



Policy on

HE Suspension of Studies

Approved by

Senior Leadership Team

Policy Title	HE Suspension of Studies Policy
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New College Durham is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

If you require this document in an alternative format and/or language, please contact records@newdur.ac.uk

We review our policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. All policies are subject to equality impact assessments which are carried out to determine whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on those with protected characteristics. We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to these impact assessments, and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility of fairness of this and all College policies.

Equality Impact Assessed: October 2023

Accessibility Impact Assessed: October 2023

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1. Scope

This policy covers responsibilities for the management of suspension of studies for an HE student on a New College Durham (NCD), Open University (OU) or Pearson HN programme. It will ensure that the College complies with the relevant NCD and OU Academic Regulations, the law and expectations of students and external partners including regulatory and awarding bodies.

The policy applies to Apprentices and Non-apprentices.

2. Responsibilities

The Vice Principal for HE is responsible for ensuring a policy is in place defining responsibility for the procedures and management of Suspension of Studies.

The Academic Registrar is responsible for

- ensuring this policy is maintained, monitored and disseminated;
- ensuring responsibility for procedures are clearly assigned; and
- convening the Suspension of Studies Panel and communicating extensions of suspensions of studies to the OU.

The Registry Manager is responsible for ensuring that procedures which adhere to the law, College policy and the rules of any validating or external awarding bodies are written, monitored and promoted to all staff and students.

Curriculum Information Services (CIS) are responsible for processing requests for SOS to as described in the **HE Suspension of Studies Procedure**.

Programme Leads are responsible for ensuring students are aware of the process for suspension of studies at their induction. They are also responsible for monitoring and recording engagement and attendance to allow them to identify where a student is not attending/engaging as described in the Student Engagement in Learning Policy and to identify suspension of studies as an option.

Access Fund are responsible for ensuring bursary funding is adjusted in the case of a student suspension of studies.

3. Relationship with existing policies and regulations

In addition to meeting the requirements of funding, validating and awarding bodies, this policy should be read in the context of the following College policies and procedures:

- HE Suspension of Studies Procedure
- Refund and Compensation Policy for HE

- Student Engagement in Learning Policy
- Academic Registry Policy
- HE Access Fund Policy
- HE Withdrawals Policy

4. Suspending a student's studies

Suspending studies is the process by which a student can temporarily withdraw from their studies to pause their learning activities. They will not be enrolled during this time. The student can then return to the same stage of the programme and resume studies after an agreed period of time.

Reasons for suspension of studies might include:

- Prolonged illness or health complications
- Personal problems
- Death of a family member

A suspension will be granted for up to one academic year (an initial SoS). Where there are exceptional circumstances a further one-year period may be granted if applied for, subject to approval from the Suspension of Studies Panel. Mitigation should be considered for shorter term circumstances.

Before a student decides to suspend their studies, the student must seek advice from the Programme Lead. There may be financial, academic and professional implications to consider. Students must be informed of the financial implications of a decision to suspend their studies and of the fact they will be withdrawn if they fail to engage with the Programme Team on the date of their expected return to study.

Students must be invited to suspend their studies on a programme by their Programme Team and Academic Registry will process the application following the **HE Suspension of Studies Procedure**, directing the student to relevant advice or guidance to assist their application.

The decision to suspend studies will be noted by the Suspension of Studies Panel (see **Appendix 1 for Terms of Reference**). The Panel cannot reject an application for an initial SoS.

Students can return from SoS within the same academic year but they will trigger the fee liability for any term they are in attendance. Student Finance England would need to reassess their funding. If they return in a new academic year they should re-apply as normal.

Students will receive correspondence from Registry confirming their agreed date of return

Programme Teams must not accept assignment submissions when a student is on a Suspension of Studies. There must be no student engagement with their programme. Grades must not be entered for any students while they are on Suspension of Studies. The student will not be allowed to use College facilities excepting counselling or other guidance services.

The Programme Team must adhere to agreed contact arrangements during the suspension. They should make necessary arrangements for a student's return to study including assessing any programme modifications that may need to be allowed for.

5. Appealing a Panel decision

A student must not have their request to extend an SoS denied without being given recourse to an appeal to ensure fairness of the process. An appeal will only be acceptable if received within 10 working days¹ of the confirmation of the panel decision being sent.

6. Formal recognition of credits

Completed modules/units that students have achieved prior to suspending their studies will be presented to the next Assessment Board and the student will receive a transcript confirming these results.

Following failure to re-engage a student may be eligible for an exit award.

7. Exceptions

Where an HE apprentice intends to engage in a break in learning under the Apprenticeship Funding Rules the elements of the application that do not apply to the HE programme will be managed by the Apprenticeships Office.

8. External Partners

It is expected that any external partners will apply this HE Suspension of Studies Policy and Procedure, either by direct adoption or by mirroring the requirements in their own policy.

The External Partner will notify the College of a suspension of studies using a CIS Data Capture Amendment Form. The Last Date of Engagement must be provided.

¹ 'Working days' includes weekdays outside of term time but does not include College closure (e.g., Christmas) or bank holidays.

9. Record keeping

Records of HE suspensions of studies will be held on the Assessment Board records permanently. Records of the process will be held for 6 years after the student's programme has ended.

10. Evaluation and review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored annually and reviewed every five years in light of experience and best practice. This mechanism recognises that changes to legislation may prompt a review of the policy before the five years stipulated.

Suspension of Studies Panel

Terms of Reference

The Suspension of Studies Panel will be responsible to the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board

- Overall Purpose:** To ensure suspensions of studies (SoS) are identified and any extensions to these are assessed and approved or rejected within an acceptable timescale with due regard for the impact on the student, curriculum and College.
- Key Tasks:** To report and monitor instances of initial SoS presented by Registry.
- To make decisions to approve or refuse extensions of initial SoS depending on the programme validation status.
- Frequency:** The meetings will be held at the start of each term and preceding each round of assessment boards.
- Membership:** Attendees:
- Academic Registrar (Chair)
 - Assistant Principal for Collaborative Partnerships and International
 - Curriculum Rep from Each School (CM, Programme Lead or Head)
 - Curriculum Representative from HE Partner
 - HEDU Representative
 - Registry Manager