

## Guidance for students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study

This guidance applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students across the University.

### 1. Purpose of interruptions

- 1.1 It is the expectation of the University that you will complete your programme in one continuous period of uninterrupted study. It is understood, however, that you may encounter personal difficulties or situations which may seriously disrupt your studies. Please see Appendix 1 for examples of such exceptional situations. In such instances, you may be granted a temporary interruption to your studies at the discretion of your School. In reaching a decision about such an application your School may take into account whether you have already been granted an interruption and/or your academic record since joining the University.
- 1.2 If you have been, or are being, affected by mitigating circumstances (see [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances](#)) that have lasted, are expected to last, for a significant period, or that may impact upon a significant number of units on your programme, it may be better for you to apply instead for an interruption to your studies. This may, depending on the circumstances, be wholly or partially retrospective in nature; (however, please see paragraph 1.6, below). You should speak to your School (your Academic Advisor, Programme Director, Undergraduate / Student Support or Postgraduate Officer, etc.) about this.
- 1.3 If an application to interrupt a programme of study is approved, it would normally be to help you to recover from medical problems, or problems of a personal or financial nature which are having, or may have, a negative impact on your performance. However, your School has the flexibility to consider and make decisions on whether to approve requests for interruption in relation to other circumstances too (see section c of Appendix 1).
- 1.4 Wherever possible, you should apply for an interruption before it is due to start. This would be the expectation for certain predictable medical circumstances such as scheduled surgery. Such interruptions will usually be for *up to* one complete year and will not usually involve any repeat of a period of study. After a single and continuous period of interruption of 12 months, your circumstances and progression will be reviewed by your School and, following that, an exit award will be issued, if appropriate.
- 1.5 Some interruptions, however, are not predictable and you may need to ask for them after difficulties have already come to light. In these circumstances you should seek the advice of your Academic Advisor, Programme Director, Undergraduate / Student Support or Postgraduate Officer, etc. as soon as possible to discuss your options.
- 1.6 You should note, however, that retrospective applications for interruption, for example, as a result of mitigating circumstances, will not be considered without a credible and compelling explanation as to why the circumstances were not known before the beginning of the proposed period of interruption or why you were unable to complete or submit an application before that date.
- 1.7 In the case of non-EU students in the UK on a Tier 4 student visa, the University is legally required to report to the UK Visas and Immigration any interruption of studies of over 60 days. International students should therefore contact the Student Immigration Team in the Student Services Centre to discuss the consequences

of taking an interruption. International students in the UK on a Tier 4 student visa are not permitted to study part-time as their visa conditions require full-time student status.

## 2. Tuition fees during interruptions

2.1 During a period of interruption, no tuition fee is payable. If your application for interruption is successful and you require a refund for fees paid beyond the date of last attendance, you should contact the Funding Team, Student Services Centre:

- telephone: 0161 275 5000 – select option 4;
- website: <http://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/finances/>
- email: [funding@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:funding@manchester.ac.uk)

## 3. Sources of advice

3.1 You can get advice on interruptions from your Academic Advisor, your Programme Director, the Undergraduate/Student Support Office, the Postgraduate Officer, the University's Information, Advice and Guidance Team, the University Counselling Service or the Students' Union Advice Centre.

3.2 You also need to consider the financial implications in respect of where you are living and, if necessary, you should consult the manager of your Hall of Residence or your landlord.

## 4. Approval Process

4.1 You should apply for an interruption by completing the relevant **School Interruption Approval Form**. This should be available from your School intranet or from the relevant School Undergraduate/Student Support Office or Postgraduate Office.

4.2 You should complete the approval form, sign it and attach supporting evidence, for example, a doctor's note in the case of medical reasons for a request for interruption. You should discuss with the appropriate adviser when your interruption should start and end.

4.3 The form and attachments will be treated as confidential; (however, there may be circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be maintained, e.g. for the protection of a student or other individuals). The information will be circulated only as necessary to enable a decision to be reached on your application, and any reporting requirements or statistical data collection will not identify you as an individual. Your School reserves the right to request further information from any source that is already named in your application or in the supporting material without making further reference to you.

4.4 Once the application has been considered and decided upon, the School will write to you to let you know their decision.

## 5. Applications that are approved – informing funders

5.1 If your application is approved, it is your responsibility to inform any organisation or person who is funding your education. In particular, you should inform the Student Loans Company if you are a home student and/or any sponsoring body if you are a home or overseas student.

## 6. During the interruption

### Access to facilities

- 6.1 During your period of interruption **you will not be a registered student of the University** and your right to be on University premises will be that of a member of the public. You should not undertake work on University premises as you will not be covered by the University's insurance arrangements. ***You should note also that you will lose onsite IT and student library access; however, you can retain remote IT access to your student email account, the student portal and Campus Solutions and you will also retain access to Blackboard. You do need to ensure, however, that, if necessary, you save work and provide alternative forwarding contact email details to your School.***

### Maintaining contact

- 6.2 During your interruption, it is your responsibility to maintain contact with the appropriate person in your School e.g. your Academic Advisor, Programme Director, etc. In certain circumstances you may be given permission to take examinations during your period of interruption. It is **your** responsibility to find out when and where these examinations will take place and to pay any fee that is required.

## 7. Notice of Return

- 7.1 You should indicate your intention to return to study after your interruption by completing a 'Return to Study Form' (to be provided by your School or using the School's alternative method of informing them about your return) and returning it to your School at least one month prior to your agreed return date. If the period of interruption is less than one month, your School will agree the timescale for submission of the Form/confirmation of your return date.
- 7.2 Your School will attempt to contact you to offer support in relation to a potential return to study; there is a requirement you to meet with (or speak to) your School to discuss your return to study, prior to your return.
- 7.3 If your School does not manage to contact you, or you do not engage with the School with regards to your return from interruption, please see paragraph 9.5: if 30 days have passed following your expected date of return and your School has not heard from you, they can deregister you from the student system and formally withdraw you from the University, issuing an exit award, if appropriate.

## 8. Return to Study in cases of medical-related interruptions

- 8.1 If your interruption was permitted as a result of medical-related reasons<sup>1</sup>, you must provide a letter from your healthcare professional which states that you are fit to return to your studies. If your circumstances are not sufficiently rectified to allow you to return, you will need to make an application for a further interruption but you should not assume that this will automatically be granted.
- 8.2 You may also be referred to the University's Occupational Health office who may, with your permission, need to contact your healthcare professional for updated information about your medical/health issues and your fitness to return to study and meet the requirements of your specific programme. If you do not give consent to referral to Occupational Health, or do not provide medical evidence, the School will decide whether there is sufficient information on which to assess whether you are fit to return to study.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of letters from healthcare professionals, normal pregnancy is not regarded as a medical reason, and consequently confirmation of fitness to return to study is not required following a period of maternity leave.

8.3 Where there is a decision to be made on your fitness to return to study, your School will inform you of this decision in writing in advance of the agreed return date.

## **9. Return from interruption**

9.1 You will be invited to attend a return to study meeting with relevant staff within your programme/School, normally within two weeks of your return.

9.2 It is important to realise that your School may not be able to provide an identical teaching, supervision and assessment experience on your return as would otherwise have been the case. Programmes of study and regulations change to reflect developments in the subject, requirements of external bodies, and the resources available to the University. While your School will try to make reasonable provision for you following your interruption, you need to accept that permission for an interruption is a privilege and not a right. You may need to do additional work in your own time to put you in a position to benefit from your return to study and your return may need to be scheduled to fit the needs of your programme. You will need to abide by any reasonable return date and fulfil registration requirements. If the regulations and requirements of the University and/or your programme have changed when you return, you will normally be subject to the regulations and the requirements that are applicable to the cohort of students that you will then join, unless a significant change has taken place which means that the regulations and requirements are less favourable to you. In such a case, your programme team or School will discuss with you at your return to study meeting about returning subject to the University regulations or programme requirements you were originally registered under.

9.3 If you believe that you require additional support on your return in relation to health or disability issues, you can discuss with your Programme/School contact regarding liaising with the University's [Occupational Health](#) and/or [Disability Advisory and Support Service \(DASS\)](#).

9.4 On your return from interruption, you should inform your Programme Director (or equivalent) and the appropriate Programme/School Administrator. You may be required to re-register on your return, but this would be dependent on the registration cycle and the date of your return. If you are required to re-register but fail to do so within 30 days of your expected return, you can be withdrawn from your degree programme.

9.5 Your School should attempt to contact you if you fail to return and re-register at the expected date of return following an interruption. However, if 30 days have passed following your expected date of return and your School has not heard from you, they can deregister you from the student system and formally withdraw you from the University, issuing an exit award, if appropriate.

9.6 If you are a non-EU student in the UK on a visa, you will need to fulfil all of the requirements of your visa. You should consult the Student Immigration Team in respect of queries relating to visa extensions, work permissions, or return from interruption (email: [visa@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:visa@manchester.ac.uk)).

## **10. Applications which are not approved - Students' right to appeal**

10.1 If your application for interruption is declined by your School, you have a right to appeal against this decision. In this instance, you are advised to refer to the University's Academic Appeals Procedure (General Regulation XIX:

- [Regulation XIX: Academic Appeals Procedure](#)

## Appendix 1 - Examples of exceptional situations

### **a. Examples of acceptable types of circumstances**

The following circumstances are typical of what **may** be considered grounds for applying for an interruption to a programme. This list is not definitive and even if a circumstance is listed, it does not mean that an application for interruption on the grounds of the particular circumstance will automatically be approved; applications are considered on a case by case basis:

- Serious physical or mental illness of the student;
- Death / serious illness of a partner, close family member or close friend;
- Unforeseeable or unpreventable events such as distress or injury caused by a serious accident; the effects of being the victim of a criminal act or the distress or serious disruption caused by fire, flood or other natural catastrophe;
- Extreme family or financial circumstances leading to stress;
- Breakdown of *essential* equipment where a student is unable to continue a project and the use of alternative equipment is not possible;
- Jury Service;
- Maternity, paternity/shared parental or adoption leave (see below)
- Delays in progress due to unforeseen problems (e.g., moving of offices/buildings, supervisor changes etc.) which are outside of the student's control.

Maternity leave - Students may interrupt their studies for the purpose of maternity leave at any time from 28 weeks of the pregnancy for a maximum period of 12 months during their degree. The period of leave must be taken in one consecutive block.

Paternity/shared parent leave - an expectant or new mother can choose to share her parental leave with her partner, so the partner of a pregnant student can apply for an interruption to take time out of their studies in order to provide parental care. A maximum of 12 months interruption can be granted between the two partners.

Adoption leave - Students who are adopting a child may interrupt their studies for a maximum 12 month period during their degree. The period of leave must be taken in one consecutive block.

### **b. Examples of unacceptable types of circumstances**

The following circumstances **will not normally** be regarded as grounds for applying for an interruption or an extension:

- The student being unaware of policy and application procedures for interruptions and/or extensions for coursework/assessment. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of all policies and procedures relevant to their degree;
- **Work commitments that do not contribute significantly towards the student's programme of study or future employability;**
- Vacations such as expeditions, recreational sporting activities or long term holidays;
- Inadequate planning and time management;
- Normal pregnancy (excluding standard maternity leave entitlement);
- Difficulties with English language (including delays as a result of proofreading);
- Computer or other equipment failure where use of an alternative is possible or any loss of work was avoidable.

**c. Examples of other circumstances which Schools may wish to consider favourably**

Exceptional circumstances or situations may arise which fall outside of these examples of what would normally be accepted or not accepted as grounds for interruption. In these cases, Schools have flexibility to make decisions regarding the acceptance of applications for interruption. It is at the discretion of Schools to determine whether the following circumstances should be considered as grounds for interruption. **However, in these cases, there should be no detrimental effect on the student's academic progression:**

- High level sporting activities (e.g. a student representing their country at events);
- Circumstances that demonstrably enhance a student's employability, which may in some circumstances include:
  - Work commitments that contribute significantly towards the student's programme of study or future employability;
  - Further primary research and/or laboratory work;
  - Exchanges/placements that do not form part of your degree programme;
  - Voluntary service overseas.

Guidance for students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study Version amendment history		
Version	Date	Reason for change
2.2	March 2009	Was named: Principles in respect of interruptions to an Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught Programme of Study - Guidance for students
3.0	October 2015	Creation and approval by TLMG/TLG: Produced as separate Policy, Staff and Student Guidance to replace version 1.4 of 'Principles for Granting Interruptions to an Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught Programme of Study'
	May 2016/August 2018	Web links updated in May 2016 and August 2018.
3.1	April 2019	Review by TLG Policy & Guidance Subgroup, 2018/19; to provide more information to support students' return to study after interruption.
3.2	March 2021	Update to the end of paragraph 9.2 regarding the versions of University/programme regulations or requirements students should return subject to. (April 2023: Policy owner and contact details updated in the Document control box).

Document control box	
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	N/A
Related Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Policy on Mitigating Circumstances</a></li> </ul>
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guidance for Staff on Interruptions to Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Procedure on Supporting Return to Study</a></li> </ul>
Policy owner:	Head of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact:	Teaching and Learning Manager (Policies and Degree Apprenticeships), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS  <i><a href="mailto:teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk">For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</a></i>