



Interruption of Studies and Withdrawal from Study Policy

Document Control Box	
Document title (include version number if amended within same year as approved)	Interruption of Studies and Withdrawal from Study Policy
Reference Number	002/24
Approval category (Please indicate)	
Governance/Governor	X
MPRIG Executive/Other Committee (insert name)	
Senior Staff (insert name)	
Date document approved	12/2/24 (Issued 1/9/24)
Supersedes (insert previous title and/or version date)	Interruption of Studies Policy
Date document last reviewed and/or updated	22/8/24
Date next due for review	1/6/27
Related statutes or regulations	
Related policies/procedures/guidance/forms	
Staff member responsible for update	Academic Director

Amendment History

Version	Revision Summary	Date Approved	Author
002/24	Previous policy was the UoM approved policy. Policy has been extensively rewritten.	12/2/24	
002/24	Before issued, an amendment was made. Added Para 54 'Withdrawal due to fitness to practise'. This was approved by the Governance Group (under new delegation scheme.)	22/8/24	Governance Group



Interruption of Studies and Withdrawal from Study Policy

Purpose

1. This Policy outlines the College's approach to interruptions of studies and withdrawals from studies.

Introduction

2. The College expects that students pursue their studies on a continuous basis for the stipulated duration of their programme. However, students may encounter personal difficulties or situations which seriously disrupt their studies. Students who encounter situations where it becomes clear that continuing their studies is not possible, may be granted a temporary interruption to their studies at the discretion of the Special Cases Committee. Students that experience prolonged difficulties or wish to discontinue studying may withdraw from their studies.

Scope

3. This policy applies to students who are registered with Spurgeon's College on any taught programme (including distance learning), with the following exceptions:
 - Counselling programmes accredited by the CPCAB (only provisions laid out in paragraphs 50-78 apply).
 - Equipped to Minister programme.
 - Equipped for Digital Ministry programme.
 - Pastoral Supervision programme.
 - Those registered with partner institutions and subject to the requirements of those accrediting bodies.
 - Research Programmes.

Definitions

4. An interruption of study means an authorised formal break from study for a specific period of time with the intention to resume study at a future date which has been agreed by the College.
5. Voluntary withdrawal from study means that a student has permanently left their programme before the completion of their studies. A Student can also be withdrawn from their studies for non-engagement, academic reasons, or gross misconduct.

6. Exceptional circumstances are the grounds on which the Special Cases Committee decides whether or not to grant an interruption of study.

Responsibilities

7. The Special Cases Committee is a standing committee of the Progression and Awards Board. It considers requests for an interruption of study and determines if a student should be withdrawn for non-engagement.
8. The Progression and Awards Board determines whether a student should be withdrawn for academic reasons, in accordance with the provisions in the College Degree Regulations¹.
9. The Disciplinary Panel/Principal determine whether a student should be expelled for gross misconduct, and therefore withdrawn from their studies, in accordance with the provisions of the [Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy](#).
10. The Registry Department is responsible for the administrative arrangements around interruptions of study and withdrawals from study.

Process to request an interruption of studies

11. An application for an interruption of studies should be made by completing the [Interruption of Studies Request Form](#) and emailing it, with relevant attachments, to the Registry Department (registry@spurgeons.ac.uk). This form can be found on the front page of Moodle and under the Academic Administration page. Applications must be made at least two weeks before the beginning of the proposed interruption.
12. Students should obtain the support of their Programme Director. This is to ensure that they are aware of how a break may impact their studies and to receive advice on whether an interruption is the most appropriate course of action given their individual circumstances.
13. When a master's student requests an interruption after the taught component of their programme has been completed, they must produce a document detailing the progress made with their dissertation and how they will complete it within the time limit on their return from the interruption. This time plan must be approved by the programme director and the dissertation supervisor.
14. In the case of a full-time student, changing the pattern of attendance to part-time may be considered an appropriate alternative to an interruption of studies. International students who are in the UK on a student visa are not permitted to study part-time at the College.
15. The Senior Registrar or Assistant Registrar will arrange for the Special Cases Committee to consider the request and make a decision.

¹ Copies of all relevant degree regulations can be found under the policies page of the College website www.spurgeons.ac.uk or on Moodle in the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines area.

16. Interruption of studies requests cannot be submitted retrospectively, unless it can be shown that the student was prevented from applying in advance by a serious health condition or other relevant circumstance.

Period of interruption

17. A period of interruption is not normally more than a complete academic year. The duration of the interruption may have to be determined by the student's status in the programme. For example, if a student interrupts a taught programme, the moment of return may be dictated by the availability of the programme units that they have missed. A student on a taught programme returning from an interruption of studies would therefore normally return at the start of the equivalent semester in the following academic year. This reflects the fact that the majority of programmes are delivered once per academic year, and it would not normally be possible for a student to access lectures and classes that they have missed if they were to return earlier. For students on more flexible distance learning programmes, the final programme deadline will be extended for the length of time agreed for the period of interruption.

Process to consider and confirm an interruption of studies request

18. Requests for interruption will be considered by the College's Special Cases Committee.

19. The decision on whether to grant an interruption of studies will be based on a student's individual circumstances and the potential impact of interruption on the student's learning experience.

20. The following are examples of exceptional circumstances which may be acceptable grounds for granting an interruption of studies. This list is not definitive and even if a circumstance is listed, it does not necessarily follow that a request for interruption will be approved:

- 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 another natural catastrophe.
- Extreme family or financial circumstances leading to stress.
- Delays in obtaining ethical approval for research projects.
- Jury service.
- Parental leave.
- Delays in the progress of study due to problems outside the student's control, such as moving of offices/buildings, supervisor changes, delays in third party processes such as DBS checks etc.
- Military service including students who are undertaking military service as reservists.

21. The following circumstances will not be regarded as grounds for applying for an interruption:

- Ignorance of policies, procedures and assignment submission requirements.²
- Normal work commitments.
- Exchange visits.
- Voluntary service overseas.
- Expeditions/sport.
- Long-term holidays/vacations.
- Inadequate planning / time management.
- Difficulties with the English language including delays associated with obtaining help from the learning support department.
- Computer or other equipment failure where use of alternative equipment is possible or loss of work was avoidable.
- Interruptions requested immediately before the start of examinations or submission of assessments, simply as a means of avoiding failure in or postponing assessments.³

22. In addition, the Special Cases Committee will not grant interruptions of studies where:

- Programme/unit changes or closures mean that the student would not be able to continue with their programme of studies on return from an interruption.
- It would lead to a student exceeding the maximum period of registration for the programme or breaching any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) or legal requirements.

23. Applications will be considered in a timely manner, normally within 5 working days of the Registry Department receiving the Interruption of Studies Request Form.

24. The College will confirm the outcome of the request in writing, including the start and end date of the period of interruption. This communication will also confirm the student's academic or assessment position at the point of return including:

- Outstanding assessments which need to be submitted in order to complete the relevant level or stage of a programme.
- Future assessment dates (if known).
- Confirmation of which assessment attempt a student will have reached upon their return to study (for example first attempt or replacement first attempt).
- Any relevant supervision arrangements or changes to personal tutor arrangements upon return.

² It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of all policies and procedures relevant to their studies.

³ This would provide these students with an unmerited advantage. If there is a genuine reason why a student cannot complete an assessment, it may be appropriate to use the Mitigating Circumstances Policy.

25. If a student requires a further period of interruption, beyond that which was originally granted, they should submit a new Interruption of Studies Request Form, along with supporting evidence, to the Registry Department.⁴
26. Students should be aware that programme changes might affect the availability of units on return to study.

Parental Leave

27. Students may interrupt their studies for the purpose of maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave. Leave for these purposes should be requested in writing in the same manner as other interruption to study requests.
28. Maternity leave can be taken at any time from 28 weeks of the pregnancy for a maximum period of 12 months. The period of leave must be taken as one consecutive block.
29. Students who are adopting a child may interrupt their studies for a maximum of 12 months. The period of leave must be taken in one consecutive block.

Supporting documentation

30. A doctor's note or note from another medical professional should be submitted in support of an interruption of studies application which is made on the basis of a prolonged or acute medical condition.
31. Other appropriate third-party evidence or collaborative documentation may also be required. Where considerable personal or family difficulties have led a student to seek a leave of absence, these circumstances should be fully explained. In case of a ministerial student or a minister, a supporting letter from the church, providing details of the circumstances, may be appropriate.
32. The Special Cases Committee will determine if the evidence supplied is satisfactory on a case-by-case basis. It may contact any person named in a submission to seek further clarification or further information, but this will not be undertaken to remedy omissions in the documentation or to seek supporting evidence when not supplied.

Access to services during a period of interruption

33. Students remain registered with the College whilst they are on an approved period of interruption of studies but since they are not classed as studying on their programme, they will not be able to:
- Attend lectures, classes, supervision or other scheduled contact time.
 - Access library resources.
 - Access Moodle.
 - Access the building freely, unless signed in for specific purposes.

⁴ The Special Cases Committee must ensure that any extension to an interruption of studies does not take the student beyond the time frame within which their programme of study must be completed.

34. The College will make appropriate contact with the student throughout their interruption, to make sure that they are fully aware of relevant information and to facilitate their return to the programme. Students will retain access to their College email account and IT services for this purpose during a period of interruption.

Return to study after an interruption

35. Students should confirm to the Registry Department in writing their intention to return one month before the expected return date. If they fail to return within 30 days after their agreed date of return, and there is no response to the College's efforts to contact them, they may be withdrawn from their programme.

36. Liaison will take place with a student prior to their return to the College to confirm the arrangements for the resumption of study. This will include the date of return, elective unit choices (where appropriate), confirmation of outstanding assessments and the implications of any changes to the programme or regulations during the period of interruption. The student will also be offered support to draw up a plan of study where appropriate.

37. Where possible, this should take the form of a face-to-face meeting between the Programme Director and the student to support the student's return to the programme.

38. If a student wishes to return early from an interruption of studies, they should contact the Registry Department to ascertain whether this is possible, and if so, to confirm arrangements for the resumption of study. If the interruption was permitted for serious medical reasons, the student may be asked to provide evidence that they are fit to return to studies.

International Students

39. The College is required to notify the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) of interruptions of study for students sponsored under the UK Points Based Immigration System where the College has issued Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). If a student's interruption of studies is longer than 60 days or would mean that they are unable to complete their course before their visa expires, then the College is required by law to withdraw them from the course and cancel their CAS. They would therefore be expected to leave the UK. In exceptional circumstances, such as serious illness or injury the College can continue to sponsor them and not cancel their CAS, but only if they would still be able to complete their course within the timeframe of their current student visa. Once they have left the UK and are ready to resume their studies, they will need to apply for a new visa. A student must inform the College as soon as possible so that they can be assigned a new CAS number, and the College can confirm the date on which the student will be able to rejoin their course.

40. International students should ensure they have considered the implications of current regulations regarding visas prior to requesting an interruption of studies.

International students will be referred to the College's International Students Committee to discuss the consequences of an interruption.

Fitness to Study

41. Where there are concerns about a student's fitness to study, and these are being investigated under the College's fitness to study processes, they may be referred to this policy to apply for an interruption of studies.
42. Where a student is detained under the Mental Health Act the College will place them on an interruption of studies. This will be lifted once a fitness to study process has assessed the student's fitness to return to their studies.
43. A Stage 2 Fitness to Study Meeting will be held to consider whether an action plan can be agreed for the student's return to studies, or whether the decision needs to be referred to a Stage 3 Fitness to Study Panel.

Financial implications of interruptions of studies

44. During the period of interruption, students may no longer be eligible for Student Finance grants or loans, or any other funding⁵. Students may be able to get student finance while they are away from their course, if they suspend their studies due to illness, bereavement or another serious personal reason.
45. Students will need to reapply for funding if they return to their studies in a new academic year. Funding should restart automatically if they return in the same academic year. Students might be required to start repayments straight away if they withdraw or are withdrawn from their course.
46. The College is required to report an interruption of studies or withdrawal to the Student Loans Company (SLC) or other UK equivalent funding bodies. Students should consult their funding body before interrupting their study, and are reminded that the College is not able to guarantee the resumption of any external grant or loan.
47. Tuition fees are not payable during the period of interruption; however students will be asked to pay any outstanding tuition fees up to the point of taking the interruption. If a student interrupts their study and returns to repeat a stage/semester the student will be charged the appropriate tuition fee for the repeat period of study.
48. For postgraduate students with Research Council or other funding awards, students will need to ensure that they have prior permission in writing from their funding body before requesting the interruption and will be required to enclose copies of the related correspondence with the interruption form in confirmation of this.

⁵ Including a College Bursary or Scholarship.

49. Students should contact the College's Finance Department for advice on the financial implications of interrupting their studies.

Voluntary withdrawal from studies

50. Before voluntarily withdrawing from a programme, students should first discuss the matter with their Programme Director to ensure that they are making an informed decision. Students should consider all the consequences associated with withdrawing and whether there are any other options which may be available to them, including applying for an interruption of studies.

51. After discussing the matter fully, any student who wishes to withdraw from their programme of study must do so formally by completing a '[Request for Withdrawal from Study Form](#)' and submitting it to the Registry. A copy of this form can be found under Academic Administration or requested from the Registry (registry@spurgeons.ac.uk).

52. The Senior Registrar or Assistant Registrar presents the form to the Special Cases Committee, after which the student is notified to confirm the date from which their withdrawal is effective.

Withdrawal for non-engagement

53. As stated in the College Terms and Conditions for Registration, if a student fails to engage with their studies without good cause and due notice by the end of the sixth week of the advertised start date of the programme, the Senior Registrar will refer them to the Special Cases Committee who will deem them to have withdrawn from the programme and their registration will be terminated.

54. The College may also withdraw students from their programme if they have stopped engaging with it any point during the academic year⁶. The Progression and Awards Board (and, in mid-year, the Pre-Progression and Awards Board) operates a warning system whereby an inactive student may be asked to submit a piece of work by a set date. If they fail to do so, a subsequent Board will set a new deadline. If this also is missed, they will be withdrawn.

55. If it is considered that a student's engagement is not consistent with the terms and conditions of their registration, then the Senior Registrar will write to the student outlining these concerns and asking them to comment and submit any relevant supplementary evidence. The case will then be referred to the Special Cases Committee for review and determination.

Academic withdrawal

56. Other than withdrawal for non-engagement, a student can be withdrawn for poor academic performance in accordance with the provisions laid down in the College's Degree Regulations.

⁶ In accordance with the College's Terms and Conditions for Programmes of Study.

57. In such cases a student can be withdrawn from their programme at the end of the academic year after determination of the student's profile of marks by the College Progression and Awards Board.

Withdrawal for Fitness to Practise

58. A student may be withdrawn from a programme or pathway following a Fitness to Practise hearing, as per the College's [Fitness to Practise Policy](#). Where the College has been informed by a PRSB that a student is not fit to practise, and the PRSB requires the removal of the student from the relevant programme or pathway, the College will comply with the request.

Actions following withdrawal

59. In all cases of withdrawal of students by the College, students are notified in writing of the reasons for their withdrawal and the date from which the withdrawal is effective. They are also notified of any relevant appeal procedures.

60. Where a student withdraws, the last date of attendance/engagement is recorded as one of the following:

- The last day of academic activity/engagement where this is known; or
- The date of submission of the 'Request for Withdrawal from Study Form'

61. The College will inform the student of any outstanding tuition fee balances, in accordance with the [Tuition Fees Policy](#).

62. Once students have withdrawn, the College will normally:

- Issue the student with a statement outlining any outstanding fees which must be paid.
- Withhold any student loan or other payment due.
- Refuse to deal with applications for any other government funding.
- Inform the Student Loans Company or their equivalent in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- Inform the Home Office, in the case of international visa students with a Student Visa.
- Inform any other relevant funding or accrediting bodies.

63. Students must return their student ID card and any other College equipment, including library books. Failure to return any equipment will result in the student incurring the cost of the replacement.

64. If students are living in College accommodation when they withdraw, they will be required to move out in accordance with the terms of their accommodation agreement.

65. If a student has withdrawn, or has been withdrawn, the College will review the student's academic profile to determine if sufficient credits have been

accumulated to award an intermediate exit qualification in line with the relevant Academic Regulations.

66. UK Visas and Immigration will be informed about international students with a Visa who have withdrawn. This would result in an immediate cancellation of sponsorship, and the need to find another sponsor or potentially leave the UK. In such circumstances a student may not be entitled to a refund of any tuition fees already paid.

Re-enrolment following withdrawal by the College

67. Once a student has been withdrawn from a programme, re-enrolment will be considered by the Admissions Department and Admissions Committee.
68. Such students may re-apply to the College for a different programme. The decision whether to admit the applicant for the second time will take account of the circumstances under which his/her programme was terminated and the applicant's subsequent development.

Re-enrolment following voluntary withdrawal

69. A student who withdraws from a programme voluntarily may be allowed to re-enrol on that programme, for example to complete a degree following withdrawing at diploma level. The conditions for re-entry will depend on the circumstances that led to the withdrawal and conform to the relevant Admissions Protocols.

Right to appeal

70. If a student wishes to appeal against a decision to withdraw them on academic grounds, they should use the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).
71. If a student wishes to appeal against a decision to withdraw them due to gross misconduct, they should use the procedure detailed in the [Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy](#).
72. If a student's application for interruption is declined by the Special Cases Committee, or the student has been withdrawn due to non-engagement, the student has a right to appeal using the appeals procedure set out below.
73. The student has the right to appeal to the College Principal in writing, within 10 working days of the outcome of the claim being communicated. The Principal, or nominee⁷, will assess the appeal, seeking clarification and evidence from relevant parties as necessary. A decision will be communicated to the student in writing, within 10 working days of the appeal being received.
74. An appeal may only be made on the following grounds:

⁷ Any nominee must be independent of the original decision.

- A material and demonstrable procedural irregularity in the interruption of studies or withdrawal from studies processes.
- Evidence that the College did not consider all of the information available to it at the time of its consideration of the claim.

75. Appeals will not be considered on the following grounds:

- Dissatisfaction with the reasonable judgment of the Special Cases Committee.
- Retrospective submission of an application for an interruption or late submission of evidence to support an application where there are no compelling grounds why the application was late.
- Late submission of work or evidence to support a student's engagement with studies.

76. Once such a student has finished the internal appeals procedure the College will promptly send a Completion of Procedures letter to the student. This will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the College's final decision.

77. If the appeal is rejected and this procedure has been completed, students registered with validating Universities can request a review of their appeal.

- University of Manchester registered students can request a review of their appeal to the Registrar, Secretary and COO of the University of Manchester.
- Liverpool Hope University registered students can request a review of their appeal to the Pro Vice Chancellor.

78. If the Student believes the issue has not been appropriately addressed, the student may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for higher Education. The OIA review will focus on the final decision. The OIA must receive a student's Complaint Form within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter. For further details see: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/rules-and-the-complaints-process.aspx>

Monitoring and Review

79. An annual overview report detailing the number of students interrupting and withdrawing, accompanied by relevant explanations, will be considered by Programme Committees and the Academic Board.