

**Faculty Policy: Interruption of Studies for Students on Undergraduate  
And Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study<sup>1</sup>**

This document sets out the Faculty's Policy on interruptions to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes of study and applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and staff members working with them. The Faculty expects that students will complete their programme of study in one continuous period of uninterrupted study. Any student who does not believe they can complete their programme of study as required should discuss their options with their Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (undergraduate programmes – UG and Pre-Registration MSc) or Programme Leader (postgraduate taught programmes - PGT).

It is recognised, however, that once enrolled, students may encounter personal difficulties or situations which may seriously disrupt their studies. In such instances, students may be granted a temporary interruption to their studies at the discretion of the Faculty. The Faculty is committed to supporting students to successfully complete their studies and our policy on interruption aims to be fair, transparent and equitable to all students.

A single period of interruption for pre-registration programmes is normally a calendar year (12 months) so that students can re-join the programme at the point at which they left and not repeat a period of study. Periods shorter than 12 months can be agreed should the programme structure and assessment arrangements permit. Students will only be able to re-join pre-registration programmes at the start of a term, providing three points to re-join in the academic year. Periods over 12 months can only be agreed in the most exceptional circumstances. There is a maximum period of 24 months of interruption permitted. Students cannot re-join a discontinued programme.

After a single and continuous period of interruption, the student's circumstances and progression must be reviewed by the Programme Leader. This review must be undertaken 12 weeks prior to the student's return. At this point, a decision can be taken to:

- allow the student to return to the university, enrol and continue with their programme;

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<sup>1</sup> This procedure does not apply where interruption of studies is initiated by staff – for example where students are unable to make the request themselves (see Regulation G30 [Academic Regulations](#)) or where students are unable to progress in accordance with NMC Standards [NMC Standards for Education](#)

- approve an additional period of continuous interruption (up to a maximum of 24 months overall but only in exceptional circumstances);
- withdraw the student from the programme (an exit award can be issued where one exists and where the student has met the requirements of that award).

Designated staff (i.e. Cohort lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration), Programme leader (PGT/UG PQ), etc) are responsible for following the Interruption of Studies Procedure, to ensure that student requests for interruptions to a programme of study are handled consistently and students treated equitably. Applications for interruption of studies should be made online by students following consultation with their Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration) or Programme Leader (PGT/UG PQ) as appropriate. An action plan should be developed with the student that identifies:

- The proposed date of return
- The cohort the student will be joining (for pre-registration programmes)
- The scheduling of assessments, if this falls outside of the usual programme pattern
- The scheduling of placements, if applicable and if this falls outside of the usual programme pattern

Once the action plan is agreed the student makes the interruption application via the online student records system. If the student has already completed the online interruption application this should not be approved until an action plan has been developed and agreed. Prior to meeting with their Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration) or Programme Leader (PGT/UG PQ), students should seek appropriate advice. The Student Advice Team at King's Student Services can help signpost students. Students should consider the impact on their:

- finances (including tuition fees, student loans, bursary, sponsorship, etc);
- accommodation (for example Hall of Residence) and;
- if applicable, visa. Note: All students on Tier 4 student visas, must discuss the consequences of taking an interruption with the [Student Advice and International Support Office](#) before applying for an interruption, as interruptions may result in the student's visa being curtailed and students being required to leave the UK. Applications for interruptions from students on Tier 4 student visas cannot be approved without input from a Student Advisor.

Applications for interruption of study must be submitted online by the student via the student records system. Retrospective applications can only be considered if there is a credible and compelling explanation for late application. The application and any attachments will be treated as confidential. The information will be circulated only as necessary to enable a decision to be reached and for any change in student status to be recorded. Any reporting requirements or statistical data collection will not identify individuals. Decisions on applications (and permission to return) are made by the Programme Leader. Where an application for an interruption exceeds 12 months, or where an application is being made retrospectively, the decision must be taken in consultation with the Vice Dean for Education. Where an application exceeds 24 months, or where taking an interruption could mean the student will exceed the maximum period for registration allowed on their award, advice must be sought from the university's Exemptions Team, via the Nightingale Student Hub, before the application is approved.

**Criteria for granting an interruption of study.**

When considering the request to grant an interruption the academic member of staff should consider whether there is a single event that has led to the requirement for interruption or whether there are a combination of circumstances that lead to an overall cumulative impact for the student.

The Faculty consider the following to be suitable grounds for granting interruptions.

- Tragic family circumstances, such as the death or sudden severe injury of an immediate family member (e.g. a spouse, a partner, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling; or a child, parent, grandparent or sibling of a spouse or partner of the student);
- Physical or mental illness (sudden or relapse thereof), accident or medical procedure which would lead to the student being unable to attend the programme for a significant period;
- Maternity, paternity/shared parent leave or adoption leave;
- The effects of being the victim of a criminal act, natural catastrophe or terrorism.
- Jury service;
- Elite sporting activities (e.g. a student representing their country at events);
- Circumstances that demonstrably enhance a student's employability (e.g. work opportunities or voluntary service).
- Where a pre-registration student has not obtained DBS or OH clearance in a timely manner to enable them to commence their first clinical placement

Interruptions will not be granted for personal circumstances which, in the judgement of the Faculty, do not fulfil the above criteria. Furthermore, if a student does not truthfully provide medical information to Occupational Health (OH) about their fitness to practise during the recruitment cycle and prior to the commencement of study, and this affects their ability to complete their programme, they will not be considered by the Faculty as having grounds on which to grant an interruption.

In reaching a decision about an application for interruption, the Faculty may consider whether the student has already been granted an interruption and/or the student's academic record since joining King's. Consideration will also be given to the likelihood of the student returning to their studies and successfully completing the programme. If the Faculty believes that this is unlikely then the student may be advised to withdraw from the programme.

#### **Once an interruption is approved**

Students are responsible for informing any organisation or person who is funding their education, for example the Student Loans Company, and/or any sponsoring body, such as the NHS. The university is also obliged to notify the Student Loans Company and other funding bodies when an interruption has been approved. The university also has a legal obligation to report to the UK Visa and Immigration Service at the Home Office when a student on a Tier 4 visa is no longer actively studying.

#### **If an application for an interruption is declined**

If an applicant for an interruption does not, in the Faculty's view, fulfil the above criteria, it will not be granted, and the student will be required to continue with their programme. Should such a student fail to engage with their programme as required, the Faculty may seek to withdraw the student from their programme in accordance with the university's regulations. If an application is declined, the Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration) or Programme Leader (PGT/UG PQ) will direct the student to alternative means for support, such as the mitigating circumstances procedure or compassionate leave arrangements. Any student denied approval to interrupt may appeal this decision to the Executive Dean of the Faculty, Professor Irene Higginson (email: [irene.higginson@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:irene.higginson@kcl.ac.uk)) within 14 working days of notification of the initial decision. The request for an appeal must be in writing (hard copy or email with delivery receipt) and indicate the grounds for the appeal.

### **During an interruption of study**

During a period of interruption, students are not enrolled students of the university and their right to be on university premises will be that of a member of the public. Students are not permitted to undertake reassessments, re-take a module or attempt a module for the first time during an interruption of study. They should not undertake any work on university premises as they will not be covered by the university's insurance arrangements. For the avoidance of doubt, neither should they undertake any work in a clinical/placement setting which is intended to contribute towards their King's award. Students will not have access to onsite IT and student library access; however, they can retain remote IT access to their student email account and KEATS. As part of a managed return to the university, increased access to facilities and premises may be arranged at the discretion of the Programme Leader. Students need to be aware that they will be asked to complete a DBS declaration when returning from interruption and therefore must maintain behaviour that is in the line with the NMC Code.

### **Maintaining contact with students**

Prior to the interruption of studies, the Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration) or Programme Leader (PGT/UG PQ) should agree what level of contact the department should have with the student whilst on interruption (e.g. regarding possible changes to the programme, general news from the Faculty, etc). It is a student's responsibility to ensure that the Faculty has up to date contact details for them (contact details can be updated via Student Records or by emailing [nightingale@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:nightingale@kcl.ac.uk) ). The student must contact their named departmental contact 12 weeks before their return date, to arrange their return to the university (or application for further interruption or withdrawal). The university will normally only respond to emails from students on interruption sent from a King's College London email account.

### **Returning to the university**

Students will be instructed in their Interruption of Studies letter of their named departmental contact (normally the Programme Leader) and designated contact week in which to make arrangements for their return or otherwise to the programme. The contact week is normally 12 weeks before the end of the agreed period of interruption however for a shorter interruption period the contact week will need to be identified by the Programme Leader and communicated to the Nightingale Hub Team. At this time, students will need to decide whether making a return to study is practical and sensible. This should be done in discussion with their named contact. These staff should also assist with arranging for additional support, should it be required for the returning

student and must inform the student of any changes to the programme or regulations which may affect them. Students will then be informed in writing by the Nightingale Student Hub (on behalf of the department) of the arrangements to support them to re-join the programme, for example, if they need to undertake additional work. This 12 week period also allows time for the mandatory training and OH appointments to be completed if required.

All pre-registration students who have taken an interruption of studies on health grounds, or where a student has taken a continuous interruption of 12 months or more and has declared a change to their health, will be referred to OH to assess their fitness prior to return to their studies. Where this is not possible, for example, where an international student needs to be assessed outside the UK due to visa restrictions, alternative satisfactory medical evidence must be provided. Please note: The Faculty cannot accept medical clearance granted to return to work obtained via a student's employer.

Where a student finds they are not able to return, they can make an application for a further interruption. Students should not assume that this will be granted automatically.

Should the student fail to contact their department, by the end of the designated contact week, as instructed in their Interruption of Studies letter, a warning letter will be issued. Students who fail to make contact or re-enrol at the expected date will be considered to have withdrawn from the programme of study, and their registration will be terminated. An exit award may be issued, where one exists and where the student has met the requirements of that award.

### **Changes to programmes of study**

Except in the case of maternity, paternity/shared parent leave or adoption leave where statutory rights apply, permission to take an interruption of study is a privilege and not a right. As the Faculty cannot guarantee that students returning from an interruption will receive the same teaching, supervision and assessment experience as would otherwise have been the case, returning students will normally be subject to the programme requirements and regulations that are applicable to the cohort of students that they will be joining. If the student has given their Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration) or Programme Lead (PGT/UG PQ) permission to contact them during their interruption of studies, departments should notify affected students of programme changes as they would students who are in attendance.

Due to the limited availability of clinical placements, appropriate clinical placements may not always be available when a pre-registration student returns from an interruption.

## **Procedure for the Interruption of Studies for Students on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study**

### *Applying for an Interruption of Studies*

1. Students are advised to contact the Student Advice Team at King's Student Services before making a formal interruption of studies request. International students on student visas should also seek advice from the Student Advice and International Support Office and must see a Student Advisor before their Interruption of Study can be finalised.
2. The student discusses options with their Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (undergraduate programmes – UG and pre-registration MSc) or Programme Leader (postgraduate taught programmes - PGT). The Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration)/Programme Leader (PGT) should base the discussion around the content of the Faculty's Interruption of Studies Policy.
3. An action plan is completed that outlines:
  - The proposed date of return
  - The cohort the student will be joining (for pre-registration programmes)
  - The scheduling of assessments, if this falls outside of the usual programme pattern
  - The scheduling of placements, if applicable and if this falls outside of the usual programme pattern
  - The action plan is sent to: Nightingale Hub, Assessments Team, Placements Team, Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor, Academic Assessor for the Part of the Programme the Student is returning to
4. The student completes the interruption request on student records. The Faculty reserves the right to request further information from any source that is already named on the student's application, or in the supporting material, without making further reference to the student. In the

case of the application being made on health grounds, the Faculty reserves the right to ask students to attend an assessment by Occupational Health (OH).

5. The Nightingale Student Hub Programme Team logs and reviews the request and contacts the Cohort or Programme Leader to confirm arrangements. The Cohort or Programme Leader reviews and approves the interruption request on student records.

6. Where an application for an interruption exceeds 12 months, or where an application is being made retrospectively, decisions must be taken in consultation with the Deputy Vice Dean for Education. [Where an application for an interruption exceeds 24 months, or where taking an interruption would mean the student will exceed the maximum period for registration allowed on their award, advice must be sought from the university's Exemptions Team, via the Nightingale Student Hub, before the application can be approved.]

7. Once a decision has been made, the Nightingale Student Hub Programme Team completes the on-line process and updates SITS.

8. Successful applications: The Nightingale Student Hub issues the interruption of study letter, which includes the interruption start and end dates, the contact week dates (usually 12 weeks prior to the interruption end date), a named person for the student to contact during the contact week, and an agreed action plan for the student's return.

9. Unsuccessful applications: the Nightingale Student Hub will inform the student and the Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration)/Programme Leader (PGT), who will then direct the student to alternative means for support, such as the mitigating circumstances procedure or compassionate leave arrangements.

10. Students who have had their application rejected can appeal this decision to the Executive Dean of the Faculty, Professor Irene Higginson, (email: [irene.higginson@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:irene.higginson@kcl.ac.uk)) within 14 working days of notification of the initial decision. The request for an appeal must be in writing (hard copy or email with delivery receipt) and indicate the grounds for the appeal.



### **Returning from an Interruption of Studies**

1. Prior to the end of the agreed period of interruption, the student must contact the Nightingale Student Hub and their named departmental contact, normally the Programme Leader, to discuss their readiness to resume their studies and, if applicable, to update and agree the plan to manage their return to the university. The action plan should be reviewed to ensure it still meets the needs of the student.
2. If permission for an interruption was given on medical grounds, or, where a student has taken a continuous interruption of 12 months or more and has declared a change to their health, the student must be seen by Occupational Health (OH) who will assess their fitness to return to their studies. The Cohort Lead/Programme Leader (UG/MSc with registration)/Programme Leader (PGT) will send an OH referral form, via the Nightingale Student Hub, to the relevant OH provider.
3. Once the student has permission to return to the university, they must re-enrol prior to commencing their studies and meet with their personal tutor in the first two weeks following return.
4. Should the student fail to contact the Nightingale Student Hub or their departmental contact, by the end of the designated contact week, a warning letter will be issued. Students who fail to make contact or re-enrol at the expected date will be considered to have withdrawn from the programme of study, and their registration will be terminated. An exit award may be issued where one exists and where the student has met the requirements of that award.

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