Interruptions guide - Student Support and Wellbeing (2016/17)

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What is this guide for?

This guide has been created by UCL Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) for students to offer general guidance and advice regarding the process of interrupting. An interruption is a temporary break from your studies. The need for an interruption can come from a range of issues such as personal, medical, academic and/or financial issues. University life and studying in London can differ from expectations in a variety of ways – it is not uncommon that personal circumstances mean you cannot give your studies the full attention that you would like and that you need to take a break.

This guide is tailored to students interrupting for health or wellbeing reasons. For further advice on your specific circumstances, you should speak to your department.

Disclaimer

This document is intended for general guidance only. It is important to discuss your situation with your department and other relevant services to ensure you have the correct information for your specific circumstances. The information here is correct at the time of publication.

Please note: For any students with a fitness to practice or fitness to teach element (e.g., MBBS, PGCE) your return to study will be handled by your department and Occupational Health & Wellbeing. This may also be the case for some research students.
1. Pre-interruption

1.1) I am thinking of interrupting my studies – what should I do first?

Before making the decision to interrupt your studies, it is important to consider your options. In the first instance, you should consult someone from your department who you feel comfortable enough to discuss this with. They can offer you advice on the interruption process, dates of your interruption as well as the specific academic consequences of interrupting e.g. module availability. This could be a personal tutor, departmental tutor or administrator. If you are a research student this could be your supervisor.

1.2) How long do I interrupt for?

In most cases, students interrupt for up to one year. However, this varies depending on individual circumstances and the reason for interruption. You should consult with an appropriate tutor or administrator in your department who will be able to offer further guidance on the lengths and dates of your interruption.

1.3) Applying for an interruption

Once you have made the decision to interrupt and have discussed this with your department, you will need to submit an Interruption Form to your department. This form can be downloaded from Portico. Your department will advise you if there is any supporting documentation you need to submit. For research students, the application process requires your supervisor to email Student Records confirming the effective date of interruption, expected date of return and reason for interruption. Any application for interruption will need to be approved accordingly.
2. Implications of Interruption

2.1) Fee liability
Depending on when you interrupt you may be eligible for a fee refund, we have outlined details of fee liability below. For full details please see UCL Current Students Fee Liability website.

If you are a full-time or part-time academic year student (taught courses):
- If you interrupt within 2 weeks of term 1, you will not incur any fees.
- If you interrupt after the first 2 weeks but within term 1, you will be charged 25% of the full fee.
- If you interrupt in term 2 you will be charged 50% of the full fee.
- If you interrupt in term 3 you will be charged 100% of the full fee.

If you are an affiliate student:
- If you interrupt within the first two weeks, you will not incur any fees.
- If you interrupt after this date but in term 1, you will be charged 45% of the full fee.
- If you interrupt in term 2, you will be charged 90% of the full fee.
- If you interrupt in term 3 you will be charged 100% of the full fee.

If you are a research student and/or calendar year student:
You are charged fees on a daily basis for the period of enrolment.

If you are a postgraduate modular student:
You will be charged for the modules that show on your student record.

2.2) Student Finance – maintenance loans and grants
When you interrupt, your department will send a ‘Change of Circumstance’ (CoC) to your funding provider (e.g. Student Finance England/Wales/Northern Ireland, Student Awards Agency for Scotland) notifying them of your last day of attendance. This effectively pauses all funding. There are some circumstances in which you may be able to receive funding after this point. When you return your department sends another CoC to notify your funding provider that you have returned and your funding will start again.
If you interrupt part way through a term, you may have already received an instalment of maintenance loan/grant money and therefore received funding for time that you are not in attendance. Depending under what circumstances you interrupt, your funding provider may ask for some of this money back. We recommend you contact your Student Funding provider to discuss the financial implications of interrupting your studies.

If you are an international student with more complex funding matters or have more questions we strongly recommend you contact the UCL Student Funding team (Email: studentfunding@ucl.ac.uk Tel: 020 7679 0004) who will be able to offer you further guidance.

2.3) Accommodation

UCL Accommodation: If you are in UCL Halls, taking an interruption will mean you will be required to leave your room as you are no longer enrolled as a student at UCL. For more information on this please see UCL General Regulations and Guidance or email: residences@ucl.ac.uk.

Private Student Accommodation: The implications of your interruption will depend on your accommodation provider. You will need to review your agreement and discuss your circumstances with an appropriate staff member at your accommodation. You may be required to leave the accommodation because you are no longer a registered student. It is likely you will be liable for some fees and in some cases, you may be required to find a replacement tenant. We strongly advise students to contact the University of London Housing Services and UCLU Rights and Advice Centre who can offer you guidance and information regarding these issues.

Private Accommodation: If you live in private accommodation, it’s unlikely there will be an obligation for you to leave following a change to your student status. However, you may choose to leave and return home, in which case, you must consider the terms of your tenancy agreement and what this means for you. This can be complex and confusing, so we strongly recommend you seek advice UCLU Rights and Advice. If you decide to stay in your private accommodation it is important to note that as you are no longer a full time student, you may be required to pay Council Tax. Again, we strongly recommend you contact UCLU Rights and Advice about this and the University of London Housing Services for advice.

2.4) What happens to my Tier 4 Student Visa if I interrupt?
If you are an international student with a Tier 4 visa, you are obliged to leave the UK for the duration of your interruption. The law means that UCL must inform the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) of any changes to your student status. Once your interruption has been processed, you will receive an email to confirm that sponsorship has been withdrawn and you should make arrangements to leave the UK within 60 days of UCL’s report to UKVI. You will then need to apply for a new visa before you return to UCL – please see section 4.3 for more information on this.

3. During interruption

3.1) What do I have access to whilst on interruption?

During your interruption your access to the following may change:

- **Student ID card** – Your ID card will automatically be invalidated upon the change of your student record. This means access to onsite IT facilities, buildings and libraries is limited.
- **Student email account** – you will have full access to your UCL email, however, you must ensure you continue to update your UCL password as and when required (every 150 days). We recommend that you keep your password up to date and check it regularly.
- **UCL Portico** – You will maintain full access to your UCL Portico account, if your password is updated (see above). We recommend you continue to update your personal details on Portico if and when they change.

3.2) Make sure your details are all correct on Portico

In order to support your return to UCL, a few teams will need to contact you. It is extremely important that you update your details (including: email, telephone number, term time address and home address) on Portico so we can reach you ahead of your return.

3.3) Maintaining contact

During your interruption you may find it helpful to stay in contact with an appropriate person in your department e.g. your Personal Tutor. This is not compulsory but it can offer a good point of contact upon your return. It is your responsibility to initiate and maintain this contact.
3.4) How to make the most of your time on interruption?

During your period of interruption it is important for you to focus on your health and wellbeing and this should be your priority. To make the most of your time on interruption it is important to consider your access to support. We recommend students consider their supports options as early as possible before interrupting.

3.6) Access to support (UK Residents)

- We strongly recommend you register with a local GP when on interruption, if you are unsure of where your nearest GP is you can find it [here](#). You can discuss both mental and physical problems with your GP and they will be able to refer you to local psychological or health services, if appropriate.
- You can often self-refer to Increasing Access to Psychological Therapy services, they deal with mild-to-moderate psychological problems including anxiety and depression, and you can find your nearest service [here](#).

  Note: it is important to be aware that the waiting times for psychological therapy under the NHS can be lengthy so we encourage you to make arrangements for this early. If you are in need of urgent support we would advise you contact a crisis helpline (see section 7).

- **Access to support** (International students) – international students on a tier 4 visa will need to return home for the duration of their interruption. We strongly recommend you visit a healthcare professional (e.g., doctor, psychiatrist, nurse) and seek appropriate support. As part of your fitness to study assessment before your return to UCL, we will require medical evidence which demonstrates you engaged with such support. Therefore, it is important from both a wellbeing and academic perspective.

3.7) Financial support

As previously mentioned, when you are on interruption you will no longer receive your maintenance loan. This is a key source of income for some students and means you will need to carefully consider options for financing your interruption and/or seek appropriate support to do so.

**Receiving an extra 60 days of funding**

If you are interrupting due to ‘Compelling Personal Reasons’ e.g., physical/mental illness or a personal or family crisis, then you can receive up to 60 days of funding from your funding provider after your last date of attendance. To receive this you must send your funding provider evidence of the reason you interrupted (for example, medical evidence from your GP). Your department will also need to state the Change of Circumstance (CoC) and the reason for interruption.
Receiving funding for the remainder of the academic year

In some extreme circumstances, your funding provider may choose to provide you with funding for the rest of the academic year (awarded on a case by case basis). To receive this, students must:

- Have interrupted for compelling personal reasons and
- Provide evidence that they will be in significant financial hardship if they lost this funding. For example, if you have signed a tenancy agreement/accommodation contract or have other binding financial commitments that you will not be able to meet otherwise. Evidence for this must be provided to the funding provider.

4. Pre-return

*Please note: For any students with a fitness to practice or fitness to teach element (e.g., MBBS, PGCE) your return to study will be handled by your department and Occupational Health & Wellbeing. This may also be the case for some research students.*

4.1) Confirm return to SSW and department

It is important you confirm to your department that you wish to return to your studies at UCL. If your department have requested you have a Return to Study check with SSW, Approximately 3 months before your return, SSW will be in touch with you via email to support your return to study. Therefore, we strongly advise you monitor your emails.

4.2) Prepare medical evidence and personal statement

When returning from a period of interruption that was taken for health and wellbeing reasons, you may be required to provide medical evidence and a supporting statement to indicate that you are well enough to live and work in a university environment. If this is the case for you, SSW will email you prior to your return to request this documentation. You will need to provide assurance that your studies will not be detrimental to your health or your health to your studies, and may be required to have an appointment with the SSW team, before re-enrolment can be permitted.

**Medical Evidence:** Your medical evidence should meet the requirements outlined in the [UCL Medical Evidence Guidance](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/occupational-health-and-wellbeing). It is important that you read the guidance carefully to ensure your medical evidence fulfils the requirements. This needs to be completed by a qualified medical practitioner.
We can consider medical evidence from: GP, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Therapist, Counsellor and/or a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner.

To confirm the legitimacy of this medical evidence, it should be on headed paper or stamped by the health practice or service. If it is only possible to provide the evidence in an email form, please inform your medical practitioner that this must be sent directly to us at student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk along with their registration number and full name.

**Personal Statement**: This needs to be a brief statement outlining the following:

- confirmation that you feel fit to return to your studies
- Any support you have had during the time of interruption
- Any arrangements for on-going support
- Any further support you feel would be beneficial for you as you continue your studies at UCL.

If any specific support is recommended in your medical evidence and is not currently in place, please advise us how you will go about following the relevant recommendations. It is important you address all the points outlined here to fulfil the requirements.

**4.3) Apply for CAS and visa if necessary**

If you are an international student requiring a Tier 4 visa you will need a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) number before you can apply for your visa. Before you can apply for a CAS, you will need to send your medical evidence and personal statement to SSW. Once this has been reviews we will contact the UCL Visa Compliance team, who can issue you a CAS number. Therefore, it is important you send this to us as soon as possible after our initial request.

**4.4) When can I register for my modules?**

In order to register for modules on Portico you must be enrolled and cannot do so until you have engaged with the SSW process and your Faculty have approved your return. For this reason, we encourage you to arrange your medial evidence, personal statement and engagement with SSW. You can find out more information about module registration [here](#). If you would like to discuss module registration and options in more detail you should speak to your department.

**4.5) Student Finance**

When you return, your departmental administrator will send another Change of Circumstance notification to your funding provider. They will run an assessment and calculate what you are entitled to. You will not receive any of your funding prior to arriving back at university, so it is a good
idea to arrive with a little funding of your own to support you before your student finance money comes through.

4.6) Finding accommodation
- If you plan to live in UCL Halls you need to apply online, you can find out more information on the UCL accommodation website.
- If you are choosing not to live in halls or are undecided, there are a number of useful website run by UCLU and UoL to help you find suitable accommodation:
- If you are struggling to find somewhere to stay you can talk to the University of London Housing Services - by emailing them on: housing@lon.ac.uk or you can call them +44 (0)20 7862 8880. You can find out more here.

4.7) I’m not ready to come back now – what do I do?
If you wish to extend your interruption, you should contact your department in the first instance, as they will need to approve this extension.

4.8) I don’t want to come back at all – what do I do?
If you wish to withdraw completely from your studies at UCL, contact your department in the first instance and they will be able to offer you further guidance.

5. On return

Please note: For any students with a fitness to practice or fitness to teach element (e.g., MBBS, PGCE) your return to study will be handled by your department and Occupational Health & Wellbeing. This may also be the case for some research students.

5.1) Attend SSW appointment (if required)
If requested by your department, you may be invited to attend a Return to Study appointment with Student Support and Wellbeing. The purpose of this is to go over your medical evidence and personal statement as well as to discuss in more detail any suitable support options that are available to you at UCL. Whatever support you chose to engage in, we recommend students do so early on – this way you can be given the appropriate support and reduce the impact any difficulties have on your studies.
Please note that there may be up to 4 people present at the appointment, each of whom are representatives from key support providers at UCL and can explain their services to you. This gives you a good opportunity to discuss in detail what support might be useful for you and how you can move forward in engaging with this support.

Please note: This appointment is not a psychological assessment and we do not make the final decision regarding your re-enrolment.

5.2) Engage with department
You should contact your department towards the end of your interruption confirming you wish to return to UCL. After you have engaged with SSW, we will contact your faculty with any recommendations for your re-enrolment. They will then contact your department who will be in touch with you regarding your re-enrolment.

5.3) Attending classes before re-enrolment

If your appointment with SSW is after the start of term we would advise you to inform your department. It may be possible for them to allow you to attend classes informally until you can re-enrol, but this will be at their discretion.

5.4) Accessing buildings before enrolment

Before you are re-enrolled, your ID card will be invalid meaning your access to UCL Buildings and Libraries in limited. If your appointment with SSW is after the start of term we would advise you to inform your department. It may be possible for them to provide you with a note that will allow access to buildings and libraries, but this will be at their discretion.

5.5) I have had my meeting with SSW but I can’t reenrol yet – what do I do?

If you have attended your meeting with SSW, both you and your faculty will be advised about our recommendations for your re-enrolment shortly after. Processing your re-enrolment requires a number of departments and can take a few days – do not worry if your re-enrolment doesn’t occur as quickly as you’d expected. If you are particularly concerned, please contact SSW (email: student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk) or your department and we will try to identify the problem.

5.6) How do I know when my enrolment status has been updated?

You can check your enrolment status in the ‘Statement of Student Status’ in the ‘Student Record and Fee Data’ container on your student home page in Portico.
6. After re-enrolment

6.1) Re-enrolling and getting a new ID card (if needed)

Once you have enrolled, your ID card will be re-instated and will be valid for use in entering UCL buildings. If your ID card has expired (based on the expiry date printed on your card) you will need to get a new one. This can only be done after you have re-enrolled. To get a new card, you will need to visit the Security Systems team within the Andrew Huxley Building, opposite the Print Room Café (map). Please read the following page for more information about obtaining your new ID card.

6.1) Engage with support recommendations

Once you have engaged with SSW, we will advise you on the appropriate support available to you at UCL. We strongly recommend you utilise the support services recommended to you. Doing so is in your own best interests and will help you reach your full potential as a student.

6.2) Register with a local GP

We recommend all students register with a local GP. You may be within the catchment area for UCL’s Ridgmount Practice, you can find out more information here. If you are not within the catchment area or wish to use a different GP, you can find your nearest GP here.

6.3) Tips for re-integrating

Join a club or society?

There is a large number of clubs and societies available to you at UCL. Joining a society is a great chance to meet people with similar hobbies and interests to you. If you are resuming your studies in September you can attend the fresher’s fair to have a look at the clubs and societies on offer. This will give you a chance to talk to the society’s current members and sign up to their mailing list. If you miss the fresher’s fair, you can find out more on the UCLU website.

For many students who have interrupted for wellbeing reasons, it may be useful to note the following societies: UCL Mindfulness Society and UCL Yoga and Meditation Society. For international students who are finding it hard to integrate into London life, it may be helpful to join a society for your region, for example, American Society, Arabic Society, Caribbean Society, Chinese Society.
Engage with departmental activities?

To fully integrate back into UCL, it is recommended that you engage with the activities in your department. This includes lectures and seminars/tutors which are a great way to meet your classmates.

Volunteer

It is widely documented that volunteering is good for your wellbeing. UCL offers numerous volunteering opportunities, which allows you to help yourself by helping others. It also gives you a great opportunity to meet like-minded people and can boost your CV. You can look on the UCLU website and the University College Hospital website for volunteering opportunities.

Overall, it is important to maintain a balance in your academic studies, extra-curricular activities, work, social life, fun, exercise and healthy eating. It is important at all stages of the year that you prioritise your wellbeing and take appropriate steps to look after yourself. If you find yourself struggling with this, please refer to section 7 so that you can seek the appropriate support. SSW hopes your time on interruption is a recuperating and peaceful one. We work to ensure you are appropriately supported upon your return to UCL to help you reach your full potential as a student.

7. Useful contacts and links

Crisis and emergency contacts

- **Accident and Emergency Department**: 999 – A&E offer support for both physical and mental health emergencies.
- **CareFirst** - helpline: 0800 197 4510, CareFirst website. Counselling is provided via telephone from Monday to Friday from 5pm to 9am, at weekends, during Bank Holidays and College closure periods.
- **Nightline** – Tel: 020 7631 0101, Website: www.nightline.org.uk. This is a student run service available in term-time between 6pm and 8am.
- **The Samaritans** – Tel: 08457 909090, Address: 46 Marshall Street, London W1F 9BF, Website: www.samaritans.org.uk. The Samaritans can be contacted at any time and their service is confidential. They also operate a walk in service between 9am – 9pm every day.
UCL and UCLU Support services

- **UCL Careers service** - 020 7866 3600, they provide resources, events and/or 1-1 appointments for students and graduates looking for work.

- **University of London Housing Services** – email: housing@lon.ac.uk, Tel: (0)20 7862 8880.

- **UCLU Rights and Advice** – Tel: 020 7679 2998, Address: UCLU Rights & Advice Centre 15 Gordon Street, London, WC1H 0AH (Map). You can send them a query using their contact form. To find out more information about their services [here](#).

- **UCL Student Funding Team** – Email: studentfunding@ucl.ac.uk, Tel: 020 7679 0004

- **Student funding welfare Adviser** - email: studentfundingwelfare@ucl.ac.uk

- **UCL Student Psychological Services (SPS)** – Tel: 020 7679 1487, Address: 3 Taviton Street, WC1H 0BT.

- **UCL Student Support and Wellbeing** – email: student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk

External Support Services
You can find information about the key external services which are outlined on the [UCL “sources of support” website](#). You can find additional information on the [UCL Student Psychological Services website](#).

Online Resources

- **The Student Support and Wellbeing Blog** This is a blog with articles and videos encouraging mental and physical wellbeing in UCL students. This blog posts a number of articles focusing on holistic wellbeing, it touches on Mind, Body, Studies and Student Life. It aims to positively influence student’s wellbeing habits to help students help themselves.

- **The NHS website** is a useful platform addressing mental health problems and other obstacles to wellbeing, offering online therapy and support.

- **NHS Moodzone** website offers information, advice and support on common mental health difficulties including stress, anxiety and depression.

- **Mental Health Foundation podcasts** this is a helpful way to explore and improve your wellbeing on the go. These podcasts touch on a number of topics for example, Stress and Relaxation, Wellbeing and Sleep, Overcoming Fear and Anxiety and many more.