



Policy on suspensions of status for undergraduate students

Approved by Governing Body in March 2026

A. Introduction

1. This document provides guidance about suspension of status for undergraduate students and tutors. It is not applicable to postgraduate students.¹
2. Further information and detailed advice can be obtained from the College Registrar, the Dean for Welfare and the Tutor for Undergraduates.

B. Definitions

3. A student who is not enrolled as an active student on their course for a defined period of time, but who intends to return to complete their studies in the future, is categorised as a suspended student.
4. Almost all suspensions are entered into by a student voluntarily, often for medical reasons but sometimes for other reasons.
5. In very rare cases, a student may be suspended for academic reasons by the College under the [Academic Expectations and Disciplinary Procedures \(AEDP\)](#). It is also possible for a student to be suspended for non-academic reasons either by the University or the College (under the [Non-Academic Discipline Procedure \(NADP\)](#)). Occasionally a student who is unable to progress from one year of a course to another, while waiting to take (or retake) a University assessment, may also have suspended status.

C. Basic information about suspensions of study

Students should be actively studying if they are enrolled

6. The College is an academic community. If students are not able to engage effectively with their studies, as expected by the College's *Academic Expectations and Disciplinary Procedure (AEDP)*, then it is appropriate for the possibility of a suspension of status to be considered.

The decision to suspend is almost always a joint decision between the student and the College

7. Except in the rare cases where the University or College imposes a suspension of status on a student, for academic or non-academic reasons (see paragraph 5 above), the decision to suspend is one made by the student and the College together.
8. A student cannot decide to suspend their status unilaterally and the Tutor for Undergraduates (on behalf of the College) ultimately makes the decision about a request to

¹ See https://www.spc.ox.ac.uk/asset/SPC_PG_suspension_policy.pdf

suspend. Stopping academic work without having first sought permission to suspend would involve breaches of the College's *AEDP* and could jeopardise a student's good academic standing with the University.

9. Where a student is considering suspension, they can and should seek advice from their tutors, the Tutor for Undergraduates, the College Registrar and/or the Dean for Welfare. In the first instance either the Dean for Welfare and the College Registrar can offer an informal and confidential conversation to students seeking a better understanding of this process.

Suspensions of study normally last a year

10. Suspensions for undergraduate students tend to be a year long, because the course structure rarely enables students to miss a shorter period of the course.

11. In some cases, particularly where a student has been unable to engage effectively with their studies in the period immediately before they suspend, the College may agree that the student can repeat one or more terms of study, meaning that the period of time suspended is less than a year. This normally requires medical evidence in support of the request to repeat.

12. The College would not normally contemplate a request from a student to suspend their status for more than one year in the first instance, although in exceptional cases the College may agree that a suspension may be extended if there are clear medical reasons for this being necessary.

Reasons for suspending

13. The most common cause of suspension is health reasons: in such cases the College requires students to provide medical evidence in support of the request to suspend and will also require medical evidence of the student's fitness to resume their studies at the end of the suspension period. Suspension for medical reasons can be beneficial for students; the time away from study provides time for the student concerned to focus on their recovery and get into a position where they are healthy enough to enable with their studies effectively on their return.

14. Other reasons for students to request a suspension of status might include: the need to take parental leave, financial reasons, taking up a time-limited internship or other personal reasons. The College does not have to agree that students can take time out of their studies to undertake an internship or employment, and in such cases would expect there to be very clear reasons why the proposed break in studies would be beneficial to the student's overall academic trajectory.

15. The College will not grant suspension of status solely on the grounds that a student is, or considers themselves to be, ill-prepared for examinations, or that they have underperformed on course. In a case where a student suspends their status immediately before – or during – their final exams, the expectation would be that the student returns 'for assessment only' the following academic year rather than repeating any terms of study.

Fee liability and residence

16. The University's rules state that course fees for a term are liable unless a student withdraws or suspends on or before Monday of week 4 of the term.²

² See <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/fees/liability/payments>

17. Suspended students are not expected to reside in College accommodation, and are requested to vacate such accommodation within a week of their suspension being agreed. There are some limits on the access to College facilities during a period of suspension (see paragraph 27 below).

D. Considering the possibility of a period of suspension

18. Where a student is considering suspension, they can and should seek advice from their tutors, the Tutor for Undergraduates, the College Registrar and/or the Dean for Welfare. Each student's situation is different. In some cases, suspension may not be the most appropriate option, not least because a period of suspension inevitably causes an extension in the total period of time elapsed before a student can complete their course. The College will do what it reasonably can to assist a student to remain on course rather than suspend. The College Registrar can advise about possible routes to request reasonable adjustments to course requirements on the basis of disability or serious ill health.

19. On occasion, a tutor, the Dean for Welfare or the College Registrar may initiate a discussion with a student about whether it would be appropriate for them to consider the possibility of a suspension. Tutors are advised to seek advice from the Dean for Welfare and/or the College Registrar before they initiate such a conversation. On occasion the College Doctor may also initiate such a conversation with a student.

20. The aim of the College is to help students complete their course successfully (defined in the *AEDP* as achieving a First or a 2.1 Honours degree). Where a student is considering requesting a suspension, it is reasonable for the College to ask the student how they intend to spend the time away from their studies. Particularly in the case of suspension on medical grounds, students should consider (and discuss with the College Doctor or other medical professionals) what treatment they will seek during the period of suspension with the aim of ensuring that they are fit to resume their studies at the end of the period of suspension.

E. Starting a period of suspension

21. The College's agreement to a request to suspend will be communicated by the Tutor for Undergraduates by email. When the Tutor for Undergraduates has agreed the request then the College Registrar will notify the University of the suspension and notify the College Accommodation team (when the student is resident in college accommodation). Where medical evidence is required, this may be provided subsequently: it is not essential that the medical evidence has been received by the College at the point that the suspension is agreed.

22. Where a suspending student is resident in college accommodation, they are expected to move out of their accommodation within a reasonable period (usually within a week unless there are specific travel-related reasons that necessitate a longer stay). Rent (and pre-pay charges) for the term will be adjusted downwards to reflect the student's date of departure. Students should ensure that they check out at the Porters' Lodge, clearing their room and returning any keys before departing.

23. The arrangements for the period of suspension will subsequently be documented in a formal letter from the Tutor for Undergraduates to the student. The key points of the letter likely to be covered in the formal letter are summarised in Annex A. The student will be asked to confirm by email that they agree to the various conditions set out in the letter.

F. During a period of suspension

24. While suspended, students are not liable to pay course fees.
25. Students are encouraged to maintain occasional contact with their Organising Tutors but are not expected to be carrying out significant amounts of academic work while suspended and are not entitled to any formal tuition.
26. Students with suspended status remain members of the University and College and as such are still subject, allowing for necessary variations, to University and College rules and regulations.
27. During a period of suspension, students may not visit or use any College facilities or remain on College premises without the prior written permission of one of their Organising Tutors, the College Registrar, the Tutor for Undergraduates or the Dean for Welfare who may grant permission in respect of single or multiple specified events provided such permission is copied to the Registrar. This includes the dining hall, the library, the bar, the JCR and the College's accommodation. The College retains the right to deny or rescind any permission granted to access College during suspension (although this would only occur in cases where a suspended student's presence in College was negatively impacting on other members of College). Suspended students may maintain periodic contact with the College's Dean for Welfare, where appropriate.
28. Information about the University provision and services that a suspended student can access is available here: www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/undergraduate/status

G. Returning from a period of suspension

Before returning

29. The letter from the Tutor for Undergraduates confirming the details of a student's suspension of status (see paragraph 23 above) will set out the procedure to be followed in run-up to a student's return from suspension. The letter will normally include a specific date by which a student should contact the College Registrar, and their tutors, to confirm their plan to return from suspension. Where a suspension has been on medical grounds, the student will also be expected to arrange for the provision of medical evidence to confirm their fitness to return to full-time study.
30. If the student would like to have accommodation in College on their return, they should contact the Accommodation team (accommodation@spc.ox.ac.uk) in good time before their return. Accommodation on a student's return from suspension cannot be guaranteed at the point that the student starts their suspension, especially for students returning from suspension partway through an academic year.

Collections and other academic requirements

31. Students returning from suspension may be asked to sit a collection (or collections), on work that they have studied before they suspended; they will not be expected to sit a collection on new work. Permission to return from a suspension will not be made conditional on performance in any collection.

32. In exceptional cases, where a student has suspended for health reasons and there has been concern in the run-up to their suspension whether they are able to meet their basic academic obligations, the student may be required to undertake one or more academic tasks in the run-up to, or in the period immediately after, their return. Such tasks would be similar to those required as part of normal tutorial work (or collections). Any such expectations would be specified in the formal letter from the Tutor for Undergraduate issued at the start of the suspension.

Meetings at the start of term in which the student returns

33. The Dean for Welfare will reach out to students returning from a period of suspension. Organising tutors should also meet with the student at the start of the term in which they return.

Disciplinary matters

34. If a student is subject to any disciplinary warnings or conditions under the *AEDP*, the *NADP* or the *Student Regulations* at the point that they suspend their status, these would usually be extended and resume at the point of the student's return.

Annex A: key topics covered in a formal letter confirming suspension arrangements

- a. Start and end date of the suspension
- b. Reason for the suspension
- c. Arrangements relating to any summative assessments already completed/submitted, especially if any terms of study are to be repeated
- d. Date by which the student must confirm their intention to return
- e. *For suspensions on medical grounds only:* requirements for medical evidence to confirm fitness to resume study
- f. Information about whether the student might be required to sit collections or meet other academic conditions at the start of the term they return
- g. Conditions of suspension, including versions of the following text (where relevant to the situation of the particular student):
 1. If you have not already done so, you must contact the Finance Department to settle any outstanding battels.
 2. Please make arrangements to remove any remaining items from [the lockbox in] your room as soon as possible and to return any college keys or key fobs to the Porters' Lodge. Please let the Accommodation team (accommodation@spc.ox.ac.uk) know as soon as you have cleared your remaining belongings.
 3. Any discussions with Student Finance England or other funding bodies about your fees and other financial arrangements are your responsibility, although the University will write to confirm the dates of your suspension of status to the Student Loans Company.
 4. Where relevant it is your responsibility to check on any effect on your visa status that suspending your status may have. You are advised to seek advice from the University Office's student.visacompliance@admin.ox.ac.uk. You should make early contact with the Deputy College Registrar to ensure a new visa can be arranged for you in time for your return.

5. Although your tutors may advise you informally on academic matters during your suspension of status and you should in due course contact them regarding any work to prepare for your return, you are not entitled to formal tuition.
6. It is your responsibility to ensure that you arrange accommodation for your return; you are of course welcome to seek the advice of the College Accommodation Team (accommodation@spc.ox.ac.uk) about this.
7. It is also your responsibility to ensure that you enter for your examinations by the University's deadline. If you are due to return to sit examinations/submit work during the academic year, you will be required to enter for your exams using Student Self Service by the University's deadlines. You will be invited to enter by an email sent to your @ox.ac.uk email address and you should ensure that you continue to monitor your university email account regularly.
8. As a student with suspended status, you remain a member of the University and College and as such are still subject, allowing for necessary variations, to University and College rules and regulations.
9. As a student of the University with suspended status you will retain your University card and Single Sign On (SSO) access to online resources, including email, and to University libraries (subject to any restrictions imposed by the libraries themselves). Guidance on this can be found on the University website at: www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/undergraduate/status
10. During your period of suspension, you may not visit or use any College facilities or remain on College premises without the prior written permission of your tutors, the College Registrar, the Dean for Welfare, or the Tutor for Undergraduates, who may grant permission in respect of single or multiple specified events provided such permission is copied to the Registrar. This includes common rooms, the dining hall, the library, the bar, the JCR and the College's accommodation. The College retains the right to deny or rescind any permission granted to access College during your suspension.