Abeyance Policy for Students on Taught Programmes

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Document Version	Amendments	Amended By	Date
1.0	New policy outlining process and responsibilities for abeyance	Quality Assurance	January 2023
1.1	Roles and team names updated in line with new structure; including Student Engagement Team replaced with Engagement and Success Team, and Director of Teaching and Learning replaced with Director of Education.	Quality Assurance	November 2025

Abeyance Policy for Students on Taught Programmes

1 Introduction and General Rules

Please note that this policy covers abeyance for students on taught programmes only[1].

1.1 Abeyance is the process whereby a student is entitled to request a temporary suspension of their studies. This is usually due to a life event that will impact their learning, such as ill health, pregnancy (including maternity and paternity leave), surgery (including gender reassignment), care giving, financial challenges, work or other opportunities.

1.2 A period of abeyance is normally 12 months in length, typically covering an entire academic year/level, although shorter periods of abeyance can be requested dependant on programme structure and a student's individual circumstances.

1.3 Abeyance for taught students is referenced in Senate Regulations 2 for undergraduate students & Senate Regulation 3 for postgraduate students as below:

"Students wishing to enter a period of abeyance must apply to the College Education Committee for approval. Having been advised by the authorised member of staff regarding the next or most appropriate point for return to the programme following abeyance, the student will confirm to them the date of return from abeyance. The University will not normally agree to periods of abeyance of more than one calendar year in the first instance. Students in abeyance shall remain registered for their programme. Senate shall determine the entitlement of students in abeyance to the use of the University's resources."

1.4 For taught students, abeyance requests will not normally be considered for a period of more than 12 months, in the first instance, unless approved as per Section 5 of this Policy. This rule is applicable to students on both full and part-time modes of study.

1.5 Students on all modes of study are entitled to request an extension to abeyance should they require a further leave of absence once the initial period of abeyance is due to expire.

1.6 The period of abeyance must apply from the date of the student's request and should not usually be back dated. Back dating of a request may be accepted, in some cases, such as a significant medical/personal issue supported with evidence, proven student non-engagement or a delay caused by the University.

[1] Abeyance for research students is referred to in SR5.12 and Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

1.7 Whilst in abeyance students are still considered a registered on their programme, and therefore are permitted access to a limited number of University resources and services, as approved by Senate, whilst away from their studies, such as eVision and Student Wellbeing. Some University resources and services will not be permitted to be accessed or used by students whilst in abeyance, such as on-campus accommodation.

1.8 University Education and Student Experience Committee (UESEC) has overall responsibility for abeyance. In each College, accountability for abeyance approval sits with the College Education Committee (CEC).

1.9 A CEC may delegate the operational responsibility for considering individual requests of abeyance to College departments or individuals. If operational responsibility is delegated, during each consideration of abeyance at CEC, the Committee should list those responsible for authorising periods of abeyance, from an operational perspective, within the College.

1.10 Contact details for those with responsibility for abeyance approval in each College should be communicated to the Engagement and Success Team via set@brunel.ac.uk.

2 Considerations prior to a request for a period of abeyance

2.1 Prior to submitting a request for abeyance, students should seek advice from an appropriate member of staff, such as their Personal Tutor. During these discussions University staff should ensure that consideration is given to the following points:

- If a period of abeyance is in the student's best interest
- Any support that the student may need on returning to study
- Appropriateness of timing in the context of the student's programme or the academic year of the requested period of abeyance
- Any outstanding assessment
- If the student should submit an extenuating circumstances claim prior to abeyance
- Date of return from abeyance
- If the request requires an application for an exceptional period of abeyance or extension to the maximum period of registration
- Programme changes expected to be implemented whilst the student is in abeyance

2.2 Once a discussion with the student has taken place in the Department/College regarding academic matters, students should be directed to the Engagement and Success Team who will provide information and guidance on wider University services, such as the Student Support and Wellbeing Team.[2]

[2] Should a student engage with the Engagement and Success Team initially, the Engagement and Success Team will ensure that the student is directed to their College to receive academic guidance, so that they may make an informed decision regarding abeyance.

2.3 If an abeyance request in eVision indicates that the student has not discussed their intention with a member of staff, either from the College or Engagement and Success Team, the request may be referred back to the student with a recommendation that they speak with a suitable member of staff or team.

3 Student Responsibilities

3.1 Students are responsible for submitting an initial request for a period of abeyance, and any supporting evidence, via the "My Requests" section on eVision.

3.2 Where a student is not capable of submitting a request themselves i.e. due to severe ill health or accident, a member of College staff may submit on the student's behalf with approval from the Chair of CEC.

3.3 Once a student's abeyance request has been submitted, reviewed and accepted, students are responsible for ensuring that the administrative activities outlined on the Making changes to your course (brunel.ac.uk) page have been completed.

3.4 International students that have an accepted period of abeyance will be notified by Records if the abeyance will affect their visa or immigration status and if a removal of sponsorship will occur. If an impact is identified students must act accordingly. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with any visa and immigration requirements prior to, during, and when returning from a period of abeyance.

3.5 Students can be directed to the Engagement and Success Team who will provide additional guidance and support in completing necessary tasks prior to them going into a period of abeyance.

4 Communication whilst Students are in a Period of Abeyance

4.1 Whilst in abeyance, students will be contacted regularly by the Engagement and Success Team and kept informed of any University changes that may be relevant, as well as ensuring that communication with the University is maintained.

4.2 The College is responsible for ensuring that details of any academic changes that will impact a student on their return to study are sent to the Engagement and Success Team in a timely manner, to ensure these are communicated to the affected students promptly.

4.3 Changes could include:

- Significant block modifications
- Programme changes
- Withdrawal of programme
- Assessment changes
- Change to delivery
- Significant changes to College or Department structure

4.4 Similarly, the Engagement and Success Team will ensure that any information provided by a student in abeyance that is deemed relevant, and with the student's permission, is passed to the College for consideration or action, such as if the student believes they may need an extension to their abeyance period.

4.5 If a student chooses not to receive support from the Engagement and Success Team whilst they are in abeyance, the Engagement and Success Team will inform the student's department of this. In this case, the responsibility for ensuring communication of any academic changes to the student comes under the remit of the college or department.

5 Exceptional Periods of Abeyance

5.1 An exceptional period of abeyance refers to either:

- A period of abeyance that exceeds 12 months in the first instance
- An extension to a period of abeyance that exceeds 12 months
- Where a student has requested more than one period of abeyance during their programme of study, irrespective of the previous lengths of abeyance.

5.2 Exceptional periods of abeyance must be approved by a Departmental Director of Education and Vice Dean (Education).

5.3 Once the College or Engagement and Success Team are notified by the student that they wish to apply for an exceptional period of abeyance, a request must be submitted by the relevant College department on the student's behalf using the Exceptional period of abeyance or extension to maximum period of registration request form. A student wishing to take an exceptional period of abeyance should provide evidence to support their request, such as medical evidence.

5.4 If an exceptional period of abeyance is sought, the relevant College will need to consider if the student's maximum period of registration will be exceeded. If so, a request for an extension to the maximum period of registration will need to be made (see section 6).

6 Maximum Period of Registration

6.1 A maximum period of registration is the time scale by which a student is expected to have completed their degree. Details of the maximum period of registration is indicated in the programme specification for each programme.

6.2 On occasion, a student is not able to complete their study within the maximum period of registration, for example, where a Board of Examiners allows reassessment which would take the student over the maximum period of registration for their programme; or where a student has needed to take numerous or extended periods of abeyance. If this occurs, an extension to the maximum period of registration may be requested via the Exceptional period of

abeyance or extension to maximum period of registration request form by the department on the student's behalf.

6.3 Extensions to maximum periods of registration must be approved by the Vice Dean (Education) and Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education).

7 Rejecting a Period of Abeyance Request

7.1 Students are entitled to request a period of abeyance; therefore, rejection should be on substantial grounds, for example:

- The request is for longer than 12 months in the first instance (an exceptional period of abeyance) without the necessary approval having already been achieved (see 5.2).
- It has been decided, in consultation with the student, that an alternative, more appropriate course of action has been found
- An exceptional period of abeyance was not supported by a satisfactory reason and/or evidence
- Acceptance of the request would contravene a University regulation or policy
- If the request has been back dated at the time of submission and was not supported by a satisfactory reason and/or evidence

7.2 The rejection of a period of abeyance request does not impact the student in making future requests.

8 Student Results and Consideration at Boards of Examiners

8.1 For any assessment completed prior to a period of abeyance, the student's results for those assessments will stand. These results will be carried forward and the student will be required to complete any necessary, outstanding assessment on their return from abeyance in order to complete their level.

8.2 If a student has submitted extenuating circumstances, which were accepted prior to abeyance, the student will be entitled to re-assessment as per SR 4 Section B Exceptional Circumstances .

8.3 If a student has completed all taught elements of assessment on their current level, the Board of Examiners should consider the student's profile and offer the necessary re-assessments to be completed on the student's return. Students in abeyance are able to view results on eVision and therefore will be notified of the Board's decision and any re-assessment required.

9 Students Returning from Abeyance

9.1 Students are formally notified 10 working days prior to the expiry of their period of abeyance that they are due to return to study and are required to register on their course.

9.2 When a student returns from a period of abeyance, departments should ensure every effort is made to support the student in making a smooth transition back into study.

9.3 Prior to return, or as soon as practicable after the student returns to study, the Engagement and Success Team will contact the student and College to arrange a meeting with the student's Personal Tutor or other appropriate member of staff. During the meeting with the student, consideration should be given to the following areas:

- Additional support requirements and fitness to return to study
- Any changes to the student's programme/Department/College that may have a significant impact to the student
- Any significant University changes that may impact the student
- Outstanding assessment and re-assessment expected of the student
- Advice of departmental/College/ University support services
- Any other appropriate advice based on the student's specific circumstances

9.4 Should any issues arise from this meeting, actions required by either the College or Engagement and Success Team should be completed in a timely manner so as not to disadvantage the student.

10 Additional Information and Guidance

Team/Resource Details	Location of Resource/ Contact Details
Engagement and Success Team	Student Engagement Team (SET) Email for students: assist-set@brunel.ac.uk Telephone: 01895 268475 Email for staff: set@brunel.ac.uk
Student Responsibilities	Making changes to your course (brunel.ac.uk) Student should also review College information regarding abeyance and speak with their Personal Tutor for further information.
Student Hub, Student Finance, Wellbeing and Immigration information	Supporting you | Brunel University London
eVision step by step guide on abeyance processing for staff	eVision Functionality (brunel.ac.uk)
Quality Assurance forms	Supporting students | Brunel University London