
Interruption of Study Policy and Procedure

Policy Category:	Academic, student.
Subject:	Interruption of study
Approving Authority:	Academic Board
Responsible Officer:	Executive Director, Education and Students
Responsible Office:	Student Administrative Services (Student Operations)
Related Procedures:	Mitigating circumstances procedure Prolonged lack of student contact procedure
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I PURPOSE & SCOPE

An interruption of study is a supportive mechanism normally initiated by students on a voluntary basis when they need to formally step away from their programme for a defined period. This policy describes how the university should manage requests for an interruption of study.

This policy does not cover:

- Interruptions under Support for Study and Fitness to Practise policies;
- Exclusions or suspensions under the principal's emergency powers as set out in the [Academic Regulations](#);
- Interruptions required due to failure to meet progression requirements for regulated programmes.

The policy has been developed with regard to equal opportunities legislation, which ensures that the rights of students are protected, and judgements are free from prejudice on the basis of protected characteristics.

II DEFINITIONS

The following definitions can be found in the [Academic Regulation Glossary](#):

- Interruption
- Mitigating Circumstances

III POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 An interruption of study is for students who require time away from their studies due to personal circumstances and where this will assist them in achieving the best academic outcomes. An interruption of study is for a sustained period. It is important that the student applies formally for an interruption using a [Change of Circumstances](#) form and a request for an interruption must be approved by the relevant faculty.
- 1.2 For short absences, faculties should provide information about how and when to report them.

- 1.3 The [Mitigating Circumstances](#) procedure is for unexpected or disruptive events beyond the student's control which might have a significant or adverse impact on their academic performance.
- 1.4 Where a student has had several short absences or mitigating circumstances requests, the faculty should consider whether an interruption of study or alternative, such as, a change to mode of study, might be appropriate.
- 1.5 If a faculty or department is concerned that a student has not engaged with teaching activities, the [Prolonged Lack of Student Contact Procedure](#) should be followed, and discussions held with the student regarding whether an interruption may be appropriate.

2. Reasons for interruption

- 2.1 Interruptions of study may be requested for a number of reasons, including mental or physical illness, maternity and parental leave, personal and family reasons, and financial hardship. This list is not exhaustive, and faculties may grant interruptions for other reasons they consider acceptable.
- 2.2 Faculties may approve an interruption for any reason they consider acceptable and have discretion to determine if an interruption is appropriate for the student based on their personal and academic circumstances.
- 2.3 For research students, there are some circumstances where a request for an interruption of study would not normally be permitted and this includes: a change of research topic, lack of progress, fieldwork, or time spent training or undertaking work experience where this is part of the research programme.

3. Application

- 3.1 Faculties are responsible for appointing a decision maker who is responsible for reviewing any interruption of study request within their faculty. The decision maker can delegate their authority and they, or their nominee, should be supported by professional services staff.
- 3.2 Before applying for an interruption, students should discuss their reasons for requesting an interruption with their Programme Director, Supervisor or Personal Tutor who should keep a record of any conversation with the student related to an interruption.
- 3.3 Students should make sure they understand all possible implications of taking an interruption of study. Information can be found in Student Services Online articles, and it is recommended that all students considering an interruption speak to the [Advice & Guidance Team](#) to talk through the practicalities.
- 3.4 A period of interruption will have an impact on a number of areas, including but not limited to:
 - **student visas** – students who are studying on a student visa must speak with the [Visa and International Student Advice](#) team requesting an interruption of study.
 - **fees** – students who interrupt during the academic year may be charged pro rata tuition fees to the date of interruption and are required to pay the sum owing within 14 days of the date of invoice.
 - **funding.**
 - **maximum periods of registration** – all periods of interruption will count towards the maximum period of study for an individual programme.
 - **access to university services** – students will retain access to their IT account, which includes KEATS and will still be able to access Library Services and Student Services, unless there is good reason to put limitations in place. Any limitations should be imposed rarely, and decisions on restricting certain aspects, such as course information on KEATS, should be made at department

level, with input from key stakeholders and only if it is considered to be in the student's best interests.

- **Access to King's student housing** – in exceptional circumstances, a student may be permitted to stay in King's halls of residences whilst on interruption, depending on their personal circumstances and the reasons for interruption. This decision would be the product of discussions with King's Residences.

3.5 If students are studying on a visa, they are expected to speak to the [Visa and International Student Advice Team](#) before requesting an interruption. Information regarding a student's status will be shared with external organisations as appropriate; this may include student funding bodies and UKVI. There is more information on this in the [Student Data Collection Notice](#).

4. Supporting documents

4.1 If appropriate, faculties can ask students to provide supporting documentation for their interruption of study request. Faculties should be clear about the type of documentation required. In some cases, it may not be possible for a student to provide the documentation, and in such instances the student's request should still be considered. Where faculties require supporting documents, they should ensure students are asked to provide only the minimum information necessary for the Faculty to make a decision and handle any personal information confidentially in compliance with the College's [Data Protection Policy](#). If staff are unsure how to proceed with such a request, they should contact Information Compliance for advice at info-compliance@kcl.ac.uk.

5. The decision

5.1 Each faculty should make available to students and staff details of who reviews and makes decisions on applications within their respective faculty.

5.2 Decision makers should have a complete picture of the student's academic and personal profile, as appropriate, including if the student's protected characteristics may affect their circumstances and may consult the university's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion \(EDI\)](#) Team for guidance.

5.3 Decision makers must consider the best interest of the student, and the structure and requirements of the student's programme.

6. Terms of the interruption

6.1 The terms for an interruption of study will be the product of a discussion between the student and the faculty, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of the individual student and the requirements of their programme.

Start date

6.2 An interruption may start at any point during the academic year.

6.3 In most circumstances the start date of the interruption will be the date specified in the application request which will often be the date of the application. If appropriate, an interruption can start immediately.

Requests to backdate the start date of an interruption

6.4 A student may ask to have their interruption start before the date they applied. This is referred to as backdating. Requests to backdate the start date of an interruption will be considered by the faculty depending on the student's individual circumstances, the date of last engagement, and the requirements of the programme.

- 6.5 Backdating the start of an interruption may affect student visas, fees, and/or funding, and the implications should be fully explored before the start date is agreed.
- 6.6 It is not possible to backdate an interruption beyond the student's date of last engagement, which is the date that it can be reasonably established that a student last attended or engaged with their studies.
- 6.7 For PGR students, retrospective interruptions are not allowed. In such cases, an exemption request should be submitted in order to extend or exceed the registration period.

Length of interruption

- 6.8 An interruption should be for a specific period with a return date agreed between the student and their faculty prior to the start of the interruption. For research students the minimum term for an interruption is one calendar month.
- 6.9 The return from an interruption will normally be scheduled for the start of a period of study; however, this will be part of the discussion between the student and the faculty. To extend a period of interruption, the student must complete another Change of Circumstances form.

7. Changes to programme

- 7.1 Under Consumer Law, material changes to courses that will affect currently enrolled students should be avoided and only contemplated in exceptional circumstances. The university's general principle is that any significant changes should only be introduced for new cohorts of students. However, there will be occasions when changes need to be made that affect students already registered on the programme.
- 7.2 Where it is known that changes are to be introduced to a programme that will impact a student if they go on interruption of study, the following should be discussed with the student before the interruption of study is agreed:
- the incoming changes and the implications these will have for the student;
 - the options available to the student considering the changes.
- 7.3 Where a change is brought in whilst a student is on interruption, the student should be informed at the earliest opportunity, including the rationale for the change and any benefits, and they should be made aware of the options available to them. It is good practice to arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the changes.

8. Re-engagement plan

- 8.1 Faculties must have re-engagement plans (appendix 1) in place for all students returning from an interruption of study and students should be consulted on these plans. An initial discussion on the contents of the plan may take place before the start of the interruption and a more detailed conversation should happen as part of the planning for return. Students should be given a copy of the re-engagement plan.

9. PSRB Requirements

- 9.1 For students on PSRB programmes, there may be additional mandatory requirements attached to their return, expected by the relevant external regulator.
- 9.2 Where the faculty thinks that the reason for an interruption of study might impact a student's fitness to practise, the faculty may consider implementing the provisions in the [Fitness to Practise policy](#) and the faculty's Fitness to Practise procedures.

10. Communications

- 10.1 Faculties will keep in contact with students while they are on an interruption and, wherever possible, a communications plan (appendix 1) should be agreed with the student at the point that the interruption is approved.

Links

[Academic Regulations](#)

[Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#)

Student Services Online Articles

- [How can I take a break from my course?](#)
- [Assessment - Mitigating Circumstances](#)

Information and resources for students

- [KCL Advice & Guidance](#)
- [KCL Visa and International Student Advice](#)
- [KCL Money Advice](#)
- [KCL Fees and Funding](#)
- [Student Parents and Carers](#)
- [Faculty Wellbeing and Welfare Advisors](#)
- [KCLSU advice](#)
- [King's Academic Skills for Learning](#)

Interruption of study procedure

1. Introduction

It is important that the student applies formally for an interruption. The time it takes to process an interruption request may vary. Normally requests should take no longer than six weeks to process in full, and in many instances it will be less. However, on occasion complex requests may take longer than six weeks to process, and in these instances the faculty should contact the student to make them aware of any delays.

2 Considerations

- 2.1 If a faculty is aware that a student is considering an interruption of study, they should encourage the student to access university support and advice services to make sure the student understands all possible implications of an interruption including the impact on their fees, visa implications and that the student will not be able to graduate with their existing cohort.

Student Services Online Articles

- [How can I take a break from my course?](#)
- [Assessment - Mitigating Circumstances](#)

Information and resources for students

- [KCL Advice & Guidance](#)
- [KCL Visa and International Student Advice](#)
- [KCL Money Advice](#)
- [KCL Fees and Funding](#)
- [Student Parents and Carers](#)
- [Faculty Wellbeing and Welfare Advisors](#)
- [KCLSU advice](#)

3 Decision

- 3.1 When considering whether to approve a request for an interruption, the decision maker must consider the best interest of the student. This includes whether the student is applying for an interruption to avoid assessments. In such cases, faculties should explore alternative options with the student including referral to [student support services](#).
- 3.2 The decision maker must pay due regard to the way that a student's protected characteristics may affect their circumstances and must consider the best interest of the student, within the parameters set by the requirements of the programme. They may consult academic and professional services staff to gather further information about the student, their personal circumstances, academic record and programme, and consulting with the EDI team for guidance if appropriate.

If the application is refused

- 3.3 If the application is refused, the reasons for this decision should be made clear to the student, in writing, and they should be signposted to appropriate support services, for example, the faculty Wellbeing and Welfare Advisor.
- 3.4 If the student or faculty possesses further information or supporting documentation that they believe may affect the decision, a further application may be submitted. In such cases, it may be appropriate for the decision maker to nominate an alternative decision maker, which should be an academic member of staff with similar standing in the university or higher or convene a panel to reconsider the application.

4 Terms of interruption

- 4.1 When agreeing the terms of an interruption, the faculty must consider the best interest of the student, within the parameters set by the requirements of the programme.

Start date

- 4.2 Wherever possible students are encouraged to apply for an interruption before it is due to start. In most circumstances, the start date of the interruption will be the date of the application or a later date

Requests to backdate the start date of an interruption

- 4.3 A student may ask to have their interruption start before the date they applied. If the student is able to provide good reason and supporting evidence why they did not apply for an interruption earlier, the start date may be backdated.
- 4.4 Requests to backdate the start date of an interruption will be considered by the decision maker within the faculty depending on the student's individual circumstances, the date of last engagement, and the requirements of the programme. The views of the student should also be taken into account.

The date of last engagement

- 4.5 The date of last engagement is the last date that it can be reasonably established that a student attended or engaged with their studies. To establish this date, faculties should review attendance records, engagement with online learning activities, submissions of assessment and any contact made with staff related to teaching and learning. If the date of last engagement cannot be established, the date that the lack of engagement was first highlighted may be the appropriate date.

- 4.6 Please note: It is not possible to backdate an interruption beyond the student's last known point of engagement.

The student's profile and the implications of a period of interruption.

- 4.7 If a student is in receipt of funding or a student loan and their interruption is backdated, they may be required to return all funds received immediately.
- Backdating will also result in a loss to the university, which will be assigned as a credit note to the relevant faculty. Faculties should consider if this cost can be absorbed by the faculty.
 - As part of the Data Futures return, the university is required to submit data on students' whereabouts at the end of each term. Backdating may affect the quality and reliability of this data.
 - The requirements of the programme, particularly where there are PSRB requirements.
- 4.8 If faculties would like to backdate the start of an interruption, they should get advice on the implications for the specific situation from relevant teams, including Finance, Student Funding and Data Governance. If a request to backdate has been approved, the faculty should inform these teams for the student record to be updated.

Length of interruption

- 4.9 An interruption should be for a specific period and an expected return date should be agreed prior to the start of an interruption. Wherever possible students should return at the start of a period of study although there may be circumstances where it is appropriate for a student to re-join their programme mid-way through a period of study.
- 4.10 The point of return may be influenced by:
- the point in the programme at which the interruption started;

- the scheduling of modules on their programme during the academic year of anticipated return;
- the timing of any assessments;
- the personal circumstances of the student

4.11 Appropriate input should be sought from members of the programme team in making decisions about the point of return.

4.12 Faculties must make sure students are aware of the impact of the point of return including any extra fees they may be liable for and any period of study they may need to repeat. Faculties should also encourage students to make sure they understand any funding or immigration implications upon this return.

4.13 Faculties must also make sure that all relevant staff are aware of the agreed point of return.

5. Changes to programme

5.1 Under Consumer Law, material changes to courses that will affect currently enrolled students should be avoided and only contemplated in exceptional circumstances. The university's general principle is that any significant changes should only be introduced for new cohorts of students. However, there will be occasions when changes need to be made that affect students already registered on the programme. Where changes do need to be introduced, students (and where appropriate, accepted offer holders) need to be consulted beforehand to ensure they agree to the proposed changes.

Changes that are known about before a student goes on interruption

5.2 Where it is known that changes are to be introduced to a programme that will impact a student if they go on interruption of study, the following should be discussed with the student **before** the interruption of study is agreed:

- the incoming changes and the implications these will have for the student;
- the options available to the student considering the changes.

5.3 An example of this, could be that a change to compulsory modules on the programme has been introduced for the next cohort and will be implemented in the next academic year and so if the student interrupts they may need to follow the new curriculum on their return in the next academic year.

Changes that are brought in while a student is on an interruption

5.4 In some circumstances changes may be brought in whilst a student is on interruption and so prior notification and discussion is not possible.

5.5 Where a change is brought in whilst a student is on interruption, the student should be informed at the earliest opportunity, including the rationale for the change and any benefits, and they should be made aware of the options available to them. It is good practice to arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the changes.

5.6 Note, consideration will need to be given to the university's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Faculties should consult the university's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion \(EDI\)](#) team for guidance.

Consultation

5.7 Where consultation is required because of programme changes, faculties should ask the Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards team for advice at arqs@kcl.ac.uk.

5.8 Further information on the university's contractual obligations and the requirements under Consumer Law can be found on the CMA Intranet area: [CMA | King's College London Intranet. \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#).

6. Communications plan

- 6.1 Faculties will keep in contact with students while they are on an interruption. The frequency and content of the communications will vary depending on the individual circumstances of the student and the reason for their interruption.
- 6.2 Wherever possible, a communications plan should be agreed with the student at the point that the interruption is approved. The communications plan should include:
- Points of contact, including
 - who the student can contact for pastoral support;
 - who may contact the student while they are on interruption.
 - Circumstances in which the university will contact the student during their interruption. For example;
 - assessment results and feedback;
 - in order to make preparation for their return, for example, module selection or placement allocation;
 - To discuss mandatory requirements for students on PSRB programmes, for example, DBS checks or Occupational Health clearance.
 - Method of contact. This could be via email, Microsoft Teams video call, telephone or letter. Up-to-date contact details should be obtained, including a personal email address.
- 6.3 If it is not possible to agree a communications plan at the time the interruption is approved, faculties should contact the student by the mid-point of the interruption, or six months after the start date of the interruption, whichever is sooner, to establish a plan.
- 6.4 Students should be made aware that all methods of contact may be used if the faculty are unable to contact the student using their preferred method of communication.
- 6.5 When developing the communications plan, faculties should consider the appropriate timing of communications taking into account the reasons for interruption while also ensuring the student is not disadvantaged, for example, for placement allocation, module selection and study abroad options.
- 6.6 Faculties should consider sending keeping in touch emails; these could be individual or cohort-wide for students on interruption. Cohort-wide, keeping in touch emails should:
- be personalised to the students and be relevant to their situation;
 - have no requirement for, or expectation of, a response;
 - not be sent from a no-reply email address;
 - not include the contact details or email addresses of other students on an interruption.
- 6.7 During an interruption, students may still receive general communications from the university or faculties. Students should be made aware of this before they start their interruption.
- 7. After Terms are agreed**
- 7.1 At the point the terms of the interruption have been agreed, the faculty should make sure relevant staff members are provided with the appropriate level of detail about the terms of the interruption. For example, Personal Tutors should be informed about an interruption if they were not involved in earlier discussions, and the programme team should be made aware of the anticipated date of return.
- 8. Return**
- 8.1 Students should agree their expected date for return to study at the point of interruption.

- 8.2 An automated email is sent from Student Administrative Services one month prior to the student's return to establish whether they intend to return on the agreed date or if they would like to apply for an extension to their interruption.
- 8.3 It is recommended that faculties also contact students separately to establish whether they would like to return on the agreed date or extend their interruption. It may be appropriate to initiate this conversation before the automated email from Student Administrative Services is sent.

9. Re-engagement plan

- 9.1 Students will be provided with support on their return to study. This support should be set out in the student's re-engagement plan which will be tailored to reflect the student's circumstances and the requirements of their programme. A re-engagement plan may cover;
- an initial meeting with the Personal Tutor and/or the Faculty Wellbeing and Welfare Advisor;
 - reading lists and support materials;
 - any other appropriate meetings, with information about their purpose.
- 9.2 Students who are returning mid-way through a period of study should have an enhanced re-engagement plan which should include how the student will be supported to successfully re-integrate into their programme.

10. PSRB Requirements

- 10.1 Any additional mandatory requirements for students on PSRB programmes that are attached to their return, for example; DBS or occupational health clearance requirements, or pending professionalism matters, should be discussed before the interruption starts. It is recommended that a plan for completing the mandatory requirements is developed for the student's return.

Communication Plan Template

Wherever possible, a communications plan should be agreed between the university and the student before the interruption starts. This document includes a template for use in developing a plan.

- 1) Once it is confirmed that a student will be going on an interruption of study the department should consult with the student on a communications plan.
- 2) The lead officer in this process may vary depending on the department or faculty but it should be made clear to the student at the beginning of the process, who their named contact is.
- 3) This template is a suggestion only and is not intended to limit support provided to students. Depending on the reasons for the interruption, the type, frequency and means of communication may vary and departments should also consider the individual student's personal circumstances and the requirements of their programme.
- 4) Departments should be aware, and make students aware, that they will still receive general college-wide communications.

If it is not possible to agree a plan before the interruption starts, the department should attempt to contact the student by the mid-point of the interruption, or six months after the start date of the interruption, whichever is sooner, to establish a plan. If this is not possible the department should complete the plan, and share this with the student, providing them with the opportunity to discuss it further should they wish to do so.

Student Name:	
K Number:	
Programme and Year of Study:	
Return Date:	

Student's preferred method of contact

Note, all methods of contact may be used if the university is unable to get in touch using the student's preferred method of communication

Email

Microsoft Teams video call

Telephone

Letter

Student's Contact Details whilst on interruption, if different from details on their student record

Address	
Telephone	
Email	

Points of contact for support whilst on interruption

Name	Email Address	Issues contact can provide support for

Individuals who may be in touch during the interruption

Name	Email Address	Likely purpose for contact

Circumstances where the university may make contact during the interruption:

Reason for Contact	Likely point at which contact will be made	Notes
Module selection		
Placement allocation		
Study abroad options		
Any changes to programme		

Keeping in touch arrangements

Any other relevant notes

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Date of discussion and agreement	
Student Signature	
Faculty Representative Signature	

For administrative use - who needs to be informed of Communication Plan Arrangements?

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Re-engagement plan for returning students

One month before a student is due to return from an interruption of study, they receive an email from King's directing them to re-enroll. This document sets out how a re-engagement plan should be developed with students who intend to return from interruption and includes a template for use in developing a plan.

- 5) Once it is confirmed that a student will return from interruption the student should be contacted by a member of the faculty or department in advance of their return date so they can be included in developing their re-engagement plan.
- 6) The lead officer in this process may vary depending on the department or faculty but it should be made clear to the student at the beginning of the process, who their named contact is.
- 7) This template is a suggestion only and is not intended to limit support provided to students. The re-engagement plan must be specific to the individual student, their personal circumstances and the requirements of their programme. Depending on the reasons for the interruption, extra welfare support may be appropriate. If a student is returning part way through the academic year, extra academic support may be appropriate.
- 8) Faculties may consider providing faculty or department bulletins and may organise re-fresher events for returning students as additional support and engagement for returning students. This will depend on when in the academic year a student is returning.

Re-engagement Plan Template

Please complete the following form as fully as possible. Add appropriate details and do not use To Be Confirmed (TBC) in any section.

Student Name:	
K Number:	
Programme and Year of Study:	
Return Date:	

Is the scheduled return at the start of the period of study, or a midway point?

Note, further support may be required if the return is during the mid-point of a period of study.

Are there any outstanding assessments for completion on return from interruption?

Note, if assessments are outstanding deadlines must be clear and meetings with the relevant module leads may be beneficial.

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Contacts to meet during the first week of return

<p>Faculty contacts</p> <p>Personal Tutor <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Module Lead <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Programme Lead <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Student Experience Manager <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>FWWA <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Student Services</p> <p>Money & Advice <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Student Funding <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Visa & International Advice <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>King's Academic Skills for Learning <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Counselling & Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>King's Careers & Employability <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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Meeting Arrangements for first week

Contact	Date & Time	Location

Contacts to meet during the first four weeks following the return to study

<p>Faculty contacts</p> <p>Personal Tutor <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Module Lead <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Programme Lead <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Student Experience Manager <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>FWWA <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Student Services</p> <p>Money & Advice <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Student Funding <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Visa & International Advice <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>King's Academic Skills for Learning <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Counselling & Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>King's Careers & Employability <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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Meeting Arrangements for first four weeks following return

Contact	Date & Time	Location

Actions to support return

Actions to be completed by the student

Note, this could include engagement with any relevant King's Academic Skills for Learning resources and activities.

Actions	Timeframes for completion

Other actions

Action	Owner	Timeframe for completion

Ongoing support requirements

Other re-engagement activities and requirements for return

Note, this could include any PSRB requirements.

Any other relevant notes

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Date of discussion and agreement	
Student Signature	
Faculty Representative Signature	

For administrative use - who needs to be informed of Re-Engagement Plan Arrangements?

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