BLOOMSBURY INSTITUTE LONDON

Important information for Bloomsbury Institute Students

The Interruptions Policy below is issued by Birkbeck, University of London, our awarding partner. As a validated partner institution, we follow Birkbeck's policy framework for students requesting an interruption.

Please note that some of the resources referred to in this policy relate specifically to Birkbeck provision and may differ from the support offered at Bloomsbury Institute. We provide our own process for interruption requests. Please contact Academic Administration (academic.admin@bil.ac.uk) if you are considering requesting a break.

If you are uncertain about:

- how any part of this policy applies to your course, or
- where to access the equivalent Bloomsbury Institute support,

please contact Academic Administration, who will be happy to advise you.

Our aim is to ensure you are fully supported should you need to take an interruption during your studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy applies to all students registered with Birkbeck, University of London (hereafter referred to as 'the University' or 'Birkbeck') on taught or research programmes, on-campus, online and off-site.

1.2 This policy outlines the criteria that apply and the procedure for requesting or being placed on interruptions, including breaks in studies and being placed on exam only status.

1.3 Research students who are in receipt of funding from an external sponsor including UKRI studentships may have specific entitlements in relation to periods of absence including paid leave while remaining enrolled. Such students should contact their administrative lead at the earliest opportunity to discuss the support available to them before requesting a break in studies.

2. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

2.1 **Interruption**: This refers to an interruption in a student's enrolment, while interrupted the student is still registered on a programme but is not enrolled.

2.2 **Break in studies**: This refers to a student who has taken an approved Break in Studies and is therefore not enrolled. Students on a Break in Studies should not be attending classes or receiving supervision, although they may have access to other services to enable them to easily transition back to study at the end of their break. Students may either request a break in studies or may be placed on a break in studies by the University, where appropriate (see section 5 below). Students may undertake reassessments during a break in studies but may not re-take a module or attempt a module for the first time.

2.3 **Exam only**: This refers to a student that is being re-assessed and will be either re-submitting coursework or re-sitting an exam but are not taking any modules and therefore should not be attending any classes. Exam only students are not enrolled but may have access to other services in order for them to be supported during the re-assessment process. This also applies to PhD students who are resubmitting their thesis. Students should only be placed on exam only status as a progression decision made by a Sub-Board of Examiners. Students may undertake reassessments while on exam only status but may not re-take a module or attempt a module for the first time.

2.4 Students enrolling onto individual modules via the University's 'open enrolment' process and who do not continue to study, are not considered to be on a break in studies. Students may withdraw from their modules at any time or choose not to enrol on further modules. Such students who recommence their modules within six terms of their original start date, will be considered as 'continuing students' and are subject to the fee regulations in place at the time of their original enrolment. Students who do not re-enrol within six terms will be considered as having withdrawn from studies and they will then be subject to the rules and regulations in force at the time of any new application.

2.5 Students who wish to slow down their studies but not take a break for the rest of the academic year, would not be considered to be taking a break in studies but instead would have reduced study intensity for that year.

2.6 Students cannot be registered with another Higher Education institution whilst on an interruption and risk being withdrawn from their programme if found to be so.

3. FEES AND FUNDING

3.1 Taught students taking a break in studies will be liable for fees for the whole term in which the break commences. When a student returns to study, they will not be liable for any term of study already part or fully attended, that they have already been charged for. This relates to uncompleted credit. If a student has completed the credits and then needs to re-take them as a re-assessment, then they would be charged again. Details of fee charging for students taking a break in studies are outlined in the Fees Policy.

3.2 Fee liability for research students taking a break in studies will be calculated on a termly basis, in accordance with the Fees Policy.

3.3. Students with exam only status will not be liable for fees during this period.

3.4. Interruptions may have implications for student funding arrangements and students should seek advice on funding and fee implications from Student Advice.

4. LENGTH OF INTERRUPTION

4.1 The regulations for taught programmes of study and regulations for research degrees, permit any student on a programme of study leading to a Birkbeck award, to suspend studies for a maximum of six terms in total during their programme of study. This may be in one period of six terms, or non-consecutive shorter periods that add up to a total of six terms or less. This limit continues to apply in cases where a student transfers to a different programme of study at Birkbeck.

4.2 Students who wish to stop studying within the first two weeks of the start of their programme will not be considered for a break in studies but will be withdrawn.

4.3 The length of any permitted break in studies is dependent at which point a student wishes to interrupt.

- 4.3.1 For taught students a break in studies is expected to commence from the term that the break starts, and will normally run until the start of the next academic year that the student intends to return to study.
- 4.3.2 For research students a break in studies is normally expected to be from the term that the break starts, until the start of the next term that the student intends to return to study.

4.4 A break in studies must be a minimum of one term. Breaks in studies for students on taught programmes will not be permitted for only one term, where that term has no scheduled teaching and only examinations. In summer term students will not normally be permitted to take a break in studies after the first two weeks of the term.

4.5 For taught students, a break in studies will commence on the day following the last recorded date of attendance. The University reserves the right to determine the date that the break in study commences when there is a difference between the recorded last date of attendance and the last date where there is evidence of the student engaging with their studies.

4.6 For research students, the date of interruption will be recorded as the day following the last recorded date of attendance. Where this does not fall on the first day of a term fee liability will be calculated on a termly basis in accordance with the Fees Policy.

4.7 Students should seek guidance where a break in study is likely to exceed the six term maximum. Students who do not re-enrol after having completed six terms of breaks in study, will be deemed to have withdrawn from their programme. Any student who wishes to resume their programme after having been withdrawn should seek guidance and may be eligible to apply for any previous credits achieved to be considered on starting or re-starting a programme, under the University's Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy.

4.8 For taught students exam only status may last for a maximum duration of two consecutive academic years (i.e. six consecutive terms) at any one time, although may extend beyond this duration over the period of their programme of study (e.g. where a student has spent two years on exam only status, and returned to study for a full academic year, they may then be placed on exam only status again if appropriate at the end of that academic year).

4.9 Sub-Boards of Examiners (or another nominated body within the School) should keep a record of all students on exam only status and review this annually. Where students spend longer than two consecutive years on exam only status, Schools are required to keep a record of the reasons why this period is being extended beyond the normal maximum duration, and if appropriate seek advice from Registry and ASQ.

5. PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING A BREAK IN STUDIES

5.1 When a student requests a break in studies, they should first discuss this with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. programme director and/or supervisor, personal tutor). Students can then register their request for a break in study via their MyBirkbeck Profile.

5.2 Consideration for approval, subject to policy compliance, will be by the programme director for students on taught programmes and by the supervisor and PGR School Lead for students on a research programme. If there is any conflict of interest, then the decision may be made by a suitable alternative member(s) of academic staff. Once approved, the school will write to the student to confirm the agreed dates of the break in study.

5.3 In some circumstances, students may be placed on a break in studies by the University due to disciplinary reasons (refer to the Student Discipline Policy for more information) or for health reasons (refer to the Fitness to Study Policy for more information).

6. RETURNING FROM A BREAK IN STUDIES

6.1. All students on breaks in studies will be contacted by the University prior to the expected return date, to discuss plans to return to study.

6.2. Students will not normally be permitted to repeat teaching or assessments that they had the opportunity to engage with or complete prior to their break in studies commencing, without paying fees again for the module(s) in question.

POLICY REVIEW

- **Created**: June 2008
- **Latest update**: July 2026
- **Date of next review**: 2030-31 academic year
- **Owner**: Director of Registry
- **SLT owner**: DVC Education and Student Experience
- **Committee oversight**: Education and Student Experience Committee for Academic Board