

Voluntary suspension of studies for postgraduate students

If you have any queries about suspension, please contact the Academic Registrar, Freyja Madsen, at tuition@new.ox.ac.uk, on 018656 279596.

What is voluntary suspension?

Sometimes, a student may decide that, for example for the sake of their health, they wish to take a break from their studies; this is known as suspension. When a postgraduate student suspends their studies, they cease for a period to be provided with tuition or supervision by the University, or to have use of New College facilities. During the period of suspension, the student remains registered for their course of study, and is required to resume it at the end of the period of suspension, subject to meeting any requirements specified at the start of the suspension process.

A suspended student will still be able to access University and Departmental libraries and online resources, as well as central University specialist services including Counselling and Careers; with the Dean's permission, they may also arrange to visit College sites. They cannot, however, receive any teaching or supervision, and may not submit any assessments for marking. Students cannot continue to serve on the MCR Committee during the period of their suspension.

Voluntary suspension most frequently occurs when students make a request on medical, parental or other welfare grounds. However, suspensions are also granted to allow a student time to take up internships, fixed-term employment, or research projects outside of their current programmes. The College receives these requests sympathetically but there are specific procedures that must be followed and there are consequences that follow on from the decision. These are outlined below.

Framework for voluntary suspension

Students do not have an automatic right to suspend study. However, College will be sympathetic when considering requests on medical or other welfare grounds. Suspensions on medical grounds require medical evidence in support of the request, which should be supplied by the College Doctors, or medical specialists familiar with the student's case. Suspensions for maternity, paternity, or adoption leave must be accompanied by a MAT B1 certificate.

The student remains registered for their course of study, and is required to resume it at the end of the period of suspension, subject to meeting any requirements specified at the start of the suspension process.

How do I suspend?

If at all possible, you should first discuss your request to suspend with your supervisor, so that they can establish a plausible timeline for returning to study, and determine whether any terms should be

repeated. You can, if necessary and with the support of your supervisor(s), repeat a term in which you were unable to work.

If suspending on health or welfare grounds, you are also strongly encouraged to contact the Welfare Team (welfare@new.ox.ac.uk), the Academic Registrar (tuition@new.ox.ac.uk) or the Tutor for Graduates (Rosalind.temple@new.ox.ac.uk).

You should then complete the [GSO.17/GSO.17b](#) form to formally request permission to suspend your studies. You should complete your section and ask your supervisor to complete their section before returning it to the College, via the Academic Registrar (tuition@new.ox.ac.uk). Once the Tutor for Graduates has approved the suspension, the signed form will be returned to you and you should pass it to your Director of Graduate Studies, via the relevant [Graduate Studies Assistant](#). Requests made on medical grounds should be accompanied or shortly followed up with medical evidence. If you are unsure about how to word this request, or would like to discuss the process, you should contact the Academic Registrar at tuition@new.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that if you request suspension before Monday of 4th week, then your fees for that term will be refunded.

What happens when I return from suspension?

The College may decide to set conditions for your return from suspension. The conditions will be specified in the College section of the GSO form, but will most commonly require a medical assessment from the College Doctor or a medical specialist stating whether or not, in their opinion, you are fit to resume study.

At the end of your period of suspension you should complete the student section of the [GSO.17a form](#) and return it to the College, via the Academic Registrar (tuition@new.ox.ac.uk) along with evidence that you have met the conditions of your return. Once the Tutor for Graduates has approved the return from suspension, the signed form will be returned to you and you should pass it to your Director of Graduate Studies, via the relevant [Graduate Studies Assistant](#). The Tutor for Graduates shall be responsible for determining whether the conditions for return have been met.

You are encouraged to contact the Academic Registrar (via tuition@new.ox.ac.uk) if you have any queries before or during the suspension process, and subsequent period of suspension.

Practical Matters

College Rooms

If you have a room in a College property, you will normally be expected to vacate the room as soon as practicable but no longer than a week after suspension has been granted. If there are extenuating circumstances where a week is insufficient, you are encouraged to discuss this as soon as possible with the Home Bursar (gez.wells@new.ox.ac.uk). Please note that if you are living out of college in private accommodation, you will be responsible for your contract with your landlord.

Council Tax

You will not be eligible for Council Tax exemption from Oxford City Council during the period of your suspension. If while suspended you find yourself in financial hardship you may be able to apply for a discretionary discount, via the Academic Registrar (tuition@new.ox.ac.uk).

Fees and Funding

If you suspend your studies before Monday of 4th week, you will not be charged fees for that term. If you have any queries about fees or funding during the period of your suspension, please contact our Fees Officer at linda.goodsell@new.ox.ac.uk.

Student visas

Suspending your studies may have an impact on your Tier 4 Student Visa (if you have one). The University's Student Immigration Team will contact you directly to discuss the potential impact of a suspension on your visa, but you can seek their advice in advance by emailing student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk.

“Carrying forward” marks for assessments

If you have already submitted some examined work or completed a block of examinations during the year in which you suspend your studies, you can apply for these marks to be “carried forward” into the next academic year, so that you do not have to repeat the work. Permission to carry forward marks is granted by the University's Education Committee. At your request, the Academic Registrar will submit the relevant application to Education Committee.

Changes to Exam Regulations

Sometimes the Exam Regulations for a course change. If this happens during the period of your suspension, you can either sit the relevant papers under the new set of regulations, or apply to Education Committee for permission to sit “under old regulations”. You should ask your tutors whether this will apply to you. At your request, and in consultation with your Faculty/Department, the Academic Registrar will submit the relevant application to Education Committee.

Appeals

In the event that a request to suspend is not supported, or you dispute the decision, or you are found not to be fit to return to study following a period of suspension, you may seek a review with the Warden and Tutors Appeal Sub-Committee.