

## BREAK IN STUDY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### Mitigating impact on your study and assessment by halting your studies

#### Introduction

1. In this document 'we', 'our' and 'us' refer to Sheffield Hallam University. 'You' and 'your' refer to all taught students of Sheffield Hallam University who are studying for a Sheffield Hallam academic award either at the University or a partner organisation.
2. Once you enrol on a course at the University you are expected to complete the course in one continuous period of uninterrupted study. However, we recognise that there are some situations where you want to take a year out to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity (either employment or vocational), or need to halt your studies due to extenuating circumstances (i.e. health issues, personal issues or a change in caring responsibilities which have occurred suddenly and unexpectedly). This policy explains the process and implications of taking a break in study. *If you are a student on a Degree Apprenticeship course, please also see Annex A.*
3. A break in study means that you are temporarily halting your studies with the intention of resuming your studies in the next academic year (usually within a 6-18 month period). If your circumstances are likely to last more than 18 months, you are advised to withdraw from your course and re-apply by using the normal Admissions process when you feel able to engage in your studies.
4. Any request to take a break **should be made before the start of the next academic year** which means that you will not re-enrol onto that year. **Exceptionally**, you can request a break in study part way through an academic year with the intention of returning at the beginning of the next academic year, or the beginning of a semester/trimester, whichever is appropriate. A break in study part way through an academic year would only be permitted if you have extenuating circumstances supported by evidence or a long-term condition supported by a Learning Contract. Taking a break mid-year does have financial implications (see points 21-24) so you need to think carefully about whether a break in study or a withdrawal is the most sensible option for you.
5. You cannot take a break from your studies within the final four weeks of the teaching/planned delivery of a course in an academic year (please note that this includes placement activity). This is because the majority of the teaching/planned schedule for the year has been delivered to you and it is expected you will be in a position to make an attempt at the assessments. At this point you are expected to manage your assessments using the Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt and Request to Extend a Submission Deadline processes in the [Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure](#).
6. The length of your break in study is included in the calculation of the number of years you study on the course. [Regulation 1 of the Standard Assessment Regulations](#) explains the normal and maximum durations permitted for each award.
7. We will always support your request to take a break wherever possible. There are some situations, however, where a request cannot be approved. These include:

- Where a break in study would take you beyond the maximum duration for your course (see point 6. Where maximum duration permits, it may be possible to take more than one break in study within the duration of your course.
  - Where your course is about to close or be substantially redesigned, meaning that the current provision will not be available when you return.
  - Where you have been pre-excluded for non-payment of tuition fees.
  - Where the request is for a period of less than six months.
  - For in-year requests only, where the circumstances reported do not meet our definition of extenuating circumstances, or where you have not provided any supporting evidence.
8. There are some situations where the University will automatically record you as taking a break in study. These are:-
- Where you have not secured a placement for your sandwich year, and you have indicated that you want to take a year out so you can resume your studies with the rest of your cohort.
  - Where you stop studying on your course pending a transfer to a different course at the beginning of the next academic year.
  - Where you are due to undertake retake modules which do not start teaching until later in the academic year. (This may affect your student finance and funding allowance.)
  - Where Professional and Statutory Body Requirements (PSRB) require you take a break pending return at a later date (usually when you can start a placement).
  - Where you have Tier 4 or Student (or other international) visa and must return home to renew your visa, to return to study at a later date.
  - Where you have been detained under the Mental Health Act (1983).
  - Where you have been remanded in custody pending a criminal trial or sentenced to a period in prison.
  - Where the break is deemed essential as part of a support plan approved by the Director of Student Services and the Director of Academic Services.
9. If you are pregnant and are planning to take maternity absence you must contact a Student Support Adviser in good time to arrange your studies around your maternity absence. See [Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy](#).
10. If you are an international student attending on a [Tier 4 or student visa](#), you must ensure that you understand what a break in study means for your visa. For example, the University must report the details of your break in study to UK Visas and Immigration and cease sponsorship of your current visa. You will need to apply for a new Tier 4 visa to return to study. You must also be aware of the Student Visa Time Limits on study in the UK. Further advice for Tier 4/ Student visa students taking a break in study is available from the International Experience Team.

## Process

11. You must contact a [Student Support Adviser](#) to request a break in study. You are required to complete a request form in conjunction with a Student Support Adviser. Your request will be considered by a Student Support Adviser.
12. If your request is declined, we will explain the reasons why and discuss with you other options for support, and/or the implications of withdrawing from the University and reapplying in the future.

13. If your request is approved, your studies will be put on hold until the next academic year (or next available intake, where appropriate). The specific implications will vary according to your course. These will be explained to you when you apply for a break in study.
14. A break in study can only be commenced once a completed request form has been received and will be recorded from the date of receipt of this form and relevant evidence. **A break in study cannot be backdated or requested retrospectively.**
15. Confirmation of your approved break in study will be emailed to your University email address. You should not assume that your request has been accepted until this notification has been received.

### **Assessment**

16. If you are taking a break in study part way through an academic year, any assessment already submitted, or exams already taken will be marked and considered at a Department Assessment Board. If modules are passed, the marks stand. If modules are not passed, you can choose to retain individual task marks, or to void them. We retain the right to void individual task marks if the module is not being delivered in the next academic year or has been modified.
17. You will not normally be permitted to engage in any outstanding assessments from your previous year unless you are taking a break in study due to non-medical reasons. This will be confirmed to you if your request to take a break in study is approved.

### **During the break in study**

18. You are not permitted to attend any teaching during your break in study.
19. You retain all access to University IT services and retain access to the Library.
20. You can access wellbeing support available to all students for online, self-help and group sessions. If you have previously registered with the Wellbeing Service or are requesting individual support, this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on your circumstances during your break and your ability to actively engage with the wellbeing support.
21. Teaching staff are not obliged to provide you with any academic support during your break in study and so there will be limited communication from University staff. This is to enable you to concentrate on the circumstances which have led to your break in study.
22. You will be contacted about any arrangements that must be put in place for your return to study, for example, choosing your modules for the next academic year.

### **Tuition fees**

23. No tuition fee is payable from the date of your break in study being approved to the date you resume your studies. If you take a break in study part way through an academic year, we will recalculate the tuition fee for that year based on the time between enrolment and the break in study and issue a credit note to you as follows:-
  - For self-financing students, if the amount of tuition fees paid is greater than the revised tuition fees then we will refund the overpayment upon request. If you have not paid sufficient fees by the time of the break in study then you must arrange payment. You will not be able to re-enrol onto the course if you have outstanding tuition fee debt.

- For students funded by Student Loans Company (SLC), you will be charged in accordance with the liability dates from SLC as dates vary depending on individual courses.

24. When you resume your studies in the next academic year, we will calculate the tuition fee for that year as follows:-

- For self-financing students, the fee will be calculated based on the amount of credit you are studying in that year. Fees for any modules you are not studying in their entirety may be charged pro-rata to the number of weeks you are studying.
- For students funded by Student Loans Company (SLC) or similar funding body, the fee will be calculated based on the amount of credit you are studying in that year. Fees for any modules you are not studying in their entirety may be charged pro-rata to the number of weeks you are studying. The fee charged will take account of the SLC liability dates.

## Funding

25. Taking a break in study can affect your future entitlement to funding and/or bursaries and scholarships. It is important to understand the implications of a break in study on your financial situation. You must speak to your funding body/sponsor about your personal circumstances before proceeding with a break in study.

- Home and EU undergraduate students, and postgraduate students accessing a postgraduate loan, are advised to contact [Student Finance England](#) to discuss their future entitlement to tuition fee and maintenance loans when returning from a break in study.
- All other postgraduate students and all international students must contact their sponsor directly to discuss their circumstances.
- Apprenticeship students should discuss funding requirements with the Work Based Learning Team prior to returning to their apprenticeship and their studies.

26. In normal circumstances when you resume studies after a break you can expect to maintain your eligibility for bursaries funded by the University, providing your course and other circumstances have not changed. You will not normally be asked to repay any University funded bursaries already paid in the academic year that you took a break in study. If you receive a bursary from an external body such as the Department for Education or NHS England, you may be asked to pay back some or all of your funding. To discuss bursary repayment and future eligibility, please contact [Hallam Help](#).

## Returning from a break in study

27. A Student Support Adviser will contact you two months before your intended date of return. At this point you must confirm that you are fully able to return to your studies and re-engage with teaching and learning. You may be required to provide evidence of your fitness to return to study (such as a letter from your GP/Consultant and/or an Occupation Health report) before being invited to re-enrol.

28. If you are not able to return to study or if you do not engage with our communications, you will be withdrawn from the course and issued with an intermediate award if eligible. You will be able to re-apply via the Admissions process when you are able to engage in your studies.

29. It is important that you can engage fully with your academic studies when you re-enrol onto your course. If the circumstances that led to your break in study are ongoing, it is unlikely that your circumstances will meet the University definition of Extenuating Circumstances. This means that

the support we are able to provide to you will be limited. In these situations, we aim to support you under the [Supporting Capacity to Study](#) process.

30. You may be invited to attend a return to study meeting with a Student Support Adviser and/or your Academic Adviser/Course Leader. This is to ensure that you are prepared to fully engage with your studies and that all available support is in place.
31. If you are due to undertake placement activity upon your return to study, this will be discussed with you prior to your return.
32. If you are in debt to the University, you will not be permitted to re-enrol and resume your studies until that debt has been cleared.

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## ANNEX A

### BREAK IN STUDY FOR STUDENTS ON A DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP COURSE (Previously 'Break in Learning')

1. Students on a Degree Apprenticeship course are subject to Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules which stipulate specific rules regarding taking a Break in Study. These rules supersede the points in the University Break in Study Policy and Procedure relating to the reasons for which you can take a break in learning (points 2-4 in the Policy), the process for requesting a break (points 11-15), and assessment arrangements (points 16-17).

Where a break in study is recorded for a student on a Degree Apprenticeship, the date of commencement should be recorded as the last point of engagement with the course.

2. You can only halt your studies due to extenuating circumstances; you cannot halt your studies for vocational reasons. See scenarios below.
3. If you are on a Degree Apprenticeship course, your break must be approved by your employer as well as by the University.
4. You must initially speak with your employer and your University Work-Based Learning Coach regarding a Break in Study. If a break is initially agreed, you must book an appointment with your Student Support Adviser to discuss the implications of taking a break and the arrangements for teaching and assessment when you return.
5. A Break in Study form must be completed in conjunction with your Student Support Adviser within 30 days of your last point of engagement.
6. You are not permitted to engage in any outstanding assessments or attend teaching during the break.
7. If you are taking a break part way through an academic year, any assessments already submitted, or exams already taken will be marked and considered at a Department Assessment Board and those marks will stand. We retain the right to void individual task marks if the module is not being delivered in the next academic year or has been modified.

#### Example scenarios

Scenario	Break in Study at University	BIS form required to be completed	Managing Records on MAYTAS
You have medical/personal issues and anticipate being away from employment for <b>less than four weeks</b>	This is not considered a Break in Study.  You should utilise the Request to Extend Submission Deadline (RESD) and Request to Repeat Assessment Attempt (RRAA) processes under the Extenuating Circumstances Policy to	No – RESD or RRAA should be submitted.	There is no need to record this absence in MAYTAS.

	manage your assessments.		
You have medical/personal issues and anticipate being away from employment for <b>four weeks or more</b>	<p>You are not permitted to attend or engage in assessments when you are on a Break in Study.</p> <p>(a) If you are within the final four weeks of delivery of the planned schedule of the course for the academic year, this is managed via the RRAA process in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.</p> <p>(b) If you are not within the final four weeks of the delivery of the planned schedule of the course for the academic year, or you will miss the delivery of block teaching, this is managed via the Break in Study process.</p>	<p>No – RRAA must be submitted.</p> <p>Yes</p>	This must be flagged with BESE to update MAYTAS system with a Break in Learning.
You have failed modules and need to undertake retakes in the next academic year	You are recorded as repeating study and your status at University is “enrol to repeat” (ERP).	No	This must be flagged with BESE to update MAYTAS system with a Break in Learning.
You leave employment for personal reasons, e.g., to travel for a year	You are not permitted to take a break from a Degree Apprenticeship course unless you are employed. You are withdrawn from the University.	No – you are withdrawn	
You are made redundant from your employment	You are not permitted to take a break from a Degree Apprenticeship course unless you are	No – you are withdrawn	

	employed. You are withdrawn from the University.		
You need to take maternity leave	Break in Study is recorded in accordance with the Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy.	Yes	This must be flagged with BESE to update MAYTAS system with a Break in Learning.