the deadlines specified by the regulations for Taught Programmes. For example: for a full-time student on a 3-year degree programme – within 5 years.
Taught Postgraduate Students:	Within the deadlines specified by the regulations for Taught Programmes, plus the length of the period of interrupted study. For example: for a full-time student on a 12 month programme (expected completion in 1 year), whose studies were interrupted for 12 months – within 2 years.
Postgraduate Research Students:	Within the deadlines specified by the regulations for Postgraduate Research Programmes, plus the length of the period of interrupted study. For example: for a full-time student on a 3 year PhD programme (expected completion in 4 years), whose studies were interrupted for 12 months – within 5 years.

Appeal Procedure

29. Appeals against any decisions made under these Procedures will be considered by a Pro Vice-Chancellor, normally the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience). Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Head of Student Administration within 10 days of the date on which the student receives notification of the decision.

30. Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:

- Defects or irregularities in operation of these procedures.
- Exceptional personal circumstances that relate to the decision. The appellant must explain why such personal circumstances were not made known to the University before a decision was made. Where a student could have reported exceptional circumstances but did not do so, those circumstances cannot subsequently be cited as grounds for appeal.

31. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will investigate the concerns in any manner that is appropriate in order to gather full and relevant information before making a judgment on the appeal.

32. The Pro Vice-Chancellor may reach one of the following conclusions:

- That the appeal is **not upheld**. The Pro Vice-Chancellor will instruct the Head of Student Administration to write to the appellant to inform her/him that the appeal was not upheld and that the University's procedures have been concluded.
- That the appeal **is upheld**. The Pro Vice-Chancellor will instruct the Head of Student Administration to arrange to reconsider the case. In her/his instructions to the Head of Student Administration, the Pro Vice-Chancellor will identify the grounds upon which the appeal was upheld.

33. Appeals against a reconsidered decision will not normally be permitted.

34. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. Bangor University is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with the outcome from Bangor University, you may be able to ask the OIA to review your case. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and cannot look at and what it can do to put things right here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.

You normally need to have completed this procedure before you complain to the OIA. Bangor University will send you a letter called a 'Completion of Procedures Letter' when you have reached the end of these processes and there are no further steps you can take internally. If your complaint/appeal is not upheld, Bangor University will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your complaint/appeal is upheld or partly upheld you can still ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter from Bangor University if you want one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters>.

To bring a complaint to the OIA, you need to submit a completed OIA Complaint Form within 12 months of the date of Bangor University's final decision (usually the

date of the Completion of Procedures Letter), and you will normally need to send the OIA your Completion of Procedures Letter.