

SUSPENSION OF STATUS FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Definition

Suspension of status 'stops the clock' for all elements of a student's degree, including residence, fees and terms for which a particular status may be held. During this period an undergraduate will not be considered on-course, and will not hold enrolled status.

Principles

A suspension of status may arise in one of two ways. Firstly, when an undergraduate wishes to suspend status on medical or other personal/welfare grounds where continuing with studies is incompatible with their ongoing health and welfare. Secondly, on rare occasions, the College may decide it is necessary to suspend an undergraduate's status (i) if there are severe concerns about fitness to study or (ii) for disciplinary reasons (academic or non-academic).¹

Undergraduates do not have an automatic right to suspend status. They should be reassured, however, that College will respond sympathetically to requests made on medical or personal/welfare grounds and will make reasonable adjustments in cases covered by the Equality Act 2010. Cases of suspension will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account all relevant information (including medical). While College will do all it reasonably can to assist an undergraduate to remain on course, in some cases, suspension of status will be the best course of action.

The College will not grant suspension of status solely on the grounds that an undergraduate is, or feels, ill-prepared for examinations, or that they have underperformed on course. Nor will it grant suspension of status to allow an undergraduate to take up an opportunity or activity.

Process for suspension on health or welfare grounds

This process may be initiated by the Junior Member of the College. While Suspension of status may also come about as a result of disciplinary action, Junior Members should be assured that suspension on health or welfare grounds has no negative or disciplinary connotations.

Where a student believes they need to suspend on health or welfare grounds, they should discuss this first with their tutor(s) and then with either the Academic Director or their deputy, the Academic Registrar. They should also discuss it with either their GP/consultant, the College Welfare Officer, or counsellor.

A request to suspend status is usually preceded by a period of discussion and on-course support. The Academic Director or Academic Registrar will be available to discuss the practicalities of suspending. They will also seek to ensure that the Junior Member has fully considered the implications of suspension, including its pros and cons, and will answer questions the student may have.

Suspension of status on medical grounds requires medical certification, typically from the GP (doctor) with whom the Junior Member is registered in Oxford.

Once the College has agreed with a student that suspending is the best option, the College will agree a reasonable date for vacating the College. This will be normally be soon after agreement is reached. The student must arrange to move out of their accommodation, return their library books,

¹ See draft Fitness to Study policy and Bylaw 13 and 15.

pay their battels, and ensure that the appropriate medical or other certification in support of suspension is sent to the Academic Director or Academic Registrar as soon as possible. The certificate or letter should be from an expert or professional who has engaged with the student on their health or welfare issue, for example, GP, consultant, College Welfare Officer, or counsellor.

The Academic Office will submit the required paperwork so as to notify the University of the Junior Members' suspension of status. If the undergraduate has completed any assessment prior to the start of the suspension, the Academic Office will ensure that marks are carried forward in accordance with the University's procedures.² Where it is agreed by the Academic Director that a dispensation from the Examination Regulations may be feasible, owing to exceptional extenuating circumstances, the Academic Office will submit a request to the Education Committee and communicate the outcome to the Junior Member.

The Governing Body approves all student suspensions. No personal details are shared with the Governing Body. Once approved, the College will confirm in writing the suspension of status, and the conditions attached to that suspension and return. This will normally be sent no more than 28 working days from the date of informal agreement, subject to receipt of necessary evidence. If a Junior Member is dissatisfied with the College's decision, they should follow relevant appeal or complaints procedures as set out in the College's Undergraduate Handbook

Normal conditions of suspension

The letter confirming suspension of studies will normally contain the following clauses:

- Please arrange to vacate your College accommodation (if you have it);
- Please return any College or University library books, if you have not already done so;
- Please pay any outstanding battels bill: an outstanding amount must be paid as soon as possible and most certainly before your return;
- You should contact Student Finance to inform them of your suspended status;
- You may retain your Jesus email address and your University Card during your absence, and you will continue to have access to the University's electronic library resources;
- If your University card is due to expire during the period of suspension you will be issued with a replacement to cover the period between the end date of the original card and the expected end of the suspension;
- You may use University libraries and other University facilities;
- You may make contact with the University's Advisory and Welfare services;
- No tuition will be provided during your period away from College; however your tutors will be happy to advise you on reading material and other work to help you prepare for your return to study;
- The Academic Director, Academic Registrar, and Welfare Officer may be contacted for advice;
- During the period of suspension, you must ask the Academic Director for permission, in writing, to visit College premises or use College facilities. If permitted you will be able to collect a fob from the Lodge which must be returned at the end of your visit;
- Before your return, you will need to provide evidence of your fitness to study eight weeks before your agreed return date. You must arrange for a medical certificate or letter from your home GP or specialist to write to the Academic Director;
- If fit to return to study, you may come back into residence no more than two weeks before the start of the term in which you are due to resume status;

² As detailed in the University's guidance on dispensations: <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/dispensations>.

- The College cannot guarantee that accommodation will be available, but is usually able to accommodate returning students. Please contact the Accommodation Services Manager in the term before you are due to return;
- On your return you will normally sit Collections. These will normally be those being taken by other undergraduates in your year and course, but, where necessary, Collections may be devised for you. You will not usually be required to achieve a specified mark but you will be expected to demonstrate that you are well-prepared to resume your course at the required level.

Further information on the services and support available to suspended undergraduates is detailed on the University's website: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/undergraduate/status>.

Timing and duration of suspension

Any term of study that has been completed by the time of suspension is not normally allowed to be repeated. When a student suspends status they will normally go out of residence for three terms. Circumstances that have affected study in a given term should normally already have been raised with tutors and/or relevant College Officers as and when they arise, and addressed during the term.

There might be exceptions to this, such as when a health or welfare issue is raised early on in term and, in consultation with tutors and the Academic Director or Academic Registrar, a Junior Member seeks to continue study without suspension, but this attempt is ultimately unsuccessful, or where a serious situation has not been recognized at an earlier stage. In such cases any period of 'repeat study' cannot be assumed, but might be considered.³

The University's rules state that the term's fees must normally be paid if an undergraduate is on course beyond Monday of 4th week of that term.

A single period of suspension of status will not normally exceed one year. Exceptionally, the College may consider an extension, or further period of suspension, following a fresh consideration of a case. Periods of suspension in aggregate extending beyond two years will require consultation with Education Committee and the relevant Department or Faculty, not least as a returning student would be 'Overstanding for Honours' without dispensation.

Conditions of return

An undergraduate whose status is suspended on medical grounds will normally be expected to follow medical advice and appropriate treatment as agreed with a doctor in order to address their health problems. Students reading Medicine may also need to satisfy departmental requirements. After suspension on medical grounds, and before an undergraduate is permitted to resume study, the College must receive a medical certificate, stating whether or not the undergraduate is medically fit to resume study. The College will be responsible for determining, in the light of the doctor's assessment, whether the undergraduate is fit to study and whether any other conditions of return have also been met.

All undergraduates who are on course, including those who have returned from suspension of status, are expected to be in good academic standing, as defined by the College. In consultation with the undergraduate and their tutors, the College may set academic as well as medical conditions of

³ It is noted that the University's assessment structures start from the basis that all undergraduates will have the same number of terms, and time, to study and prepare for examinations and that colleges need to ensure that suspension does not lead to unfair advantage in relation to other undergraduates.

return. Where academic conditions are set for undergraduates returning from medical suspension (and where the undergraduate is not concurrently under an academic disciplinary process) these will be designed to support the Junior Member of College in their return, and to ensure that they are prepared for the proposed point of re-entry

If an undergraduate was on a disciplinary or academic monitoring process at the point of suspension they would normally return at the same point in that disciplinary or monitoring process, unless it was decided prior to, or at the point of, suspension that their medical condition provided sufficient mitigation for them to be removed from that process, or for that process to be adjusted.

Where suspension of status has been decided on academic disciplinary grounds the College will normally set academic conditions of return, which may include one or more penal collections to be sat shortly before or at the point of return.