

Break in Study Policy

Introduction

1. This policy applies to all students of Birkbeck including students on taught programmes of study and research degrees.
2. This policy outlines the criteria that apply and the procedure for requesting breaks in studies.

General

3. Students enrolling onto individual modules via the College's "open enrolment" process and who do not continue to study are not considered to be on a break in studies. Students may withdraw from their modules at any time or choose not to enrol on further modules. Such students who recommence their modules within six terms of their original start date will be considered as "continuing students" and are subject to the fee regulations in place at the time of their original enrolment. Students who do not re-enrol within six terms will be considered as having withdrawn from studies and they will then be subject to the rules and regulations in force at the time of any new application.
4. In some circumstances students may be placed on a break in studies by the College due to health reasons. Please refer to the [Wellness Review Policy](#).
5. Students who wish to slow down their studies but not take a break for the rest of the academic year would not be considered to be taking a break but instead would have reduced study intensity for that year.
6. Students cannot be registered with another Higher Education institution whilst on a break in study and risk being withdrawn from their programme.

Fees and Funding

7. Students taking a break in study will be liable for fees for the whole term in which the break commences. When a student returns to study they will not be liable for any term of study already part or fully attended that they have already been charged for. Details of fee charging for students taking a break in study is outlined in the [Fees Policy](#).
8. Taking a break in studies may have implications on student funding arrangements and students should seek advice on funding and fee implications from Registry Service before taking a break.

Length of Break

9. The regulations for taught programmes of study and regulations for research degrees permit any student on a programme of study leading to a College award to suspend studies for a maximum of six terms in total during their programme of study. This may be in one period of six terms, or non-consecutive shorter periods that add up to a total of six terms or less.
10. Students who wish to stop studying within the first two weeks of the start of their programme will not be considered for a break in studies but will be withdrawn.

11. The length of any permitted break in studies is dependent at which point a student wishes to interrupt. A break in studies is normally expected to be from the term that the break starts until the start of the next academic year that they intend to return to study.
12. A break in studies must be a minimum of one term. Breaks in studies for students on taught programmes will not be permitted for only one term where that term has no scheduled teaching and only examinations.
13. A break in studies will commence on the day following the last recorded date of attendance, unless there is evidence that the student has engaged with studies and/or when this is different from the notified last date of attendance. For Research Students a break of studies will commence on the first day of the term in which the break commences.
14. Students should seek guidance where a break in study is likely to exceed the six term maximum. Students who do not re-enrol after having completed six terms of breaks in study will be deemed to have withdrawn from their programme. Any student who wishes to resume their programme after having been withdrawn should seek guidance and may be eligible to apply for any previous credits achieved to be considered on starting or re-starting a programme under the College's [Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy](#).

Procedure

15. Students should first discuss taking a break in studies with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. programme director and/or supervisor, personal tutor). Students can then register their request for a break in study via the My Birkbeck Profile.
16. Consideration for approval will be by the programme director for students on taught programmes and by the supervisor and PGR director for students on a research programme. If there is any conflict of interest then the decision may be made by a suitable alternative member(s) of academic staff. Once approved the department will write to the student to confirm the agreed dates of the break in study.
17. All students on breaks in studies will be contacted by academic department staff prior to the expected return date to discuss plans to return to study.