

Higher Education Withdrawal and Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

Alternative Format

This policy is available in alternative formats, to request this, please email marketingcampaigns@mkcollege.ac.uk

Version Control

Version Number	Author	Approver	Date approved	Next review date
1	Group Director HE, Adult & IoT	Group Leadership Team	03/12/25	Nov 27

Change log

Version Number	Summary of changes
1	New policy

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. The college recognises that sometimes circumstances arise which mean students studying Higher Education programmes at Milton Keynes College Group (MKCG) either need to withdraw (i.e. permanently leave) or suspend (i.e. temporarily pause) their academic studies.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the various rules and regulations that surround suspension and withdrawal, as well as a number of factors that a student should consider before making any decision around leaving or suspending their studies.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to students studying validated and professional higher education programmes at MKCG.
- 2.2. Students studying a validated or professional higher education programme as part of an Apprenticeship must also consult with the Employer Engagement team and their employer to understand the implications of suspension / withdrawal, and necessary processes to follow.
- 2.3. If, in any cases, either an Awarding Body's regulations or the requirements of a Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) conflict with those below, the regulations of the Awarding Body or PSRB will take precedence.
- 2.4. This policy outlines the various rules and regulations that surround suspension and withdrawal for MKCG HE students, where a student wishes to leave their programme of study or is experiencing extenuating circumstances which cannot be adequately supported or managed through either the Extensions, Extenuating Circumstances, Interruption to Studies and Deferrals Policy, or the Readiness to Learn Policy.

3. Responsibility and Authority

- 3.1. Responsibility for overseeing this policy sits within MKCG
- 3.2. It is the responsibility of MKCG learners to proactively communicate with both their Programme Leader and the MKCG support teams at the earliest opportunity if they might be considering suspension and / or withdrawal, to seek relevant advice, and to ask for clarity and support if required to help them make a well-informed decision.

4. Steps to be taken if a student wishes to suspend/withdrawal

- 4.1. If a student wishes to temporarily suspend or withdraw, they should first read through the information contained in this policy carefully to understand the considerations and potential consequences of temporary suspension or withdrawal. Students can access support, as outlined in Section 3 above, to understand the information contained in this policy and potential consequences of suspension or withdrawal. Students wishing to temporarily suspend their studies must read section 6 carefully to identify whether their circumstances would meet the criteria in which a temporary suspension of studies would be permissible.
- 4.2. If, after considering all of the relevant information in this policy, a student does wish to suspend or withdraw, they must first speak to their Programme Leader. This will allow the Programme Leader to identify why a student wishes to suspend / withdraw, and if any other options could be considered first to support a student to succeed in their studies.
- 4.3. If, after speaking with their Programme Leader, a student still wishes to suspend or withdraw, they must inform their Head of School, via email. If a student is requesting to temporarily suspend their studies, they must complete the relevant form (Appendix 1) and provide this form and any required evidence, alongside their

email.

4.4. If a student has requested to suspend:

- 4.4.1. The Head of School will convene a Suspension of Studies meeting to consider the application. This meeting should ordinarily be called within one working week of receipt of the student request, however, exceptional circumstances (such as vacation periods) may mean this period is extended, and the meeting should be called as soon as possible thereafter. A Suspension of Studies meeting will include at the Head of School, Programme Lead and where appropriate, additional staff within relevant expertise may be invited to join the meeting.
- 4.4.2. The meeting will consider the application in line with the Terms of Reference attached (Appendix 2) and decide whether a student will be offered the opportunity to suspend their studies.
- 4.4.3. The outcome of the meeting will be communicated to the student within 10 working days of the meeting.
- 4.4.4. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their request for Temporary Suspension of Studies, they should do so using the Academic Appeals Policy.
- 4.4.5. Once all relevant information has been collated, the student will be issued with a letter formally confirming their temporary suspension of studies, including their last date of attendance, tuition fee liability, and intended return date.
- 4.4.7. The student must take responsibility for informing the Student Loans Company of suspension of studies. MKCG will also communicate to inform relevant parties, such as the relevant Awarding Organisation, the Student Loans Company, of a student's withdrawal / suspension.
- 4.4.8. The next Examination Board to meet will formally ratify the student's academic outcomes, including confirmation of any applications for Exam Board Consideration (if appropriate). Any ratified marks our outcomes would then be

communicated to the learner appropriately.

4.5. If a student has requested to withdraw:

- 4.5.1. The HoS will provide any further relevant information requested by the student.
- 4.5.2. Once all relevant information has been collated HoS, the student will be issued with a letter formally confirming their withdrawal, including their last date of attendance and tuition fee liability. In normal circumstances, this should take no longer than two working weeks from point 4.3.
- 4.5.3. The student must take responsibility for informing the Student Loans Company of the decision to withdraw. MKCG will communicate to inform relevant parties, such as the relevant Awarding Organisation, the Student Loans Company, of a student's withdrawal / suspension, in line with their agreed reporting expectations.
- 4.5.4. The next Examination Board to meet will formally ratify the student's academic outcomes. Any ratified marks would then be communicated to the learner appropriately.

5. Protocols & implications if a student suspends/withdraws

5.1. Last Date of Attendance

- 5.1.1. If a student withdraws or suspends, their last date of attendance will be recorded as whichever is the later of (a) the last date they are registered as having attended a timetabled class, or (b) the last date where they submitted assessment or sat an examination.
- 5.1.2. For the avoidance of doubt, a student's last date of attendance is not recorded on the basis of the date they notified us they wished to withdraw / suspend, or the date their withdrawal / suspension is processed.

5.2. Tuition Fee Liability

- 5.2.1. A student's tuition fee liability may be affected by when in the academic year their last date of attendance falls, in line with the Fees Policy.
- 5.2.2. We advise all students to look at the Fees Policy to understand their fee liability at the point of withdrawal / suspension.

5.3. Maintenance Loan Implications

- 5.3.1. If a student is in receipt of Maintenance Loan, withdrawing / suspending may affect their maintenance loan payments, including having to repay some maintenance loan to Student Finance England.
- 5.3.2. We advise any student in receipt of Maintenance Loan who is considering suspension / withdrawal to read the guidance from Student Finance England for more information.

5.4. Examination Boards and Ratification of Academic Achievement and Outcomes

- 5.4.1. If a student suspends or withdraws, their academic profile will be taken to the next appropriate Examination Board for consideration. Dependent upon the point at which a student suspends or withdraws, various outcomes may be considered.
 - I. If a student has not yet commenced studying a unit / module then the Examination Board will not ratify any outcome, and the student will not be deemed to have 'attempted' the unit / module.
 - II. If a student has begun studying a unit / module, but none of the assessment points (i.e. deadlines) have yet occurred, they will not be deemed to have 'attempted' the unit / module.
 - III. If a student has completed a unit / module (all of the relevant assessment points have passed, regardless of whether the student submitted work and / or passed

the assessment), the Examination Board will ratify their outcome for that unit / module. For students on OU validated programmes ratification will be by the OU, normally within 2 weeks following the Exam board.

- IV. If a student has begun studying a unit / module and at least one of the assessment points (deadlines) for that module has passed, they will be deemed to have 'attempted' the unit / module. If a student withdraws / suspends before completing all of the necessary assessment to successfully pass the unit / module, they will be deemed to have attempted but not achieved that unit / module. Depending on the awarding organisation, they may have the right to repeat that unit / module; however, most awarding organisations have a limit to the number of times a student can attempt a unit / module, and there may be a mark cap applied (dependent upon the awarding organisation's regulations).
 - V. It is worth noting that in an instance where a student has had an extension to deadline approved under the Extensions, Extenuating Circumstances, Interruption to Studies and Deferrals Policy, it is this bespoke deadline date that would be considered when determining which of the categories above a learner falls within.
- 5.4.3. If a student in circumstance (iii) or (iv) above is temporarily suspending their studies due to an extenuating circumstance, and believes they should not have been deemed to have 'attempted' the unit/module owing to their extenuating circumstances, they are entitled to have this considered.
- 5.4.4. It is not possible for a student's academic profile or the outcome of an application for Exam Board consideration to be ratified outside of a formal Examination Board. This may therefore mean that students will need to wait for the next appropriate Examination Board to meet (which for many programmes will be at the end of the Summer Term) to hear their outcome.

- 5.4.5. All Examination Boards will be conducted in line with both MKCG and the regulations of the relevant awarding organisation. Student outcomes will be determined in line with these regulations.

6. Temporary suspension of studies

All students should review the regulations of their awarding organisation. For students on Open University programmes these are the Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University [\(Link\)](#)

For students on Higher National programmes, this information can be found in the 'Assessment' section of your Pearson Programme Specification.

6.1. Circumstances in which a student may request a temporary suspension of studies

- 6.1.1. If a student experiences extenuating circumstances during their period of study which cannot be adequately mitigated through existing mechanisms such as extensions to deadlines, additional academic or pastoral support, moving from full-time to part-time study (where appropriate), or a Readiness to Learn plan, students are entitled to request a period of temporary suspension of studies of either one semester or one year.
Any request for temporary suspension of studies would be subject to the suspension not taking a student outside of their maximum period of registration with their awarding organisation.
- 6.1.2. Section 4 outlines the steps a student must take if they wish to request a temporary suspension of studies, and the process that will then be followed to consider this request and provide an outcome to the student, including the route of appeal.

6.2. Exceptional circumstances which may affect suspension of studies

- 6.2.1. In some instances, regulatory, procedural or awarding body processes or requirements, beyond the control of MKCG, may prevent a suspension of studies from being possible. This may include, for example, if the programme a student is studying, or the version of the specification they are enrolled on, is discontinued. In these cases, alternative options will be explored, such as using the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy to allow a student to resume their studies on a new version of the specification upon return. If appropriate, provisions of the MKCG Student Protection Plan would be considered.

6.3. Resumption of studies post-suspension: point of return

- 6.3.1. If a student temporarily suspends their studies, they must be aware that they will not necessarily simply be able to resume studying at the same calendar point in a future year. Depending on when a student suspends and whether any unit(s) / module(s) are partially completed and / or not achieved at this point, they may be required to either retake or restart unit(s) / module(s) in a future year, which may necessitate a suspension period which does not fall neatly within a semester or 12-month period.
- 6.3.2. Depending upon the circumstances that surrounded a student's suspension of studies, it may be appropriate for the Readiness to Learn Policy to be used to support the process of returning to study.

6.4. Resumption of studies post-suspension: attendance pattern

- 6.4.1. Students should also note that there is no guarantee that attendance patterns are consistent between academic years. For example, a student studying on an evening-only basis, or only attending one day per week, is not guaranteed to be offered the same attendance pattern post-suspension. The attendance pattern will depend on the unit(s) / module(s) a student has to sit upon their return, and cohort sizes and timetabling arrangements for the future cohort(s) they will in-fill with.

6.5. Resumption of studies post-suspension: module availability

- 6.5.1. MKCG may change its module offer between academic years, in response to awarding body changes, PSRB requirements, student feedback, sector changes, or staff specialism. Whilst changes to modules between years are rarely widespread or significant, it is not possible to guarantee that the same modules will be available to a student who suspends their studies upon resumption.

6.6. Resumption of studies post-suspension: tuition fees

- 6.6.1. In line with the Fees Policy, students will be charged tuition fees for the unit(s) / module(s) they study post-suspension. Where a student returns post-suspension on a part-time basis (i.e. they are studying fewer than 120 credits in their bespoke academic year), they will be charged for the credits they study in line with the Fees Policy and the college's Office for Students approved fee limits.

Related Policies and Legislation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy:

- Extensions, Extenuating Circumstances, Interruption to Studies and Deferrals Policy
- Compliments, Concerns and Complaints (Higher Education) Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Readiness to Learn Policy
- Fees Policy
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy