

Hertford College

Suspension on Medical Grounds for Undergraduate Students

Oxford Colleges' Senior Tutors' Committee (STC) has recently agreed a document on **Guidance on Undergraduate Suspension of Status**. Hertford adopts this document as the framework for its own procedures for Suspension on Medical Grounds, with some variations as noted below (principally, we do not require students to sit collections as a condition of re-entry).

The College's specific procedures for suspension on medical grounds are as follows. *They should be read in conjunction* with the **STC Guidance on Undergraduate Suspension of Status**, which is available in Appendix A.

Note: Suspension on **non-medical** grounds is also occasionally possible but is much rarer. This possibility should be discussed as appropriate with the lead tutor in the student's subject, the Senior Tutor, or any member of the welfare team¹ or other senior person in College.

Information for Postgraduates wishing to suspend can be found at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/status?wssl=1>.

ARRANGING TO SUSPEND ON MEDICAL GROUNDS

1. A student wishing to suspend on medical grounds requires the permission of Hertford's Governing Body, as requested by the student through the Senior Tutor.
2. A student who believes they may require a suspension on medical grounds should raise the matter with one or more of the following in the first instance: the lead tutor in their subject, the Welfare Coordinator, the Registrar, the Dean, the Senior Tutor, or any other member of the welfare team². If the student wishes to pursue the matter further, a meeting is normally held with the Senior Tutor and Dean, at which any of the other above-mentioned may also be present as appropriate. The student may if they wish be accompanied at this meeting by another member of College or the University, normally agreed in advance with the Senior Tutor or Registrar.
3. Either before or after this meeting, the student should visit the College GP and request a medical letter, without which a suspension cannot be effected. A letter from the College GP is normally required, even where a student has (or can request) other evidence from a GP or specialist elsewhere. The medical letter should state that, in the GP's opinion, the student is not currently fit to pursue their studies, give the reasons why this is so, and detail the steps that are to be taken to remedy the situation. It

¹ For list of current members of the welfare team, see <https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/my-hertford/health-welfare/hertford-welfare-support>

² <https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/my-hertford/health-welfare/hertford-welfare-support>

may also indicate the date by which the student is likely to be fit to resume their studies. University templates for the letter are available and may be obtained from the Welfare Coordinator or Registrar, or directly from the [University website](#)³.

4. After agreement between the student, the Senior Tutor and the Dean, the College Office will normally effect the suspension on receipt of the medical letter and the student will make arrangements to go out of residence as soon practicable thereafter. The arrangements will initially be confirmed by email from the Registrar. A formal letter from the Senior Tutor confirming the suspension and the projected return date will be sent to the student's home address and/or to any other specified address, as the student requests as soon as possible after the next Governing Body meeting, when the decision has been formally ratified by the College.
5. A student will normally resume their studies at the point in the academic year at which they suspended: i.e. will not normally repeat a term or terms (see STC Guidance para 7).

WHILE SUSPENDED

6. Students suspended on medical grounds are normally expected to pursue a course of medical treatment in order to ensure a return to full health; to keep in touch with their lead tutor or other college contact (e.g. the Registrar) during the period of suspension; to continue to engage with their academic discipline as their personal circumstances and health permit; and, in due course, to take advice from their lead tutor about preparing to resume their studies. The college contact person should be agreed by the College and the student at the point of suspension.
7. **Access to University facilities** (see STC Guidance para 10). While suspended, a student will normally continue to have access to their Hertford e-mail account, to University libraries and electronic resources, and to the Counselling Service (OUCS), Disability Advisory Service (DAS) and Careers Service.
8. **Access to college site and facilities.** A suspended Hertford student will not normally be entitled to college accommodation or to any teaching. Hertford strongly supports the views set out in STC Guidance para 11, which take into account the health and wellbeing of all its members as well as that of individual suspending students (so, for example, a suspended student sleeping on a friend's floor is not appropriate). However, any suspended student who wishes to visit the College is however welcome to do so on an occasional basis, and may, with appropriate notice (of at least 48 hours) reserve a guest room (if available) for an overnight stay, if required. Such visits should not normally exceed two nights per term, and the guest room should be booked via the Registrar and will normally be

³ <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/resources/medicalcerts/>

charged at the standard vacation rent rate⁴.

9. **College employment.** While suspended, a student cannot seek employment with the College or with International Programmes (or continue with such employment, if already arranged).
10. **Holding JCR offices.** If, when suspending, a student is the holder of any JCR position, they will normally be expected to co-opt (or, with the JCR, otherwise arrange) an 'acting' officer or representative for the period of the suspension.
11. **Welfare support while suspended.** The College does not have the resources to offer on-going welfare support to students who are on suspension. Some short-term support may however be arranged with the University Counselling Service, as detailed in the STC guidance para 12, where further advice and information may be found.
12. **Financial arrangements.** Full information and guidance may be found at the STC Guidance para 14. Any student who is (exceptionally) permitted to repeat one or more terms on resuming their studies should be aware that this will normally have financial consequences – i.e. the student will incur additional liability for tuition fees and increased expenditure on maintenance – and should plan accordingly.

RETURNING TO COLLEGE

13. A student who has suspended on medical grounds will be contacted by the College Office at least eight weeks before their projected return to College. At that point the date of return can normally be reviewed, if there are continuing medical problems. If not, arrangements can be made for the student to come back into residence, if appropriate.
14. A student who has suspended on medical grounds will not be required to sit re-entry collections as a condition of re-entry. They may, however, request or agree to sit collections (or, for example, to write one or more timed essays) if they consider it will help with getting back up to speed academically, or with assessing where more work is needed. This may be particularly appropriate in subjects and years where all students returning to College at the start of term routinely sit collections.
15. A student who has suspended on medical grounds can resume only if, before their projected return, they have secured a medical letter (from any GP or specialist, but normally the College GP) which states that, in the doctor's opinion, the student is fit to resume their studies. It is the student's responsibility to make sure this letter reaches the Senior Tutor or the College Office in good time for their return to College. (See STC Guidance

⁴ The standard vacation rent rate is published in Information for Members, available from <https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/my-hertford/documents-and-policies>

paras 5 and 6.)

16. On coming back into residence, a student who has suspended on medical grounds is required to attend a meeting with the Dean, Senior Tutor and Registrar (and, where appropriate, the Welfare Coordinator) to review their medical and academic needs. This meeting should not be regarded a substitute for discussing academic issues with the student's lead tutor, but as an opportunity to consider the support that may be required from a wider perspective (e.g. relating to medical, welfare, accommodation issues etc, and/or from appropriate University services, such as the DAS).
17. Students returning from suspension are eligible to apply to the College [Student Support Fund](#)⁵.

⁵ <https://www.hertford.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/content/files/discover-hertford/Student%20Support%20Fund%20Information.pdf>

Guidance on Undergraduate Suspension of Status

Drawn up by a Working Group of the STC, and received and noted at the meeting of the STC on Monday 14 November 2016

Definition of terms

Suspension of status

Suspension of status is sometimes colloquially referred to as 'suspension', 'rustication', or 'intermission', and it is recommended, for clarity, that 'suspension of status' is the term to be used, as it is by the University.¹ During this period an undergraduate will not be considered on-course, and will not hold enrolled status.

In the absence of College permission, an undergraduate ceasing their studies or going out of residence will be deemed to have withdrawn.

Withdrawal

An undergraduate may withdraw from their studies at any time and by such withdrawal leaves the University, their College, and their course. Students who have withdrawn are not enrolled at the University and cannot expect to return to their studies at a subsequent point.

Principles of undergraduate suspension of status

1. A suspension of status may arise in one of two ways. Firstly, when an undergraduate wishes to suspend status on medical or other personal/welfare grounds (for example, bereavement, parenthood, need to care for others, etc). Secondly, on rare occasions, a college may decide it is necessary to suspend an undergraduate's status (i) if there are severe concerns about an undergraduate's fitness to study² or (ii) for disciplinary reasons (academic or non-academic).

¹ Terms as used by the University are set out at:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/undergraduate/status?wssl=1>

² Individual colleges may have their own fitness to study policy, and/or may also refer to the University's Fitness to Study policy: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/fitness-to-study?wssl=1>, and the associated University statute: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/787-121.shtml>.

The University has established a common framework across departments, faculties and colleges for cases where questions arise as to whether a student is fit to study or to return to study after a period of leave for medical, psychological, or emotional problems. Extract from Statute XIII <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/787-121.shtml>:

“‘fitness to study’ shall mean:

(a) a student's fitness:

- (i) to commence a distinct course of academic study; or
- (ii) to continue with his/her current course of academic study; or
- (iii) to return to his/her current or another course of academic study; and

(b) his/her ability to meet:

- (i) the reasonable academic requirements of the course or programme; and
- (ii) the reasonable social and behavioural requirements of a student member (whether resident in college or not) without his/her physical, mental, emotional or psychological health or state having an unacceptably deleterious impact upon the health, safety and/or welfare of the student and/or other students and/or University or college staff (not withstanding adjustments required by law)”.

2. Undergraduates do not have an automatic right to suspend status, though colleges will consider sympathetically requests on medical, or other personal/welfare grounds, and will make reasonable adjustments in cases covered by the Equality Act 2010. Suspension of status on medical grounds requires medical certification, typically from the GP (doctor) with whom a student is registered in Oxford, in support of the request. A college will not grant suspension of status solely on the grounds that an undergraduate is, or feels, ill-prepared for examinations, or that they have underperformed on course.
3. Cases of suspension will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account all relevant information (including medical) and are always treated holistically, with the particular undergraduate in mind. A request to suspend status is usually preceded by a period of discussion and on-course support. Colleges will do all they reasonably can to assist an undergraduate to remain on course, rather than to suspend their status. In some cases suspension of status will be the best course of action, in others it may not.³
4. Any decision made by a college regarding suspension of status, and the conditions attached to that suspension and return, should be confirmed in writing by the college within a reasonable time (within 28 working days from the date of informal agreement, subject to receipt of necessary medical evidence). If an undergraduate is dissatisfied with the college's decision, they should follow relevant appeal or complaints procedures as set out in college regulations. Such regulations can normally be found in College handbooks or provided on request to the Senior Tutor.

Discussion between a college and an undergraduate regarding suspension of status might helpfully also include discussion of domestic and other arrangements, such as any charges made for college rooms vacated, means of communication during the period of suspension (eg confirming which email address will be checked), and the possibility of college accommodation on return to studies.

5. An undergraduate whose status is suspended on medical grounds will normally be expected to follow medical advice and appropriate treatment as agreed with a doctor (typically the GP with whom a student is registered in Oxford) in order to address their health problems. After suspension on medical grounds, and before an undergraduate is permitted to resume study, the college must receive a medical assessment from the doctor, stating whether or not the undergraduate is medically fit to resume study. The doctor's assessment will, as appropriate, take into account reports provided by other clinicians involved in the care of the undergraduate during the period of suspension. The college will be responsible for determining, in the light of the doctor's assessment, whether the undergraduate is fit to study and whether any other conditions of return have also been met.⁴

Undergraduates whose status is suspended are often required to arrange an appointment with the doctor (again, typically the GP with whom a student is registered in Oxford) prior to a final decision's being made on their medical fitness to return, so that necessary paperwork can be submitted in good time, outstanding conditions addressed, and appropriate support or necessary reasonable adjustments put in place.

³ University procedures allow for the possibility of re-structuring courses as a 'reasonable adjustment' where this is the best response to an ongoing disability condition. Applications for such re-structuring, or for other major adjustments to assessment on the grounds of disability should be made to Education Committee.

⁴ See footnote 2.

Undergraduates are encouraged to provide full disclosure to the doctor, who will then only communicate to the college what has been agreed with the undergraduate, and what is relevant for return.

Confirmation of an undergraduate's medical fitness to return does not need to entail a full recovery: an undergraduate might continue to be in receipt of health-care or welfare support on returning to studies, as agreed with the doctor, but be managing their medical condition sufficiently well for the doctor to be able to recommend to the College that they can return to full-time study.

6. All undergraduates who are on course, including those who have returned from suspension of status, are expected to be in good academic standing, as defined by the college (for example, attending classes, tutorials, submitting work on time, sitting collections, performing at a level commensurate with their ability).

Colleges will wish to assure themselves that returning undergraduates are ready to re-integrate into their course at an appropriate level, and are fit to return to study (see footnote 2). In relation to students with disabilities, colleges will follow the collegiate University's common framework, noting the requirement to make reasonable adjustments insofar as they do not compromise academic competence standards.⁵ Returning without being able to fulfil the academic requirements of the course and to maintain good academic standing within the college may be seriously detrimental to an undergraduate's health, and can limit an undergraduate's opportunities to complete their studies successfully.

Colleges may deem it appropriate to set academic as well as medical conditions of return. Where academic conditions are set for undergraduates returning from medical suspension (and where the undergraduate is not concurrently under an academic disciplinary process) these are on pedagogical grounds and/or to support undergraduates in their return, and to ensure that they are prepared for the proposed point of re-entry, rather than as a punitive measure (that is, if collections are set under these circumstances they are not 'penal' collections). In such cases it will be important to show how a specific requirement relates to a college's overall academic framework and procedures.

If an undergraduate was on a disciplinary or academic monitoring process at the point of suspension they would normally return at the same point in that disciplinary or monitoring process, unless it was decided prior to, or at the point of, suspension that their medical condition provided sufficient mitigation for them to be removed from that process, or for that process to be adjusted.

Where suspension of status has been decided on academic disciplinary grounds a college will normally set academic conditions of return (which may include one or more penal collections to be sat shortly before or at the point of return).

7. Any term of study that has been completed by the time of suspension is not normally allowed to be repeated. Circumstances that have affected study in a given term should normally already have been raised with tutors and/or relevant college officers as and when they arise, and addressed during the term. There might be exceptions, such as when a condition is raised early on in term and, in consultation with tutors and the appropriate college officer, an undergraduate attempts to continue study without

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http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/aad/documents/disability/A_common_framework_for_supporting_disabled_students.pdf

suspension, but this attempt is ultimately unsuccessful, or where a serious situation has not been recognized at an earlier stage. In such cases any period of 'repeat study' cannot be assumed, but might be considered.⁶

The University's rules state that the term's fees must normally be paid if an undergraduate is on course beyond Monday of 4th week of that term. In practice, this normally means that a suspension should have been discussed and agreed by Friday of 3rd week of the term of suspension if fees are not to be incurred and the term is to be re-taken. In the context of fees, it may be appropriate to emphasize to students that suspension of status is not a mode of part-time study: undergraduates who are taking part-time courses pay fees at specific rates for those courses, while undergraduates taking full-time courses whose status is suspended and are not on course do not pay fees for the terms of suspension (subject to the above point about the timing of suspension).

8. A single period of suspension of status will not normally exceed one year. In some cases colleges will consider an extension, or further period of suspension, following a fresh consideration of the case. Periods of suspension in aggregate extending beyond one year will require consultation with further parties (eg Education Committee and the relevant Department or Faculty), not least as a returning student would be 'Overstanding for Honours' without dispensation. It would be unusual for any undergraduate to be suspended from studies for a total of more than two years across their course.
9. In all cases of suspension consideration will need to be given to the assessment of any University work already submitted, changes in exam regulations, and whether that undergraduate will be 'Overstanding for Honours'. This should be discussed with the undergraduate prior to suspension.

10. Access to University facilities

An undergraduate whose status is suspended will no longer be on course.

Undergraduates whose status is suspended will normally have access to certain 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 resources, use of the University libraries, borrowing rights from faculty and sub-faculty libraries (unless a block has been put on the University card e.g. for non-payment of library fines), and an active University email address. It should be noted that students who are suspended due to non-payment of fees will have all services withdrawn.

During a period of suspension, undergraduates may not normally be included on routine mailing lists, and may need to remain in proactive contact with tutors and administrators regarding matters such as option choices on return.

Many college offices will provide a letter of introduction on request if undergraduates wish to use a local University library.

11. Access to College site and facilities

Many colleges require that an undergraduate not come into college during suspension of status except with written permission. Colleges will have a named officer from whom, or

⁶ University regulations and processes allow for flexibility where there is good cause. However, assessment structures start from the basis that all undergraduates will have the same number of terms, and time, to study and prepare for examinations and colleges need to ensure that suspension does not lead to unfair advantage in relation to other undergraduates.

procedure by which, an undergraduate whose status is suspended can seek permission to enter college premises. If and when academic conditions of return have been set, a student suspending from studies will need to liaise with the college about appropriate access in the run-up to any assessment, for example if access is required to specific texts.

Colleges are small academic communities concentrated on academic work, and many of their members are residents. Colleges may regard the presence in college of undergraduates who are not on course as a distraction to those who are, and may also have health and safety reasons for requiring written permission for access.

Undergraduates whose status is suspended are sometimes concerned that their access to facilities is restricted, and many undergraduates find the company of their on-course friends a support. However, colleges must balance the needs of all their undergraduates. Because of their pre-existing membership of the college community, the relationship to the college of a student whose status is suspended is not akin to that of a member of the public, and their presence on college premises has a different impact. In some cases blurred boundaries of support can lead to a very difficult environment for on-course undergraduates, significantly affecting both their work and, potentially, their own welfare.

Advice

12. Welfare support

It is important to recognise that Colleges and the University are places of academic study and cannot play a significant role in the welfare support or treatment of an undergraduate while their status is suspended.

An undergraduate whose status is suspended from their studies will inevitably face a certain amount of disruption to their support networks. As part of preparing to suspend, undergraduates should consider how to ensure that they will have sufficient support during the suspension of their status. Undergraduates who are staying in the city of Oxford need to be made aware that this can be a challenging option, and asked to consider carefully how they will spend their time as an Oxford resident who is not currently on course.

Undergraduates whose status is suspended will normally have access to certain University welfare services as set out by the University⁷; however, this support is generally not a substitute for specialist support for the relevant medical condition. The University's Counselling Service may also provide students whose status is suspended with help on the same basis as 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. Students may also find it helpful to access the Service before returning to study to help re-engage with academic work and college life.

OUSU's Student Advice Service can provide both advice and support to undergraduates considering and returning from suspension.⁸ The University's Careers Service is also available to students whose status is suspended.⁹

⁷ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/undergraduate/status?wssl=1>

⁸ <http://ousu.org/advice/student-advice-service/>

⁹ <http://www.careers.ox.ac.uk/>

13. The Disability Advisory Service

For some undergraduates, medical factors that led to suspension of status may suggest a condition that can be supported by the University's Disability Advisory Service.¹⁰ If an undergraduate suspects that support from the service might be helpful, they should be 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 an undergraduate may put themselves at a disadvantage if appropriate support cannot be put in place by the time of their return.

14. Financial arrangements

While their status is suspended, an undergraduate will not be required to pay fees, nor will they normally be eligible for university student financial support; colleges will have their own policies with regard to college financial support. If suspension of status is agreed, the college will inform University administration, which will in turn inform any UK student funding body.

Undergraduates with suspended status are recommended to make contact with Student Finance England (SFE), or other funding body, within a month of receiving the college's formal confirmation of suspension. This should allow time for notification to have been processed. The college is only allowed to discuss an undergraduate's case directly with SFE or other agency where a student has set up permission for this to take place, but can be asked to provide any official letters required if an undergraduate is negotiating provision. At the time of writing (2016), in some circumstances of medical suspension an undergraduate is able to receive an additional 60 days' worth of funding from SFE and, if an undergraduate has interrupted for Compelling Personal Reasons (CPR) and can demonstrate financial hardship, they may be eligible for a limited amount of maintenance funding during suspension. Requests are considered by SFE on a case-by-case basis, and in some circumstances the University's fees and funding team may be able to advise.¹¹ Each of the other UK funding agencies has different arrangements in place to support these circumstances, which students will need to check directly.

Undergraduates returning from suspension will need to re-contact SFE, or other funding body, prior to their return to confirm their funding arrangements directly. Where an undergraduate is returning from suspension in a subsequent academic year, they are advised to reapply for their Student Finance as early as possible after the new application cycle opens (usually from January onwards) to allow sufficient time for their application to be assessed and their entitlement to be finalized, even if not returning until Hilary or Trinity term of the next academic year. Following a re-assessment, undergraduates will receive an updated Student Finance letter from their funding agency which confirms their revised entitlement.

Undergraduates are advised to contact their Local Council as soon as possible after suspension of status to inform them of their situation and clarify whether or not they will be liable for Council Tax.

Undergraduates who are withdrawing from exams only do not normally repeat the term on return from suspension, but return to sit exams only. These undergraduates will not be liable for tuition fees for that period, nor will they be entitled to access to tutorials,

¹⁰ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability>

¹¹ <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/fees/liability/payments/suspension>

revision classes etc. SFE will not provide maintenance funding for a return to sit exams only.

15. 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 if their status is suspended. The University has a duty to inform the UK Border Agency when a student's status is suspended, 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>. Students can also access individual advice via tier4compliance@admin.co.uk.

Appendix B

Suspension of Study Checklists

Matters to be reviewed with students in meetings and/or subsequent communications

(a) before or at the point of suspension

- (i) Reason for request, and any specific details contained in the medical letter (if available);
- (ii) Agreement of an appropriate treatment plan, normally drawn up with the College Doctor;
- (iii) Agree college contact person for period of suspension (e.g. lead college tutor or Registrar);
- (iv) Appropriate access to facilities while suspended;
- (v) Academic plan for catching up on any work backlog and preparing for the term of return;
- (vi) Any expectations regarding the provision of interim reports by the undergraduate;
- (vii) Consideration of a referral to the Disability Advisory Service;
- (viii) Review meeting in the term preceding return;
- (ix) Implications for examinations (e.g. over standing for honours, changed regulations);
- (x) Conditions attached to return;
- (xi) The case for repeating any terms;
- (xii) Anticipated medical and welfare support on return
- (xiii) Reminder to contact JCR to be included in room ballots and on mailing lists.

(b) before returning to college

- (i) Evidence of having followed the agreed course of medical treatment in order to ensure a return to full health;
- (ii) Receipt of a medical assessment, normally from the College Doctor, stating whether or not, in their opinion, the student is fit to resume study;
- (iii) Engagement with their academic discipline as their personal circumstances and health permit;
- (iv) Preparations to resume academic studies, following advice from lead tutor;
- (v) Anticipated adjustments on return (e.g. accommodation and other domestic facilities, teaching, exam arrangements);
- (vi) Renewal of University Card with revised expiry date.

(c) after returning to college

- (i) Any outstanding implications for examinations (e.g. over standing for honours, changed regulations);
- (ii) If not already referred, consideration of a referral to the Disability

- Advisory Service;
- (iii) Agreement of ongoing medical and welfare support, including agreed adjustments (e.g. accommodation and other domestic facilities, teaching, exam arrangements);
 - (iv) Resumption of access to JCR, college, and faculty/department mailing lists;
 - (v) Any other matters outstanding from previous meetings.