

Procedures for Approving Interruption of Studies

Procedure 07: 2017 Version 01

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PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

Introduction

1. This document describes the procedures that must be followed when a student wishes to interrupt studies. The procedures must only be used in cases where there are justifiable reasons why a student can't 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.
 - Unfair practice cases. Such cases should be considered under the Unfair Practice Procedure (Procedure 05).
 - 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 (Regulation 01)
 - Students whose studies may be suspended or terminated by the University because of ill-health as defined by the General Regulations for all Students (Regulation 13).
 - 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, will not pay fees, and will not have access to any of the University's facilities, including access to IT resources.

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

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 this Procedure may be assumed by the College, Dean of College, College Officers or College Committees respectively, as appropriate.

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 Academic Registry 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 one month 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 Academic Registry as soon as is practicably possible.

13. Where necessary, the Academic Registry 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 Academic Registry 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:
 - One month's notice of return will be required
 - The student will not have access to the University's facilities
 - University accommodation on their return 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 Academic Registry 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 Academic Registry will inform the Halls Office that interruption of studies has been approved. Hall fees will be refunded as described in paragraph 23.
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 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 Academic Registry must be informed in writing. The letter/email must be sent at least one month before the intended date of return. If a student does not inform the Academic Registry 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 at least one month 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 (Regulation 01).

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:	<p>Within the deadlines specified by the regulations for Modular Undergraduate Degrees (Regulation 01).</p> <p>For example: for a full-time student on a 3-year degree programme – within 5 years.</p>
Taught Postgraduate Students:	<p>Within the deadlines specified by the regulations for Taught Postgraduate Programmes (Regulation 02) plus the length of the period of interrupted study.</p> <p>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.</p>
Postgraduate Research Students:	<p>Within the deadlines specified by the regulations for Postgraduate Research Programmes (Regulation 03) plus the length of the period of interrupted study.</p> <p>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.</p>

Appeal Procedure

29. Appeals against any decisions made under these Procedures will be considered by a Pro Vice-Chancellor (normally the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning)). Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar within 14 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 Academic Registrar 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 Academic Registrar to arrange to reconsider the case. In her/his instructions to the Academic Registrar, 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. In accordance with the Higher Education Act 2004, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (the OIA) has been designated by the National Assembly for Wales from 1 January 2005 as the operator of an independent scheme in Wales for the review of student complaints. When the appeal procedure has been completed a student may submit a complaint to the OIA. Any such complaint must be submitted by sending a completed Scheme Application Form together with all relevant information to the OIA within three months of the date on the "Completion of Procedures Letter" from the University upon completion of its internal procedures. A Scheme Application Form can be downloaded from the OIA website www.oiahe.org.uk.