



## **Guidance for Taught Students on Leaves of Absence**

### **1. Introduction**

- a. This guidance applies to students who are currently enrolled on a taught programme of study offered directly by us or at selected partner organisations.
- b. Postgraduate Research students should refer to the [Graduate School website](#) for details on how to obtain leave of absence from research programmes.
- c. If you're an international student, you must seek advice from the [International Student Team \(IST\)](#) regarding the impact of leave of absence on your immigration status.

### **2. What is leave of absence?**

- a. Leave of absence is an authorised break from your studies.
- b. Normally this is granted for instances that will adversely affect your studies and last for longer than one calendar month, but less than one year (although you can request back-to-back leaves of absence).
- c. There are a number of different scenarios that require leave of absence, but usually they fall into medical and non-medical.
- d. International students requiring an authorised absence (for short periods (less than a month) of absence) should follow the information available on <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/academic-support/registry/ug-gt/authorised-absence-international-students.aspx>
- e. Students on flexible programmes may not always be required to apply for a formal Leave of Absence during periods of non-engagement with study which are taken in line with the flexible nature of their programme. Students should always consult their Principle Academic Unit (PAU) / Department before taking any break in study.

### **3. What to do if you need leave of absence**

- a. If you are considering leave of absence (sometimes referred to as temporary withdrawal from the University) you need to speak with your School first. Your Personal Academic Tutor, Supervisor or Wellbeing Officer are usually the best people to contact in the first instance.
- b. You should discuss:
  - i. The reasons behind the need for leave of absence (if you're happy to do so);
  - ii. How long you need leave of absence;
  - iii. What support you may need whilst on leave (*please note that you may not be able to access Student Support in the same way that you can as a registered student*).

### **4. Evidence**

- a. Medical leaves of absence require medical evidence (normally in the form of the University's Medical Certificate or letter from a healthcare professional). The University reserves the right to request permission from you to write to your healthcare practitioner or refer you to the University Medical Officer for further



information, where necessary. Should you be granted leave of absence on medical grounds, you will need to submit a medical note confirming your fitness to return to study before you're readmitted to your programme.

- b. Applications without appropriate supporting evidence will not be considered. Evidence that is not in English must be translated into English by a certified translator.
- c. The guidance on the types of evidence you'll need for non-medical leaves of absence are included in the table below.

Category of Voluntary Leave of Absence	Recommended Evidence
<u>Maternity/Paternity/Adoption:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You should refer to the Guidance Note on Student Parent, Guardians and Carers for details about how to request maternity/paternity/adoption leave.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical certificate (or note from a suitably qualified healthcare professional or adoption service).</li> </ul>
<u>Financial:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For instances of financial hardship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of bank statements confirming financial hardship;</li> <li>Report/letter of support from support services (such as Guild Advice).</li> </ul>
<u>Transfer of degree programme:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For instances where you are transferring degree programmes but it is too late for the current academic session (you're transferring mid-session and you will have to wait for the next academic session).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation of transfer.</li> </ul>
<u>Placements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For use when the placement element is <b>not</b> part of your degree programme (e.g. you've arranged it yourself)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation of your placement year from the placement provider.</li> </ul>
<u>External Intercalation:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For use when you are taking an intercalation year at <b>another</b> institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation of your place at another institution for an intercalation year.</li> </ul>
<u>Competitive Sports:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For use when you need to take leave to compete at international level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter from your coach/selection committee confirming your selection to compete in the international event.</li> </ul>
<u>Sabbatical Officer position</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For use when you want to run for office as a Sabbatical Officer (before you graduate). This needs to be granted before you take office.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter from the Guild confirming that you are running for office.</li> </ul>
<u>Flexible programmes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students on flexible programmes who take a break in study in line with the flexible nature of their programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence may not be necessary but you must consult your PAU / Department before you cease engaging with your programme.</li> </ul>



<p><u>Other:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal reasons (family circumstances such as bereavement or divorce, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All evidence should explain why taking leave of absence would be beneficial to your circumstance.</li> </ul>
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- d. Examples of unacceptable reasons for requesting Leave of Absence include problems with equipment or technology, lost work, travel difficulties, holidays, or moving house.
- e. Students studying at overseas campuses of the University should be aware of the legal context of the country in which they are studying, and are therefore advised to seek advice from a Wellbeing Officer or Personal Academic Tutor in the first instance before requesting medical evidence. Students should also refer to any country-specific guidance or handbooks that are made available to them by the University.

## 5. What happens next

- a. You will need to fill out the leave of absence form, which is available on <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/academic-support/registry/ug-gt/leave-of-absence.aspx>
- b. Once completed you should submit your form to your School. If you are on a joint or multidisciplinary degree programme, you should submit this to the programme-owning School.
- c. Your School will approve the form and then submit it to Taught Student Administration for processing.
- d. Taught Student Administration will process your request and will inform Housing Services (for students in University accommodation), the Finance Office and your Local Authority (if applicable). You will then receive an email to confirm that your request has been processed.

## 6. Compulsory leave of absence

- a. We can place you on leave of absence without you submitting a formal request in certain circumstances. These circumstances are listed in the table below.

Category of Compulsory Leave of Absence	Implications
<p><u>Suspension</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A temporary suspension imposed during a police or disciplinary investigation, in accordance with Regulation 8</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your student registration will be suspended for an initial period of three months and may be extended for additional periods of up to three months after each review of the suspension</li> </ul>
<p><u>Suspension:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a Misconduct or Fitness to Practise Hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your student membership will be suspended for the period of time specified (which will not exceed one year)</li> </ul>
<p><u>Imposed – excluded for tuition fee debt:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following instances where you have incurred tuition fee debt but have not applied for leave of absence voluntarily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imposed for the remainder of the academic year that you have defaulted on your tuition fee payments.</li> <li>If you subsequently voluntarily apply for leave of absence, this will be recorded as 'financial'.</li> </ul>



<p><u>Compulsory:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Following procedures in the <a href="#">Code of Practice on Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Where the <a href="#">Code of Practice on Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study</a> determines that your ability to study or participate in University life may be compromised, the Academic Registrar may suspend you.</li></ul>
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## 7. Alternatives to leave of absence

- In instances where your change in circumstance may affect you for longer than one year, you may wish to consider part-time study. This wouldn't be appropriate for international students on visas. You should speak with your School about the possible options.
- In instances where your change in circumstance may affect you for a short period of time, you may wish to consider requesting an extension to deadlines (see the [Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment and Feedback](#)) or submission of extenuating circumstances (see the [Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances](#)).

## 8. Tuition fee liability

- The [Tuition Fee Liability](#) webpage provides information about the Fee Liability Policy for students who withdraw or take leave of absence.

## 9. Returning from leave of absence

- You must complete the form to return from leave of absence, found at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/studentrecords/services/leave-of-absence.aspx>
- If you have been on leave of absence due to medical reasons you will need to provide your School with a copy of a medical note confirming that you are fit to resume your studies. Once your School has received the medical note and are content that you are fit to resume studies, your Personal Academic Tutor will sign the form. They will then send this to Taught Student Administration, so your record can be updated.
- If you haven't been on leave of absence due to medical reasons, you can return your form directly to Taught Student Administration by email to: [tsa@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:tsa@contacts.bham.ac.uk).
- When your record has been updated we will send you an email confirmation that you will be able to register online via the student gateway: <https://student-gateway.bham.ac.uk/>

## 10. Access to University facilities whilst on leave of absence

- Although there is technically still a connection with the University, there is no active student registration status for this period of absence, and this drives certain other outcomes:
  - Limited library access (as of those of the general public – limited visits and no borrowing rights);



- No access to University provision, such as teaching, tutorials, academic supervision, University accommodation and Counselling Services<sup>1</sup> during the period of Leave of Absence;
- There is no automatic entitlement to the VLE and e-learning.
- University email addresses remain active so long as they are regularly accessed by the student.
- The only exception to the above is in the case of a Registered Student undertaking their first or second term as a Guild Sabbatical officer where their status will remain as “Normally Registered” (NR) The central University record will reflect that the student holds a Guild Sabbatical officer position.

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<sup>1</sup> Students who are suspended due to an ongoing conduct investigation will retain access to the University’s Wellbeing services.