

POLICY ON THE SUSPENSION OF STUDIES FOR STUDENTS			
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I have carried out an equality impact assessment screening to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.			✓
I have considered the impact of the policy on the Welsh language and Welsh language provision within the University.			✓

Policy on students suspending their studies at Wrexham University

This policy on the management of suspension of studies is in line with the commitment of Wrexham University to support widening participation, promote student retention and enhance the student experience.

It recognises also the significance for both the University and for individual students of accurate reporting internally and to external agencies, such as the Local Authorities and Student Loans Company, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Higher Education Statistics Agency and UK Visas and Immigration.

The Policy is split into two sections:

Section One: Students enrolled on Campus Based and Blended Learning Programmes

Section Two: Students enrolled on Programmes Delivered Wholly Online or via Distance Learning

Purpose of the Policy

- To provide students with an opportunity to discuss issues related to continuing engagement with their studies
- To provide students with an opportunity to agree a short period of authorised absence if appropriate
- To manage the suspension and re-enrolment processes to ensure that records are up-to-date and that the University is able to meet its obligations for accurate reporting

- To provide information on student attendance to enhance student support and the student experience
- To provide procedural detail to support section 12 of the Academic Regulations, General Regulations, Suspension of Studies, which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Section One: Students enrolled on Campus Based and Blended Learning Programmes

Definition and Scope of Suspension of Studies

- 1.1** Once a student has registered on a programme of studies they are expected to complete that programme within the normal study periods unless they withdraw from the University or suspends their studies.
- 1.2** This section of the procedure will apply to all students registered on campus based or blended learning programmes which are Wrexham University awards including those studying at partner colleges/institutions. Students who are registered for non-Wrexham University awards will be subject to the suspension requirements of their awarding body.
- 1.3** The University recognises that students may feel compelled for various reasons to interrupt their studies during an academic session. In such instances students may request a suspension of their studies. It should be noted that students do not have a right to suspend their studies; rather suspensions must be requested and approved by the Programme Leader.
- 1.4** The grounds on which a student can request a suspension shall be as follows:
- Health
 - Exceptional personal circumstances
 - Financial
- 1.5** The University acknowledges that there will also be instances where a student will be required to suspend studies whilst the University investigates their case under Disciplinary or Suitability to Practice Procedures. Further information regarding enforced suspension in these instances is available in the relevant procedure.
- 1.6** Where a student requests a period of parental leave, the Programme Team will follow the procedure outlined in the University's Parent Friendly Procedure. International sponsored students who are on a time limited visa would be required to seek advice from the Immigration Compliance Team for any impact an absence may have on their visa conditions.
- 1.7** Suspension of studies shall mean suspension from all modules associated with the programme of study on which they have registered.
- 1.8** Suspension of studies requests will not normally be back-dated. In exceptional circumstances the Dean of Faculty or nominee may agree to back-date a request for a maximum of one month, with supporting evidence provided to support the back-dating of the request.

- 1.9 Students are expected to return to their studies at the beginning of the next academic year, or at the start of the semester in which suspension occurred during the previous year.
- 1.10 Students are not normally permitted to suspend their studies immediately prior to an examination or assessment period or during the re-assessment period. (see point 1.15 below)

The Procedure

Students who are considering suspending their studies

- 1.11 Students are encouraged to seek advice in the event of any difficulties they encounter. Students should approach their Programme Leader for advice and guidance on academic issues. In the case of personal problems, students may wish to approach their Personal Tutor or Student and Campus Life for advice and support.
- 1.12 During a discussion with a student who is considering suspending studies, the appropriate tutor or member of Student and Campus Life should discuss the reasons for the student's concern and consider whether action can be taken to remedy the situation. The options of a short period of authorised absence, transfer (to another programme or another institution), change of mode of study or submitting an Extenuating Circumstances claim should be discussed, as well as suspension or withdrawal. Agreement should be reached on any action to be taken, and recorded appropriately (see 1.13).
- 1.13 Once a decision is made, and if the student has decided to request a suspension of studies, they must complete the Suspension of Studies Form C.
- 1.14 The student must seek approval of the request for suspension from their Programme Leader. The agreed start of suspension date and a date of return should be recorded. Any other observations and agreed actions should be recorded on the form. Evidence to support the request will be required. The fully completed form should be submitted to SPSA by the student. Once a decision has been reached regarding a request for authorised absence a record of the decision will be noted on the student record system and any supporting evidence which contains personal data will be destroyed.
- 1.15 Suspension of Studies requests which have a start date which is one month, or less, before an examination, assessment or re-assessment period, must include a rationale and evidence for this exceptional request and may be referred to the Academic Registrar or nominee for final approval.
- 1.16 An authorised absence may be agreed to deal with a short term issue or illness. This should normally be for no longer than 2 weeks, but may exceptionally be for up to one month where suitable evidence to support such a request can be provided. This should be recorded on an Authorised Absence Form E. Start and End dates for the period of authorised absence must be agreed by the Programme Leader (and the approved by the Immigration Compliance Team if the request is from an international sponsored student).

- 1.17** Authorised absence requests relating to illness must be supported by a certificate from an independent professional practitioner such as a GP, or a Counsellor who is currently supporting the student, stating clearly that they were unable to attend. If the request is as a result of bereavement or adverse personal/family circumstances the student is required to submit independent evidence, such as a death certificate, to support this claim. Once a decision has been reached regarding a request for authorised absence a record of the decision will be noted on the student record system and any supporting evidence will be destroyed.
- 1.18** Students requesting an authorised absence should consider the impact of this on their studies and discuss with the Programme Leader how they will make up the lost study time. If the absence coincides with a period of assessment, it may be necessary to submit a request for an extension to deadline or an Extenuating Circumstances claim at the appropriate time and it is the student's responsibility to submit this claim within the stipulated deadline, if this is required.
- 1.19** Any absence of longer than one month must be treated as suspension of studies rather than an authorised absence.
- 1.20** A suspension of studies may not be approved for longer than one year. In very exceptional circumstances a further request for an extension of the suspension may be made after 1 year. Students should also be aware that a suspension does not extend the overall registration period for the programme, and must ensure they have sufficient time to complete the programme upon their return.
- 1.21** The Programme Leader may refuse a request from a student to suspend studies if, in her/his opinion, the reason is not adequately related to genuine personal problems or changes in circumstance.
- 1.22** A student may request the Dean of Faculty or nominee to review an unsuccessful request for suspension
- 1.23** Students who are suspended will not have their module marks considered by an assessment board during their period of suspension unless the student had completed and submitted that assessment prior to the start date of the suspension.
- 1.24** Students whose suspension of studies has been approved will not be eligible to attend classes or undertake any assessment until they have re-enrolled. They may with the Dean of Faculty (or nominee) approval, be permitted limited access to the University's resources.
- 1.25** Retrospective applications for suspension of studies will not normally be approved and if submitted, reasons for the lateness of the application will be required.
- 1.26** If a student fails to resume studies at the date agreed on the suspension form they must either make a request for further suspension of studies (only to be agreed in exceptional circumstances) or they will be withdrawn from studies.
- 1.27** Failure to notify the University promptly of a student's suspension of studies will result in the student continuing to be liable to pay fees to the University and may

also result in the student subsequently being required to repay a bursary or student loan.

- 1.28** Following receipt of the completed and signed suspension form, the SPSA will notify SRS who will amend the student records system and notify the Student Loan Company, if applicable. Tuition fees will be charged in accordance with the Tuition Fee Regulations, students should seek guidance from Student Funding & Money Advice Team and the relevant authorities for guidance on student loan and bursary implications of suspension. For international sponsored students UKVI will also be informed – please see below.
- 1.29** Any other agreed change to the student’s registration, such as a transfer to another programme or a change in the mode of study, must also be notified immediately to the SPSA using the Form D, Change of Programme.
- 1.30** The Programme Leader is responsible for notifying the programme team if a student suspends studies.

Additional Requirements for all Sponsored International Students

- 1.31** Institutions are required to keep specific records on the attendance of sponsored (international) students and to notify UK Visas and Immigration when any student fails to attend or suspends studies. The University therefore is obliged under UK legislation to report formally when international students are absent or suspended.
- 1.32** International students needing to take a break in studies, normally of no more than 2 weeks, must complete an Authorised Absence form, and ensure they obtain an authorisation of absence from their programme leader and submit the completed form to SPSA or relevant administrator at partner organisation. This does not affect sponsorship but GU may still advise UKVI of the authorised absence.
- 1.33** International sponsored students needing to travel home for short periods of authorised absence, normally of no more than 2 weeks, may wish to obtain a travel letter from the SPSA.
- 1.34** International students requesting an exceptional authorised absence of between 2 and 4 weeks must provide additional evidence to support this (e.g. doctor’s letter). Such requests will need additional approval from the University’s Immigration Compliance Team at Wrexham.
- 1.35** International Students who require an extended leave of more than 2 (or exceptionally 4) weeks’ absence must suspend their studies, which will invalidate their visa sponsorship. Students who have suspended their studies must return home for the duration of their suspension. If an international student has been advised that they may be permitted to resume their studies at a later date, s/he must make a formal request for a new CAS which will be assessed prior to approval.
- 1.36** Students who advise the University that they cannot travel home due to extended ill health or advanced pregnancy are still required to suspend their studies and GU is required to report this suspension to UKVI. Leave to remain in the UK

under the international visa will therefore be curtailed during a suspension of studies. Where this is known, UKVI will be advised in such reporting that the student has stated they are unable to travel, but the issue of leave to remain in the UK is then a matter between the individual student and UKVI. UKVI may in some circumstances allow discretionary compassionate leave to remain in the UK but making any such arrangement with UKVI is the sole responsibility of the student.

Section Two: Students enrolled on Programmes Delivered Wholly Online or via Distance Learning

Definition and Scope of Suspension of Studies

- 2.1 Once a student has registered on a programme of studies they are expected to complete that programme within the normal study periods unless they withdraw from the University, takes a break or suspends their studies.
- 2.2 This section of the procedure will apply to all students registered for Wrexham University awards which are delivered wholly online or via distance learning.
- 2.3 The University recognises that students may feel compelled for various reasons to interrupt their studies during an academic session. In such instances students may request:
 - a break in studies for one or more blocks up to a cumulative maximum of six blocks in total and for no more than two consecutive blocks
 - a suspension of studies if they wish to request a continuous break of more than two blocks.
- 2.4 Students wishing to request a formal suspension of studies should contact their Student Success Coordinator to discuss. It should be noted that students do not have a right to suspend their studies; rather suspensions must be requested via the Student Success Coordinators.
- 2.5 The grounds on which a student can request a suspension may include:
 - Health
 - Exceptional personal circumstances
 - Financial
- 2.6 The University acknowledges that there will also be instances where a student will be required to suspend studies whilst the University investigates their case under Disciplinary or Suitability to Practice Procedures. Further information regarding enforced suspension in these instances is available in the relevant procedure.
- 2.7 Where a student requests a period of parental leave, the Programme Team will follow the procedure outlined in the University's Parent Friendly Procedure.
- 2.8 Break in Studies or Suspension of studies shall mean suspension from all modules associated with the programme of study on which they have registered.

However students would still be required to complete any outstanding reassessments during a break or period of suspension.

- 2.9 Suspension of studies requests will not normally be back-dated.
- 2.10 Following a break in studies students are expected to return to their studies at the start of the next module.
- 2.11 Following a period of suspension students would be expected to return to their studies at a previously agreed return date, dependent on the delivery pattern of any modules they have outstanding.

The Procedure

Students who are considering a break in studies

- 2.12 Students who wish to take a break in studies for one block must notify the University prior to the start of that block. If a student does not register for a module, and fails to notify the University of their break in studies within 7 days of the module start date, the University will record the student's status as a break in studies and, if appropriate, the SLC will be notified accordingly.
- 2.13 Students are encouraged to seek advice in the event of any difficulties they encounter. Students should initially approach their Student Success Coordinator who will assist them in accessing the appropriate academic or pastoral support and guidance within the University.
- 2.14 Students taking a break in studies should consider the impact of this on their studies and discuss with the Student Success Co-ordinator how they will make up the lost study time. Points to consider include the student's current profile, the delivery schedule of any outstanding modules, the student's registration period and any previous periods of suspension. Students should also be advised of any potential financial impact.

Students who are considering suspending their studies for more than two blocks

- 2.15 Students are encouraged to seek advice in the event of any difficulties they encounter. Students should initially approach their Student Success Coordinator who will assist them in accessing the appropriate academic or pastoral support and guidance within the University.
- 2.16 During a discussion with a student who is considering suspending studies, the Student Success Co-ordinator should discuss the reasons for the student's concern and consider whether action can be taken to remedy the situation. The options of a break in studies for up to two blocks, transfer (to another programme or another institution), change of mode of study or submitting an Extenuating Circumstances claim should be discussed, as well as a longer period of suspension or withdrawal. Agreement should be reached on any action to be taken, and recorded appropriately (see 2.17).

- 2.17** Once a decision is made, and if the student has decided to request a suspension of studies, they must complete the Suspension of Studies Form C.
- 2.18** The student must agree a request for suspension with their Student Success Coordinator. The agreed start of suspension date and a date of return should be agreed following consideration of the student's current profile, the delivery schedule of any outstanding modules, the student's registration period and any previous periods of suspension. Students should also be advised of any potential financial impact. Any such observations and agreed actions should be recorded on the form. Evidence to support the request will be required.
- 2.19** The fully completed form should be submitted to the Student Success Coordinator by the student. A record of the suspension will be noted on the student record system and any supporting evidence which contains personal data will be destroyed.
- 2.20** Students will not normally be permitted to suspend a re-assessment attempt and must undertake the re-assessment within the time period identified by the Award/Progression Assessment Board or submit a formal claim for Extenuating Circumstances
- 2.21** A suspension of studies may not be approved for longer than one year. In very exceptional circumstances a further request for an extension of the suspension may be made after 1 year. Students should also be aware that a suspension does not extend the overall registration period for the programme, and must ensure they have sufficient time to complete the programme upon their return.
- 2.22** Students who are suspended will not have their module marks considered by an assessment board during their period of suspension unless the student had completed and submitted that assessment prior to the start date of the suspension or they are undertaking re-assessment.
- 2.23** Students whose suspension of studies has been approved will not be eligible to engage with any online delivery, access resources or undertake any assessment until they have re-enrolled. Students will be required to undertake any reassessments (see 2.21).
- 2.24** If a student fails to resume studies at the date agreed on the suspension form they must either make a request for further suspension of studies (only to be agreed in exceptional circumstances) or they will be withdrawn from studies.
- 2.25** Following receipt of the completed and signed suspension form the student records system will be amended and the Student Loan Company notified, if applicable. Students should seek guidance from the Student Success Co-ordinators and any relevant external authorities for guidance on student loan and bursary implications of suspension.
- 2.26** Students requesting a break in studies or suspension may be requested to take a further period of suspension if the module(s) they originally suspended are not available when they request to resume studies.

2.27 Any other agreed change to the student's registration, such as a transfer to another programme or a change in the mode of study, must also be notified immediately to the Student Success Co-ordinator using the Form D, Change of Programme.