

## Wadham College: Terms of Graduate Suspension

Students who are considering withdrawing from their course, or who might wish to investigate the possibility of suspending their studies for a specified period of time should talk to their Department/Faculty and to the Tutor for Graduates and/or Senior Tutor at the first opportunity. In all cases students are welcome to be accompanied by a friend or member of the College's welfare team.<sup>1</sup> In many cases suspension needs to be determined relatively quickly, and in such cases the Senior Tutor will normally agree suspension on behalf of the College, subject to agreement from the Department/Faculty. In the first instance, graduates may wish to talk to their supervisor or graduate studies assistant: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/status>

Applications for suspension need to be made with the GS017 form:

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

Reasons for suspension can often be complex and emotional. It is usually preceded by a period of discussion and on-course support. It can be colloquially referred to as suspension, rustication, or intermission, and in all cases it is something that must be agreed with the College and Department/Faculty rather than being an option which a student can unilaterally pursue. Suspension on medical grounds, or because of exceptional personal circumstance, may come from a purely medical or welfare situation. In many cases, however, medical and academic factors can interplay, and suspending students can find themselves in difficulty on both fronts. This is a dynamic to which the College is sympathetic, and of which it has a depth of experience. It is part of the reason why cases of suspension are always treated individually and holistically, with the particular student in mind.

### 1. Medical Conditions

Students suspending from study normally do so on medical grounds (which can include mental health reasons), after very careful consideration, and in discussion with health-care providers, the Department/Faculty and the Senior Tutor/Tutor for Graduates.<sup>2</sup> Medical suspension will require a letter of support from the College GP, who can in turn be in contact with relevant specialists supporting a student. The student will be required to follow agreed medical advice and appropriate treatment in order to manage their health problems. Return is conditional upon receipt of a medical note from the College GP certifying that the student has received the appropriate and recommended support during their time in suspension, and that they are fit to resume studies.<sup>3</sup> Suspended students are thus required to arrange an appointment with the College GP at least 6 weeks prior to the agreed date of return.

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<sup>1</sup> Contact details for the welfare team at Wadham, members of staff and students, can be found at: <http://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare>. OUSU's Student Advice Service is also happy to provide support and to accompany students: <http://ousu.org/advice/student-advice-service>

<sup>2</sup> Other grounds may include becoming a parent or guardian, or exceptional personal circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> Students are encouraged to provide full disclosure to the College GP, who will then only communicate to the College what has been agreed with the student, and what is relevant for return. A student might thus still, quite sensibly, be in receipt of health-care or welfare support on returning to studies, as discussed with the GP but be coping sufficiently for the GP to be able to recommend to the College that they can return to full-time study.

## **2. Academic Conditions**

Any academic conditions will be set by the Department/Faculty, and not by the College.

## **3. Period of suspension**

In the case of graduate students on a taught course, any term of study completed by the time of suspension is not normally allowed to be re-taken. Circumstances that have affected study in a given term should already have been raised with the Department or Faculty as and when they arise, and addressed during the term. There are exceptions, most particularly when a condition is raised early on in term and, in consultation with the Department/Faculty and College, a student attempts to continue study without suspension, but this proves ultimately unsuccessful. In all cases the Department/Faculty should liaise with the College to determine whether, exceptionally, a period of 'repeat study' is justified. As a rule, the closer towards the end of a term that a suspension is requested, the less likely it will be that the term can be 're-taken', but this may depend on the level of work achieved during the term.

Students undertaking research work will also need to discuss with the Department or Faculty their re-integration into an ongoing project and/or the continued availability of their supervisor.

The University rules that the term's fees must be paid if a student is on course beyond Monday of 4<sup>th</sup> week of that term. In practice, this means that all suspension should have been discussed and agreed by Friday of 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the term of suspension if fees are not to be incurred and the term is to be re-taken.

## **4. Access to academic facilities**

Once someone has suspended their studies, they will no longer have 'student status' with the University. Nonetheless, students on medical suspension will have access to University facilities as set out by the University. This will include the provision of an active University card, which will in turn allow access to online facilities and texts, use of the University libraries, including borrowing rights from faculty and sub-faculty libraries, and an active College email address. The College will not normally allow access to the College library except with the permission of the Senior Tutor, nor the long-loan of texts. The College will provide a letter of introduction on request if students wish to use a local university library.

Students are asked to routinely check their Wadham email account whilst suspended, or forward this to a private account, so that the College can stay in contact during this period.

## **5. Welfare support**

A student suspending from their studies at Wadham will inevitably face a certain amount of disruption to their support networks. As part of preparing to suspend, students should consider how to ensure that they will have the support that they will need during their time away from study. Students on medical suspension will have access to University facilities as set out by the University; however, this support must not be a substitute for specialist support for the relevant medical condition.

The College Welfare Advisor or Chaplain can assist students with planning their transition to and from suspension, and can give suspended students permission to enter College for meetings on this subject. However, the Welfare Advisor or Chaplain cannot provide ongoing welfare support for suspended students, which should instead be sought from appropriate professionals.

The Welfare Advisor can help with identifying potential sources of support during a period of suspension. To arrange a meeting, email [welfare.advisor@wadh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:welfare.advisor@wadh.ox.ac.uk)

The University's Counselling Service may also provide suspended students with help on the same basis as for students on-course; that is on a short term basis. The Counselling Service will not be able to substitute for NHS (or overseas) support at home, but can assist in helping students to think about the services they will need, and can offer appointments on Skype to students who have already left residence.

OUSU's Student Advice Service (<http://ousu.org/advice/student-advice-service/>) is also happy to give both advice and support to students considering and returning from suspension, and has set up an online discussion forum for students on suspension as well as arranging regular meetings for those coming back to study.

## **6. Disability Advisory Service**

For some students, medical factors that led to suspension of status may suggest a condition that can be supported by the University's Disability Advisory Service.<sup>4</sup> If a student suspects that support from the Service might be helpful, they are strongly encouraged to make contact prior to their return so that appropriate assessment can be scheduled and support put in place. The process of agreeing and funding support can take a surprisingly long time, and a student may put themselves at a disadvantage if appropriate support cannot be put in place by the time of their return.

## **7. Domestic arrangements**

The College will attempt to re-let College rooms vacated by suspended students, and will not charge rent beyond residency for any suspended students. Those living in College-owned accommodation must notify domestic offices promptly, and if possible in advance of their departure. It is expected that students will generally leave residence within one week of the agreement to take suspension. Students leaving shared flats will need to notify their flat-mates as other students may be offered use of that room.

Students living in University-owned accommodation should liaise directly with the University's Graduate Accommodation Office about their domestic arrangements.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability?wssl=1>. The college's dedicated link advisor can be contacted at [georgina.heywood@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:georgina.heywood@admin.ox.ac.uk) although any member of the service can be contacted in confidence. Further details on college support for students with disabilities can be found at: <http://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supporting-students-and-staff-with-disabilities>

## **8. Access to College**

A period of suspension from studies is a time for recovery and/or reorientation, and students tend to benefit more from this if they are able to take some time completely away from the 'Oxford bubble'. Students often look forward to time spent in Oxford without work and deadlines, but in fact being here while everyone else is busy with their studies can be uncomfortable and alienating. For this reason, if it is feasible for a student to spend most of their suspended time away from the city of Oxford, we would recommend that they do so. Nonetheless we know that there are many reasons why this may not be the best possible course of action. Students who are staying in Oxford need to be aware that this can be a challenging option, and to carefully consider how they will spend their time as an Oxford resident who is not currently a student of the University.

During suspension a student is required not to come into College except with the written permission or at the invitation of a College Officer or advisor (or Welfare Advisor or Chaplain, as above). If they wish to attend a specific social event, application must be made to the College Dean, who has the right to refuse. This provision applies to access to Merifield, as well as to the main College site.

## **9. Financial arrangements**

While on suspension, a person will no longer have 'student' status with the University and therefore will not be required to pay fees, nor will they normally be eligible for student financial support (including support from the College, such as living out grants). The Department/Faculty will contact the Central University team to inform them of your suspension, but suspending students should ensure that any funding body is informed of their decision to suspend.

Historically students on suspension have been liable for Council Tax. Some local authorities, including Oxford, now appear to be taking a more lenient line, and you are advised to contact the Council as soon as possible after you suspend to inform them of your situation and clarify whether or not you will be liable for Council Tax.

Students on post-graduate taught courses who are withdrawing from exams only do not normally repeat the term on return from suspension, but return simply to sit the exams. These students will not be liable for tuition fees for that period, but nor will they be entitled to access to tutorials, revision classes etc.

## **10. Overseas students**

Students who have been studying at Oxford on a student visa may be unable to remain in the UK and need to return to their country of residence promptly. The University has a duty to inform the UK Border Agency when a student suspends, and students are advised to check on the University's webpages for overseas students for further information on their rights and responsibilities:

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

**Agreed by Governing Body  
27<sup>th</sup> July 2016**