



A Quick Guide to Suspension of Studies for Postgraduate Students

1. Suspension or intermission of studies, from now on referred to simply as 'suspension', is always going to be a last resort, but it may become necessary if you are unable to carry out your studies to the required standard and it is plausible that a period away from Oxford will remedy this. Please note the fundamental difference between suspension and rustication. "Rustication" refers to expulsion as a punishment, such as for non-payment of fees, and is not an applicable term for the process outlined here.
2. Suspension is not to be taken lightly. Intermitting your studies is disruptive, so it is only to be undertaken if, in your view and in your Department's, carrying on with your studies is impossible or near impossible.
3. To make the break complete, and also so as not to make suspension seem more attractive an option than it is, there are strict rules about what suspension entails. In particular, suspended students are not allowed in College for any reason unless they have special permission from the Tutor for Graduates or the Dean (rarely granted). Suspended students are usually expected to leave College within 48 hours of suspension being confirmed, and may not leave any belongings in storage during their suspension.
4. Normally suspension will be for a term or multiple terms: you will leave with the intention of picking up your studies where you left them when you return.
5. If you are considering suspension, the first thing to do is to consult your Supervisor or your Department administrator. You may want to talk things over with your College Advisor, especially if your reason for suspending is welfare-related.
6. If all parties agree that suspension is reasonable and appropriate, you will need to get a certificate from the College doctors stating that you are unfit to study. If your reason for suspending is not medical, you will be advised individually as to any evidence requirements.
7. The terms for your return will be agreed with your Supervisor and your Department, which in the case of suspension on medical grounds will - as a minimum - require a medical certificate, usually from the College doctor, stating that you are fit to return to your studies.
8. Suspension has a bearing on the level of access a student has to the University (Appendix A), and will affect financial circumstances (Appendix B) and - if applicable - visa arrangements (Appendix C). It is the student's responsibility to ensure they have reviewed all information available before suspending.

9. In virtually all cases, suspension is by mutual agreement, but the College does also have the power to enforce suspension in exceptional circumstances. The procedures for this are set out in the 'Fitness to Study' document.
10. Should you suspend your studies, a number of people in College can help ensure that your return from suspension is as successful as we all hope it will be, and so it is important to remain in touch with your Department administrator and the College Office about your fitness to study, including any documentation required before your return; and the Accommodation Office regarding the availability of accommodation.

In addition, please be sure to contact in good time the people who can assist with the welfare side of your return: that might include friends in College, the College's welfare team, the University Counselling Service, the Disability Advisory Service, members of the MCR executive board, and/or the University's Student Union.

Rebecca Beasley, 7 August 2024

Appendix A: the University

The university's guidelines concerning changes in student status are available online, here:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/status>

(Home > Oxford students > Academic matters > Study guidance > Graduate > Changes in student status, last accessed 6 July 2023).

As the university's policy states, during their suspension, students ...

- can keep their University card and SSO access and, with them, can continue to use University libraries and online resources, including email;
- can use the Counselling Service and receive the same level of support as other students, including online support for those who live far from Oxford;
- can remain in touch with their disability advisor (if relevant), but cannot access disability services (which can include specialist SpLD tuition, specialist mentoring, assistive technology training, proof-reading and library assistance); and
- will not receive any formal teaching (including access to lectures, whether in person or recorded).

Appendix B: Finances

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to ascertain the impact of suspension on their financial position, especially if they are in receipt of funding or loans. The College cannot offer financial advice and does not have the ability to intercede with funding bodies or loan companies on behalf of a student.

Appendix C: Visa and Immigration

If you are on a student visa, please consult the guidance here for information about how

suspending will impact your visa status:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/during/changes>