

Higher Education Withdrawal or 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	19/11/25	Nov 2027

Change log

Version Number	Summary of changes
1	Policy

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1. Purpose

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.

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

This policy applies to students studying validated and professional higher education programmes at Milton Keynes College.

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.

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.

This policy outlines the various rules and regulations that surround suspension and withdrawal for Milton Keynes College 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 and Extenuating Circumstances Policy, or the Readiness to Learn Policy.

3. Responsibility and Authority

Responsibility for overseeing this policy is within Milton Keynes College.

It is the responsibility of Milton Keynes College HE learners to proactively communicate with both their Course Team Leader and the College 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/withdraw

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, to understand the information contained in this policy and potential consequences of suspension or withdrawal. Students requiring support to engage with this process should contact Learning Support (LearningSupport@MKCollege.ac.uk).

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.

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 Course Team Leader. This will allow the Course Team 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.

If, after speaking with their Course Team 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.

If a student requests to suspend:

The Head of School will convene a Suspension of Studies meeting to consider the application. This meeting should ordinarily be called within 6 working days 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, Course Team Lead and where appropriate, additional staff within relevant expertise may be invited to join the meeting.

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.

The outcome of the meeting will be communicated to the student within 15 working days of the request.

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.

Once all relevant information has been collated, if the application is successful 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.

The student must take responsibility for informing the Student Loans Company of suspension of studies. Milton Keynes College will also communicate to inform relevant parties, such as the relevant Awarding Organisation, the Student Loans Company, of a student's change of status.

The next HE Exam Board to meet will formally ratify the student's academic outcomes, including confirmation of any applications for HE Exam Board consideration (if appropriate). Any ratified marks or outcomes would then be communicated to the learner appropriately.

If a student has requested to withdraw:

Once all relevant information has been collated by the Head of School, 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 15 working days from the request for withdrawal.

The student must take responsibility for informing the Student Loans Company of the decision to withdraw. Milton Keynes College will communicate to inform relevant parties, such as the relevant Awarding Organisation, the Student Loans Company, of a student's change of status.

The next HE Exam 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

Last Date of Attendance

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.

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.

Tuition Fee Liability

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 HE Fees Policy.

We advise all students to look at the HE Fees Policy to understand their fee liability at the point of withdrawal / suspension.

Maintenance Loan Implications

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.

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.

Examination Boards and Ratification of Academic Achievement and Outcomes

If a student suspends or withdraws, their academic profile will be taken to the next appropriate HE Exam 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 HE Exam Board will record their outcome for that unit / module. For students on OU validated programmes ratification will be by the OU, normally within 2 weeks following the HE 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).

It is worth noting that in an instance where a student has had an extension to deadline approved under the Extensions & Extenuating Circumstances Policy, it is this bespoke deadline date that would be considered when determining which of the categories above a learner falls within.

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 by the HE Exam Board.

It is not possible for a student's academic profile or the outcome of an application for HE Exam Board consideration to be ratified outside of a formal HE Exam Board. This may therefore mean that students will need to wait for the next appropriate HE Exam Board to meet (which for many programmes will be at the end of the Summer Term) to hear their outcome.

All HE Exam Boards will be conducted in line with both Milton Keynes College 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 Academic Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University and are available [here](#).

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

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

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.

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.

Exceptional circumstances which may affect suspension of studies

In some instances, regulatory, procedural or awarding body processes or requirements, beyond the control of Milton Keynes College, 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 Student Protection Plan would be considered.

Resumption of studies post-suspension: point of return

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.

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.

Resumption of studies post-suspension: attendance pattern

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.

Resumption of studies post-suspension: module availability

Milton Keynes College 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.

Resumption of studies post-suspension: tuition fees

In line with the HE 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 HE Fees Policy and the college's Office for Students approved fee limits.

7. Related Policies and Legislation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy, which can be found on the College Website [here](#)

HE Terms and Conditions

HE Extensions & Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Complaints (Higher Education) Policy

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Readiness to Learn Policy

HE Fees Policy

Academic Appeals Policy

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Student Protection Plan

Appendix 1- Student Request for Temporary Suspension of Studies

1 Personal Details

Name	
Student ID	
Course	
Year/Level	
Programme Leader	

2 Outline of the reason for application

Please clearly explain the extenuating circumstances you have experienced and why you feel you need to temporarily suspend your studies. Please clearly outline why other mitigations, such as extensions to deadlines, application for exam board consideration, moving from full-time to part-time study (where appropriate), or seeking additional study or pastoral support are not adequate to support you to continue with your studies, and you need to request a temporary suspension. You can go onto another page if needed.

Dates which have been affected by these circumstances			
From:		To:	

3 – Supporting Evidence

Please tick which type of evidence you are providing

	Medical Certificate (GP note, Consultant letters, discharge note)
	Letter from a qualified counsellor
	Death Certificate or Order of Service
	Solicitor letter, social worker or other qualified professional
	Other independent evidence (give details)

4 – Outline the period of suspension requested

If permission for temporary suspension of studies is granted, it may not be possible to offer suspension for precise periods, owing to term dates and module sequencing. However, please indicate when you believe you would like to return from a temporary suspension of studies.

Requested period of temporary suspension			
From		To	

5 – Previous suspension of studies

Please outline any previously requested periods of temporary suspension while studying at MKCG

Requested period of temporary suspension			
From		To	
Please give a brief description of the circumstance			

6 – Declaration

I understand that applying for this temporary suspension of studies is a serious matter and that by submitting this declaration I am confirming that the information I have provided, including any supporting evidence, is truthful. I understand that academic integrity is taken extremely seriously, and this submission will be reviewed by the University Centre team. I understand that suspected breaches of Academic integrity will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action

Signed		Date	
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Please return this form with your supporting evidence to your Head of School

Appendix 2

Terms of Reference for a Suspension of Studies Meeting

The Suspension of Studies Panel will include in membership at least one Head of School and the Course Team Leader, typically, although not exclusively, these should be staff who are linked to the curriculum area in which the student is studying, and where appropriate, additional staff within relevant expertise may be invited to join the meeting.

The purpose of the Suspension of Studies meeting is:

1. To determine whether the submitted evidence is valid within the Regulations governing the programme of study, as well as the regulations of the awarding institution.
2. If circumstances are deemed valid, it is then the responsibility of the meeting to identify whether Temporary Suspension of Studies is an appropriate and proportionate remedy for these circumstances.
3. If so, the meeting must determine whether a Temporary Suspensions of Studies can be granted in line with the student's maximum period of registration and other awarding body regulations, and if so, what an appropriate period of suspension might be.

A Suspension of Studies meeting must accept the professional recommendation of a medical practitioner or qualified counsellor regarding the effect on a student of a particular condition or problem. However, in the absence of an opinion as to the impact of the illness or condition the Suspension of Studies meeting may use its own judgement to determine whether the circumstances are likely to have had an impact on performance.

The outcome of the meeting will determine whether or not the application is:

- a) accepted completely, processed with the awarding institution (where required),
- b) rejected due it being unsubstantiated or not considered applicable,
- c) returned to the student, requesting additional information.

If a student fails, without good cause, to provide sufficient evidence to the Suspension of Studies meeting, the Suspension of Studies meeting has authority to reject the request on those grounds. If a student's circumstances are not deemed appropriate to warrant a Temporary Suspension of Studies, or

the unintended consequences of a Temporary Suspension of Studies may put a student at disadvantage, the Panel may suggest other supportive measures and options to the student, including:

- recommending an adapted period of suspension so as to allow a student to resume to their studies at a more appropriate point,
- options to claim partial credit or exit award for study up to this point, and then return to study using APL/RPL in the future.

If exceptional regulatory, procedural or awarding body processes or requirements, beyond the control of the College may prevent a suspension of studies from being possible, for example, the programme a student is studying, or the version of the specification they are enrolled on, is discontinued, alternative options will be explored, such as using the Recognition of Prior learning procedure to allow a student to resume their studies on a new version of the specification upon return. If appropriate, provisions of the College Student Protection Plan would be considered.

The intent of a Suspension of Studies meeting is to ensure that students are not put in a position of unfair advantage or disadvantage over other candidates; the aim should be to enable the student to engage with their studies and be assessed on equal terms. The outcome of the Suspension of Studies meeting will be shared at the next HE Exam Board.