

Interruptions of Studies Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and context

1.1.1. A student's period of study shall normally be continuous. However, at its discretion, the ICR may grant a formal period of interruption of study.

1.1.1. Interruptions may be permitted for a number of reasons including:

- long-term sickness (owing to physical and/or mental ill health);
- personal issues (such as bereavement or caring responsibilities);
- maternity, paternity, adoption, or shared adoption leave;
- undertaking a work placement or internship (where this is distinct, time-limited specialised training or employment that would be beneficial to a student's studies);
- jury service; or
- military or national service.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1. This policy applies to all students registered on an ICR degree programme.

1.3. Roles and responsibilities

Not applicable.

1.4. Definitions and glossary

Not applicable.

2. Policy

2.1. For research students, periods of interruption **do not** count towards a student's total permitted period of study. For taught students, periods of interruption **do** count towards a student's total permitted period of study.

2.2. A maximum of 12 months' interruption may be granted. In exceptional circumstances, further interruptions (with each having a duration of up to 12 months) may be approved, provided the work studied remains academically relevant.

2.3. In the case of taught students, an interruption of studies shall not be granted if this would lead the student to exceed the maximum permitted period of study.

2.4. Students from overseas should be aware that any change to their circumstances may impact on their eligibility to remain in the UK. Where the ICR is the visa sponsor, advice is available from the Registry, who may be required to contact UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) to inform them of the interruption. Where an interruption of study exceeds 60 days, the ICR will usually be required to cease sponsorship of a student's visa.

2.5. For students funded by an external funding body, the terms and conditions of the funding body should be reviewed and, where required, permission to interrupt should also be sought from the external funding body.

2.6. During a period of interruption:

- (a) fees are not payable;
- (b) students must continue to comply with the ICR's policies and procedures;
- (c) students will usually continue to have access to ICR IT resources;
- (d) students are not expected to undertake study or research that would contribute to the degree for which they are registered. Therefore students will not normally be entitled to:
 - (i) receive any supervision or tutorials related to their studies;
 - (ii) attend credit-bearing lectures or classes;
 - (iii) be on site without prior arrangement with a supervisor, tutor or staff member of the Registry;
 - (iv) submit work to be assessed, except in the case of a taught student who has already attended the teaching for a module. In these cases, whilst submission of assessments is not expected or required during an interruption, the Course Director may allow this in exceptional cases, at the explicit request of the student.

2.7. Any formal procedures (such as investigations of alleged plagiarism or disciplinary issues) will usually be paused during an approved interruption of study. Where this is considered to be inappropriate (for example, where evidence would no longer be available), the Academic Registrar or Head of Registry may decide that a procedure should continue. Reconsideration of such a decision may be requested through the Final Review Procedure for Non-Academic Decisions and Academic Appeals.

2.8. For research students in a 'writing up' period, where they have completed their formal period of study but not yet reached their thesis submission deadline, requests for interruptions of study are only likely to be successful where these are owing to unavoidable reasons (and not, for example, for work placements).

3. Procedure

3.1. Students who wish to interrupt are encouraged to discuss this with the Registry team and/or the relevant Deputy Dean or Course Director as early as possible, to determine whether this is appropriate in their case.

3.2. In the case of short-term circumstances that affect the submission of coursework, taught students should usually instead use the procedures for requesting coursework extensions or consideration of extenuating circumstances.

3.3. Students must complete the form 'Request for a period of interruption of study' and return this to the Registry.

3.4. Any interruption of study request will need formal approval from the Deputy Dean for research students or the relevant Course Director for students on taught courses. If the application is not approved, the reasons for this will be outlined to the student.

3.5. The application must be made and approval given in advance of the period of interruption. Approval will only be granted retrospectively in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances (such as sudden illness) – in these cases, the interruption request must still be made at the earliest opportunity.

3.6. In an emergency, the Course Director or Deputy Dean may recommend an interruption of studies to a student. In these cases, the Academic Registrar or Head of Registry may accept a simple email exchange as sufficient, with more complete evidence being provided at a later date.

3.7. Where an interruption request is not granted, the student may only reapply if they have new or additional information/evidence to add to their application. If a student wishes to challenge the decision, they may request a review under the ICR's Final Review Procedure for Non-Academic Decisions and Academic Appeals.

3.8. A student must inform the Registry before returning from a period of interruption, giving as much notice as possible. A 'return to studies' meeting with a Senior Tutor or Course Director will usually be required.

3.9. Where a taught student interrupts mid-way through a module, the Course Director will determine whether the student must re-attend any lectures or repeat any assessments when they return. The student will not be charged an additional tuition fee for the module.

3.10. Where interruption was granted owing to a serious medical issue, referral will also be made to Occupational Health to confirm the student is fit to resume their studies and to consider whether there is a need for a phased return.

4. Supporting evidence

4.1. Students will be required to submit evidence to support their application for an interruption of studies – advice is available from the Registry team. For students interrupting on grounds of ill health, suitable evidence includes a medical certificate, doctor's letter, or hospital admission letter.

5. Funding during an interruption of studies

5.1. For students receiving a stipend through the ICR payroll, these will continue through interruptions in the sole cases of:

- long-term sickness: where, within a rolling 12-month period, payment will continue for absences of up to 28 weeks at full stipend (to a maximum of 52 weeks across the studentship).
- parental leave: where the 'Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policy for Non-Clinical PhD students' applies.

5.2. For students who are also employees at the ICR / Royal Marsden or elsewhere, the relevant staff policy on payments during staff absence will apply instead.

6. Support for wellbeing

6.1 In some circumstances, students seeking an interruption of studies may also benefit from the wider range of support available from the ICR. For research degree students, information can be found on Nexus within the student welfare pages, as well as on those describing organisation-wide wellbeing services. For taught course students, similar resources are available via Canvas.

7. Mechanisms for implementation

7.1. This document will be made available on Nexus, Canvas and the external website. Students will be referred to it by Registry staff or members of the Academic Dean's Team as needed.