

GUIDELINES ON STUDENT TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

The Guidelines apply to all students irrespective of location or mode of study. It is important that students read and understand the Guidelines before applying for a temporary suspension of studies.

A temporary suspension of studies is applicable where a student ceases study with the University for an extended period of time. It can be applied for and approved on the basis of genuine medical, personal, financial reasons or military service at the request of the student or enforced by the University in cases where this is considered necessary. In exceptional cases a suspension may also be granted for industrial placements or a semester/year abroad, where these are not a formal part of the study programme, if it can be clearly demonstrated that it is nevertheless directly related or beneficial to the student's programme of study.

With the exception of postgraduate research students, suspensions of studies will normally be granted in suspension periods (please see definition of [suspension periods](#) below). The duration of a temporary suspension of studies will normally be no greater than one academic year (one calendar year for postgraduate research students). In the event that an additional suspension of studies is required students must reapply for a suspension within one month of the end of their current suspension of studies. A suspension of studies commencing after week six of that suspension period will be permitted under exceptional circumstances only. For postgraduate taught students completing a dissertation a suspension of studies commencing within six weeks of the submission deadline will not normally be permitted.

The application form for a temporary suspension of studies is available at:

http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/doc/AMREG_familyname_initial.pdf - (UG and PG Taught Students)

http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/doc/PGRAMR_familyname_initial.pdf - (Postgraduate Research)

Completed forms should be sent to the relevant School/Institute Administrator for initial approval by the Director of Learning and Teaching/Director of Research (or delegated authority for students on non-Scottish campuses) before being considered by the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies Committee. Students will be informed of the outcome of their suspension of studies request in writing within seven days of the decision being made by the appropriate Studies Committee. Once a temporary suspension of studies is granted a student will not normally be permitted to withdraw the suspension or return to their studies before the agreed end date.

Students should note that a temporary suspension of studies is not an automatic right and therefore applications may be refused if a suspension is deemed inappropriate or if insufficient supporting evidence is submitted. In the event that a temporary suspension of studies request is refused, the student has the right to submit an appeal and should refer to the *Guidelines on Student Academic Appeals Procedures* available at <http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/complaints/student-appeals.htm>

Grounds for a suspension of studies:

1. Medical Grounds

Where a student requests a suspension of studies on medical grounds, relevant evidence in support of the suspension and covering the period of suspension must be provided. This can be in the form of a medical

certificate, letter from Student Support and Accommodation (or equivalent department at non-Scottish campuses) or other relevant qualified practitioner. If such evidence cannot be provided, a suspension of studies will not normally be granted. Re-admittance on to a programme of study will usually be subject to confirmation by an appropriate medical practitioner indicating the student's fitness to return to studies.

2. Personal and Financial Reasons

A suspension based on personal or financial reasons can only be considered if supported by the student's Programme Director/Supervisor. A statement in support of the suspension should be included by the Programme Director/Supervisor detailing, if possible and with the consent of the student, the circumstances and the effects this has had on the student's studies. If the suspension is based on the medical circumstances of a family member, relevant medical evidence should be provided.

3. Industrial Placement/Year Abroad

A student may exceptionally be permitted to suspend their studies in order to take part in an industrial placement or a year abroad, where these are not a formal part of the study programme, if it can be clearly demonstrated that it is nevertheless directly related or beneficial to the student's programme of study and they have fulfilled the progression requirements to progress to the next stage of study. Supporting evidence in the form of a statement of support from the Programme Director/Supervisor and, where appropriate, a letter from a prospective employer should be submitted with the amendment to registration form.

Retrospective Suspension of Studies

A retrospective or backdated suspension of studies will not normally be granted if it is received after the end of the requested suspension period. Any requests received beyond this point or after week six of that suspension period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will require additional supporting evidence and significant support from the student's Programme Director/Supervisor. Additionally, students will need to provide the reasons why they were unable to apply for a temporary suspension of studies at the time.

Examinations, Accommodation and Access to University Facilities

Students who have been granted a temporary suspension of studies will not normally be permitted to sit any examinations nor will they be permitted to engage in any project/dissertation work during the period of suspension. A student may exceptionally be permitted to re-sit an examination in a course which cannot be carried forward to the next stage of study and impacts on the ability for progression to the next stage of study. Any exceptions will need to be confirmed by the applicant's Programme Director/Supervisor.

During a period of temporary suspension of studies, access to all University provisions such as computing facilities, teaching, Library, tutorials, academic supervision and University support services will normally be withdrawn with the exception of access to the University email facility. Special arrangements may be put in place for students taking a suspension of studies based on maternity/paternity leave and will be considered on a case by case basis. Any additional exceptions will need to be confirmed by the applicant's Programme Director/Supervisor. Under certain circumstances limited access to additional support services available from Student Support and Accommodation may be available following the approval of the Director of Student Support and Accommodation (or equivalent at non-Scottish campuses).

Students who reside in University accommodation will be required to contact the Accommodation Office to discuss their situation since they will have signed a legally binding contract for the duration of the academic year and will remain liable for the rent. Visit <http://www.hw.ac.uk/student-life/campus-life.htm>

Temporary Suspension of Studies for International Students

Scottish Campuses

It is essential that International students with a Tier 4 Visa should carefully consider visa/immigration implications before applying for a temporary suspension of studies and should seek advice from one of the University's International Student Advisors based in Student Support and Accommodation. To book an appointment with an International Student Advisor visit <http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/international/uk.htm>

The University is obliged to report any significant changes in students' circumstances relating to study periods for Tier 4 Visa holders to the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) including periods of temporary suspension. It is also advisable for students to inform the UKBA if a temporary suspension of studies is granted. Depending on the reason and length of the suspension, permission to stay in the UK will no longer be valid if a student is not actively studying and students may be advised to leave the UK. When ready to resume studies, students will have to make a new application for a visa.

Non-Scottish Campuses

International students studying at a non-Scottish campus should contact the borders agency (or equivalent) of that country to determine the impact that a temporary suspension of studies may have upon their visa status.

Financial Implications of a Suspension of Studies

Students granted temporary suspensions of studies are not liable to pay tuition fees during this period. Sponsored students should inform their sponsor of their temporary suspension of studies. Where relevant the University will inform the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) or Student Loans Company (SLC) once a temporary suspension of studies has been granted.

In the event that a student has paid their fees for a full year they will then be refunded a proportion of the fee dependant on the time of the Suspension of Studies.

Returning from a Temporary Suspension of Studies

At the conclusion of a period of suspension of studies and before returning to studies, the student must contact their relevant School Administrator to determine their enrolment status and to confirm if any further action is required before the student may return to their studies.

If a student has been granted a temporary suspension of studies on medical grounds, confirmation of the student's fitness to return to studies must be provided by an appropriate medical practitioner to the relevant School Administrator in the first instance.

Once a temporary suspension of studies is granted a student will not normally be permitted to withdraw the suspension or return to their studies before the agreed end date.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Suspension Periods

Suspension Period 1 – Academic Session Week 1 – 17 (September – December)

Suspension Period 2 – Academic Session Week 18 – 36 (January – May)

Suspension Period 3 – Academic Session Week 37 – 52 (May – September)

Grades and Results

Students should be aware that the results of any assessments undertaken during a period for which a retrospective suspension of studies is subsequently granted will be revoked and will not count towards their final grade.

Supporting Documentation in a Foreign Language

Any supporting documentation in a language other than English must be accompanied by a certified English translation.

Implications of a Suspension of Studies

A suspension of studies may impact in a number of ways on a student (e.g. financial, visa, academic). It is a student's responsibility to carefully consider the impact and seek advice from the appropriate advisors within the University.

Involuntary Suspension of Studies

When, in the opinion of a Head of School, there are concerns regarding a student's health or well-being and any detrimental impact upon his or her studies, or the studies of other students, the Head of School shall consider whether or not a student should be permitted to continue with their studies, or whether arrangements should be put in place for their studies to be temporarily suspended. Please see Regulation 1, *General Regulation*, available at <http://www.hw.ac.uk/ordinances/regulations.pdf>

Insurance

A student who visits any of the University's campuses or properties whilst on a temporary suspension of studies is considered to be a visitor in terms of insurance cover.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. In the first instance, students should discuss their intention to apply for a temporary suspension of studies with their Programme Director/Supervisor or Mentor, or other appropriate member of staff, to determine if such a course of action would be appropriate for the student's situation.
2. Students are advised to seek further advice from relevant support sections to determine the impact a suspension of studies may have on their academic performance, financial situation, and student or immigration status.
3. If a student wishes to proceed with a temporary suspension of studies application they should download and complete the relevant form found at <http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/record/amending-your-enrolment.htm>. Where possible students should submit the form electronically via their Heriot-Watt University email account and include a good quality scan of all supporting evidence.
4. All completed forms should be submitted to the relevant School Administrator for initial processing and review. If all required information and supporting evidence is complete, the application will then be considered by the student's Programme Director/Supervisor, or nominee, who will include a statement indicating their support or otherwise of the suspension of studies. The Programme Director/Supervisor should also indicate whether access to any University facilities should be maintained and must provide a rationale for this request.
5. Once the application is completed by both the student and Programme Director/Supervisor and signed off by the Director of Learning and Teaching/Director of Research (or delegated authority for students on non-Scottish Campuses), it will be submitted to the Clerk of the relevant Studies Committee for consideration by the appropriate Dean.
6. Approval/Refusal:
 - a. If a temporary suspension of studies application is approved the student will be informed in writing within seven days of the decision being taken. Academic Registry will inform all relevant internal departments such as the School, Finance, Student Support and Accommodation. The Academic Registry will also inform external parties such as the Grant/Fee Awarding Authority, UKBA and any other parties deemed relevant by the University
 - b. If a temporary suspension of studies application is refused, the student will be informed in writing within seven days of the decision.
 - c. In exceptional circumstances the Dean may refuse a student's application but may approve an alternative arrangement if deemed appropriate.
7. When a student's period of suspension has come to an end, they are obliged to contact the appropriate School Administrator to determine their enrolment status and to re-enrol on their programme of study. Failure to re-enrol and attend classes will NOT automatically extend a student's suspension of studies and students must re-apply for a further suspension of studies if it is required and deemed appropriate.