Code of practice for temporary and permanent withdrawals: taught programmes

Academic year 2026/27

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Applicability

1. This *Code of practice* for temporary or permanent withdrawal applies to all of the University's taught provision at both undergraduate and taught postgraduate level, including programmes with an integrated foundation year, Degree Apprenticeship programmes, provision within Associated and Accredited Institutions (AIs)[1], and other collaborative arrangements with academic partners in the UK and abroad for taught degree programmes leading to University of Surrey awards.

Purpose of the Code

2. The University requires that all students participate fully in the work of their programme and complete the required assessments as set out in their programme specifications. In cases where students might experience difficulties, such as health or other serious personal problems that affect their studies, it may be advisable for a student to take a period of temporary withdrawal and return to the programme at a later date. In other cases, a student may decide to permanently withdraw from their programme.

3. The temporary and permanent withdrawal principles are defined within the *Regulations for taught programmes* and are applicable in all cases where current students apply for withdrawal. The University has a general duty of care at common law to deliver educational and support services to the standard of the ordinarily competent institution, and, in carrying out its services and functions, to act reasonably to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students:

    - Student Finance Policy Guidance & Student Support Information Notices: www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/policy/.
    - Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance: www.gov.uk/government/collections/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers-and-students.
    - Visa Regulations – Student Visa (General): www.gov.uk/student-visa.
    - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37.
    - Statutory Maternity Pay and Leave: www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave.

4. The health and wellbeing of students is very important to the University. There is a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its employees, students, and others at work. The University has implemented procedures, as set out in paragraphs 40-41, to address the need for enforced temporary withdrawal or exclusion of a student from their programme of study.

5. All students are strongly encouraged to discuss their decision to withdraw and to consider the implications of such a decision. Advice is available to students from different areas of the University and Students' Union, including:

    - Personal Tutor.
    - MySurrey Help or (Money, International).
    - MySurrey Hive team (MySurrey Hive | MySurrey student website | University of Surrey).
    - Programme Leader.
    - For apprentices, please email apprenticeships@surrey.ac.uk

[1] Reference to Faculty/School should also be taken to include the relevant unit within the Associated/Accredited Institution or a collaborative partner.

- Accommodation Services.
- Students' Union Academic Advice Service.

6. This *Code of practice* aims to assist the University and its staff and students by setting out the procedures for temporary and permanent withdrawals.

7. In responding to requests for temporary or permanent withdrawals, all individuals should be treated with dignity, respect, and attention sensitively given to any needs relating to protected characteristics (Gender, Race, Disability, Age, Religious and Non-Religious Belief, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy, Maternity and Paternity) of the people involved.

Definitions

8. It is the student's responsibility to notify the University at the point at which they intend to withdraw via Surrey Self-Service. Normally, retrospective withdrawals are not accepted, especially in light of Student Visa requirements, student loan implications, and funding implications for apprenticeships.

9. **Temporary withdrawal** – an approved and formalised period when a student is not actively studying on their course but plans to re-join at a specific date in the future. Also referred to as suspension, absence, interruption, or deferral.

10. **Permanent withdrawal** – when a student leaves their studies with no intention to return.

11. **Resumption** – a pre-agreed date by which a temporarily withdrawn student must return to studies**.**

12. **Date of temporary/permanent withdrawal** – there are a number of financial and legal consequences arising from this date. Students will be temporarily or permanently withdrawn from the date of application or a future date if this is specified on their application and is approved. Students who request a date in the past should include compelling evidence as to why they were unable to apply sooner. Retrospective applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Temporary Withdrawal

13. The period for which the University will allow suspension of registration for a student following a taught programme will not normally be longer than one academic year[2]. Where the requested period for temporary withdrawal exceeds 12 calendar months, students will be required to submit supporting evidence.

14. The University reserves the right to refuse a temporary withdrawal application. This may be on the basis of visa implications, currency of learning or assessment points, or similar examples. In cases where the University has concerns about the nature and frequency of temporary withdrawals, the student may be referred to the *Regulations for support to study*.

15. Requests from students for short temporary withdrawal periods, with a duration of less than an academic year, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

16. Normally, students are advised against resuming their studies mid-way through an academic semester.

17. Students who wish to apply for a temporary withdrawal for a short period of time over the examination period will be redirected to submit an online extenuating circumstances application. Extenuating circumstances are defined as circumstances

[2] See *A1 Regulations for taught programmes*.

which are sudden, unexpected, significantly disruptive, and beyond the student's control.

18. Students applying for temporary withdrawal are required to provide an expected resumption date. The University may amend the requested resumption date, in consultation with the student, as appropriate, e.g. Level 4 students who leave early during Semester 1 may be asked to come back for the start of Welcome Week, or when it is considered that returning earlier will benefit the student's academic progress.

19. Requests for further extension of a temporary withdrawal period will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In such cases, students will be required to submit compelling supporting evidence as to why they need a further extension.

Retrospective temporary withdrawals

20. Retrospective applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and are highly unlikely to be approved in the absence of compelling evidence as to why the student was unable to apply sooner. Those involving Student Visa requirements, and those with student loan implications, are also highly unlikely to have an application accepted. It is the student's responsibility to formally notify the University at the point at which they intend to suspend their programme registration (see paragraph 25 below about strict time limits). Students with exceptional circumstances which prevented them from notifying the University at the correct time will be required to submit supporting evidence.

Temporary withdrawals during vacation periods

21. Students are not required to apply for a temporary withdrawal to solely cover a period when they would be on vacation during a University vacation. Neither is a temporary withdrawal application required when a dissertation extension is being sought.

22. If a student is not able to sit an examination or other assessment during a vacation period, they will be directed to submit an online extenuating circumstance application. Students requiring extensions to dissertation deadlines should use the online extenuating circumstances system.

Changes to student status and fee liability and re-enrolment

23. Where a temporary withdrawal request is approved by the University, the maximum periods of registration are set out in the University *Regulations*[3]. On a case-by-case basis, the maximum periods of registration may be extended by a period equivalent to the approved exceptional period of temporary withdrawal. Students on Student Visas are subject to Home Office regulations that may determine matters such as maximum length of study and opportunities to change programme. In such cases those regulations supersede the University's *Regulations*. Please check through the information on MySurrey Help, and if you still need further support, please log a new case via Surrey Support. Learners on degree apprenticeship programmes are subject to Department for Education regulations. According to the DfE, a break in learning must be reported when there is no off the job training scheduled in any one calendar month. Please see the apprenticeship funding rules for more detail, and for procedures in the instance of redundancy.

[3] See *A1 Regulations for taught programmes*, Tables 6 and 7

24. During the approved temporary withdrawal period, students' programme registration status is changed from "Enrolled" to "Absent". The "Absent" status means that tuition is not provided and students are not eligible to participate in the programme of study (including assessments and reassessments) before resuming their registration; however, their access to University of Surrey IT facilities will be maintained throughout this period and they will be able to use University of Surrey email accounts and SurreyLearn to access online materials. Access to chaplains, counselling, and mental health advice will remain open for students to continue to be supported during a temporary withdrawal. Students are strongly recommended to engage with the Wellbeing service before they return to ensure a smooth transition back. The Disability and Neurodiversity team can also provide information and advice to students during a period of temporary withdrawal.

25. The University has established strict deadlines for requesting temporary withdrawals. These time limits are linked to tuition fee liability as **students may still be required to pay for all or part of the academic year**. Before submitting online applications for temporary withdrawal, students should discuss these matters in detail with their Personal Tutor and/or Programme Leader, the Student Finance Team, and the Student Money and Housing Team. The full schedule of fee liability following temporary withdrawal can be found in the *Student fee & debt management policy*, section "Withdrawal from Studies".

Requirement for continuous re-enrolment

26. Regardless of the timing and length of a temporary withdrawal period, all students must re-enrol before the start of each new academic year, normally in August/September. Temporarily withdrawn students should ensure that they re-enrol in order to maintain their affiliated status and access to Surrey IT facilities. The re-enrolment process does not automatically activate the resumption of studies process or fee liability. The resumption of studies is a separate process; see paragraphs 42-48 below.

Changes to programmes during periods of absence

27. In line with its approaches to quality assurance and enhancement, the University undertakes regular reviews of its academic programmes, services, and facilities to ensure continuous quality enhancement of this provision which can include alterations to timetable, location, number of classes, content or method of delivery of programmes of study, examination processes, etc. Some of these changes may happen during a period of temporary withdrawal, and students will be advised about these changes using their Surrey email account.

Recording of Absences

28. All student absences, including periods of temporary withdrawal, are logged within the student record system. This data is processed in accordance with the University's Privacy Notice[4].

Procedures for temporary withdrawal

29. Where a student is considering taking a period of temporary withdrawal, they are strongly encouraged to discuss this first with their Personal Tutor, Programme Lead, or Hive coordinator (a member of the International Student Advice Team if a student

4 Further information about Student privacy note is available on the University website here: https://www.surrey.ac.uk/student-privacy-notice. The University Data Protection Officer can be contacted via dataprotection@surrey.ac.uk

is on a student visa). Apprentices should contact apprenticeships@surrey.ac.uk to discuss their withdrawal in the first instance. Advice is also available from the 'Surrey Help' or the MySurrey Hive team, particularly around such issues as money, accommodation, etc. International students should be aware that temporary withdrawal periods will affect their visa status and right to stay in the UK. Before submitting the temporary withdrawal application, students should check through the information on MySurrey Help, and if you still need further support, please log a new case via Surrey Support or email hive@surrey.ac.uk.

30. Students should apply for a period of temporary withdrawal online via Surrey Self Service:

- Login to http://www.surrey.ac.uk/selfservice.
- Select the registration tab followed by apply for a suspension or withdrawal.
- Students will be asked to provide the following details:
  - Start date – this should be a date in the future
  - Expected resumption date
  - Primary reason
  - Secondary reasons (where appropriate)
  - Supporting evidence may be required for withdrawal periods over 12 months or for retrospective withdrawal applications
  - Documentary evidence – an upload option is available should a student wish to provide documentary evidence to support their request e.g. letter from their doctor.

31. Where students have stated that they require additional support from student money or housing before submitting the online application, this will put the request on hold until the required support has been reviewed.

32. All online applications for temporary withdrawals are considered by the relevant team within the CSO Directorate. Where relevant, students might be asked for additional information before making a decision. After the withdrawal request is processed, the outcome decision will be communicated to students by email.

Temporary withdrawal from Professional Training Year (PTY) or a placement

33. All placement students should be made aware that they have entered into a formal agreement, whether contractual or via the placement agreement, to work for a specific period. Failure to honour the agreed duration without express consent of the host organisation is not only a breach of this agreement but also of the *Code of practice for professional training* (please note the length of contract supersedes the minimum qualifying period stated in the *Code of practice*). Temporarily withdrawing and ceasing to be a full-time student may lead to the host organisation being unable/unwilling to retain their services.

34. The minimum aggregate period of Professional Training (in weeks and hours) is set out in the *A1. Regulations for taught programmes* and the *Code of practice for professional training*. Students who cannot complete the minimum hours will normally be unable to complete level P and all cases will be considered on an individual basis.

35. Where students have applied successfully for a period of temporary withdrawal during their PTY or a clinical/professional placement, they should inform both the

placement provider and the Employability and Careers team or, where applicable, their Faculty.

36. The temporary withdrawal process should not be used for avoiding paying Professional Training Year fees and, where this is deemed to be the case, requests will be declined by the University. Where there is evidence to suggest that a student has applied for temporary withdrawal in order to avoid fees, the University will consider whether it would be proportionate to take disciplinary action. Students who have applied for a period of temporary withdrawal just before commencing their professional training placement should be aware that any such requests will be referred to the Employability and Careers Service and the Faculty for consideration on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the following:

- The nature of the difficulties being faced by the student.
- The suitability of the placement for recognition as a Professional Training Year.
- The level of support already provided from the University.

Temporary withdrawal from the approved educational exchange

37. Where a student on the approved educational exchange year withdraws from the partner institution at any point after starting their exchange programme, the full annual tuition fee is due to be paid to this partner institution. This also applies in cases where students return to the University of Surrey after one semester of study abroad, having originally committed to the whole exchange year.

38. Where a student on the approved educational exchange year withdraws before completing Semester 1, including any assessment periods, they will be deemed to have failed that semester and will need to apply for temporary withdrawal from the University of Surrey for the second semester by no later than 31st December. This should be done regardless of whether the educational exchange study period was for only a single semester or the entire year. Where the educational exchange period takes place in Semester 2 only and a student withdraws from the partner institution, they will be deemed to have failed that semester and they will be unable to temporarily withdraw from the University of Surrey.

39. Students must inform both the partner university and the International Engagement Office at the University of Surrey of their withdrawal from the exchange programme as soon as possible.

Enforced temporary withdrawal

40. Exceptionally, there are some occasions where the University may decide to temporarily withdraw a student. Students may be asked to attend a *Support to study* or *Fitness to practise* Panel hearing. In all cases of the enforced temporary withdrawal, students will be fully informed of this process and its outcomes. Such cases could be based on,

- *Regulations for support to study.*
- *Regulations for fitness to practise.*
- *Student disciplinary regulations.*
- Immigration/visa related issues.

- Academic progression at a partner institution during the approved educational exchange.

41. Where relevant, students will be informed of any specific conditions that must be fulfilled before they can resume their studies after an enforced temporary withdrawal.

Resuming studies following a temporary withdrawal

42. Normally, students will be contacted via their University email address approximately eight weeks (or 12 weeks for international students) prior to the return date with the request to acknowledge their intention to return to studies.

43. Students are required to confirm in writing their intention to resume studies before their period of temporary withdrawal expires. Depending on the nature of the student's decision to temporarily withdraw, their return to studies may depend on whether or not the student is fit enough to study.

44. Some students may be required to provide additional evidence before their return to the University.

45. Where a student is unable to return to their studies at the end of a period of temporary withdrawal, they should apply for a further temporary withdrawal and submit supporting evidence. Alternatively, students may decide to submit a permanent withdrawal form (see paragraphs 50-52 below).

46. In accordance with the *Regulations for taught programmes*, failure to respond to official email enquiries from the University over a reasonable period (normally, four weeks) will be considered as lack of engagement. The Chief Student Officer Directorate will send a postal enquiry to the student's last known address and if there is no response to this communication, again within a reasonable period, the University will normally consider the student's registration to have been terminated.

47. Where a student is unable to respond to University communication due to exceptional circumstances and, as a result, finds their registration terminated, they may make an academic appeal and provide supporting evidence.

48. If a student wishes to end their period of temporary withdrawal prior to the agreed date they can approach the Programmes team, CSO Directorate for consideration. The Programmes team, CSO Directorate will consider the individual circumstances and determine the optimal way to support resumption on the programme of study.

Students on a Student Visa

49. Students who require a Student Visa should ensure that they plan for their return to the University by requesting a confirmation of acceptance of studies (CAS)[5] at least three months in advance of resuming their studies. Visa requirements are the sole responsibility of the student.

Permanent withdrawal

50. Students who decide to permanently withdraw their programme of study must formally notify the University using Surrey Self Service (login to http://www.surrey.ac.uk/selfservice), following the steps described in paragraph 30 above. Without the formal notice, the contract between the student and University will remain active, including any liability for paying tuition fees.

[5] https://www.surrey.ac.uk/international/visas-and-immigration/confirmation-of-acceptance-for-studies

51. Where a student is considering permanent withdrawal, they are strongly encouraged to discuss this first with their Personal Tutor and the MySurrey Hive, who can also provide advice on issues such as money, accommodation, etc. Before submitting the permanent withdrawal application, students should visit MySurrey website (Withdrawals | MySurrey student website | University of Surrey) to review the advice and guidance available.

52. In accordance with the *Regulations for taught programmes*, where a student leaves the University before completing their programme of studies, they may be given the relevant intermediate exit award to which their accrued credits entitle them, provided that they have no tuition fee debts to the University or are not otherwise in breach of its *Regulations*. Where this is the case, the Academic Administration team will notify withdrawn students about an intermediate exit award. Students' IT accounts will close 90 days after the formally agreed programme registration end date.

Retrospective permanent withdrawals

53. Retrospective applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to notify the University of a permanent withdrawal at the point at which they intend to end their programme registration (see paragraph 25 above about strict time limits).

54. Where a student is unable to notify the University at the correct time due to exceptional circumstances, the application should be accompanied by compelling evidence as to why the student was unable to apply sooner. Those involving Student Visa requirements, and those with student loan implications, are highly unlikely to have an application accepted.

Changes to student status

55. Once a permanent withdrawal has been approved and processed, the requestor ceases to be a student of the University of Surrey.

Implications of permanent withdrawal

56. Permanent withdrawals can have a significant impact on a student's tuition fee liability, student loan, accommodation, immigration status (in the case of Student Visa), and access to University services, including email and IT accounts. Students should consider their personal circumstances very carefully and seek advice (see paragraph 29) before applying for a permanent withdrawal.

Requesting a review of a decision to reject an application for temporary or permanent withdrawal

57. If new evidence has become available, the student should submit a new application in the first instance.

58. If an application is unsuccessful or partially unsuccessful, the student may submit a request for a review of the decision by contacting the CSO Directorate Hive within ten University working days of receiving the decision. The review will be conducted by an appropriate senior colleague or their nominee. The review will consider whether the decision was procedurally correct, free of any reasonable perception of bias and was reasonable in all the circumstances.

59. Where the student remains dissatisfied after receiving the outcome of the review, they may request a review of the process via the *Procedure for Complaints*.