

# Change of Status Policy

Changing Courses, Taking a Study Break, or Leaving the University

1st August 2024

## Academic Services

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## Introduction

Deciding to take a study break, changing courses, or leaving the University is a change of status process that will affect a student’s academic record, their tuition fee liability and if a holder, their Student Route Visa status.

At Portsmouth, taking a study break is also referred to as an ‘interruption’ i.e. a student is interrupting their studies for a period of time. Changing courses might be also described as a ‘transfer’ i.e. a student is transferring (moving) from one course to another. The process to describe leaving the University is also known as a ‘withdrawal’ i.e. a student is withdrawing from the University and their studies.

For most students, taking a study break or leaving the University is their decision. On occasion, the University may decide that a student’s studies should be ‘suspended’ or that the student should be ‘excluded’ from the University.

This document outlines what happens when a student decides that they would like to take a study break, change course, or leave the University.

This policy is applicable for all current undergraduate and postgraduate taught students registered at the University of Portsmouth, studying an award bearing course, and apply to all University of Portsmouth

students based at either the Portsmouth or London campus.

Students undertaking a credit bearing or non-credit bearing short course should first consult their course leader regarding the viability of a change of status.

This policy is not applicable to current postgraduate research students who should look at the Regulations for Research Degrees which can be found at [www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk) on the [Policies and Standards page](#).

Students on a degree apprenticeship do need to be aware that due to different funding rules, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) outlines specific requirements and processes that must be followed relating to apprenticeship withdrawals and breaks in learning. These are outlined within this document and supported by the SITS/HUBs Process Manual.

For any student to formally request a study break, change courses or leave the University, they should submit an application via their Student View - <https://student-system.port.ac.uk>.

These regulations and other related University policies can be found at [www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk) on the [Policies and Standards](#) webpage, including:

- Appeals Procedure
- Examination and Assessment Regulations
- Exclusions and Appeal Policy
- Fitness to Practice Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Regulations for Research Degrees
- Student Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Student Conduct Policy
- Tuition Fee Policy
- UKVI Student Route Compliance Policy

## Support for Students

Taking a study break, changing course or leaving the University is an enormous decision for some students to make. In addition to our personal tutors based in our Schools, as a University we offer a range of support services as featured on the following webpages:

- [Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre](#)
- [Careers and Employability Service](#)
- [International Student Advice Team](#)
- [Student Finance Team](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Service](#)
- [The MyPort Hub team](#)

- [The Portsmouth Students' Union Advice Service](#)
- [MyPort Guidance and Support webpage](#)

## Holders of a Student Route Visa

Before applying for any of the processes described below, students on a Student Route Visa must understand:

- That the conditions of their visa may not allow them to change courses
- That an approved study break will require the student to leave the UK
- That an approved study break will cancel their visa, and the student will need to request a new Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS), and make a new visa application
- That by leaving the University, the student will need to leave the UK
- That the University will report to UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) any changes of status that affect a student's original CAS.

## Tuition Fees

Students will pay the tuition fee regime in force at their initial registration on their course, subject only to annual increases.

This commitment will hold good for the normal course length plus two years. After this time has lapsed, if for any reason students have not completed their course, including taking approved study breaks, students will be charged the new tuition fee regime. However, for students eligible for a Student Loans Company (SLC) tuition fee loan, their fees will continue to be charged under the original fee regime.

Degree apprentices do not pay tuition fees as the cost of their course is paid by either their employer levy account or the Government. Under no circumstances can apprentices be charged for any aspect of their course or End Point Assessment.

## Changing Courses

After students have started their course, we know that there may be situations where they seek to change to an alternative course. We will endeavour to provide support for such requests; however, not all changes may be feasible depending on various factors, including:

- Both the current and new course leaders agree that the change (transfer) is the right move academically.
- The student meets the entry requirements of the new course they are requesting to join.
- The student has the correct pre-requisite qualifications for the new course.
- That there is capacity on the course to accept the student.
- Whether or not the support and reasonable adjustments a student has can apply to the new course.
- The student has not been permanently excluded by the University, or has not left the University.
- If a Student Route Visa holder, the conditions of their visa allows the student to change courses.
- The student has permission, if needed, from their employer/sponsor to change courses.

It is the receiving course leader's responsibility to check that the student meets the academic requirements of the course that they wish to change to.

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) is at the discretion of the receiving course leader, and they determine whether to accept accredited modules already achieved by the student.

A student on a Student Route Visa holder should always first consult with the International Student Advice team in Student Support Services to avoid any disappointment and misunderstanding.

Depending on when in the academic year a student makes a change course request, if approved the student may need to take a study break. For a Student Route Visa holder, that will mean they will need to leave the UK and reapply for a new visa.

### **Impact on Fees**

- Students who move onto a course with a different tuition fee, will be invoiced for the previous course up to the liability point that applies to the time of the change, plus the tuition fee for the new course from the liability point that applied at the time of the change.
- Undergraduates who receive tuition fee loans from the Student Loans Company (SLC), and will be starting again at level 4 of their new course should make sure that they have adequate funding available to them.
- All students who are receiving loans and/or self funding their tuition and living expenses should make sure that changing courses is financially viable.

If a degree apprentice requests a transfer from one apprenticeship to another apprenticeship or course within the University of Portsmouth, this will result in a withdrawal from the original course impacting achievement rates and reduction in funding. A transfer does not guarantee funding for the new course and the apprentice would need to reapply and their eligibility reassessed in line with the ESFA funding rule

# Taking a Study Break

We understand that life events and circumstances may arise for students, making it desirable for them to take a break from their studies and return at a later point.

It is important that a student who wishes to take a study break should first speak with their Personal Tutor or Course Leader as a study break may not be permissible.

Students should always carefully consider any potential impacts of taking a study break, and seek advice should they have any questions.

A student on a Student Route Visa holder should first consult with the International Student Advice team in Student Support Services before applying for a study break.

New students cannot take a study break in their first two weeks of study. A break in a student's studies at this point will be treated as either leaving the University or wanting to defer to the next entry point.

During a study break, students are not allowed to engage in any study and assessment activity, but they should monitor their University email account, particularly when they are due to return to their studies.

A period of a study break cannot last longer than one year. Should a student wish to extend their study break, they will need to submit another request. Such a request will only be agreed if the student is facing exceptional circumstances.

The return date from a study break will usually be the start of an academic year or teaching block, except in the case of practice or placement modules and in the case of postgraduate dissertation modules where a different date may apply.

Students undertaking courses where they have 120 credit year long modules will need to repeat the full year if they take a study break at any point in the current registration year.

Students studying on a part time course will be allowed to take a study break from specific modules.

If a student fails to be assigned credit for a period of two calendar years, the Board of Examiners will exclude that student unless it believes that to do so would be unjust. The School should give this regulation due consideration when considering a student's request to take a study break.

The study break comes into effect from the date of last engagement. The date of last engagement will be the date the University is notified of the student's wish to take a study break by their application via their Student View or by written request. The request for a study break may be backdated where assessments are affected.

Degree apprentices considering a break in learning contact the Degree Apprenticeship Office via the Faculty University of Portsmouth /*Change of Status Policy*

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Hub. The Degree Apprenticeship Office will then contact the apprentice and their employer to identify why the apprentice wishes to take a study break and explain any alternative options. Once a 'break in learning' agreement has been reached with the employer, the length of the break and an appropriate 'keeping in touch' schedule will be agreed. The Degree Apprenticeship Office will then confirm that the break can be processed including the effective date and expected return date.

In some cases an apprentice will be placed on a break in learning when there has been no evidence of engagement within a calendar month. This is a mandatory funding rule and is a requirement of the University's funding contract with the ESFA.

When a study break request is approved, the following will apply:

- The student's tuition fee will be based on the fee liability periods for the period of study when the study break comes into effect in accordance with the current version of the Tuition Fee Policy found at [www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk) on the [Policies and Standards](#) webpage.
- If the University's records show that the income collected is less than this amount, the student will be liable for immediate payment of the outstanding amount. Any student who is struggling financially to pay their tuition fees will face exclusion from the University unless a satisfactory arrangement can be made with the Income Team.
- If the University's records show that the income collected exceeds this amount, Academic Services will make sure the balance is credited against future tuition fees.
- If the student takes a study break from a module or modules, there will be no recalculation in the tuition fee.
- Students who receive tuition fees and/or maintenance loans from the SLC will be expected to tell the SLC that they are taking a study break. The University will also inform the SLC once the student record is updated.
- For any module included in the agreed study break, the student will be withdrawn from the module. The Module Assessment Boards will not consider the student in any module for which the student has not completed and submitted all assessments at the time the study break comes into effect, nor shall the student be included in any statistical review of the module.
- In any module included in the agreed study break, the Module Assessment Boards will consider a student's performance in any module for which the student has completed and submitted all assessments at the time the study break comes into effect, and will include the student in any statistical review of the module.
- A student on a study break may not undertake a second attempt assessment or deferred first attempt assessment in modules included in the agreed study break, until such time as their study



break ends.

- A student on a Student Route Visa holder will be reported by the University to UKVI that they are on a study break which will cancel their visa. This means that they will need to leave the UK and return to their home country.

## Returning to Study

The University will contact the student using their University email address to tell them when the date they are expected to return to their studies approaches.

Their student record will be activated, and they will need to complete online registration and relevant tuition fee payments before arriving at the University.

Returning students who need a Student Route Visa will need to request a new CAS and make a new student visa application before returning to the UK.

All returning students who do not hold British or Irish passports will need to complete an in person ID check at the point of arriving back at the University.

The SLC will be informed when a returning student who receives from the SLC their tuition fees and/or maintenance loan has completed their registration.

If a student fails to resume their studies at this confirmed date they must either make a request for further study break (which will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances) or they will be withdrawn from their programme of studies.

## Leaving the University

Leaving the University will result in the complete closure of a student's record, ending their studies and contract with the University.

Students may leave their studies at any time during the academic year, but should be made aware that when they leave could impact their tuition fee liability.

A student who wishes to leave the University should first speak with their Personal Tutor or Course Leader before making a final decision.

The date of last engagement will be the date when the University is notified of the student's intention to

leave by the completion of the Student View Withdrawal Form.

Leaving the University (withdrawal) will terminate the student's registration in their programme of study and all modules associated with it, and any assessment entitlements, with effect from the last date of engagement as recorded on the form.

A student on a Student Route Visa holder will be reported by the University to UKVI that they are no longer studying at the University. This will cancel their visa, and the student will need to leave the UK and return to their home country.

The student's tuition fee shall be based on liability periods and the annual fee charged for the period of registration until the date the student leaves the University in accordance with the current version of the Tuition Fee Policy found at [www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk) on the [Policy and Standards](#) webpages. In all cases, any unpaid balance of fees will become due immediately.

Students who receive tuition fees and/or maintenance loans from the SLC will be expected to tell the SLC that they have left the University. The University will also inform the SLC. If the student is leaving the University to transfer to another Higher Education Institutions, the University will inform the SLC.

A student who has left shall have no right or expectation of readmission to the University.

If a degree apprentice wishes to leave their programme, the apprentice should discuss this with their Work Based Tutor before making a formal request. If, following a discussion they still wish to leave, then they should submit a Change of Circumstances request in Student View.

Once the request has been received, it should be forwarded onto the Degree Apprenticeship Office, who will in turn contact both the apprentice and their employer to arrange a discussion regarding their withdrawal and discuss whether alternative options would be more appropriate. On agreement with the employer, the contract will be terminated and apprenticeship funding will cease.

## Degree Apprenticeships - Redundancy

In the unfortunate situation of an apprentice being made redundant, the following will apply:

- If they have less than six months left on their apprenticeship programme, they will be funded by the ESFA until they have completed.
- If they have more than six months left to complete their apprenticeship, they will receive up to 12 weeks of funding by the ESFA. Should they not find new employment during that time, they can choose to either:
  - Self-fund and complete their degree course.
  - Withdraw from their apprenticeship, but take a study break for up to a year in order to find new employment that will support their degree apprenticeship. They will then reapply to restart their apprenticeship and Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) will be used to plan their

new completion date.

- Or Leave the University and accept an exit award.

# Exclusion and Suspension

## Student Conduct Policy

Excluding a student from the University or suspending a student from their studies, is a University decision that is made in accordance with the Student Conduct Policy found at [www.port.ac.uk](http://www.port.ac.uk) on the [Policies and Standards](#) webpage. The severity of the offence and level of sanction will determine whether or not a student will be suspended from their studies for a period of time, excluded from accessing specific services and premises or being permanently excluded from the University.

## Student Engagement and Attendance

Any student with a poor attendance and/or engagement in their studies, and with no extenuating circumstances, is at risk of being excluded from the University as explained in the [Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#). It is therefore important that the student's School has intervened early and provided documented support for the student.

## Fitness to Study

Suspending a student under the [Fitness to Study Policy](#) is a measure available to the University in situations where there are serious and significant concerns for a student and their capacity to undertake academic study, manage the demands of student life or adhere to specific professional, regulatory or statutory body requirements.

Measures that could be implemented are:

- A temporary requirement for the student not to attend University premises and/or learning and teaching activities.
- A temporary requirement for the student not to enter specific areas of University premises.
- A temporary requirement for the student to move rooms in University owned/managed accommodation.
- A temporary requirement for the student to leave their University owned/managed accommodation
- A temporary requirement for the student not to engage in any University related activity at all.

Any student who is returning from a suspension under the Fitness to Study procedure will be subject to a Return to Study assessment.

## Repeating Modules

Students who do not complete successfully their level of study and are required to repeat modules, but not immediately, will have their studies suspended.

Holders of Student Route Visas may need to leave the UK if the waiting period of time is 60 days or more before the modules they are repeating are taught again. A Student Route visa holder who is required to leave the UK will, if they are required to be on campus to complete the repeated modules, need to re-apply for a new CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance to Studies) before they can enter the UK.

Students who show that they have not made any progress at their level of study in two years will be excluded by the University in accordance with the Examination and Assessment Regulations found on [Policy and Standards](#) webpages.

## **Registration**

Students are required to register at the start of each academic year they are studying, and agree to the University's terms and conditions. The University therefore reserves the right to exclude a student from their course if they do not complete registration by the University's given deadline. If a student then decides that they want to complete their course they will need to reapply to the University to rejoin the course in a subsequent academic year.

## **Non Payment of Tuition Fees**

Students who default or miss agreed payments will face exclusion from the University unless a satisfactory arrangement can be made with the Income Team.