

# WITHDRAWAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE 2019/20

## Introduction

The term 'withdrawal' is a broad term which indicates the process by which a student may leave the University other than through the successful completion of their programme of study. Student withdrawals from our University may be either temporary or permanent and may take place for a variety of reasons. These reasons may be student-led (the student may choose to withdraw), or University-led, where our University may require a student to withdraw as an outcome, for example, of an Examination Board, or a disciplinary process.

This combined policy and procedure defines the different types of withdrawal, sets out the rules for each type and explains the processes involved.

## Terminology

1. To denote withdrawals the following terminology will be used:
  - i. Student-led temporary withdrawal is termed 'Suspension of Studies';
  - ii. Student-led permanent withdrawal is termed 'Withdrawal';
  - iii. University-led temporary withdrawal with no 'disciplinary or procedural element' is termed 'Suspension of Studies';
  - iv. University-led permanent withdrawal with no 'disciplinary or procedural element' is termed 'Withdrawal';
  - v. University-led temporary withdrawal with a 'disciplinary or procedural element' is termed 'Exclusion';
  - vi. University-led 'permanent withdrawal with a disciplinary or procedural element' is termed 'Expulsion'.

## Student-led Withdrawal

2. Suspension of Studies
  - a) The University expects that students will follow the standard course of study for their mode, as set out in course documentation. However, there is also a recognition that circumstances may arise which affect the ability of students to follow the standard pattern of study. In such circumstances, students may request a suspension of studies from our University.
  - b) Students considering suspending their studies are advised to discuss their circumstances with their Academic Advisor or Course Administrator as soon as possible. The Academic Advisor or Course Administrator may direct the student to more specialist advice services as required.
  - c) Suspension of studies should normally be requested by form to the School Office, and submitted in advance of the effective date. The form should set out the reason for the request, and the period of time for which the student is requesting suspension of studies. A suspension of studies form can be found at [Suspension of Studies Form](#).

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- d) Suspension of studies must not be used to gain deferral for assessment or as a mechanism to avoid Examination Board decisions. Requests for suspension of studies will not normally be accepted after 1 May in any given year (or 1 December for students commencing studies in Semester 2). Where the student has agreed a transfer to another course from the start of the following academic year, they will be asked to confirm whether they will 'suspend their current course' or 'continue their current course'. Where the student elects to 'continue their current course', the student will be subject to the same requirements as any other continuing student. This includes, but is not limited to, the application of our university's Academic Regulations and the continued payment of tuition fees.
- e) Forms will be considered by the Course Director or their nominee. The Course Director may wish to contact the student to discuss the request or to interview the student as part of this process, and the student will be advised as to all options available to them and may be advised to seek financial advice from the Student Money team and the Students' Union. The Course Director/nominee will decide whether to approve or reject the request.
- f) Where the student making the request is a Tier 4 category student, they will normally be required to attend an interview with the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance team to ensure that they are fully aware of the impact of suspension on their immigration status.
- g) Requests for suspension of studies will not normally be backdated. Should a student wish to request a backdated suspension of studies, they will need to set out their reasons for not requesting the suspension in advance in their paperwork. Any decision to agree a backdated suspension of studies must be agreed by senior School staff.
- h) Requests will normally be agreed for a minimum period of 1 month and a maximum period of 12 months. In considering the length of the suspension, the Course Director or nominee will consider the point at which the student is leaving their programme of study and therefore what a suitable point for return would be. The point of return must be agreed by the Course Director or nominee. Students requesting a suspension of studies for a period of longer than 12 months will normally be advised to permanently withdraw from the course and apply to re-join it at a later date, or to apply for a further period of extension using the Suspension of Studies Request form.
- i) The student will receive notification of the outcome of their request in writing. The letter will contain the date from which the suspension of studies will commence, and the date on which the student is expected to return to their studies will be specified in the outcome letter to the student. The letter will also contain advice on guidance and support available to the student.
- j) The date on which the suspension of studies commences, as indicated in the outcome letter to the student, will be the date according to which reassessment of fee liability will be calculated. Reassessment of fee liability will not normally be backdated further, and any decision to agree a backdated reassessment must be agreed by senior

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School staff. Any credit relating to fees paid will be held over pending the student's return to be applied to the reinstated fee when they return. Students may make representations to the Financial Services team if they wish this position to be reviewed in light of their personal circumstances.

- k) Students who fail to return from a suspension of studies at the expected point/date are required to make contact with the university to explain the reasons for this within 2 weeks of their expected (re)enrolment date. Where the student fails to provide good reason for their failure to enrol, or where the student fails to make contact with the university during this 2-week period, this will normally result in the termination of that student's registration with the university. Students who have their registration terminated on this basis, who later present valid reasons for their failure to enrol, can be reinstated at the discretion of the Dean of School. The student will have the right of appeal any termination of their registration to the Secretary and Registrar.
- l) Any work submitted by the student prior to their date of suspension will be marked and considered at the next available Examination Board. Marks / credit awarded will be held until the student's return and will form part of their academic record. A student will not be penalised for lack of academic progress at an Examination Board for any work due during their period of suspension of studies. The student will be notified of the outcome of the Examination Board and will have the right to appeal as usual. Where a suspension of studies becomes a permanent withdrawal, the award of credit will be handled as set out in paragraph (i).
- m) Notification of suspension of studies will be made to Libraries and Learning Innovation and School Offices, to permit arrangements to be made for the return of any books and/or equipment which has been loaned to the student as appropriate.

### 3. Withdrawal (Permanent Withdrawal):

- a) Where students no longer wish to continue with their programme of study, they may withdraw from our University.
- b) Students considering withdrawal are advised to discuss their circumstances with their Academic Advisor or Course Administrator as soon as possible. The Academic Advisor or Course Administrator may direct the student to more specialist advice services as required.
- c) Withdrawal should normally be notified by form to the School Office. The form should set out the reason for withdrawal and the date from which the student wishes the withdrawal to commence. This should not normally be prior to the submission of the form. A Notification of Withdrawal form can be found at [Withdrawing from your Course](#).
- d) Forms will be reviewed by the Course Director or their nominee. The Course Director may wish to conduct an exit interview with the student, and where the course has

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particular requirements may need to ensure that the student returns certain belongings (e.g. NHS identification in relation to nursing, HPC or social work courses). The student will be advised as to all options available to them and may be advised to seek financial advice from the Student Money team and the Students' Union.

- e) Where the student intending to withdraw is a Tier 4 category student, they will normally be required to attend an interview with the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance team to ensure that they are fully aware of the impact of withdrawal on their immigration status.
- f) Withdrawal will not normally be backdated. Should a student wish to request a backdated withdrawal, they will need to set out their reasons for not requesting the withdrawal sooner in their paperwork. Any decision to agree a backdated withdrawal must be agreed by senior School staff.
- g) The student will receive confirmation of their withdrawal in writing. The letter will contain the date from which the withdrawal applies. The letter will also detail any conditions of withdrawal where these may apply (e.g. the return of outstanding library books or other equipment).
- h) The date on which the withdrawal commences, as indicated in the outcome letter to the student, will be the date according to which reassessment of fee liability will be calculated. Reassessment of fee liability will not normally be backdated further, and any decision to agree a backdated reassessment must be agreed by senior School staff.
- i) Any work submitted by the student prior to their date of withdrawal will be marked and considered at the next available Examination Board. The student will be considered for any fall-back awards due and any credit accrued will be awarded. The student will be notified of the outcome of the Examination Board, and will have the right to appeal.
- j) Notification of withdrawals will be made to Libraries and Learning Innovation and School Offices, to permit arrangements to be made for the return of any books and/or equipment which has been loaned to the student as appropriate.
- k) Students who have withdrawn (permanently withdrawn) from our University through their own choice (student-led withdrawal) will need to reapply (via UCAS or direct application) should they wish to re-join our University, whether studying the same or a different course. Where relevant, and in line with our Academic Principles and Regulations, recognition of any credit attained during their previous study may be taken into consideration. The decision to readmit will be made by the Admissions team, applying the relevant entry criteria for the course for which the student has applied.

### **University-Led Withdrawal with no 'disciplinary or procedural' element**

#### 4. Suspension of Studies

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- a) In the rare event that the University seeks to suspend studies for a student or a group of students<sup>1</sup> where there is no disciplinary or procedural element, the decision will be made by the Vice Chancellor or nominee.
- b) The outcome of Stage 3 of the University's Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure may be a recommendation by a Fitness to Study Case Conference panel to the Vice Chancellor that the student's studies be suspended. In such cases, consideration will be given to conditions for the student's return to study and consideration will be given to the implications on student funding and accommodation contracts; Student Services will advise panels on this. Outcome letters will include relevant information and contact details for the Students' Union Advice Service, and will offer to review the decision on the basis of any further independent assessment or evidence of fitness to study.

### 5. Withdrawal (Permanent University-led Withdrawal)

- a) Withdrawal on the grounds of lack of academic progress or failure takes place via an Examination Board for all taught students and via Research Degrees Sub-Committee for Postgraduate Research Students.
- b) University Attendance Panels will have the power to withdraw a student as required, with the right of appeal to the Secretary and Registrar. Withdrawal will be undertaken in line with the process set out in the Student Attendance Policy. Any student withdrawn for reasons of attendance will be considered for any fall-back awards due and any credit accrued will be awarded. The student will be notified of the outcome of the Examination Board, and will have the right to appeal.
- c) The outcome of Stage 3 of the University's Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure may be a recommendation by a Fitness to Study Case Conference panel to the Vice Chancellor that the student be withdrawn. In such cases this must be notified in writing, and information relating to rights of appeal given, as appropriate. Documentation regarding the outcome of the Stage 3 meeting and arrangements for review will be held in a confidential location by Governance and Legal Services, in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy. Consideration will be given to the implications on student funding and accommodation contracts; Student Services will advise panels on this. Outcome letters will include relevant information and contact details for the Students' Union Advice Service, and will offer to review the decision on the basis of any further independent assessment or evidence of fitness to study.
- d) Students who fail to enrol on their course at the expected point/date are required to make contact with the university to explain the reasons for this within 2 weeks of their expected (re-)enrolment date. Where the student fails to provide good reason

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<sup>1</sup> For example, if a pandemic episode required the University to close for a period of time.

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for their failure to enrol, or where the student fails to make contact with the university during this 2-week period, this will normally result in the termination of that student's registration with the university. Students who have their registration terminated on this basis, who later present valid reasons for their failure to enrol, can only be reinstated at the discretion of the Dean of School. The student will have the right of appeal any termination of their registration to the Secretary and Registrar. The student will be considered for any fall-back awards due and any credit accrued will be awarded at the next meeting of the relevant Examination Board. The student will be notified of the outcome of the Examination Board, and will have the right to appeal the decision of the Examination Board.

- e) In the interest of consistency of treatment of all students, re-admittance to the same programme of study can only be permitted in the most exceptional circumstances and with the permission of the Secretary and Registrar at the request of the Dean of School. Re-admittance to an alternative programme may be considered, however the student's previous academic record will be taken into account for a designated period of time (normally two years). Where the application is made within two years of the date of the student's previous withdrawal and is for an alternative programme of study, the decision to readmit will be made by Admissions, applying the relevant entry criteria for the course for which the student has applied, and consulting with the course team if the course is closely related to that which the student failed. After the two-year period, the decision to readmit will be made by Admissions.
- f) Students who have been withdrawn for reasons of non-attendance or lapsed enrolment may be considered for re-admittance to the same or an alternative programme, however the student's previous academic record may be taken into account for a designated period of time (normally two years) and the student may be required to provide additional information to support their application. The decision to readmit will be made by Admissions applying the relevant entry criteria for the course for which the student has applied, and consulting with the course team if the course is the same or closely related to that from which the student was withdrawn for reasons of non-attendance. After the two-year period, the decision to readmit will be made by Admissions.

### **University-Led Withdrawal with 'disciplinary or procedural' element**

- 6. Exclusion (University-led suspension of studies with 'disciplinary or procedural' element)
  - a) Students may be excluded under the Student Code of Discipline or the Professional Suitability Regulations, under which exclusion is considered and approved by the Vice Chancellor following a recommendation from the Secretary and Registrar or nominee.

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b) Where students have substantial Composite Fee<sup>2</sup> debt and have not engaged sufficiently with our University to resolve this, the University may seek to withdraw Educational Services through exclusion for a short period to seek to resolve the issue. Where students have a substantial Composite Fee debt and have not engaged sufficiently with our University to resolve it, an 'excluded' registration status will be applied to the student record at the end of the academic year, which will then support efforts to resolve the debt or to take further action to expel students for breach of contract in relation to non-payment of Composite Fees (as set out in paragraph 7d below).

### 7. Expulsion (University-led Withdrawal with 'disciplinary or procedural' element)

- a) Students may be expelled on the grounds of a breach of the Student Code of Discipline, which takes place following a recommendation by a Disciplinary panel to the Vice Chancellor, or on the grounds of Professional Suitability, which takes place following a recommendation by a Professional Suitability Panel to the Vice Chancellor.
- b) The Unfair Practice Board will have the power to enact its decisions to expel students for reasons of unfair practice, and students will be able to appeal their expulsion at the point it is applied through the standard appeals process.
- c) Where a student has a substantial Composite Fees debt and has not engaged sufficiently with our University to resolve it, an 'excluded' status will be applied to the registration at the end of the academic year in which the debt was accrued. Written notification will be provided to the student at the point the 'excluded' status is applied, and communications detailing the implication of the status and the impact on the student's ability to re-enrol, along with information on how to make arrangements to pay outstanding fees will be sent regularly to the student over the summer period, in addition to any debt collection actions which may also be in progress. This will ensure that the student has full information regarding their situation and how to rectify it in the period leading up to enrolment, and indeed it will not be possible for the student to re-enrol while the status is applied to their registration. Where an 'excluded' status remains active in relation to a student 2 weeks from their expected point/date or re-enrolment (this process will be repeated at other points in the year for semester 2 starters and courses with non-standard start dates), the student will be required to make contact with Financial Services to clear their debt. Where the student fails to make contact with Financial Services and/or fails to clear their debt, the student will be considered for expulsion. The Student Code of Discipline includes, at section 2.3.14, 'breach by a student of the terms of his or her registration contract with the University' within the definition of

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<sup>2</sup> Composite Fees are defined in the General Regulations as 'Tuition together with any examination, registration or other fees payable in respect of the particular course or programme of study for which the Student is registered'.

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conduct. A specially convened Disciplinary Panel will meet at an appropriate point each semester to consider cases of students proposed for expulsion for reason of non-payment of Composite Fees. Students will, under the Student Code of Discipline, have the opportunity to make representations to the panel in support of their case should they wish to do so. Expulsion (should it be recommended) will then be confirmed in writing to the student following the meeting of the Disciplinary Panel and the subsequent approval of the Vice Chancellor. The student will have the right of appeal as set out in the Student Code of Discipline. Students expelled in this manner will have a 'Debtor Hold' applied to their student record which will prevent them being readmitted to the University while the debt remains.

- d) Where a student is found to have withheld or misrepresented any material information, to have made false statements during the application and selection process or is unable to provide full documentary evidence of their qualifications at the point of commencing their course, they will be considered under the Student Code of Discipline. The definition of misconduct in the Code, at section 2.3.4, includes 'fraud, deceit, deception or dishonesty in relation to the University or its staff or in relation to being a student of the University' and, at section 2.3.14, 'breach by a student of the terms of his or her registration contract with the University'. Expulsion (should it be recommended) will then be confirmed in writing to the student following the meeting of the Disciplinary Panel and the subsequent approval of the Vice Chancellor.
- e) Students who have been expelled as a result of breaches of the Student Code of Discipline or Unfair Practice will not normally be readmitted to the University. Any application from a student who has previously been withdrawn for these reasons will be considered on a case by case basis, with advice sought from the Secretary and Registrar as required. Students will be made clear of this when their expulsion is communicated to them. Where a student has previously been withdrawn under one of the above policies by reason of committing a crime, any application from such a student will be treated on a case by case basis. Consideration will be given to the applicant's status under the 'Rehabilitation of Offenders' legislation in force at that time. Where the student is deemed "rehabilitated" under the legislation, the mere fact of the student's conviction will not be deemed to be a reason to refuse re-admittance. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not prevent the University from refusing re-admittance on other grounds. Again, the decision to admit or refuse admission will sit with the Secretary and Registrar.
- f) Readmission of students who have been expelled as a result of non-payment of Composite Fees will be treated on a case by case basis. It will be conditional upon clearing the outstanding debt and upon making satisfactory arrangements for payment of future fees, and must be agreed by the Secretary and Registry and/or Director of Finance and Resources. Students will be made clear of this when the expulsion is communicated to them.

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### **8. Postgraduate Research Students**

- a) Suspensions of studies for postgraduate research students are agreed following submission of a written application to Research Degrees Sub-Committee;
- b) Postgraduate research students will be allocated an annual holiday allowance to avoid the need for short suspensions of studies to cover holidays etc.;
- c) Postgraduate research students will be required to provide medical evidence to support requests for suspension of studies on medical grounds.
- d) A minimum period of three months will be applied to suspensions of studies for postgraduate research students. Requests for extension will only be considered if they are for a further block of three months or more, normally up to a maximum period of twelve months.

### **9. Reassessment of Fee Liability**

- a) The fee liability of all students will be reassessed in line with our University 'Fee Schedule and Fee Liability Policy'