**Guidance notes \_Research Degrees Committee**

**- 7.3 Temporary period of suspension inc exceptional suspensions**

The following guidelines provide an overview of the process for research student applications for temporary suspension of studies.

**Length of suspensions:**

Any suspension requests which start date after week 4 of any given Semester, the student is liable for fees for the whole semester.

Please see the [University Calendar](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/about-brookes/university-calendar) to check the dates.

Please see examples below:

Term 1 (Sept-Dec) any suspension with a start date that is after Friday of week 4 the student will be liable to pay for the fees until the end of December.

Term 2 (Jan-May) any suspension with a start date that is after Friday of week 4 the student will be liable to pay for the fees until the end May..

Term 3 (June-Aug) any suspension with a start date that is after Friday of week 4 the student will be liable to pay for the fees until the end of August.

If a student requests a suspension from the start of any given semester then these will be backdated and the student will not be liable for the fees for that semester.

* The length of the request should be explained in full within the application and be reflected within the evidence submitted with the application, which includes the ‘events log’ (name yet to be confirmed). The length of suspension request should be considered carefully to ensure any request is allowing the appropriate amount of time in order for the student to not have to extend the application which would lead to multiple applications.

**Submission of applications:** Please see [here](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/study/fees) for more information with regards fee liability periods

**Consideration of applications:** [**Overview of process for suspensions in Banner**](https://lucid.app/lucidchart/33077332-60ab-4dfd-bd71-7cccec07d519/edit?page=0_0&invitationId=inv_391771ec-ea6c-4987-86f1-c21019b28070)

**Applications from Monday Week 5 onwards (each semester):** Any application made from Monday Week 5 onwards each semester, where the student has requested a suspension of registration for more than one semester, the student will be liable for fees for the semester of the request and any future terms unless approved with evidence to support the exceptional request. Any application after week 4 deadline of each semester will be considered as exceptional requests and will require evidence to support the reasoning.

**Exceptional suspensions :** These will be for a maximum of one academic year from the beginning of the semester the request is made - for example if requested on the 1st January of any given year then the student is entitled to a maximum of exceptional suspension from 1st January - 31st December. Please note that these will only be granted in very exceptional circumstances and assessed on a case by case basis by a panel including members of the relevant sub-committee.

**Eligibility for suspensions:** Any student who is currently undertaking a MPhil/PhD, PhD by Published Work, or Professional Doctorate (Research component) is eligible to apply for ‘standard’ or exceptional suspension, **except when in Year 1 of their studies** ( Full Time or Part Time).

If a Year 1 student is unable to continue, they should withdraw and either defer their place where possible or re-apply in due course.

**Submission of evidence:** Please note that any application requiring evidence for a request of suspension, will need to ensure that only the required evidence is submitted.

This can include the ‘Events log’ and any additional evidence deemed appropriate by the student and supervisory team.

**Exceptional suspension requests-** **Types of evidence / Grounds for suspension:**

The ‘events log’ can be used for all students to record any life events that they feel has impacted their ability to continue their academic studies. Any evidence to be submitted needs to be looked at and discussed with the Director of Studies and/or Postgraduate Research Tutor. If you have any questions on the type of evidence then please contact the Research Degrees Team via email on rdt-researchdegrees@brookes.ac.uk.

**Outcome of the application:** All students will receive an outcome from the Research Degrees Team via email from rdt-researchdegrees@brookes.ac.uk .

**Consideration of requests :** To be able to keep periods of suspension as short as possible, and that students should only request the time they need to deal with their circumstances. The evidence submitted must ensure it covers the time period requested.

**What type of situation which should include evidence:** The below shows examples of circumstances where evidence might be required:

* Pregnancy or new parenthood - need to include specific new parents and pregnant students policy and gain approval - this will be in line with UG/PGT policy for maternity leave
* Health reasons
* Bereavement
* Caring responsibilities
* Financial commitments
* An exceptional and unexpected change in work commitments (for part-time candidates only)
* Participation in a short-term professional placement/internship that directly correlates with the student’s research . For example when undertaking an internship which is an arrangement with the Faculty, this is outside the University placement project
* Public duties (such as jury service)
* Competing in national or international sporting events, or other similarly high profile events, where possibly for a long period of time including training for an event
* Religious events, such as a pilgrimage

Please note when submitting evidence, careful consideration must be given to the type of evidence, as this will be viewed by members of the relevant sub-committee. It is important that only the appropriate evidence be submitted, especially where it is of a sensitive nature. The University will adhere to GDPR and the Confidentiality policy to ensure any evidence is not shared inappropriately.

**What if an application is rejected and the applicant is not happy with the decision?**
1. Where an application is rejected and the student wishes it to be reviewed, then they can request for the application to be considered by the Chair of Research Degrees Committee for review
2. If the student is dis-satisfied with the outcome then they are formally able to complain through the [University Complaints procedure](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/sirt/student-complaints)

**Returning to studies :** There will be an expectation that all students will return to study immediately after their period of suspension has come to an end.

* If the Annual Progress Monitoring is due upon the return of the student, if they do not re-enrol within 4 weeks of the suspension ending, then they are at risk of being withdrawn.
* Where a student does not intend to resume their studies following the suspension, they must formally discuss options with the Director of Studies and /or Postgraduate Research Tutor.

This needs to be discussed with the Research Degrees Team and the student will be formally withdrawn. The implications of not officially withdrawing is that the student will become Unapproved Temporary Withdrawn and within one year, be classed as “ Time Lapsed” and as such lose all access.

**Studentships**

Please note that if currently holding a studentship, depending on the rules of the particular studentship they hold and who is funding it, that there will likely be implications for their payments, in that there may be a need to suspend payments, or for payments to cease altogether until a return to study. This may have implications for completion timeframes and financing the study that need to be additionally considered when applying for a suspension or withdrawal.

**Visa sponsored students:**

When discussing any potential suspension of registration from studies with a ‘visa sponsored’ student. The Director of Studies should have an awareness of any visa requirements and/or any implications

Please ensure the student identifies where they can avoid leaving the UK if on suspension, and to discuss their case with International Student Compliance Team as part of the reporting process

If you have any concerns about the impact please contact our colleagues in the International Student Advice Team [contact details here](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/isat/)

Please also refer to [Visa Responsibilities](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/isat/visas/student-visa/visa-responsibilities) including specific information for Research students and ensure whilst studying that you adhere to the [Student Visa Engagement Policy.](https://www.brookes.ac.uk/getmedia/7a6dfb32-83cd-43e2-8796-42908d5f84da/Student-Visa-Engagement-Policy.pdf)

**What can be included to document any evidence:**

[**Events Log**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17W4cFdZqVst2lMzI9e9vRjrNWMUufa_L/edit) any events other than Covid related- for all students use the Events Log