



Interruption of studies Guidelines for students registered with the University of Manchester

Background

The University expects that students pursue their studies on a continuous basis for the stipulated duration of their programme. However, students may encounter personal difficulties or situations which seriously disrupt their studies. Students, who encounter such difficulties which may result in prolonged interruption of normal activity and where it becomes clear that continuation of their studies is not possible, may be granted a temporary interruption to their studies at the discretion of the Special Cases Committee.

Procedure

1. An application for an interruption should be made by completing the Interruption of Studies form, with attachments as relevant. Applications must be made before the beginning of the proposed interruption.
2. Normally students need to ascertain the support of their course leader. The course leader is responsible for discussing with students the circumstances that lead the student to requesting an interruption to their studies. In case the course leader opposes a request for interruption, the student needs to indicate this on their request form.
3. When a master's student requests an interruption after the taught component of their programme has been completed, they must produce a document detailing the progress made with their dissertation and how they will complete it within the time limit on their return from the interruption. This time plan must be approved by the course leader and the dissertation supervisor.
4. The course leader passes the completed application form to the Special Cases Committee, which considers the request and makes a decision. Each request will be considered on an individual basis and any decision made will be at the discretion of the College.
5. The outcome of the application is relayed to the student in writing.
6. A period of interruption is not normally more than a complete year. The duration of the interruption may have to be determined by the student's status in the course. For example, if a student interrupts a taught course, the moment of return may be dictated by the availability of the course units that they have missed.
7. In the case of a full-time student, changing the mode of attendance to part-time will be considered as an appropriate alternative to interruption of studies.
8. International students who are in the UK on a student visa are not normally permitted to study part-time and it is essential that they seek impartial immigration advice before considering this option. In the case of non-EU students who are in the UK on a student visa or residence permit, the College is legally required to report to the government any interruption of studies. International students will be referred to the College's Visa Cases Committee to discuss the consequences of an interruption.
9. The Senior Registrar is responsible for the administrative arrangements that result from an interruption being approved.

Examples of exceptional circumstances

The following circumstances are typical of what may be considered grounds for applying for an interruption to a programme:

- Serious physical or mental illness of the student
- Death / serious illness of a partner, close family member or close friend
- Unforeseeable or unpreventable events such as distress or injury caused by a serious accident; the effects of being the victim of a criminal act or the distress or serious disruption caused by fire, flood or other natural catastrophe
- Extreme family or financial circumstances leading to stress
- Delays in obtaining ethical approval
- Jury service
- Delays in progress of the study due to problems outside the student's control, such as moving of offices/buildings, supervisor changes etc.

The following circumstances will not be regarded as grounds for applying for an interruption:

- Ignorance of the policy and application procedures for interruption. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of all policies and procedures relevant to their studies
- Normal work commitments
- Exchange visits
- Voluntary service overseas
- Expeditions/sport
- Long-term holidays/vacations
- Inadequate planning / time management
- Normal pregnancy (excluding standard maternity leave entitlement)
- Difficulties with the English language including delays as a result of proofreading
- Computer or other equipment failure where use of an alternative is possible or any loss of work was avoidable

Supporting documentation

1. Medical evidence: a doctor's note or note from another medical professional should be submitted in support of an interruption based on a prolonged or acute medical condition.
2. Other documentary evidence: appropriate third party evidence or collaborative documentation is required. Where considerable personal or family difficulties have led a student to seek a leave of absence, these circumstances should be fully explained. The College will determine, on an individual case by case basis, if the documentary evidence supplied is satisfactory
3. In case of a ministerial student or a minister, a supporting letter from the church, providing details of the circumstances, may be useful.

The Special Cases Committee will determine if the evidence supplied is satisfactory. It may contact any person named in a submission to seek further clarification or further information, but this will not be done to remedy omissions in the documentation or to seek supporting evidence when not supplied.

Right to appeal

If a student's application for interruption is declined by the Special Cases Committee, the student has a right to appeal in writing to the College's Leadership Team.

Maternity leave

Students may interrupt their studies for the purpose of maternity leave at any time from 28 weeks of the pregnancy for a maximum period of 12 months. The period of leave must be

taken as one consecutive block. The student must inform the College of this absence in writing.

Paternity leave

A total of two weeks paternity leave may be taken at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following birth. The student must inform the College of this absence in writing.

Adoption leave

Students who are adopting a child may interrupt their studies for a maximum of 12 months. The period of leave must be taken in one consecutive block. The student must inform the College of this absence in writing.

During the interruption

During the period of interruption, students are not entitled to any supervision and will have limited access to College facilities.

Return after interruption

Upon return from a period of interruption, students must inform the course leader and the Academic Registrar. If the interruption was permitted for serious medical problems, they must provide a note from their healthcare professional that states that they are fit to return to studies. If they fail to return and re-register within 30 days after their agreed date of return, and there is no response to the College's efforts to contact them, they may be withdrawn from their course.

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