

# **Student Withdrawal and Interruption of Studies Policy - Effective from 2017/18**

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# 1 Student Withdrawal

## 1.1 Definition of Withdrawal

Withdrawal is the permanent cessation of study. It can be effected either by the student or by the University but both types of withdrawal require formal written notification.

## 1.2 Withdrawal from study by the student.

Students are required to formally notify the University of their request to withdraw from their programme. Students are required to contact their Programme Leader in order to discuss their withdrawal request. Withdrawal requests should be made in writing to your Programme Leader.

## 1.3 Withdrawal from study by the University

The University can withdraw any student due to:

- Failure to complete re-enrolment (see the Late Enrolment Policy)
- Academic failure in an assessment (see Academic Regulations)
- Exceeding an agreed period of interruption (see this policy below)
- Failure to attend and engage (see Student Engagement Policy)
- Concerns about fitness to study (see Fitness to Study Procedure)
- Exclusion (see the Disciplinary Procedure)
- Non-payment of fees (see Credit and Refund Policy)

In addition, the University can withdraw a Tier 4 student where it suspects the student has broken the conditions of their permission to stay in the United Kingdom. These conditions may be more extensive and detailed especially where this relates to attendance and engagement (see Student Engagement Policy).

A withdrawn student is not normally eligible to attend teaching sessions or take assessments. However, if the student has submitted a formal academic appeal against the decision of an Examination Board to the Appeals and Resolutions office and if the Appeals and Resolutions office confirm that there is a prima facie case for consideration of the appeal then the student may be permitted to continue to study (see Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure). During this period the withdrawal remains in effect but is “stayed” pending the outcome of the appeal. There may be some restrictions placed on access to facilities or premises if this is deemed appropriate and necessary.

If the academic appeal is not upheld then the effective day of withdrawal is considered to be the original date of notification of withdrawal. Any assessments taken during the “stayed” period will not be processed or considered by an Examination Board nor will they form part of a transcript or count towards any exit award.

Assessments submitted prior to withdrawal will be considered by an Examination Board to confirm credits or an exit award according to the standard assessment regulations.

### **1.3 Establishing Date of Withdrawal**

The date of withdrawal must be recorded accurately and immediately as this has important implications for the contractual, academic and financial status of both the student and of the University.

Where withdrawal is instigated by the student, the date of withdrawal will be the date formal notification of withdrawal is received by the University.

If withdrawal is imposed by the University due to academic failure, the date of withdrawal will be the date of the meeting of the Examination Board at which the assessment failure is confirmed.

Where a student is withdrawn due to non-attendance or non-engagement and has not taken any steps to contact the University, then the date of withdrawal will be determined to be the last date on which the student's engagement can reasonably be verified (this may be submission of academic assessment, attendance in person, or identifiable logon to university systems) .

If any student formally notifies the University of their withdrawal between enrolment years, the date of withdrawal will be the date the formal notification of withdrawal is received by the University.

If any a student fails to re-enrol, the date of withdrawal will be considered to be the final day of the previous enrolment year.

Where a student dies during the course of their studies, the Director of Academic Services will exercise discretion in reaching a determination on their last day of attendance which will usually then be used as the date for the University's formal record of withdrawal.

### **1.4 Consequences of Withdrawal**

#### **1.4.1 Access to buildings, facilities and services**

The University will:

- revoke access to all BCU buildings and facilities
- remove all borrowing rights from the Library
- revoke access to the University's IT network access
- revoke all rights of access to any University accommodation including as a visitor.

#### **1.4.2 Special Guidance for Tier 4 students.**

If a Tier 4 student wishes to instigate their own withdrawal, they should seek advice from the International Student Advisors before proceeding, as withdrawal will have visa implications.

If the withdrawal does proceed, the University will report this to United Kingdom Visas & Immigration (UKVI) and the student must make arrangements to leave the UK in line with Home Office guidelines.

If withdrawal is imposed on a Tier 4 student due to non-attendance and/or academic failure, as part of the withdrawal notification, the student must be advised of the subsequent visa implications. The University will notify the UKVI that they are no longer sponsoring the student under Tier 4. The student must make arrangements to leave the UK in line with Home Office guidelines.

### **1.4.3 Financial Implications**

Birmingham City University will notify the Student Loan Company of every student withdrawal where a student is in receipt of support.

See the University's Credit and Refund Policy for full liability details for all students.

If a student is in receipt of a bursary or a scholarship or a fee waiver, and is then withdrawn, the student will lose the entire value of any University bursary or scholarship or fee waiver, irrespective of the withdrawal date.

Tier 4 students may be required to provide the University with proof of return flight tickets before any refund can be issued.

### **1.5 Re-admission after withdrawal**

Student withdrawal is a permanent status. If a withdrawn student wishes to recommence study they must re-apply to the programme and will be subject to the University's standard admissions criteria.

### **1.6 Reinstatement after withdrawal**

Where a student receives an upheld appeal decision following a withdrawal due to academic failure, the student must be reinstated. The student should re-enrol to commence studies at the next available opportunity (i.e. following semester or enrolment year).

If a student is withdrawn due to University administrative error, the student must be reinstated immediately. In the event that the University fails to implement or enforce its policies and procedures correctly, any student that is affected will not be penalised.

For Tier 4 students, no re-instatement should take place until the advice of the UKVI Compliance Team has been sought as liaison with the Home Office will be required. The stage at which the withdrawal notification is at with the Home Office will determine how the student is further advised. Where a Tier 4 student receives an upheld appeal decision following a withdrawal due to non-attendance and/or an immigration breach, re-instatement is unlikely to be considered.

## **2 Student Interruption of Studies**

### **2.1 Definition of Interruption of Studies**

An interruption of studies is an approved leave of absence from all study for a defined period (see also the Maternity Policy).

There is significant evidence that students who take a break from study often experience considerable academic, financial, and social difficulties when they return to study. An interruption of studies is a serious step to take for any student and should only be considered with reasonable care and consideration for the risks and a determination that they are clearly outweighed by the demonstrable benefits for the student of taking a break from their programme.

Students can request an interruption of study which will be carefully considered by key senior staff <sup>1</sup>in the institution. Factors which will be taken into account when reviewing the request will be:

- The nature of the reason for the request – whether it is serious and likely to be an enduring matter.
- The documentary evidence provided in relation to the reason.
- The performance, attendance and engagement of the student up to the point of the request. Students who do not regularly attend, are not engaged or who are struggling to perform academically will be considered a very high risk in relation to an interruption of study and it may be more appropriate for them to withdraw entirely from study and seek to return at a later date.
- The financial / debtor status of the student.
- The overall duration of the Programme
- Any planned major or substantive changes to the format of the programme or the cost of the programme which may significantly impact on the student at the end of the interruption period when they seek to resume study.

A student who is enrolled on a programme that has accreditation from a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body should be particularly aware that the PSRB may have set its rules in relation to possible interruptions of study and especially in relation to the maximum period for which a student can be registered to study on that programme. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they are fully aware of these restrictions and take them fully into account when considering whether to request an interruption.

A student who is granted approval to interrupt study is in effect withdrawn from every module and placement and activity that is associated with the programme on which they are registered. They cannot withdraw from individual modules while continuing to study or participate in other modules and activities.

An interruption of studies may be requested for a number of reasons (e.g. health, financial, academic or personal) by any student who has been enrolled for a minimum of 20 working days.

In the event that a student wishes to seek a break from study within the first 20 working days of the programme, they will be treated as though they have withdrawn. Such a student will then be required to re-apply for any programme of study at BCU and will be subject to the normal admissions criteria.

The length of an interruption of studies can be a period of a minimum of 20 working days<sup>2</sup> up to a maximum period of the end of the academic year in which the interruption takes place. For the avoidance of doubt - any period of interruption of studies will be included for the purposes of calculating the student's maximum period of registration (see academic regulations and programme information).

An interruption of studies cannot commence fewer than 20 working days before the end of the normal study period for the modules for which the student is registered at the time. In accordance with the University's policies on student finances and payment, a student cannot be approved to interrupt their studies following an academic year where they have been recorded as owing tuition fees to the University.

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<sup>1</sup> For an interruption request this will be the relevant Associate Dean and the Director of Faculty Administration. For an extension of interruption this will be the Director of Academic Services.

<sup>2</sup> Working days are defined in the University's regulations as Mondays to Fridays but excluding Bank holidays and other days when the University is closed.

It should be noted that, for those programmes which shorter in duration than an academic year and have consequently a greater intensity of teaching, such as the University's pre-sessional English programmes, the option of taking an interruption of studies is not available to students on these programmes.

## **2.2 Establishing the interruption of studies period**

Students should request an interruption of studies at the time it is required, or ahead of time where possible. Retrospective requests for an interruption of studies will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and where the student can show good reason why the request was not made at the appropriate time.

The student must also agree a return to study date with the Faculty when the interruption is requested. Where the interruption of study is on medical grounds, the student is required to provide medical evidence to inform decisions about the length of interruption.

The Faculty must advise the student how their study will be impacted and on the likely timetable arrangements for outstanding modules and assessments. This advice should include the implications of module/programme reviews and closures. It is expected that students will re-study any uncompleted modules on their return.

The student will be required to sign a form that confirms they have been fully briefed about the risks associated with the interruption, that they accept any conditions relating to their return including the date of return and that they will notify the University of any substantive or material changes to their circumstances which may affect their eligibility to study (for example, an arrest, criminal conviction or other investigation)

Tier 4 students who wish to request an interruption of studies must seek advice from the International Student Advisors as an interruption will have visa implications. Tier 4 students on an interruption of studies cannot remain in the UK during their interruption. The University will notify the UKVI that they are no longer sponsoring the student under Tier 4. The student must make arrangements to leave the UK in line with Home Office guidelines. The student must also accept the risk that they may not automatically secure a CAS to return to study at the end of their interruption period – if they do not do so, they will be withdrawn from study.

## **2.3 Status and assessment record implications**

Where a student has completed modules prior to commencing an interruption of studies, marks must be presented to the next available examination board for credits to be awarded.

Where a student submits an assessment forming part of a module for which they have interrupted study, the mark awarded for that assessment will be carried forward and used to determine the overall module mark when the student completes the module. This will not affect the student's right to submit a claim of exceptional extenuating circumstances in respect of the assessment(s) concerned providing they do so in a timely way.

Where students have uncompleted modules on their record at the point of interruption, they must be withdrawn from these modules.

A student resuming study after an interruption of studies will be allowed the normal number of assessment attempts for each module, in accordance with the academic regulations. This means, if a student has taken and failed an assessment, and then takes an interruption of study, then on their return to study they will only be eligible for their resit attempt. This is to ensure parity of treatment for all students. This does not affect the student's right to submit a claim of exceptional extenuating

circumstances in respect of the assessment(s) concerned providing they do so in a timely way.

Students subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) or Occupational Health checks or any other status check should be informed in writing that if an interruption of studies is set for 9 months or more, the University will undertake a new DBS/Occupational Health check and that study cannot be resumed until this check has been completed.

## **2.4 Financial implications**

Birmingham City University will notify the Student Loan Company of each undergraduate interruption of studies and resumption date where the student receives funding support. For all details, refer to the Student Financial policies.

## **2.5 Resumption of studies**

Students who take an interruption of studies are expected to return to study at a date agreed at the time of the interruption. The resumption date will be governed by the next offering of the student's interrupted modules, i.e. at the start of the following semester or academic year.

Before resuming studies, students will be required to undertake a number of steps and gain formal permission to resume. Students will be required to:

- provide medical certification confirming they are fit to resume their programme of study prior to re-enrolment (in cases where an interruption of studies has been approved on medical grounds)
- Confirm that they have taken steps to familiarise themselves with the programme content and assessments and the regulations and procedures that will apply.
- Confirm that the underlying reasons for their interruption have been addressed and resolved.
- Tier 4 students must contact the Faculty at least three months prior to their resumption date in order to advise and update on their arrangements to apply to secure a Tier 4 visa for their next period of study.
- For Tier 4 students, new evidence of English Language competency may need to be provided.

Where a programme/ closes before a student resumes study, the student should be contacted by the Programme Director to discuss possible arrangements to transfer programme/ /route or to find an appropriate mode to support the completion of the learning outcomes of their programme and allow the conferment of an award.

If a student does not re-enrol at the agreed resumption date and does not submit a request to extend the interruption of studies, and reasonable attempts by the Faculty to contact the student have failed, the student shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the University – the date of withdrawal being identified as the agreed resumption date.

## **2.6 Interruption of studies extension**

Where a student on an approved interruption of studies indicates they wish to be absent beyond the agreed return date, an extension to the interruption period may be considered by the Associate Dean and the Director of Faculty Administration, in

consultation with the Director of Academic Services providing that the total period of absence including the extension does not exceed one academic year.

Requests to extend interruption of studies for more than one academic year will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances. Such requests must be approved by the Director of Academic Services.

In deciding whether to extend an interruption of study for more than one year, the Director of Academic Services will take account of:

- The nature of the reason for the request – whether it is serious and likely to be an enduring matter.
- The documentary evidence provided in relation to the reason.
- The performance, attendance and engagement of the student up to the point of the original request.
- The financial / debtor status of the student.
- The overall duration of the programme
- planned major or substantive changes to the format of the programme or the cost of the programme which may significantly impact on the student at the end of the interruption period when they seek to resume study.
- Whether the total duration of the absence represents too great a break in terms of maintaining the essential currency of study and their proficiency in any required professional skills and experience.
- For Tier 4 students, new evidence of English Language competency may need to be provided.