

Section 6: Programme-related matters

Policy on and procedures for suspensions

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to outline the procedure to be followed for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students seeking suspension, to clarify the entitlement of suspended students to access services and to outline the rights of, and procedure to be followed by, students returning from suspension.
2. The section on Return from suspension should be read in conjunction with the *Policy on and procedures for students returning to or repeating study*.

What is meant by ‘suspension’?

3. A suspension of study is an approved interruption to a period of study that prevents a student from continuing with their programme for a specified period of time.
4. A student may apply for a period of suspension through submission of a *Programme Suspension Request Form*. While all such requests will be considered by the University, it should be noted that **suspension is not an inherent right of students**; suspensions are granted at the University’s discretion.
5. The University considers that the following circumstances, with appropriate supporting evidence, may be reasonable grounds for a student seeking suspension:
 - Health issues (mental or physical);
 - Impairment of ability to attend or engage with academic commitments;
 - Parental leave;
 - Jury service or compulsory military service;
 - Compassionate reasons (including serious domestic difficulties);
 - Financial reasons;
 - Undertaking a placement or employment opportunity relating to the programme of study or employment as a sabbatical officer;
 - For part time and distance learning students only, employment issues such as significant change in employment.

This list is not exhaustive; there may be other circumstances which would substantially impair a student’s ability to pursue their programme which might provide grounds for suspension.

6. Weak academic performance in itself is not reasonable grounds for suspension. Any student who suspends should normally be in good academic standing.
7. In certain circumstances the University may require a student to suspend their studies for a period of time. These circumstances may include:

- Suspension pending re-assessment (where the student does not repeat any teaching but must pass an assessment(s) before progressing. They are referred to as suspended ‘assessment only’);
- Non-payment of tuition fees;
- Disciplinary reasons (following the application of the *Student Disciplinary Procedure* available in the current year’s calendar which can be found at: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/Calendar/>);
- Non-engagement with study (in accordance with the *Policy on and procedures relating to student academic engagement and fitness to study*);
- Reasons relating to fitness to study (in accordance with the *Policy on and procedures relating to student academic engagement and fitness to study*), including where continuing to study is considered by the University not to be in the best interests of the student, the University or the University community because the student is not fit to do so;
- Reasons relating to fitness to practise (in accordance with the *Fitness to Practise* procedures). This may include immediate suspension from a placement pending investigation; and
- Reasons relating to non-engagement with the requirements for annual re-enrolment.

Procedure for suspensions

8. The maximum period, over the course of a programme, for which a student may suspend their studies is normally 24 months, excluding periods of suspension pending investigation for fitness to practise and for suspension pending assessment or re-assessment approved by the University Special Cases Sub-Committee, University Awarding or Progression Boards.
9. A period of suspension is normally granted for one academic year, although permission may sometimes be granted for shorter periods. If a student is suspended for a continuous period longer than 12 months, full-time students would normally be required to repeat the previous year of the programme.
10. Conditions may be imposed which the student will have to meet before return from suspension will be permitted. These requirements will be confirmed in writing to the student with details of deadlines by which the student must have met the conditions.
11. Programmes of study are subject to change and any student who is suspended is normally required, when resuming their studies, to undertake the programme of study of the cohort which they are joining. This may be subject to a different programme specification.

Students requesting permission to suspend

12. If a student is considering suspension, they should in the first instance discuss this option with their Personal Tutor. If suspension appears to be a reasonable course of action, the student should be referred for further guidance to the:
 - Student Support Coordinator or Henley Business School Teaching & Learning Officer for advice on the suspension process and regarding tuition fee liability;
 - Immigration Advice Service for advice on Tier 4 visas;
 - Accommodation team for advice on moving out of University accommodation.
13. A student is not normally permitted to begin a period of suspension during the summer term or the August examination periods.

There may be additional local restrictions which limit suspensions in Schools; such local restrictions must be approved by the Teaching & Learning Dean.

14. If the student wishes to proceed, they will be required to put the request in writing by submitting a *Programme Suspension Request Form*. The form can be found online: <http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/the-important-stuff/rules-and-regulations/suspensions.aspx>.
15. The request for suspension will be considered by the Senior Tutor and the Student Support Coordinator or the Henley Business School Teaching & Learning Officer, as appropriate.
16. Requests must be escalated for approval by the Teaching & Learning Dean in the following circumstances:
 - a. Suspensions beyond the cumulative maximum
 - b. Academic conditions which must be fulfilled during the suspension and are conditions of return
 - c. Retroactive suspension
 - d. Any requests for suspension supported by the School which fall outside the normal accepted grounds for suspension.
17. If the suspension request is approved, the student will receive formal written confirmation of their suspension from the Support Centre or equivalent. If the suspension request is declined, the student will be notified in writing by the Support Centre or equivalent and will be advised of the grounds for the decision.
18. Normally students should cease attendance on their programme of study only on receipt of the written confirmation of suspension. The suspension does not come into effect until it has been formally approved.

Students required by the University to suspend their studies

19. Any student whom the University requires to suspend their studies for a period of time will be advised of this decision in writing with details regarding the grounds for and the consequences of suspension.

Return from suspension

20. The student will normally return at the beginning of the next academic year (autumn term), or they may be given permission to re-join the programme at the start of the term in which the suspension occurred during the previous academic year. Return to study will be subject to the requirements set out below and in the *Policy on and procedures for students returning to or repeating study*.
21. Students are expected to return at the time confirmed by the University. Students will not be permitted to return before or after the agreed return date other than with the agreement of the relevant Senior Tutor and the Teaching and Learning Dean (or nominee). It is recommended that a student who has been suspended for more than 12 months should not normally be permitted to return without repeating a period of study.
22. When a student, excluding students suspended pending assessment or re-assessment, is ready to apply for return from suspension, they must confirm their intention to return to the Support Centre or Henley Business School Teaching and Learning Officer, who will guide them through the procedure for return.

Students permitted to suspend their studies at their request

23. A student who has requested and been permitted to suspend, and on whom no conditions are placed in respect of their return to study at the time of suspension, is **entitled** to resume their programme provided the return to study is at the agreed return date.

24. A student who has requested and been permitted to suspend, and on whom conditions are placed in respect of their return to study at the time of suspension, is **entitled** to resume their programme provided conditions have been met and the return to study is at the agreed return date.
25. A student who has not met all of the conditions for return will not normally be permitted to return.
26. A student who does not resume their studies at the agreed return date will be withdrawn from their programme of study. Students who have been withdrawn may request reinstatement followed by a further period of suspension subject to the provisions of this policy.

Students required by the University to suspend their studies

27. A student who is suspended 'assessment only' has the right to return to undertake the assessment at the next scheduled assessment opportunity, and, if successful, resume their programme of study. It should be noted that a student shall not normally be eligible to be Deemed Not to have Sat on more than two occasions within a Part (for undergraduates) or within a one-year postgraduate programme (or within any year of study for postgraduate programmes which are longer than one-year in duration).
28. A student who is suspended 'assessment only' may also be subject to a condition which must be satisfied before the student can undertake the assessment (see paragraphs 30-32).
29. A student who is required to suspend for reasons relating to discipline, fitness, non-engagement or debt will be permitted to return at a time specified by the University, subject to fulfilment of any conditions imposed.

Academic conditions to return

30. Where a suspension imposed an academic condition on the student's right to return (supplementary to passing the relevant assessment), a decision on whether the condition has been met should be made by the Teaching & Learning Dean in discussion with the student's School. Where the Teaching & Learning Dean and the School determine that the condition has been met, they will inform the Support Centre or Henley Business School Teaching and Learning Officer who will re-activate the student's record.

Non-academic conditions to return

31. Where a suspension imposed a non-academic condition on the student's ability to return, the Support Centre or Henley Business School Teaching and Learning Officer will confirm fulfilment of conditions, liaising with the Senior Tutor who may seek advice from the Teaching & Learning Dean, as appropriate. The decision may need to take into account evidence supplied by a counsellor, a medical practitioner or other professional person.
32. Further details on the procedure to be followed for a student returning to their studies after a period of suspension on health/medical grounds is contained in the *Policy on and procedures for Students returning to or repeating study*.

Appeals

33. A student who has requested suspension and had their request declined, or a student who has been suspended by the University against their wishes, has the right to appeal.
34. Students who are suspended as an outcome of another policy or procedure should refer to that policy or procedure for the appeal process.
35. Where the suspension is as a result of this policy and not owing to suspension under a different procedure, appeals should be raised as a stage 2 complaint under the Student Complaints Policy.

Coding of suspended students

36. RISIS Codes which are applied to suspended students will indicate if a student has been suspended:

- for debt;
- for disciplinary reasons (including temporary suspensions pending investigation);
- under Calendar provisions – essentially a risk to themselves or others;
- ‘assessment-only’ i.e. cannot progress to the next stage of the programme until an assessment is passed;
- for personal reasons affecting the student (sub-categories may be recorded).

These categories are not mutually exclusive and some students fall into more than one category.

Entitlement of suspended students to access services

37. The following table does NOT apply to students suspended for disciplinary reasons or for reasons of debt. Students suspended for debt or disciplinary reasons are unable to access most University facilities.

Access to	Entitlement
Teaching	Revision classes ¹
Academic staff (especially ST)	By agreement with the School DTL
Study Advice	Yes (limited) ²
Counselling	Yes (limited) ³
Disability Advisory Service	Yes (limited) ⁴
Careers	Yes
Email	Yes ⁵
RISIS	Yes (limited)

¹ Students who are suspended are not normally permitted to attend lectures, seminars or tutorials, or to submit further formative or summative work. The exception is students who are suspended pending examination or re-examination: they are entitled to submit summative work required for re-assessment and attend any revision classes or other revision activities which are included in the normal provision for students and to seek guidance from tutors and lecturers in relation to their revision. Students are not liable to an additional fee for revision classes or revision activities which they attend.

Students who have been deemed not to have sat and have been suspended pending examination may apply to the Teaching & Learning Dean for an exceptional allowance to attend specified classes. The Teaching & Learning Dean will consider each case on its merits, and will grant such allowance in cases where a student has missed certain classes due to their circumstances. Such students will not normally be liable for an additional fee.

² Where attendance is a condition of suspension or to facilitate return to study.

³ Where attendance is a condition of suspension, or to facilitate return to study, or to assess fitness to return to study, or until alternative support is arranged.

⁴ Where attendance is a condition of suspension or to facilitate return to study.

⁵ Should be reminded to check University email regularly.

	Must ensure requisite level of access e.g. may need to access Exam timetable and/or results
Blackboard	Subject to licence issues should be able to access historic and CURRENT version of data
Library – entry/book borrowing	Yes (limited) ⁶
Library – e-resources	
On campus	Yes if granted Student Visitor status
Off campus	No
SportsPark	Yes
Student Services Centre	Transcripts, Helpdesk
Student Services Centre – Financial Support	No (limited advice is available regarding funding through Student Finance authorities)
Student Services Centre – Bursary/NSP entitlement	No
Student Services Centre – Accommodation	Cannot normally live in University accommodation Can apply for accommodation for period post-suspension
Support Centre or Henley Business School admin deck	When related to suspension, return or transfer

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date
1	CQSD	Annually	UBTL	30 April 2012	2012/13
2	CQSD		UBTL	20 May 2013	
3	CQSD		UBTL	11 July 2017	2017/18
4	CQSD		UBTL	15 May 2018	immediately

⁶ A suspended student may be granted Student Visitor status if the student (or their tutor) requests continued access AND the Head of School sponsors the student's registration - in part so that the Library gets permission to use the School's book fund to reimburse any items that the student does not return – AND the student is in 'good standing' with the Library. A Head of School should not refuse to sponsor a suspended student's application for Student Visitor status without good cause.

Student Visitor Status permits the student to:

- borrow up to 10 items - this global allowance, besides standard loan items, can include up to 2 x 7-day loans; 5 x 1-day loans (eg Periodicals) and 2 x 6-hour loans. The standard loan period is for 3 weeks unless recalled earlier because another user has placed a hold on an item.
- request Inter-library loans
- access licensed e-resources on campus.

Student Visitors are NOT eligible to join the SCONUL Access Scheme.