

Study Break Policy



1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out for all registered BSU students ('you') information about Study Breaks.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all students studying at BSU, including at our London campus. The policy also applies to students studying at partner institutions, including how your Study Break dates are recorded on the University's student record system.
- 1.3 A Study Break has a number of implications, which means that you need to consider this carefully before your Break starts. A Study Break means that you:
 - Are taking an extended break from your studies which has been recorded by the University
 - Plan to return to the University at an agreed later date
 - Will not attend or take part in any teaching or learning activities, or undertake any assessment activities until the agreed return date
 - Are recorded as being on a study break on the University's student record system
 - Do not hold student status while on a Study Break
- 1.4 However, you will continue to have access to University, Students' Union or placement facilities and student wellbeing services to enable us to continue to support you where we can do so. As well as access to all library and learning resources. We will also continue to keep in touch with you particularly to facilitate a smooth return to your studies.
- 1.5 The University operates the Study Break Policy to provide you with information about:
 - What a Study Break is and how it is different to short-term exceptional circumstances or withdrawing permanently from the University
 - Advice, guidance and support that is available to you if you are thinking about taking a Study Break, including support from [the SU Advice Centre](#)
 - Actions you should take if you decide to take a Study Break from the University
 - How you apply to take a Study Break
 - Actions the University will take if you decide to take a Study Break, including how it will record the start and end date your Study Break period

1.6 This policy operates in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

2. What is a Study Break

2.1 A Study Break is where you have an extended period of time (e.g. several weeks or months) away from your studies because of longer-term personal circumstances which affect your capacity to study. A Study Break is different to:

- When you apply for an Assessment Extension or Postponement to cover a short period of time (e.g. days or a couple of weeks) away from your studies or assessments due to short-term exceptional circumstances such as a minor illness. More information can be found in the [Exceptional Circumstances Policy](#)
- Leaving the University and permanently withdrawing from your studies. More information can be found in the [Student Withdrawal Policy](#)

2.2 The following list provides examples of circumstances where your capacity to study may be affected for an extended period and where you may need or want to take a Study Break:

- Medical situations, operations, illnesses or related complications that require you to have treatment across a longer period of time and/or where a recovery period is needed
- Trans students may require time away from their studies for a wide variety of medical appointments. The amount of time off required following surgery will vary greatly and in all cases a student should not be treated any less favourably than if they were absent due to sickness and injury.
- Deterioration of a medical condition or disability which cannot be addressed sufficiently through reasonable adjustments or a bespoke scheme of study
- Serious and/or prolonged illness of a close family member, dependent, partner or friend for whom you have caring responsibilities
- Bereavement of a close family member, dependent, partner or friend
- Circumstances in which you need to take parental or guardian leave, including students who become pregnant during their studies, students whose partners are pregnant and also any student who becomes a parent, for example through adoption.

- Stressful personal circumstances (e.g. relationship breakdown, victim of crime, challenging home or accommodation situation)
- A delay in receiving disability, or health related support measures or equipment that you need for your studies
- Severe financial circumstances which mean that you need to prioritise paid employment or there is a delay in the receipt of appropriate financial support measures for a disability (for example, Disabled Student Allowance) or long-term condition
- Being selected to compete in national or international sporting or cultural events where the intensive time commitment required means that it is not realistic to engage with that opportunity alongside your studies
- Where you are offered a significant career or work opportunity that will benefit your skills and experience, and which cannot wait until you have completed your studies
- Other significant situations which affect your capacity to study across an extended period.

A Study Break may also be put in place **by the University** where:

- There are serious and significant concerns about your capacity to undertake academic study, manage the demands of student life or adhere to specific professional, regulatory or statutory body requirements. This includes where a student is detained under the Mental Health Act. More information is available in the [Fitness to Study Procedure](#) and the Fitness to Practice Policy
- Matters relating to your fitness to practice mean you need to take a break. More information is available in the [Fitness to Practice Policy](#)
- Your alleged misconduct is being investigated by the University and/or by the police and the nature of the alleged misconduct means that it is not feasible for you to be studying at this time; for example, this includes situations where you are in police custody or in prison. This would normally follow a suspension of your studies and confirmation that you would be able to continue studying after the study break. More information is available in the [Academic Integrity Policy & Academic Misconduct Procedure](#) and the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#)
- Following one of the University's Central Assessment Boards and publication of results, you have not been able to progress to the next level of your academic study, due to outstanding assessments. Therefore, in order to submit your outstanding assessments, you will be on a

‘Progression break’ for the duration of the next academic year. Please see the University’s Progression Rules for further details.

3. Support

3.1 Your circumstances may mean that you have no choice but to take a Study Break. In other circumstances it may be the case that a Study Break is not your only option and there may be alternative arrangements and enhanced supportive measures to consider.

3.2 Whatever your circumstances, taking a Study Break is a major decision. University staff are available to help you work through that decision and we strongly advise you to speak with:

- Your Academic Advisor or appropriate supervisor,
- Student Wellbeing Services,
- Student Information Team, or
- Staff in the Students’ Union Advice Centre: the SU Advice Centre can support you in talking through your circumstances, explaining the procedure, and signposting you to the correct lead department. The processing of your request is undertaken by the University.

3.3 It is important to understand that the period of time on which you are on a Study Break counts towards your overall period of registration with the University, even though your formal student status is on hold for the Study Break period. There are a number of implications of having your student status on hold and we strongly advise you to work these through. Staff in the Student Information Team or Student Wellbeing Services can help you with this process. Matters that you need to consider include:

Topic	Matters to work through
If you are studying in the UK on a student route visa	There are instances where study breaks are permissible within Home Office regulations, however, these must be considered on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Immigration Compliance Team
If you are receiving financial support from Student Finance England (i.e. a Student Loan) or from similar bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	The University is obliged to inform the Student Loans Company of your Study Break start and end dates and you will typically not receive payments during this time. This means that you will need to have alternative ways of supporting yourself financially while you are on a Study Break. There may be circumstances where you might be able to exceptionally continue to receive student finance support and Student Wellbeing Services will be able to advise you

Topic	Matters to work through
Other sources of financial support	If you receive other forms of financial support (e.g. bursaries, other loans), you will need to find out if these will be suspended while you are on a Study Break.
Tuition Fees	The BSU Terms and Conditions and Approved Fee Information set out the fees that you owe the University at specific parts in the academic year. set out the fees that you owe the University at specific parts in the academic year.
Living accommodation	You will not be able to live in University-managed or University partner student accommodation while you are on a Study Break so you will need to make alternative plans. If you are currently in privately rented accommodation, you should check your tenancy agreement about notice periods (if you are planning on moving out) and any matters relating to your student status. If you plan to stay in your private accommodation, you will need to inform your landlord that you are no longer a student in relation to your council tax status.
Budgeting and covering your costs	You will need to consider how your finances and budgeting will work if you have been dependent on a Student Loan or other forms of financial support that will stop while you are on a Study Break. Additionally, as you will not hold student status while you are on a Study Break, you will not be eligible for financial exemptions such as Council Tax or student discounts on services and goods.
Dependents or family	If you have family members who are dependent on their UK residency through your student visa, you will need to think through the wider implications of your Study Break on them, including if your Study Break is more than 60 days and you will need to return to your home country.
Mental health and wellbeing support	As part of your study break, you may be able to access University in-house support services.
Disabled Students' Allowance, DSA	Your entitlement to DSA will stop while on a study break
Maximum period of registration	Time taken out on Study Break will count towards the maximum period of registration for your programme. The maximum registration periods are set out in the University Academic Regulations
Professional Accreditation	If your programme is professionally accredited or regulated, there may be implications for you if you take a Study Break. Your Academic Advisor can advise you on this.

- 3.4 If your circumstances mean that you are not able to engage with the University on these matters (e.g. if you are too unwell to do so), you may give permission for someone to engage on your behalf. This permission must be given by you in writing unless a medical practitioner or professional confirms that you are unable to do so.

4. Eligibility for a Study Break

- 4.1 The University will not be able to support you taking a Study Break in the following circumstances:
- within the first semester of your first year of studies unless exceptionally the request is for medical reasons. You may be required to submit evidence of this.
 - Within the last four weeks before the end of teaching/delivery date for that academic year.
 - If your registration period has ended
 - If you have been informed that you will not be eligible for any further funding from the Student Loan Company/funding body and are unable to self-fund.
 - If, after reviewing your request, it is deemed to be in your best interests not to take a study break and instead to complete your academic year or programme of studies
 - If taking a break would mean that you would exceed the maximum permitted allowance for study breaks or your maximum period of registration.
 - If your fees are funded through the Student Loans Company and taking a break means that you exceed the maximum funding entitlement.
- 4.2 Requests for repeat Study Breaks will not normally be approved.

5. Start and end dates of a Study Break

- 5.1 In accordance with the Academic Regulations, you may request a Study Break for a minimum of one semester up to a maximum of one academic year only. In exceptional circumstances, more than one further Study Break may be permitted
- 5.2 The start of a Study Break may be:
- **Immediate**, where your circumstances mean that it is necessary for you to take a break right away, irrespective of the point in the academic year
 - **Pre-planned**, where your circumstances mean that there can be a lead in time before starting your Study Break so that it may coincide with the start

of an academic semester, for example. This would only apply if you were requesting a break in the summer and not during term time, when your request must be made at the time of the break.

- 5.3 The University can support you with either of these circumstances.
- 5.4 We will record the **start** of your Study Break on the University student records system. In doing this, the University must comply with specific regulatory requirements. This means that the start of your study break will be recorded as **the day after your last interactive academic engagement** with the University (e.g. attending a class or engaging in an assessment). This information will be taken from an in-person or online attendance or engagement records. Very occasionally, we may need you to verify your last interactive academic engagement. Engagement with other parts of university life e.g. a student support service or the Students' Union will not be counted; it must be engagement with your academic studies.
- 5.5 The planned **end** date of the Study Break and your return to study will also need to be recorded on the student record system. The planned end date must form part of the agreement with the University for you to take a Study Break. Agreeing this date is important so that you and the University can plan for your return to study. This planned end date will be determined by:
- Your course structure and the most appropriate academic point that the University determines for you to re-engage with your studies to best support your learning and success.
 - In some cases it will be more appropriate for you to return at the start of the following academic year rather than mid-way through the year. However, each case will be considered on an individual basis.
 - The nature of your circumstances and the likelihood of you being able to re-engage by a particular date.
- 5.6 Restarts of the academic year will be considered on an individual basis and will be approved at the University's discretion. Considerations will include:
- The circumstances leading to your Study Break, including any evidence you have submitted as part of your Study Break request. In some circumstances you may be asked to submit additional evidence if you are requesting a restart following a Study Break (see 'Extra Information' below).
 - Your academic profile (including completed credit and your assessment submission record)
 - Your previous attendance records and engagement with your course
- 5.7 If your personal circumstances mean that you are unable to return to your studies on the planned date, you must contact the Student Information Team via [MyServices](#) so that we can understand your circumstances and discuss a different plan with you.

6. Completing and Submitting a Study Break Form

- 6.1 Once you have worked through your plans, you will need to complete and submit the [Study Break form](#). The form will ask you for specific information and will provide you with details on how to submit it to the University. The form will also provide information on whom you can contact if you need any support to complete it.
- 6.2 If the University decides to impose a study break for the reasons set out in Section 2, you will be notified of this outcome, with an explanation for this decision and you will not be required to complete a Study Break form.

7. Extra information to support your request

- 7.1 You are always welcome to provide extra information with your Study Break request if you think that will be helpful. This could include evidence you already hold, for example appointment or referral letters or records from your doctor's surgery, email/letter records from a healthcare or wellbeing service, or any letters, reports or emails from bodies such as the police, local council or other organisation.
- 7.2 We will **not normally require** you to provide extra information, but we reserve the right to do so. Situations **in which we might request you to provide extra information** after submitting your initial request include where:
- You are requesting a second Study Break
 - The reasons for requesting a Study Break may have longer-term implications and we might need to support you in additional ways
 - There are other circumstances in which extra information would help us assess your request
- 7.3 We recognise that there may be delays in you obtaining extra information due to reasons beyond your control. Where a delay happens, we will still consider your request and provide you with a provisional decision. A final decision will be subject to receiving the extra information we have requested.

8. University Review of the Study Break Form

- 8.1 Your Study Break form will be reviewed by The Student Information Team to ensure that:

- Your request aligns with University regulations concerning periods of registration
 - You have considered the implications of a Study Break in relation to the points set out in Section 3
 - If you are studying on a visa, you understand that the University will contact the Home Office to notify them of the end of your visa sponsorship if your Study Break is longer than 60 days and that you (and your dependents) will be required to leave the UK
- 8.2 The Student Information Team and the Assistant Registrar will liaise with other teams in the University as necessary (e.g. Student Wellbeing Services, Visa Compliance Team) to ensure that all our processes are coordinated to best support and advise you. Your request may be escalated to the Academic Registrar for further consideration if your case is complex.
- 8.3 If the University is not able to support your study break request, you will be informed of the reasons why. We will also provide the opportunity to meet with you to explain our decision. If you then proceed to break from your studies, the University will record you as having withdrawn.
- 8.4 Where your Study Break can go ahead, we will confirm this with you alongside any further actions that you need to take and what steps the University will take next. We will also confirm the way in which we will keep in touch with you, including during the lead up time to your return.

9. Actions the University will take next

- 9.1 Where your Study Break can go ahead, the University will:
- Record your Study Break start and end dates on the student record system
 - Provide you with written confirmation to your Bath Spa email (and your non-University email address stated on your Study Break form) that the Study Break has been confirmed
 - Inform you of any outstanding money owed in relation to Tuition Fees, accommodation costs or any other costs
 - Confirm in writing that any University-run bursaries or other financial support will be suspended and details of any money that you need to return

- Inform the Student Loans Company of your Study Break start and end dates so that the SLC can confirm arrangements with you about your student loan payments and repayment
- Inform the UK Home Office of your study break where applicable. This may result in the sponsorship of your student route visa being withdrawn and you may be required to leave the UK and return at a future date.

10. Returning to Study

10.1 Before your planned return date, the Re-Ignite team will contact you to discuss your readiness to return to your studies. The timing of this contact may vary depending on your circumstances and will be dependent on:

- Your health and wellbeing and if this relates to the reasons for taking a Study Break
- If you need to apply to obtain a new visa to study in the UK and the timeframe needed to put this in place
- If you are dependent on financial support from Student Finance England (i.e. a student loan) and the lead up time required to make sure this is in place
- If you are eligible and plan to apply for University accommodation
- The timing of when you need to make any module choices for your next period of study
- The timeframe required for completion of any necessary clearance checks and reviews for your programme, such as Data and Barring Service checks (DBS), or fitness to train to teach assessments or fitness to study assessment.
- Other factors relevant to your return, including ensuring appropriate disability support measures are in place and a Support to Study plan to facilitate your return to study is agreed.

10.2 In planning your return to study, it will be important to revisit the checklist set out in Section 2. The Student Information team are here to help you if you have any questions. Student Wellbeing Services will work with students who require enhanced support plans to facilitate a return to study, including when a study break was as a result of a Fitness to Study process.

11. Dishonest requests or providing false information

- 11.1 This policy is designed to support you in your studies and to be fair to all students. We will take disciplinary action if you submit a request which is dishonest, or where the extra information you provide (e.g. medical certificate) is false or tampered with in any way.

Document Details

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Related Policies and Procedures: Academic and Student Policies

<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/governance/policies>

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