

Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>This document provides the policy framework for the University's new temporary suspension of studies policy and should be read in conjunction with the following document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigating circumstances policy • Submission of coursework policy
<p>Scope</p>	<p>The policy applies to all Heriot-Watt University students from Academic Year 2019/20.¹</p>
<p>Policy Statement</p>	<p>A temporary suspension of studies is when a student ceases study with the University for an extended period of time (which will not normally exceed 12 months). This is outlined in Appendix 1 in greater detail.</p> <p>Every temporary suspension of studies must be submitted with acceptable supporting evidence (see Appendix 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical issues; • Personal issues; • Financial reasons; • Academic reasons; • Industrial Placement/Year abroad • Other <p>The University will ensure that prior guidance and advice (e.g. online, personal tutors, year coordinators) is available to students in order to help them consider and understand any potential implications on funding, visa, progression and accommodation issues as a result of a temporary suspension of study.</p> <p>A temporary suspension of studies application must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the reason for the application (provided by the student); • Supporting evidence (provided by the student); • A supporting statement from the student's School; • A plan for the student's return to their studies and any conditions which must be satisfied before the student resumes their studies. <p>Students shall normally receive a decision within 10 working days from the submission date of a complete application.</p> <p>Under some circumstances, a retrospective temporary suspension of studies application can be approved. Such applications should include a clear explanation of why the application could not be submitted within the usual timeframe for temporary suspension of studies applications.</p> <p>The approval process for considering a temporary suspension of studies is as follows:</p>

¹ With the exception of Edinburgh Business School Independent Distance Learning and Approved Learning Partner students who are covered by different regulations.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage One – from receipt of a complete application from the student, the School will ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The School case for support is provided and a <i>Progress Map</i> has been formulated along with any additional conditions to be met before the student resumes their studies (see Appendix 3). • Stage Two - The School Approver as nominated by the School (e.g. Director of Learning & Teaching/Director of Research) will make a decision within 10 days from the submission date of a completed application.
Implementation	<p>It is the responsibility of Registry Services Directorate to deliver a systems solution which enables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students to complete a temporary suspension of studies application online and upload all relevant evidence; • Build and maintain the approval process as outlined above; • Build and maintain the <i>Progress Map</i>. <p>It is the responsibility of the School to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the consideration of temporary suspension of studies applications within the School in accordance with this policy; • Support, inform and manage academic progression matters relating to each student who has submitted a temporary suspension of studies application; • Liaise with all relevant internal colleagues² who are affected by this decision; • This includes engaging with students near the end of the temporary suspension of studies to aide their transition back into their studies. <p>It is the responsibility of the University Committee for Quality and Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the effectiveness of the policy and process by reviewing statistics, engaging with relevant colleagues to make any enhancements to the policy and process. This includes the establishment of <i>case law</i> of examples and issues which have arisen and how these can be managed in a consistent manner across the University.

² Academic Registry; Planning and International Support Offices on specific campuses.

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Appendix 1	<p>Temporary Suspension of Studies Timescales</p> <p>Academic Session Week 0 – 17 (September – December) Academic Session Week 18 – 36 (January – May) Academic Session Week 37 – 52 (June – August) Full Academic Year (September - September) Calendar Year (January – December) Other*: Input manual dates of a temporary suspension of studies</p> <p><i>*Postgraduate Research, Degree Entry Programme and Malaysia Foundation Programme students are not bound by semesters and can select dates (e.g. Other) which are specific to them.</i></p> <p>Students can request any of these periods but the final decision will be made in line with the temporary suspension of studies policy approval process. Students should also be made aware of potential implications for their period of study and the potential requirement to apply for an <i>extension to period of study</i> in those cases.</p> <p>Students granted temporary suspensions of studies are not liable to pay tuition fees for the period of suspension.</p> <p>Sponsored students must inform their sponsor of their temporary suspension of studies.</p> <p>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, their fees will be held until they re-register and commence their studies again.</p>
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<p>Appendix 2</p>	<p>Grounds for temporary suspension of studies (evidence in English or with an approved English translation)</p> <p>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 must include how this has impacted on the student's ability to perform on their programme of study for the period in question. Relevant evidence can be the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical certificate/letter; • A letter from a relevant qualified practitioner(e.g. Counsellor); • A doctor's letter confirming that they have caring responsibilities and any perceived impact on the student. See the Supporting Student Carers Policy for exhaustive list of acceptable supporting evidence. <p>If such evidence cannot be provided, a suspension of studies will not normally be granted.</p> <p>Personal and Financial Reasons: A suspension based on personal or financial reasons can only be considered if supported by the School. A full statement in support of the suspension should be included by the School, if possible and with the consent of the student, the circumstances and the effects this has had on the student's studies. Possible examples of supporting evidence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter of Employment; • Military Service Documentation; • Termination of Employment Letter; • Sponsor Termination Documentation; • Relocation Documentation. <p>Academic Reasons: A suspension based on this is only granted after teaching week 3 when the student wishes to make a programme transfer. This is, in effect, a time out where the credits for completed courses would not contribute to their new programme. The period of suspension will only be for one semester and a programme transfer application must be provided as evidence, citing academic reasons, when students submit a temporary suspension of studies application.</p> <p>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. It must 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. The following supporting evidence should be submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of support from the Programme Director/Supervisor; • Where appropriate, a letter from a prospective employer should be submitted with the amendment to registration form.
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Appendix 3	<p>Progress Map</p> <p>In order to aid progression and a smooth transition back into studies, it is critical that a <i>Progress Map</i> is developed by the School when considering the temporary suspension of studies. This document should outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The courses which the student shall have to complete on return from their temporary suspension of studies in line with requirements to attain their programme award;• Specify what credits they may be carrying forward to the semester that they are returning.
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