

Reference Number: P82

HIGHER EDUCATION WITHDRAWAL AND TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF STUDIES POLICY



Policy Review					
Author/Owner	Position	Approved by:	Approval Date	Review Cycle Review Date	Published on Website Y/N
Sian Deasy	Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning	Corporation Signed:	6/7/23	Annually June	N

Document Control – Revision History (Policies only)					
Author/Owner	Summary of Changes	Date	Date last reviewed by SED	Version	Recommend to SED Y/N
Sian Deasy	New Policy (collating information that was previously dispersed across multiple policies and well-established working practices into one central policy for transparency and ease of use for both staff and students)	18.6.23		v1	

Initial Equality Impact Screening					
Who has been consulted on this policy & procedure? Internal colleagues including those in HE Administration who oversee operational management of this progress, and Programme Leaders who have engaged with previous iterations. Feedback from Open University colleagues as part of 2023 Institutional Approval event.					
What evidence has been used for this impact screening (e.g. related policies, publications)? Student Finance England attendance periods, Academic Regulations of awarding universities.					
Declaration (please tick one statement and indicate any negative impacts)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I am satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this policy/procedure and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. There are no specific negative impacts on any of the Protected Characteristics groups.					
<input type="checkbox"/> I recommend that an Equality Impact Assessment is required by the Equality and Diversity group, as possible negative impacts have been identified for one or more of the Protected Characteristics groups as follows:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Reassignment <input type="checkbox"/> Race <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief <input type="checkbox"/> Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage & civil partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy & maternity					
Completed by Author:	Sian Deasy	Position:	Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning	Date:	18.06.2023
<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed by Equality & Diversity Group Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I confirm that any recommended amendments have been made					
Amended by Author:		Position:		Date:	
Summary of Comments/Recommendations from Equality & Diversity Group Review:					

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1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1. The college recognises that sometimes circumstances arise which mean students studying programmes at Yeovil College University Centre (YCUC) either need to withdraw (i.e. permanently leave) or suspend (i.e. temporarily pause) their academic studies.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the various rules and regulations that surround suspension and withdrawal, as well as a number of factors that a student should consider before making any decision around leaving or suspending their studies.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to students studying validated proscribed (sometimes called 'recognised' or 'recognised for funding purposes') higher education programmes at Yeovil College University Centre (YCUC). This policy does not apply to students studying franchised higher education programmes, such as the BSc (Hons) Social Work or the BA (Hons) Business Management and Strategy degrees. Students studying franchised higher education programmes must follow the withdrawal and temporary suspension policies and protocols of their registering university.
- 2.2. Students studying a validated higher education programme as part of an Apprenticeship must also consult with the Employer Engagement team and their employer to understand the implications of suspension / withdrawal, and necessary processes to follow.
- 2.3. If, in any cases, either an Awarding Body's regulations or the requirements of a Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) conflict with those below, the regulations of the Awarding Body or PSRB will take precedence.
- 2.4. This policy outlines the various rules and regulations that surround suspension and withdrawal for YCUC students, where a student wishes to leave their programme of study or is experiencing extenuating circumstances which cannot be adequately supported or managed through either the HE Assessment, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy¹ (such as via extensions to deadlines or Exam Board Consideration), or the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy².

¹ Available to YCUC Students via the YCUC Student Help Zone on Moodle, or contact university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk for a copy.

² Available at www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports

3. RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

- 3.1. Responsibility for overseeing this policy sits within Yeovil College University Centre.
- 3.2. It is the responsibility of YCUC learners to proactively communicate with both their Programme Leader and the YCUC team at the earliest opportunity if they might be considering suspension and / or withdrawal, to seek relevant advice, and to ask for clarity and support if required to help them make a well-informed decision.
- 3.3. We recognise that students who wish to withdraw or temporarily suspend their studies are often experiencing challenging circumstances and would encourage all students to contact staff to seek support, to understand if there is support available that might allow them to continue with their studies and / or to understand the policies and regulations surrounding withdrawal and temporary suspension. The YCUC team can provide support and guidance to students in understanding these regulations and any relevant regulations of their awarding organisation. Students can also access pastoral and wellbeing support from the YCUC Student Support and can contact their Programme Leader for support or guidance.

4. STEPS TO BE TAKEN IF A STUDENT WISHES TO SUSPEND / WITHDRAW

- 4.1. If a student wishes to temporarily suspend or withdraw, they should first read through the information contained in this policy carefully to understand the considerations and potential consequences of temporary suspension or withdrawal. Students can access support, as outlined in Section 3 above, to understand the information contained in this policy and potential consequences of suspension or withdrawal. Students wishing to temporarily suspend their studies must read section 6.1 carefully to identify whether their circumstances would meet the criteria in which a temporary suspension of studies would be permissible.
- 4.2. If, after considering all of the relevant information in this policy, a student does wish to suspend or withdraw, they must first speak to their Programme Leader. This will allow the Programme Leader to identify why a student wishes to suspend / withdraw, and if any other options could be considered first to support a student to succeed in their studies (e.g. extensions to deadlines, using the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy, or a student moving from full-time to part-time study, where this option exists).

- 4.3. If, after speaking with their Programme Leader, a student still wishes to suspend / withdraw, they must inform the YCUC office, via email to universitycentre@yeovil.ac.uk. If a student is requesting to temporarily suspend their studies, they must complete the relevant form (Appendix 1) and provide this form and any required evidence, alongside their email.
- 4.4. **If a student has requested to suspend:**
- 4.4.1. A student wishing to temporarily suspend their studies should complete the Temporary Suspension of Studies Request Form (Appendix 1) and submit it to universitycentre@yeovil.ac.uk. Students must note the importance of completing the form fully and accurately, providing all relevant details and any appropriate supporting evidence. Section 3 of the Request Form (Appendix 1) suggests evidence a student might choose to submit, however, students may submit other relevant documentation to evidence their circumstances if appropriate. Incomplete forms or missing evidence may cause the process below to be delayed
- 4.4.2. University Centre Administration will call a Suspension of Studies Panel to meet to consider the application. This panel meeting should ordinarily be called within one working week of receipt of the student request, however, exceptional circumstances (such as vacation periods) may mean this period is extended, and the panel should be called as soon as possible thereafter.
- 4.4.3. A Suspension of Studies Panel shall include at least one College Manager and one Senior Manager, typically, although not exclusively, staff who are linked to the curriculum area in which the student is studying, as well as a minute taker. Where appropriate, additional staff within relevant expertise may be invited to join the Panel.
- 4.4.4. The Panel will consider the application in line with the Terms of Reference attached (Appendix 2) and decide whether a student will be offered the opportunity to suspend their studies.
- 4.4.5. The outcome of the panel meeting will be communicated to the student within 10 working days of the panel meeting.
- 4.4.6. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their request for Temporary Suspension of Studies, they should do so using the Academic Appeals process, and should note carefully the timescales to make an initial appeal.

- 4.4.7. Once all relevant information has been collated by the YCUC office, the student will be issued with a letter formally confirming their temporary suspension of studies, including their last date of attendance, tuition fee liability, and intended return date.
- 4.4.8. YCUC will communicate to inform relevant parties, such as the relevant Awarding Organisation, the Student Loans Company, and UKVI, of a student's withdrawal / suspension.
- 4.4.9. The next Examination Board to meet will formally ratify the student's academic outcomes, including confirmation of any applications for Exam Board Consideration (if appropriate). Any ratified marks our outcomes would then be communicated to the learner appropriately.

4.5. **If a student has requested to withdraw:**

- 4.5.1. The YCUC team will provide any further relevant information requested by the student.
- 4.5.2. Once all relevant information has been collated by the YCUC office, the student will be issued with a letter formally confirming their withdrawal, including their last date of attendance and tuition fee liability. In normal circumstances, this should take no longer than two working weeks from point 4.3.
- 4.5.3. YCUC will communicate to inform relevant parties, such as the relevant Awarding Organisation, the Student Loans Company, and UKVI, of a student's withdrawal / suspension, in line with their agreed reporting expectations. Students are welcome to contact the YCUC team to request a more specific timeline of when they can expect various bodies to be notified in their personal case.
- 4.5.4. The next Examination Board to meet will formally ratify the student's academic outcomes. Any ratified marks would then be communicated to the learner appropriately.

5. **PROTOCOLS & IMPLICATIONS IF A STUDENT SUSPENDS / WITHDRAWS**

5.1. **Last Date of Attendance**

- 5.1.1. If a student withdraws or suspends, their last date of attendance will be recorded as whichever is the later of (a) the last date they are registered as having attended a timetabled class, or (b) the last date where they submitted assessment via Moodle or sat an examination.

5.1.2. For the avoidance of doubt, a student's last date of attendance is not recorded on the basis of the date they notified us they wished to withdraw / suspend, or the date their withdrawal / suspension is processed.

5.2. **Tuition Fee Liability**

5.2.1. A student's tuition fee liability will be affected by when in the academic year their last date of attendance falls, in line with the HE Fees Policy.

5.2.2. We advise all students to look at the HE Fees Policy (available in the 'Policies & Reports' section on the website) to understand their fee liability at the point of withdrawal / suspension.

5.3. **Maintenance Loan Implications**

5.3.1. If a student is in receipt of Maintenance Loan, withdrawing / suspending may affect their maintenance loan payments, including having to repay some maintenance loan to Student Finance England.

5.3.2. We advise any student in receipt of Maintenance Loan who is considering suspension / withdrawal to read the guidance from gov.uk³ for more information. Student Finance are separate from Yeovil College University Centre, and students should consult with Student Finance England if they want further information on the Maintenance Loan implications of withdrawal / suspension.

5.4. **Examination Boards and Ratification of Academic Achievement and Outcomes**

5.4.1. If a student suspends or withdraws, their academic profile will be taken to the next appropriate Examination Board for consideration. Dependent upon the point at which a student suspends or withdraws, various outcomes may be considered.

- i. If a student has not yet commenced studying a unit / module then the Examination Board will not ratify any outcome, and the student will not be deemed to have 'attempted' the unit / module.
- ii. If a student has begun studying a unit / module, but none of the assessment points (i.e. deadlines) have yet occurred, they will not be deemed to have 'attempted' the unit / module.
- iii. If a student has completed a unit / module (all of the relevant assessment points have passed, regardless of whether the student submitted work and /

³ <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-if-you-suspend-or-leave>

or passed the assessment), the Examination Board will ratify their outcome for that unit / module.

- iv. If a student has begun studying a unit / module and at least one of the assessment points (deadlines) for that module has passed, they will be deemed to have 'attempted' the unit / module. If a student withdraws / suspends before completing all of the necessary assessment to successfully pass the unit / module, they will be deemed to have attempted but not achieved that unit / module. Depending on the awarding organisation, they may have the right to repeat that unit / module; however, most awarding organisations have a limit to the number of times a student can attempt a unit / module, and there may be a mark cap applied (dependent upon the awarding organisation's regulations⁴).

- 5.4.2. It is worth noting that in an instance where a student has had an extension to deadline approved under the HE Assessment, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy, it is this bespoke deadline date that would be considered when determining which of the categories above a learner falls within.
- 5.4.3. If a student in circumstance (iii) or (iv) above is temporarily suspending their studies due to an extenuating circumstance and believe they should not have been deemed to have 'attempted' the unit/module owing to their extenuating circumstances, they are entitled to also apply for Exam Board Consideration (in line with the HE Assessment, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy). All cases of Exam Board Consideration would be assessed in line with the principles of the Assessment, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy.
- 5.4.4. It is not possible for a student's academic profile or the outcome of an application for Exam Board consideration to be ratified outside of a formal Examination Board. This may therefore mean that students will need to wait for the next appropriate Examination Board to meet (which for many programmes will be at the end of the Summer Term) to hear their outcome.
- 5.4.5. All Examination Boards will be conducted in line with both Yeovil College Policy and the regulations of the relevant awarding organisation. Student outcomes will be determined in line with these regulations.

⁴ All students should review the regulations of their awarding organisation. For students on University of Gloucestershire Programmes these are the Academic Regulations for Taught Provision (<https://www.glos.ac.uk/information/article-categories/academic-regulations/>), for students on Open University programmes these are the Regulations for Validated Awards of the Open University (available at <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/>), for students on Higher National programmes, this information can be found in the 'Assessment' section of your Pearson Programme Specification.

6. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF STUDIES

6.1. Circumstances in which a student may request a temporary suspension of studies

- 6.1.1. If a student experiences extenuating circumstances during their period of study which cannot be adequately mitigated through existing mechanisms such as extensions to deadlines, additional academic or pastoral support, moving from full-time to part-time study (where appropriate), or a Fitness to Study plan, students are entitled to request a period of temporary suspension of studies of either one semester or one year. For more information on the circumstances that would be deemed 'extenuating circumstances', please see the HE Assessment, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy. Any request for temporary suspension of studies would be subject to the suspension not taking a student outside of their maximum period of registration with their awarding organisation.
- 6.1.2. Section 4 outlines the steps a student must take if they wish to request a temporary suspension of studies, and the process that will then be followed to consider this request and provide an outcome to the student, including the route of appeal.

6.2. Exceptional circumstances which may affect suspension of studies

- 6.2.1. In some instances, regulatory, procedural or awarding body processes or requirements, beyond the control of YCUC, may prevent a suspension of studies from being possible. This may include, for example, if the programme a student is studying, or the version of the specification they are enrolled on, is discontinued. In these cases, alternative options will be explored, such as using the Assessment APL-RPL procedure to allow a student to resume their studies on a new version of the specification upon return. If appropriate, provisions of the YCUC Student Protection Plan would be considered.

6.3. Resumption of studies post-suspension: point of return

- 6.3.1. If a student temporarily suspends their studies, they must be aware that they will not necessarily simply be able to resume studying at the same calendar point in a future year. Depending on when a student suspends and whether any unit(s) / module(s) are partially completed and / or not achieved at this point, they may be required to either retake or restart unit(s) / module(s) in a future year, which may

necessitate a suspension period which does not fall neatly within a semester or 12-month period.

- 6.3.2. Depending upon the circumstances that surrounded a student's suspension of studies, it may be appropriate for the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy to be used to support the process of returning to study.

6.4. Resumption of studies post-suspension: attendance pattern

- 6.4.1. Students should also note that there is no guarantee that attendance patterns are consistent between academic years. For example, a student studying on an evening-only basis, or only attending one day per week, is not guaranteed to be offered the same attendance pattern post-suspension. The attendance pattern will depend on the unit(s) / module(s) a student has to sit upon their return, and cohort sizes and timetabling arrangements for the future cohort(s) they will in-fill with.

6.5. Resumption of studies post-suspension: module availability

- 6.5.1. Yeovil College University Centre may change its module offer between academic years, in response to awarding body changes, PSRB requirements, student feedback, sector changes, or staff specialism. Whilst changes to modules between years are rarely widespread or significant, it is not possible to guarantee that the same modules will be available to a student who suspends their studies upon resumption.

6.6. Resumption of studies post-suspension: tuition fees

- 6.6.1. In line with the HE Fees Policy, students will be charged tuition fees for the unit(s) / module(s) they study post-suspension. Where a student returns post-suspension on a part-time basis (i.e. they are studying fewer than 120 credits in their bespoke academic year), they will be charged for the credits they study in line with the HE Fees Policy and the college's Office for Students approved fee limits.

7. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, DOCUMENTS, DEFINITIONS

Assessment, and APL-RPL Procedure
Customer Service Procedure (Including Complaints)
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Policy
HE Fees Policy
HE Assessment, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Student Maternity Policy
Gov.uk Student Finance guidance
Academic Regulations of relevant awarding organisations

Student Request for Temporary Suspension of Studies Form

1 – Personal Details

Name	
YCUC ID Number	
Course	
Year / Level	
Programme Leader	

2 - Outline of the reason for requesting to temporarily suspend your studies.

Please clearly explain the extenuating circumstances you have experienced and why you feel you need to temporarily suspend your studies. Please clearly outline why other mitigations, such as extensions to deadlines, application for exam board consideration, moving from full-time to part-time study (where appropriate), or seeking additional study or pastoral support are not adequate to support you to continue with your studies, and you need to request a temporary suspension. You can go onto another page if needed.

Dates which have been affected by this circumstance:			
From:		To:	

3 - Please tick which type of supporting evidence you are providing

	Medical Certificate (GP note / Consultant Letter / Discharge Note)
	Letter from a qualified counsellor
	Death Certificate or Order of Service
	Letter from a Solicitor, Social Worker or other qualified professional
	Other independent evidence (please give brief details):

4 – Outline below the period of temporary suspension you wish to request.

To be clear, even if permission for temporary suspension of studies is granted, it may not be possible to offer suspension for precise periods students request, owing to term dates and module sequencing. However, please indicate when you believe you would wish to return from a temporary suspension of studies below.

Requested period of temporary suspension:			
From:		To:	

5 – Previous suspensions of studies.

If you have previously requested and / or been granted a period of temporary suspension of studies whilst studying at YCUC, please give details below.

From:		To:	
Brief Description of circumstances:			

6 – Declaration and signature

I understand that applying for this this temporary suspension of studies is a serious matter and that by submitting this declaration I am confirming that the information I have provided, including any supporting evidence, is truthful.

I understand that academic integrity is taken extremely seriously, and this submission will be reviewed by the University Centre team. I understand that suspected breaches of Academic integrity will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action.

Signed (student)*:		Date:	
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*This can be a physical or digital signature

Please return this form along with your supporting evidence to university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk. The University Centre team will acknowledge receipt.

Terms of Reference for a Suspension of Studies Panel

The Suspension of Studies Panel will include in membership at least one College Manager and one Senior Manager, typically, although not exclusively, these should be staff who are linked to the curriculum area in which the student is studying, as well as a minute taker. Where appropriate, additional staff within relevant expertise may be invited to join the Panel.

The purpose of the Suspension of Studies Panel meeting is:

1. To determine whether the extenuating circumstances submitted are valid within the Regulations governing the programme of study, as well as the regulations of the awarding institution.
2. If circumstances are deemed valid, it is then the responsibility of the Panel to identify whether Temporary Suspension of Studies is an appropriate and proportionate remedy for these circumstances.
3. If so, the panel must determine whether a Temporary Suspensions of Studies can be granted in line with the student's maximum period of registration and other YCUC and awarding body regulations, and if so, what an appropriate period of suspension might be.

A Suspension of Studies Panel must accept the professional recommendation of a medical practitioner or qualified counsellor regarding the effect on a student of a particular condition or problem. However, in the absence of an opinion as to the impact of the illness or condition the Suspension of Studies Panel may use its own judgement to determine whether the circumstances are likely to have had an impact on performance. The outcome of the panel will lead to whether or not the application is accepted completely, processed with the awarding institution (where required), rejected due it being unsubstantiated or not considered applicable, or returned to the student, requesting additional information.

If a student fails, without good cause, to provide sufficient evidence to the Suspension of Studies Panel, the Suspension of Studies Panel has authority to reject the request on those grounds.

If a student's circumstances are not deemed appropriate to warrant a Temporary Suspension of Studies, or the unintended consequences of a Temporary Suspension of Studies may put a student at disadvantage, the Panel may suggest other supportive measures and options to the student, including recommending an adapted period of suspension so as to allow a student to resume to their studies at a more appropriate point, or options to claim partial credit or exit award for study up to this point, and then return to study using APL/RPL in the future.

In line with section 6.2 above, if exceptional regulatory, procedural or awarding body processes or requirements, beyond the control of YCUC may prevent a suspension of studies from being possible, for example, the programme a student is studying, or the version of the specification they are enrolled on, is discontinued, alternative options will be explored, such as using the Assessment APL-RPL procedure to allow a student to resume their studies on a new version of the specification upon return. If appropriate, provisions of the YCUC Student Protection Plan would be considered.

The intent of a Suspension of Studies Panel is to ensure that students are not put in a position of unfair advantage or disadvantage over other candidates; the aim should be to enable the student to engage with their studies and be assessed on equal terms.

The outcome of the Suspension of Studies Panel will be shared at the next Exam Board.