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Higher Education Withdrawal or Suspension of Studies Procedure	HEPRO014	2

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Higher Education Withdrawal or Suspension of Studies Procedure

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1. Procedure Statement

1.1. This procedure sets out Activate Learning's approach for handling a range of circumstances through which you may leave your programme of study, either temporarily or permanently. This includes:

- choosing to suspend your studies temporarily with Activate Learning.

- choosing to transfer to another programme of study either within, or external to Activate Learning. Please see Activate-Learning-HE-Student-Transfer-Arrangements for further information.
- choosing to withdraw permanently from your studies at Activate Learning.
- being required to suspend or withdraw permanently or temporarily from your studies at Activate Learning on academic (HE Academic Misconduct Procedure), fitness to study or reside (Fitness to Study or Reside Policy), or disciplinary grounds (Positive Behaviour Management Policy & Procedure)

2. Scope

2.1. This procedure applies to all students studying on a prescribed[1] higher education qualification, or module(s)/unit(s) thereof, delivered by Activate Learning with the exception of those studying on courses taught by Activate Learning and awarded by Oxford Brookes University or the University of Reading. Students studying on these courses are required to follow the relevant University's procedures as listed below:

2.1.1. Oxford Brookes University – Time out / Leaving the university

2.1.2. University of Reading – Suspensions / Withdrawing from study

3. Suspension of studies

3.1. Suspension of studies is a temporary withdrawal from a Higher Education programme when you are unable to continue your studies due to illness or other personal circumstances. There are two types of suspension of studies: student-initiated suspension and institution-initiated suspension.

4. Student Initiated Suspension of Studies Procedure

4.1. The procedure outlined below sets out the process and considerations for suspending your studies.

4.2. Initial Considerations

4.2.1. When you first become aware of your potential need to suspend your studies, you should discuss this with your Programme Coordinator. They will be able to assess your options and help you understand the implications of making a suspension of studies application.

4.2.2. You are also advised to contact the Higher Education Learning Partnerships team

[1] Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Foundation Degree or BA/BSc (Hons) top-up Degree

(adminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk)who will help you through the process, evaluate the options available to you, and support you in making an informed decision.

4.2.3. In doing so, the advice will:

- Seek to understand, without judgement, the barriers preventing you from continuing your studies and why you wish to interrupt your studies.
- Ensure that you are aware of the consequences of a decision to interrupt your studies, such as fees/funding, accommodation, and future study options.
- Explore options for not interrupting but continuing studies, including:
  - Can the cause be addressed (for example by making reasonable adjustments to cope with a disability or chronic illness)? (Reasonable Adjustment Policy)
  - Have all avenues of internal or external support been exhausted? (Financial/Bursaries and Study Support)
  - Would a structured "personal support plan" help with focus? A support plan is designed to help students by considering all available resources, procedures and student services to support you in continuing their studies, including agreed goals, milestones, and support arrangements. The plan is recorded and regularly reviewed and updated on ProMonitor for you and staff to access.
  - Extending your submission deadlines for a period (Extenuating Circumstances Procedure)

4.3. Step one: Applying to Suspend your Studies

4.3.1. Once you have discussed your consideration with your Programme Coordinator and conclude that you need to suspend your studies, you will need to complete an online Suspension or withdrawal request form which can be found on the HE Student Hub (ALO).

4.3.2. On the form you should indicate the reason for suspending your studies and the length of time you require (maximum interruption term is 12 months). You will receive an acknowledgement via your college email address within 5 working days.

4.4. Step two: Outcome

4.4.1. There are two possible outcomes from the meeting which will be agreed with you:

- **Continue** your studies with additional support arrangements and reasonable adjustments in place.

- **Suspend** your studies for a temporary period with the intention of returning in the future.

4.4.2. Confirmation of your suspension of studies will be sent to you within 5 working days of your application being submitted and this will confirm the start date of your suspension of studies, your expected return date, any conditions for your return and/or any necessary preparatory work you need to undertake prior to your recommencement of your studies.

4.4.3. Where a suspension of study is agreed, the suspended year will count towards the maximum period of registration for your course. You can normally take a study break for a maximum period of twelve consecutive months under the agreed procedure for reasons of ill health or other extenuating circumstances. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances but cannot exceed the maximum period of registration for your course which is:

- Foundation Degree – Five (5) Years,
- Higher National Diploma/Certificate - Five (5) Years,
- Bachelor's Degree (top-up) -Three (3) Years

4.4.4. Your Programme Coordinator will create a suspension of studies plan, including any tasks that you are advised to undertake and will arrange a series of catch ups via a Teams call throughout your interruption of studies to monitor your progress. This process is designed to support your successful reengagement with study by providing the opportunity for you to maintain contact with the teaching staff, but is voluntary, so not engaging will therefore have no negative impact on you returning to study.

4.5. Cooling Off Period

4.5.1. You will have a 14-day cooling off period from the date of your suspension of studies as confirmed in the suspension of studies letter. If you wish to retract your suspension of studies, you will need to contact your Programme Coordinator within the 14-day cooling off period to discuss your return to study.

4.6. Returning from Suspension of Studies

4.6.1. When you have completed your suspension of study period, you will be expected to re-enroll before the start of the equivalent term that you suspended from, (or at another

suitable point agreed with you on a case-by-case basis). For example, if you suspended your studies in the Spring Term, you will be expected to return for the start of the following Spring Term, unless otherwise agreed with you on a case-by-case basis. The process and date for re-enrollment, including any financial, or other implications such as accessing your Activate Learning Online (ALO) account will be communicated to you by email at least one calendar month prior to resuming study.

4.6.2. If you have suspended your studies on the grounds of ill health (mental or physical) or have been suspended as part of a Fitness to Study and Reside procedure or Positive Behavior Management procedure, you will need to present appropriate evidence (doctors note, hospital letter, etc.) as required and detailed in your suspension of studies letter, to your Programme Coordinator to confirm that you are able to return to your studies prior to re-enrolling. Your Programme Coordinator will be able to direct you to further advice and support if required.

4.6.3. If you feel that you are not ready to return to your studies on the agreed date, you should contact your Programme Coordinator for advice, who may suggest the following:

- Set up a meeting with the relevant student support services to discuss possible support to help you return to your studies.
- Seek an extension to the suspension of studies (this would be subject to limitations of any partner university).
- Seek to withdraw if the issues which resulted in the suspension have not receded or been resolved and are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

4.6.4. Whilst we will attempt to contact you on more than one occasion via email and phone at least one month before your return to study date, if you do not respond to communications about your return to studies, you will be deemed to have withdrawn from your programme, and we will commence the Withdrawal process.

5. Institution Initiated Suspension of your Studies

5.1. You may be suspended by Activate Learning due to various reasons including unresolved debt, serious academic misconduct, or disciplinary exclusion, or non-attendance / engagement for 55 consecutive calendar days.

5.2. Confirmation of your suspension of studies will be sent to you within 5 working days of

Activate Learning's decision to suspend your studies and this will confirm the start date of your suspension of studies, noting that the suspended year will count towards the maximum period of registration for your course, and any conditions for your return e.g. the payment of outstanding fees.

5.3. If you receive funding from the Student Loans Company, we will inform them of your suspension. For further information on Student finance if you suspend or leave your course, please see the following guidance: https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-if-you-suspend-or-leave

6. Withdrawal from Studies

6.1. Withdrawal is where you permanently withdraw from a Higher Education programme and cease to study at Activate Learning. Withdrawal takes two forms: student-initiated withdrawal and institution-initiated withdrawal.

7. Consequences of Withdrawal

7.1. As a matter of course, where applicable, we will inform the Student Loans Company, and any other relevant funding or accrediting body of your withdrawal.

7.2. Library and IT access will cease, and email accounts will be closed. You will be asked to hand in your student ID card and any other materials (such as library books) which may be in your possession.

8. Impact on Student fees and Funding

8.1. You will still be liable for any outstanding tuition fees if you withdraw or have been withdrawn from your studies. This obligation is set out in the Student Fees Policy, and the HE Terms and Conditions and Student Enrolment agreement issued at the point of enrolment. You will be informed of this liability prior to withdrawing from your studies.

8.2. If you receive funding from the Student Loans Company, we will inform them of your withdrawal. For further information on Student finance if you suspend or leave your course, please see the following guidance: https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-if-you-suspend-or-leave

9. Student Initiated Withdrawal

9.1. This is where you have made a conscious decision to withdraw from your programme for

personal factors or a potential long-term situation beyond your control.

9.2. Withdrawal from your studies is a permanent decision, therefore, it is important that you seek guidance on your options prior to making your decision. You are encouraged to discuss your individual circumstances and options with your Programme Coordinator, Study support tutor and/or a member of the Higher Education Learning Partnerships team who can be contacted by emailing: AdminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk

9.3. If you withdraw from your programme and later wish to return to your studies in a different academic year, you must apply through the standard admissions process. Re-admission is not guaranteed and will be subject to availability and academic requirements. You can apply for Recognition of Prior Learning for the credits you have achieved prior to withdrawal, and this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

9.4. Requesting to Withdraw – initial considerations

9.4.1. When you first become aware of your potential need to withdraw from your studies, you should discuss your considerations with your Programme Coordinator. They will be able to assess your options and help you understand the implications of withdrawing.

9.4.2. We might be able to offer you an alternative to withdrawal from your studies, such as access to support services, a support plan, reasonable adjustments, extending your submission deadlines for a period of time or a temporary interruption of your studies.

9.4.3. You are also advised to contact the Higher Education Learning Partnerships team (adminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk) who will help you through the process, evaluate the options available to you, and support you in making an informed decision.

9.4.4. In doing so, the advice will:

- Seek to understand, without judgement, the barriers preventing you from continuing your studies and why you wish to withdraw.
- Ensure that you are aware of the consequences of a decision to withdraw, such as fees/funding, accommodation, and future study options.
- Explore options for not withdrawing including:
  a) Can the cause be addressed (for example by making reasonable adjustments to cope with a disability or chronic illness)?

b) Have all avenues of internal or external support been exhausted?
c) Would a structured “personal action plan” help with focus?
d) Would suspending your studies be appropriate?

9.5. Step one: Applying for a Withdrawal

9.5.1. Once you have discussed your considerations with your Programme Coordinator and conclude that you need to withdraw from your studies, you will need to complete a Suspension or withdrawal request form which can be found on the HE Student Hub. and indicate the reason for your withdrawal.

9.5.2. On the form you should indicate the reason for your withdrawal. You will receive an acknowledgement via your college email address within 5 working days.

9.6. Step two: Outcome

9.6.1. There are three possible outcomes which will be agreed with you:

- **Continue** your studies with additional support arrangements and reasonable adjustments in place.
- **Suspend** your studies for a temporary period with the intention of returning in the future.
- **Withdraw** from your studies

9.7. Withdrawal

9.7.1. If you decide to withdraw from your studies, you will be sent a confirmation letter to your home address (and a copy sent to your personal email address that is on your student record) within 5 working days of the decision being made. The letter will include the date of your withdrawal, any actions that need to be taken by you and details of how to return to the college should you be able to or wish to do so in the future. Your eligibility to apply for future study may depend on the reason for your withdrawal. For example, unresolved debt would prevent future readmission. These restrictions are outlined in the Higher Education Terms and Conditions and Student Fees Policy

9.8. Cooling Off Period

9.8.1. You will have a 14-day cooling off period from the date of your withdrawal of studies, as confirmed in the withdrawal of studies letter. If you wish to retract your withdrawal of studies, you will need to contact your Programme Coordinator within the 14-day cooling

off period to discuss your return to study.

10. Institution Initiated Withdrawal

10.1. This is where we have initiated your withdrawal from your studies on health, academic or disciplinary grounds. These include the following circumstances:

- Physical or Mental Health: Withdrawal due to concerns about your physical or mental health in accordance with Activate Learning's Fitness to Study and Reside Policy
- Academic Failure: Withdrawal for reasons of academic failure as set out in the HE Assessment, Exams and Verification Policy and Procedure
- Academic Misconduct: Where you have been found guilty of serious academic misconduct, then it is possible that you might be withdrawn from your programme (see HE Academic Misconduct Policy).
- Failure to Comply with an Enrolment Condition: you may be withdrawn for failure to comply with the terms of enrolment.
- Failure to pay outstanding fees as detailed in our Student Fees Policy

10.2. You may also be withdrawn from your programme for the following reasons, as listed in our Higher Education Terms and Conditions :

- If you have provided false, inaccurate or misleading information in your application.
- If you no longer meet immigration requirements
- If you acquire a relevant criminal conviction which prevents continuation on your programme of study
- If you fail to disclose a relevant criminal conviction
- If you are withdrawn for failure on assessment.
- If you fail to pay your tuition fees by the required deadline.
- If you fail to comply with the standards expected in relation to acceptable IT use, online safety or use of artificial intelligence.
- If you fail to comply with health and safety policies and procedures.
- If you fail to adhere to the expected standards of academic integrity
- If you fail to comply with the expected standards of behaviour

10.3. If you have been withdrawn by Activate Learning, you may not be able to return to the same programme or another programme. For example, if you have been withdrawn from

your programme by Activate Learning, your eligibility to apply for future study will depend on the reason for your withdrawal. In some cases, such as withdrawal due to unresolved debt, serious academic misconduct, or disciplinary exclusion, you may be restricted from applying to any programme at Activate Learning. These restrictions are outlined in the Higher Education Terms and Conditions and relevant policies such as the Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy. If you have been withdrawn for other reasons, such as academic failure or health-related concerns, you may be permitted to apply for a different programme, subject to the admissions criteria and any conditions set by the awarding organisation, professional body, or Activate Learning.

10.4. We recommend contacting the Higher Education Learning Partnerships team at: adminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk for guidance before submitting a new application.

10.5. Step one: Formal Notice of our Decision to Withdraw you from your Studies

10.5.1. You will be informed in writing of the proposed withdrawal to your college email address. The letter will:

- Inform you of the grounds for the withdrawal.
- Appoint an adviser for the withdrawal process.
- Advise you to speak to the adviser or your Programme Coordinator at the earliest opportunity.
- Signpost other sources of advice and support in Student Welfare.
- Set out the relevant appeals process and how you can access it.

10.6. Step two: Student Objection to Withdrawal

10.6.1. If you accept the withdrawal notice, the process will move on to step three below.

10.6.2. If you object to the withdrawal notice, you have the right to seek a review of the decision by submitting a Compliment, comment or complaint form and following the Customer Compliments Comments and Complaints Policy & Procedure. The complaints procedure cannot overturn decisions made under other policies such as Student Fees Policy or Fitness to Study and Reside Policy.

10.7. Step three: Withdrawal

10.7.1. If the outcome of your appeal confirms the withdrawal (or you accept the withdrawal notice), you will be informed in writing. If you have exhausted both the internal

appeal process and any relevant awarding body procedures, you will receive a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter. If you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your case, you may submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education: Students - OIAHE within 12 months of receipt of the COP letter. Please note that the OIA reviews complaints about process and fairness, not academic judgement.

10.7.2. The withdrawal notice letter will outline:

- The reasons for the withdrawal
- Set out the consequences for withdrawal (as above) and indicate the date on which withdrawal will officially occur and when facilities such as email will cease working, etc.
- Request the return of your student ID card and list any outstanding book loans or debts which you have and the means for return or payment.
- List any sources of support and advice.

10.7.3. You will be officially withdrawn from the programme and Activate Learning 10 calendar days from the letter date. We will ensure the relevant bodies are informed (as stated above as the consequences of withdrawal).

11. Data Protection and Information Sharing

11.1. You have the right to access all the material presented during this process, if you would like a copy of this information, it will be available to you on request. Please contact the Higher Education Learning Partnerships team at adminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk and we will arrange this for you.

11.2. We recognise the importance of maintaining confidentiality throughout the above processes and how sensitive information is shared. Any information shared about your case will be treated as special category data and strictly confidential, and we will limit its disclosure to only those directly involved in the process.

11.3. We will use some of the high-level data for reporting purposes, internal reporting for evaluation, learning and training and externally for discussions with higher education sector regulators. The data we use for these reports will be anonymised. Personal data and special category data as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 may be disclosed to members of

Activate Learning staff and external regulators, if it has been requested as part of an official complaint.

11.4. Your personal data will not be shared with any other third parties unless we have your consent to do so, we have a statutory obligation, or we are permitted to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018.

11.5. If you are studying on a programme with one of our partnership Universities and you have suspended your studies or withdrawn from the programme at Activate Learning, we will have a duty to inform the relevant partner university or Pearson.

11.6. All materials relating to your case will be managed and stored in line with our Data Protection Procedures

12. Review and Monitoring

12.1. We will provide an annual report on our feedback processes, including surveys, focus groups, suggestions, and complaints, in addition to any compliments received, to the Higher Education Academic Board for monitoring and evaluation. An evaluation of feedback from relevant demographics will be undertaken to evidence the impact of our equality scheme and Access and Participation Plan 2026-2030

12.2. We work closely with our university partners to ensure that our procedures are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. If we need to make a change to this policy and procedure it will be reviewed and approved by the HE Academic Board and these changes will be noted in the version log displayed on the front page of this document.

References

- Higher Education Withdrawal and Suspension of Studies Policy
- Extenuating Circumstances Procedure
- Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Positive Behaviour Management Procedure
- Academic Misconduct Procedure
- Fitness to Study or Reside Policy
- Fitness to Study or Reside Procedure
- Fees Policy

- Higher Education Terms and Conditions
- Assessment and Verification Policy
- Higher Education Assessment and Verification Procedure

If you require this procedure in a different format, or if you need additional information or support, please contact: complianceteam@activatelearning.ac.uk