

Change of Circumstances Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy sets out the process for students who may wish to either take a temporary break from their studies (suspension of studies) or permanently withdraw from the University. It deals specifically with student-initiated suspension of studies and permanent withdrawal and is therefore distinct from University-initiated permanent or temporary withdrawal on the basis of academic performance which is set out in the Academic Regulations and temporary withdrawal on the basis of fitness to study.
- 1.2 The University takes a positive and proactive approach to supporting students who are thinking of leaving their course (including students leaving the University and transferring to another higher education institution), transferring to another course (within the University), or taking a break from their studies (suspension of studies).
- 1.3 The change of circumstances process is managed by the Student Lifecycle Team within Academic Registry, with input from School administrative teams.
- 1.4 Where possible and appropriate, students should be proactively supported to continue their studies in the first instance. Where individual personal circumstances will likely prevent a student from continuing their course (even with the support of the University's support services and processes), students will be fully supported to make an informed and timely decision to either take a break in studies, explore options to transfer courses, or withdraw from their course.
- 1.5 Degree apprentices will also be supported with input from their employers and the Apprenticeship and Partnership Unit (APU). Support for Postgraduate Research students is provided by the Doctoral Research College (DRC).

2. Definitions

- **Suspension of Studies** or 'SOS' is the formal process by which a student can request to interrupt their studies for a period of up to one year.
- **Permanent Withdrawal** or 'PWD' is the formal Process by which a student can request to withdraw from their studies.
- **Temporary Withdrawal** or 'TWD' is a University-led decision requiring a student to temporarily withdraw from their Studies either for re-assessment purposes or as a result of a decision made under the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#). In the case of re-assessment, this applies to instances where a Progression and Award Board (PAB) uses its discretion to offer a second resit opportunity and a student is required to temporarily TWD until the next available opportunity to resit the assessment.

3. Suspension of Studies (SOS) and Returning to Study after SOS

- 3.1 An undergraduate or postgraduate student may request an SOS at any time during a teaching period up until the end of semester two, with the exception of new students in their first year of study. New students will not be able to request an SOS until they

have completed at least the first semester of teaching. This must be a sufficient proportion of the teaching to enable the student to undertake the assessment either prior to or on return from SOS (normally this would be circa 80% of the teaching, subject to confirmation from the relevant School). Prior to this point, students will be required to permanently withdraw and may submit a new application if they wish to return to the University to study.

- 3.2 Following a period of SOS, students must normally restart at the beginning of the semester that they did not complete, in order to avoid any gaps in teaching. An exception to this would be courses where modules are taught and assessed consecutively rather than concurrently (e.g. block delivery) where a student may be permitted to restart at the point that the next module in the sequence is due to be delivered, which may not necessarily be at the start of the semester. Undergraduates have two points in the year where re-entry is permitted, at the start of semester one or the start of semester two (see also 3.1 above regarding new students in their first semester of study). A student may request to take the full year to allow them to engage with their new cohort. Postgraduate students may restart at the beginning of any of the three semesters.
- 3.3 Any of the assessment marks for the non-completed semester, achieved prior to suspension of studies, will be removed from the student record prior to restarting the semester/stage. An exception to this would be marks completed for modules where those modules are delivered consecutively and a student is due to restart with the next module in the sequence, which may not be the first module in the semester (e.g. courses delivered in consecutive blocks). Marks for a semester completed prior to suspension of studies will be assured by the Modules Assessment Board (MAB) and the student will be considered by the PAB at the next meeting.
- 3.4 Students are required to complete a Notification of Suspension of Studies form and confirm the last date of attendance of teaching. In all cases the student decides when to take a period of suspension of studies, within the deadlines above, but the School reviews the academic performance for the semester/stage and confirms, in conjunction with Academic Registry, which semester the student can return to and any assessments that will be set prior to re-entry or a repeat of the semester/stage, as appropriate.
- 3.5 In cases where the student does not resume their studies at the start of the semester agreed, the status of the student will automatically change from Suspension of Studies to Permanent Withdrawal. On the approval of Associate Dean (with responsibility for quality assurance), students may exceptionally be permitted to extend SOS for a maximum of one year from the start of the start of the semester for return that was previously agreed.
- 3.6 Exceptionally, a student may suspend studies after the end of the teaching period. In such cases the PAB may exercise its discretion in considering the student's overall performance and may decide to offer a resit/sit of a failed/missed assessment where the student has completed teaching for the relevant semester but has not completed the module assessment for the semester. The opportunity to take a resit/sit will be scheduled in the summer vacation assessment period prior to/after re-entry to semester two or the next stage. The mark for a previously missed assessment scheduled after suspension of studies will not be capped whereas resits for previously failed modules will be capped. Alternatively, the PAB may decide to offer a repeat of the semester/stage rather than a resit/sit of failed/missed assessments.
- 3.7 Where major changes have been made to the curriculum, it may not be possible for a resit/sit for a failed/missed assessment to be taken prior/after re-entry; for example

where the scheduled assessment is not appropriate for the original teaching that was completed. In these circumstances, the student will be required to restart at the beginning of the semester/stage to enable the credit requirement to be met. No individual assessments may be set.

4. Permanent Withdrawal (PWD) and Returning to Study following PWD

- 4.1 A student wishing to return to the University will be permitted to submit a request to return to study by 31 August of the academic year in which permanent withdrawal occurred. A student must normally restart at the beginning of the semester that they did not complete, in order to avoid any gaps in teaching. Undergraduates have two points in the year where re-entry to study is permitted, at the start of the semester one or the start of semester two. Postgraduate students may start at the beginning of any of the three semesters. A student may request to retake the full year to allow them to engage with their new cohort. All such requests must be referred to the Associate Dean (with responsibility for quality assurance). If the request is submitted on or before 31 August, the student will be required to submit an application for re-admission. Students submitting requests to return to study after 31 August of the academic year in which they originally permanently withdrew, will be required to follow the process for re-admission.
- 4.2 New applications must be made via Admissions and in all cases the current published grade requirements must be met and the personal statement must address the reason for PWD, acknowledging what has changed to improve the likelihood of a successful outcome on this occasion.

5. Internal Course Transfers (transfer from one BCU course to another BCU course)

- 5.1 All new students have an initial 'cooling off' period as follows: there is a two-week cooling off period from acceptance of an offer and another 2 week cooling off period from starting the course. During this period, transferring within the University or to another University is permitted and this will not incur a tuition fee cost.
- 5.2 Birmingham City University also permits internal course transfers up to Friday of Week four of the course start date. If a student wishes to transfer to another course after Friday of Week four, it is recommended that they complete their current year of study and apply to transfer in the following academic year. The entry requirements for the course being transferred to will need to be satisfied.
- 5.3 In the first instance, students should discuss their intentions with staff in the School Office, who will be able to guide them through the process and signpost them to further support and advice as required.

6. Fee liability

This should be read in conjunction with [The Tuition Fee Policy](#)

- 6.1 A change of circumstance may result in a change of tuition fee liability. Where a student is funded by Student Finance England, the change in their circumstances is communicated to the funding body so that their records can be updated and the student's funding account adjusted accordingly.

If there are additional tuition fees owed to the University, a confirmation invoice will be sent to the student. The same process will be followed where a student is to receive a fee credit.

Document Control Statement

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