

UCEN Manchester

Break In Study

Policy and Procedure

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1. Background

1.1 UCEN Manchester is committed to creating an inclusive, supportive, and equitable learning environment for all students. We recognise that students' physical health, mental wellbeing, caring responsibilities, and wider personal circumstances can significantly affect their ability to engage fully with their studies and achieve their academic potential. In line with this commitment, UCEN Manchester seeks to provide a compassionate and structured approach that enables students to pause their studies, when necessary, without being unfairly disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control.

1.2 This Break in Study Policy provides a clear and supportive framework for students who experience substantial or sustained circumstances that prevent them from continuing their studies for a period of time. The policy ensures that students can access timely, fair, and consistent support when significant difficulties arise, enabling them to take an approved break and return to their programme when they are able to re-engage fully. The aim is to protect students' wellbeing, academic progress, and long-term success while maintaining the integrity and quality of UCEN Manchester's higher education provision.

2. Regulatory Alignment (OfS Conditions of Registration)

This policy supports UCEN Manchester's compliance with relevant Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration by ensuring that students receive clear information, fair processes, and consistent decision-making regarding Breaks in Study. In particular, the policy aligns with:

- **Condition C1 – Consumer Protection** Ensures students receive accurate, timely, and accessible information about the implications of taking a Break in Study.
- **Condition B2 – Quality: Resources, Support and Student Engagement** Ensures students experiencing significant difficulties are supported appropriately and can re-engage effectively.
- **Condition B4 – Assessment and Awards** Ensures assessment integrity is maintained when students pause and resume their studies.
- **Condition E2 – Management and Governance** Ensures decisions relating to Breaks in Study are transparent, consistent, and well-governed.

3. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure outlines UCEN Manchester's approach to Breaks in Study for undergraduate taught programmes. It provides guidance on eligibility, application processes, responsibilities, and the implications for academic progress and funding. It ensures fair and consistent decision-making across all Schools.

4. Definition

A **Break in Study** is a formally approved interruption from study for a defined period, with the intention of returning to the same programme at a later date. The length of the break in study counts towards the duration/ registration period on the course.

5. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All higher education awards within UCEN Manchester.
- For awards not validated by UCEN Manchester the appropriate Higher Education Awarding institution policy should be referred to:
 - For **Manchester Metropolitan University**, please refer to the Student Transfer, Suspension and Withdrawal Policy:
[Manchester Met Policies](#)
 - For **Sheffield Hallam University**, please refer to the Break in Study Policy and Procedure:
[Sheffield Hallam Policies](#)
- All staff involved in advising, processing, or approving Break in Study applications.

6. Duration of Break in Study

The maximum duration of temporary leave that will be granted is one calendar year from the last date of attendance. An expected return date will always be specified. Students normally return at the same point in the following academic year.

A student will only be allowed to return earlier in the following academic session (repeat study at the same level) if they:

- 1) Submit independent evidence of exceptional circumstances in support of their repeating study time, AND;
- 2) Gain the written support from their Programme Leader.

7. Acceptable and Unacceptable Reasons

7.1 Acceptable Reasons

A Break in Study may be approved where significant circumstances impact a student's ability to engage with their programme. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- Significant wellbeing or mental health issues
- Serious illness or bereavement of a close family member or friend
- Maternity, paternity, or adoption leave
- Severe financial difficulties affecting engagement

7.2 Reasons Not Normally Accepted

- Going on an extended holiday
- Work commitments unrelated to the programme or future employability
- Breaks in Study may not be approved if the programme is being withdrawn or no cohort is planned for the following academic year. In such cases, every effort will be made to transfer credit to an alternative programme.

8. Key Considerations

A Break in Study can affect several factors.

- Tuition fee liability
- Maintenance loan entitlement
- Accommodation contracts
- Programme structure and timetable
- Assessment opportunities.

Students must seek advice and clarification from their Programme team, Future U: Student Support Services and Student Finance before applying.

9. Tuition Fees

No tuition fees are charged during an approved Break in Study. However, fee liability is determined in accordance with the HE Tuition Fee Policy. [tuition fee policy 2026-2027.pdf](#) see sections 2.21 and 2.7. Students may still be liable for fees up to the point the Break begins.

10. Student Finance

Student Finance funding is not available during a Break in Study. If funding has been received beyond the break start date, Student Finance may recalculate entitlement and request repayments of overpaid amounts. Students must ensure their Student Finance record is accurate.

11. Accommodation

Students must contact their landlord or letting agency to discuss any financial implications of early contract termination.

12. Programme of Study

On return, there may be possible changes to:

- Teaching staff
- Delivery model
- Timetable
- Assessment Schedule

13. Academic Record

- Marks for completed modules / units will be ratified at the next Assessment Board and credits achieved recorded.
- For partially completed modules / units the status of the assessments will be carried forward on the assessment record.
- Approved deferrals will remain valid.

14. Timeframe for Applications

Students should apply before the Break is due to start wherever possible.

Breaks ideally begin at the start of an academic year, but unplanned circumstances are recognised.

- Breaks in Semester 1: earliest return is the next academic year.
- Breaks in Semester 2: earliest return is Semester 2 of the following year.

A student will only be allowed to return earlier in the following academic session (i.e. repeat study at the same level) if they:

- Submit independent evidence of exceptional circumstances in support of their repeating study time, AND
- Gain the written support from their Programme Leader.

Any student repeating study time in this way should contact Student Finance England (or equivalent body) regarding their funding situation as funding for their repeated period is not guaranteed.

- Breaks are **not normally permitted** in the final four weeks of teaching. This is because much of the teaching/planned schedule for the year has been delivered and that students will be able to make an attempt at the assessments. Students unable to manage assessments should refer to the Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures. In exceptional circumstances, exceptions to this may be granted.
- Break in Study applications cannot exceed the maximum registration period as stated in the Academic Regulations.

15. Retrospective Applications

Retrospective requests are only considered where there are compelling reasons why the student could not apply earlier (e.g. hospitalisation). An explanation should be provided on the application.

16. Extending a Break in Study

Extensions may be approved in exceptional circumstances. Requests must be submitted at least one month before the expected return date and require approval from the Head of Department and Academic Services.

17. Application Procedure

1. Circumstances should be discussed with the Personal Tutor
2. If appropriate, the Break in Study application form available online <https://www.ucenmanchester.ac.uk/about/degree-course-policies/ucen-manchester/> should be completed
3. Supporting evidence should be attached

4. The completed form and evidence should be submitted to the Programme Leader and Head of School

18. Consideration and Decision

- Applications are reviewed by Director/Head of School and an outcome recorded
- The application to be forwarded to Academic Services. If there are any concerns these will be discussed with the Head of School
- Written confirmation of the outcome will be sent to the student within 10 working days from Academic Services receiving the application
- Where necessary, the Programme Team will complete required On Track process to update the student status
- Data Services will update the student record
- If the application is not approved, guidance can be sought from Future U.

19. Notification to Student Finance

UCEN Manchester reports approved Break in Study to Student Finance, but students are responsible for ensuring their Student Finance account is accurate and up to date.

20. Break in Study Start Date

Breaks are dated from the last positive register mark. Applications cannot be backdated beyond a fee liability point unless compelling reasons exist.

21. Status During a Break in Study

Students on a Break in Study are not active students and therefore:

- Cannot access campus facilities
- Cannot borrow equipment
- Retain access to Future U Support Services (as visitors if attending in person).

22. Returning to Study

- The School will contact the student within 30 days prior to their Return to Study date.
- Students must attend a return-to-study meeting either in person or have a phone discussion regarding their readiness to return.
- Students must seek funding advice before returning.
- If the School cannot contact the student, or the student does not engage within 14 days of the return date, the student maybe withdrawn from the programme.
- Any interim award due will be issued.

UCEN Manchester

Break In Study

Policy and Procedure

Document Control								
Document Type				Policy and Procedure				
Date Approved								
Approved by				Academic Board				
Review Date				July 2028				
Department				Academic Services				
Policy Owner				Head of Registry				
Principalship Lead				Vice Dean, UCEN Manchester				
Accessible to Students				Yes				
	Summary Article	Website Policy	Interactive Training	Video & Summary	Student Guide	CPD Day Training	Other	Date Completed
Website		x			X			
Intranet								
Thrive								
Staff Comms		x						
Student Comms								

Revision History

Version	New/Replacement	Summary of Changes
1.0	New -Reviewed May 2026	Encompasses UCEN Manchester Degree Awards. Full structural revision, clarity improvements, accessibility additions, OfS alignment, and enhanced procedural guidance and encompasses UCEN Manchester Awards

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Part 1 – Due regard template - to be completed for all policies / changes

SECTION 1	
Name of activity / proposal / change	An impact assessment of UCEN Manchester Break in Study and policy and Procedures which has been updated for the academic year 2026-27 and incorporates UCEN Manchester validated programmes, Pearson provision and SEG provision.
Is this a new or existing policy / practice / project?	New Policy
Date screening commenced	August 2026
Function / department / service carrying out the assessment	Registry and Academic Services /Student Experience and Engagement
Project/policy/practice owner (person responsible for the change)	Nasima Manjra Head of Registry
Name and role of person undertaking this assessment (may be the same as above)	Wendy Pennington Director of Student Experience and Engagement
Give an overview of the aims, objectives and purpose of the proposal:	
AIMS: To provide a fair, transparent and supportive framework that enables students experiencing significant personal, health, wellbeing, financial or caring circumstances to temporarily suspend their studies and subsequently return to complete their programme.	
OBJECTIVES: • Ensure students have access to a clear and consistent process for requesting a Break in Study. • Support student wellbeing, retention and future academic success. • Ensure decisions are evidence-based, equitable and consistent across all Schools. • Minimise disadvantage caused by circumstances beyond a student's control. • Maintain compliance with Office for Students regulatory requirements and institutional academic regulations.	
PURPOSE: The policy sets out the eligibility criteria, application process, approval arrangements and implications of taking a Break in Study. It ensures students are supported appropriately when they need to interrupt their studies and provides a structured route for returning to study.	
SECTION 2	
Protected characteristic	Will/Does the implementation of the policy result in different impacts for protected groups and the general population of the organisation?
Age	No adverse impact identified. The policy applies equally to students of all ages and may positively support mature learners who face caring, health or employment-related challenges.

Disability	Positive impact. The policy provides flexibility and support for students experiencing physical disabilities, long-term health conditions or mental health difficulties that affect engagement with study.
Gender reassignment	No adverse impact identified. The policy applies consistently irrespective of gender identity and provides an impartial process based on individual circumstances.
Marriage & Civil Partnership	No adverse impact identified. The policy applies equally regardless of marital or partnership status.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Positive impact. Pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption leave are specifically recognised as acceptable reasons for taking a Break in Study.
Race	No adverse impact identified. The policy is applied consistently and decisions are based on evidence and individual circumstances rather than ethnicity or nationality.
Religion and belief	Neutral to positive impact. The policy allows consideration of individual circumstances that may affect engagement with study and provides flexibility where appropriate.
Sex	No adverse impact identified. The policy applies equally to all sexes and supports individuals affected by parental responsibilities.
Sexual orientation	No adverse impact identified. The policy is applied equally irrespective of sexual orientation.
Other equality groups	Positive impact for carers, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, care experienced students and those experiencing significant hardship or wellbeing issues. The policy provides an opportunity to pause studies without permanent withdrawal.

SECTION 3

Does this activity propose major changes in terms of scale or significance for LTE Group? For example, is there a clear indication that, although the proposal is minor it is likely to have a major affect for people from an equality group/s? Please tick appropriate box below.

YES		NO	X
High risk: complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (see Part 2)		Low risk: go to section 4	

SECTION 4

If this proposal is low risk please give evidence or justification for how you reached this decision:

The policy formalises and clarifies existing arrangements for managing temporary interruptions to study rather than introducing a significant change in service provision. The policy is designed to improve consistency, transparency and accessibility and is intended to support equality of opportunity for students experiencing circumstances that affect their participation in higher education. No disproportionate adverse impact on any protected group has been identified

Signed by reviewer / assessor <i>NManjra</i>	NAME: Nasima Manjra	DATE: 19/08/26
Approval that this proposal is low risk and does not require a full Equality Assessment analysis		
For and on behalf of the LTE Group EDI committee:	NAME: Wendy Pennington	DATE: 19/08/26
TITLE: Director of Student Experience and Engagement	SIGNATURE: <i>W.Pennington</i>	