



Break in Study Guidelines and Procedure



UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON

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1. Introduction

The University of Wolverhampton is committed to a fair and transparent policy to support students throughout their studies. This policy sets out the principles of taking a Break in Study for undergraduate and postgraduate students studying at the University, enrolled on a distance learning course or registered at one of the University's UK partner institutions.

Please refer to the separate sections regarding Research students, Apprenticeships and Transnational students.

2. Purpose

This policy has been reviewed for the 2025/2026 academic year and beyond, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose; for both the University and its students.

The purpose of the document is to ensure that all relevant members of staff and students are informed of the policy and procedure that has been defined. The conditions outlined are mandatory and must be adhered to.

3. Principles

The implementation of this policy is in accordance with the University's core values which are to be:

- **Inclusive**; we are welcoming, respectful, collegiate and supportive.
- **Ambitious**; we are imaginative, confident, innovative and deliver excellence.
- **Accountable**; we take pride in what we do and how we do it, take responsibility for our actions and operate with transparency and integrity.
- **Resilient**; we have a positive outlook; we are adaptable and recover from setbacks.

4. Scope

The Break in Study Policy and Procedure applies to all students on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The policy covers both voluntary and enforced break in studies that may be applied across the student journey.

5. Details of Policy

5.1 'Break in Study' Definition

The regulations regarding a Break in Study can be located in 3.6 in University's [Undergraduate and Postgraduate Academic Regulations](#).

A voluntary Break in Study (previously known as a Leave of Absence) is a period when a student chooses to 'temporarily withdraw' from their studies, subject to approval.

During this period of absence, students are registered onto their course but are not enrolled. They are in effect, taking a complete break from their studies, with the intention of resuming at a future date.

A Break in Study is commonly requested for the following reasons:

- Personal Circumstances such as bereavement, family matters, or other personal challenges
- Health Related Issues
- Financial Difficulties

Additionally, the university reserves the right to place the student on a break for the following reasons

- Outstanding tuition debt
- Academic reasons including unavailability of module choices or failure to select a module when required
- Through the Support to Study procedure
- Temporary Suspension procedure

The maximum allowance a student can apply for a Break in Study on taught programmes is up to four semesters, or two academic years.

During an application for a Break in Study, the minimum period a student can take is a semester. The maximum amount that can be requested, in the first instance, is one academic year.

If the student requires further time away from their studies, an extension to the break will need to be requested. This is available four weeks before the expected return date of the original request.

Additional breaks in study can be requested on top of the maximum allowance due to the following reasons.

- Mandatory Jury Duty Service
- Maternity/Paternity/Parental/Adoptive Leave

A Break in Study differs from taking a short-term absence which **does not** impact on the student's ability to continue with their studies.

Where there are circumstances that may impact on a student's ability to undergo assessments/examinations, they should apply for an extension or extenuating circumstances instead, where appropriate. Students should refer to the [Late Submission and Extension Policy and Procedure](#) and [Fit to Sit and Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure](#) for further guidance.

There are circumstances where a Break in Study would **not** be approved such as:

- Where the request is made to cover an assessment or resit period only.
- Where the student wishes to return mid-semester.
- Where the period exceeds the maximum allowance.
- Where a course is being discontinued. In this scenario, an alternative course of action will be provided to support the student.

If a student has an outstanding debt to the University which cannot be resolved following three reminder contacts the student, as per Section 5.2 of the Tuition Fee Liability Policy, the student is placed on a short-term break of 30 days and withdraw if their account is not brought up to date by the end of the break.

Any outstanding debt remains owed and may be referred to a Debt Collection Agency. The debt must be cleared, for a student to re-enrol.

Students can be placed on a compulsory Break in Study by the University through the [Support to Study Procedure](#) where it is considered in the student's best interest. Students will be notified if a break in study is recommended by the Support to Study panel and the implications taking a break may have.

The University can also require a student to be placed on a Break in Study through the Temporary Suspension Procedure or as an outcome of the [Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure](#), where applicable.

In all the above scenarios, students are still expected to complete their award within the maximum registration period of the course however it will be extended by the same amount of time that the student was on a break.

5.2 How to apply for a Break in Study?

Students need to formally submit a request for a Break in Study via the e:Vision task. Once a request has been submitted, it will be subject to approval by the University.

Prior to making an application, it is advised that students discuss their situation with their Course Leader as well as seeking advice from ASK@WLV on understanding the financial and academic implications of taking a Break in Study. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- If any repeat period of study is required.
- Availability of modules upon return.
- Any mandatory training or requirements that needs to be completed prior to their return to formal study due to the course being accredited by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB).

Students can request a Break in Study before the beginning of the academic year, effectively suspending their studies for the entire year with the intention of returning to study for the next academic year. As the student will not be in attendance for the year, they should not incur any charges for tuition fees and will not be eligible for any maintenance during the period of absence.

Students can also request to take a break mid-semester. Depending on the duration of break requested, they cannot return until the start of a semester or the start of the new academic year. They will be liable for any fees due based on the date they officially request for a Break in Study.

It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of the financial implications of taking a break in their studies prior to making a formal application. Upon approval of the Break in Study and where a student has an application for funding from the Student Loans Company (SLC), SLC will be notified.

The University does not normally ask for evidence to support a request for a Break in Study however it reserves the right to do so and may do so when a request is made under the reasons of jury duty and maternity, paternity, parental and adoptive leave.

If a student makes an application that will take the total period of breaks beyond two academic years, the request will be declined unless there is evidence to support the request. This will be considered on an individual basis by the Director of Registry Services.

An application for a retrospective Break in Study is not normally permitted. However, the University does recognise there may be reasons which can delay a student requesting a break. In these exceptional circumstances, this will be considered on an individual basis by the Director of Registry Services. Supporting evidence will need to be provided to support the reasons why the student was not able to apply at the time.

5.3 Implications of a Break in Study

a) Financial

Taking a Break in Study does not exempt students from the tuition fee liability unless:

- The break was approved prior to the start of an academic year OR
- The start date of the break is within the 14-day cooling off period from the course start date.

After the 14-day cooling off period, students are liable for a proportion of the year's tuition fee in accordance with the Tuition fee liability policy.

There are financial implications for students who have an approved funding application with Student Loans Company, other funding support agencies e.g. the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) and welfare agencies, who are likely to reassess eligibility for assistance.

Students are advised to utilise the [Student's Union Advice and Support Centre](#) to discuss the impact of benefit entitlement. The Student's Union Advice and Support Centre will also be able to offer independent guidance regarding taking a Break in Study.

The Council Tax exemption granted by the Local Authority does not apply to students on a Break in Study. Students are responsible for notifying the council when they have taken a break from their studies.

Please refer to the Tuition Fee Liability and Credit Control Policies for a detailed breakdown of the liabilities for home and overseas students.

[Tuition Fee Liability and Credit Control Policy \(Home Students\)](#)

[Tuition Fee Liability and Credit Control Policy \(Overseas Students\)](#)

b) Academic (including impact on Registration Periods)

A Break in Study effectively pauses a student's registration period. A student's maximum registration period will be extended by the amount of time they were on a break.

When a student takes a Break in Study mid-semester, the modules registered in that semester will be closed out with a 'LA' grade. When the student returns to study, those modules will be re-registered against a student's record for the academic year they return to study.

Where the student has taken a break before completing their modules, any **summative** assessments submitted will be carried forward and contribute to their assessment result for the new registration of module when they return, providing that there have been no changes to the assessment requirements (3.6.10 Academic Regulations).

The University cannot guarantee that upon return, students are able to continue to study the same course and/or study the same modules. The course team will communicate this to students who are on a break if there are any changes to their course. Where the module is no longer available upon return, the student must study an alternative module.

c) Research Students

There is a separate set of [academic regulations](#) for Research Students in relation to taking a Break in Study. This applies to all research programmes covered by the regulations including ***Master of Philosophy/Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Medicine/ Doctor of Business Administration***.

Research students can also apply for a Break in Study via the 'My Study' page in e:Vision. They are advised to discuss and agree this with their supervisor before making the request.

All requests are subject to approval and will be reported to the Director of Studies and Postgraduate Research Tutor and taken to the Researcher Development and Doctoral Studies Board.

As with taught undergraduate and postgraduate students, the University does not normally ask for evidence but reserves the right to do so under the reasons of jury duty and parental leave.

As part of the request, students are declaring that they are not undertaking any research activities for that period and will have restricted access to services and facilities. This includes contacting their supervisor in relation to their research work, however students are encouraged to maintain contact for pastoral support.

The minimum period that research students can take is one month. Break in Study requests will be granted in month-long blocks and added to the maximum registration period.

No single period will be granted for more than 12 months. Consecutive breaks cannot be taken for longer than 12 months and students must re-engage with their research studies for a minimum of 3 months after the 12-month break period.

The total period of Break in Study permitted is 24 months.

Any requests that exceed the allowed period will be referred to the Research Awards Sub-committee and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.

If a Break in Study is approved, students are liable for any tuition fees incurred based on the date they officially request for a Break in Study. This includes any outstanding debts that owed.

Professional Doctorate Regulations

As Professional Doctorate students' study **both** taught modules and for a thesis, the procedure around taking a Break in Study depends on what stage of the course they are currently studying.

A Break in Study will not be granted for an excess of 12 months for a single period and the total period allowed is 24 months. As with PHD students, students on a Professional Doctorate cannot

take consecutive periods for longer than 12 months and must re-engage with their studies for a minimum of 3 months.

Any requests for a Break in Study that are more than the permitted periods will be referred to the Committee for Researcher Development & Doctoral Studies and, as appropriate, the Professional Doctorate Progression and Award Board.

During the taught element of the Professional Doctorate, where a student takes a Break in Study during the year before completing a module, any summative assessment submitted will be carried forward and contribute to the student's assessment results when they return, if the assessment requirements remain the same. Where the student has not passed any summative assessment, the student will be required to re-register the module without academic penalty.

If the student is studying taught modules only, the periods of break should fit into the start and end dates of the module.

If the student is studying both taught modules and their thesis, the period of break is determined on a case-by-case basis in agreement with the course leader. It is not possible to be on a Break in Study for part of the course.

A Break in Study during the research phase will follow the same principles as PHD students.

Master of Research Regulations

For Master of Research students, they will follow the same procedure as on campus taught students however the request is subject to approval by the research supervisor.

d) International Students

International Sponsored Students on a Taught or Research programme, studying in the UK may be asked to return to their home country whilst they are on a Break in Study. This is not required for an enforced break of study of 30 days due to financial debt.

Those who are on Student Route visa **must** return to their home country and will have the changes in circumstances reported to the Home Office. The University is obligated to report to the Home Office any change to the students' circumstances as part of its sponsorship duties. Students must provide the Student Visa Compliance and Advice team with evidence of their flight details and their home address.

The UKVI will cancel the student visa. This means the student will need to apply for a new visa before returning to study in the UK. International students are advised to seek guidance from the Student Visa Compliance and Advice team before applying for a break in study to understand the implications it will have on their status.

Students are advised to refer to the [Tuition Fee Liability and Credit Control Policy \(Overseas Students\)](#) for the financial implications of taking a break.

e) Apprenticeships

If the apprentice fails to have active learning towards their apprenticeship **for a whole calendar month**, they will be placed on a Break in Learning. During a break in learning the Apprentice will cease all apprenticeship activities including logging off-the-job hours. If an Apprentice is not in work for a calendar month or more, they will automatically be placed on a break in learning as an apprenticeship must be completed within working hours.

For apprentices, a change of circumstances form also needs to be completed by the Apprenticeship Operations team to record the break in learning and will be shared with the apprentice and Employer, alongside the completion of the Break in Study task in e:Vision.

Apprentices are not personally liable to pay tuition fees to the University and are not bound to the wider Tuition Fee Refund and Debtor policy.

They should refer to the [Apprenticeship Tuition Fee Liability Policy](#) for further information.

f) Transnational Students (TNE)

Students studying with our overseas partners will follow the same procedure as students who are studying in the UK.

Students cannot return until the start of the next entry point.

As part of the calculation of maximum Break in Study periods, if the break started part way through a month, it will be counted as a whole month, e.g. if the break in study commenced from mid-February, the whole of February will be counted as part of the calculation.

The fee implications of taking a break from their studies must be discussed with the administrative support based at the overseas partner prior to formally requesting a break.

Students cannot apply for a retrospective break in study.

g) Access to University facilities

Students on a Break in Study have restricted access to university services and **are not entitled** to attend any classroom activity, participate in any form of assessment, including submission or engage with academic staff unless in a pastoral context.

As per 7.6 in the [Accommodation Licence Agreement](#), if a student who is staying at university accommodation, is terminating the agreement due to taking a Break in Study, written confirmation of this is required by the Accommodation Services Office before they can consider any refund or cancellation of payment obligations.

Students staying in university accommodation are advised to contact the [Accommodation Services Office](#) for assistance on how taking a Break in Study affects their occupancy.

5.4 Return from a Break in Study

When students are near to the end of their Break in Study, they **must** notify the University of their intentions to return to their studies or extend their Break in Study if they have remaining allowance to do so.

Students can apply to return four weeks before the expected return date and up to two weeks after the date.

They are advised to contact ASK@, their Course Leader and/or Personal Tutor for guidance on returning to their studies.

International students must contact the UKVI Compliance Team at least two months before their return date.

Students returning to their studies can liaise with the [Student Support and Wellbeing Services](#) if they require assistance following their return.

As part of the conditions of the break, students may need to meet specific conditions or provide assurances where the break was due to:

- Personal/Extenuating circumstances which impacted the student's ability to study OR
- It was enforced by the following procedures:
 - o Support to Study
 - o Temporary Suspension
 - o Student Code of Conduct
 - o University Fitness to Practice
 - o Tuition fee liability policies

Where the programme being studied is governed by PSRB requirements, the student may additionally be required to undertake a revised DBS process prior to their return.

All return requests are subject to approval.

a) Failure to return from a Break in Study

If a student fails to return and enrol within 14 calendar days of their expected return date, they will be considered to have withdrawn and will be de-registered from their course.

Any [appeals](#) against this decision will need to be referred to the Complaints and Student Casework team (previously known as Conducts and Appeals unit). Appeals should include supporting documentation which evidences that there were extenuating factors that prevented the student returning at the expected point.

6. Further Help and Advice

The University recognises that unforeseen circumstances can take place which disrupt the student's journey and wishes to offer support where needed.

Below are links to our services which students can use for advice, information and support regarding taking Break in Study and upon their return.

ASK@ for advice on the financial and academic implications - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/askwlv/>

Student Support and Wellbeing for a variety of support following a return from a break in study. <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/student-support-and-wellbeing-ssw/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support (part of the Student Support and Wellbeing team) - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/mental-health-and-wellbeing-advice/>

Funding and Financial Support - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/apply/funding-costs-fees-and-support/financial-support/dennis-turner-hardship-fund/>

Visa and Immigration for International Students - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/international/visa-and-immigration/>

Student's Union Support and Advice for independent support- <https://www.wolvesunion.org/advice/>

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Appendix

7.1 Appendix A: Extensions, Extenuating and Break in Study Flowchart

