

## Absence policy

### Definitions:

‘Funded doctoral student’: Funded doctoral students are defined as being currently in receipt of funding that is paid by the University. Examples include Research Council funding, University funding including department, school and faculty-funded, and industry money managed by the University.

‘Self-funded student’: Self-funded refers to doctoral students who are funding their own studies, including if their period of funding has expired, or if their funding is paid directly to them from a sponsor, for example, an employer, government sponsor etc.

‘Funding package’: Refers to the elements that make up a funded doctoral students funding package. The composition of the funding package can be found in the funding offer issued prior to commencement of the programme.

### Regulations governing absence

1. Under Section A2 of the University’s regulations<sup>1</sup>, it is expected that registration for a doctoral degree will be continuously pursued.
2. However, the regulations recognise that, in certain circumstances, a doctoral student can benefit from taking a period of absence from their doctoral degree via the temporary withdrawal process.
3. The grounds, duration, and procedure for applying for temporary withdrawal are codified in Section A2 of the University’s regulations and on MySurrey<sup>2</sup>. Whilst the regulations state that students will not usually be permitted a period of temporary withdrawal in excess of twelve months aggregate over the period of registration, this does not affect temporary withdrawal requests made for the purposes of maternity leave.
4. During the approved temporary withdrawal period, students’ programme registration status is changed from “Enrolled” to “Absent”. The “Absent” status means that supervision is not provided, and students are not eligible to participate in the programme of study before resuming their registration; however, their access to Surrey IT facilities will be maintained throughout this period and they will be able to use their Surrey email account and SurreyLearn. Access to chaplains, counselling and mental health advice will remain open for doctoral students to continue to be supported during a temporary withdrawal. The Disability and Neurodiversity team can also provide information and advice to doctoral students during a period of temporary withdrawal.
5. In alignment with the terms and conditions set by the UKRI<sup>3</sup>, funded doctoral students are entitled to an extension of their funding package when taking a period of absence due to illness (covered by a medical certificate); parental leave; or jury service.

### Absence due to illness

6. Payment of a funding package can continue for a period of up to 13 weeks in a 12-month period when a doctoral student takes a period of temporary withdrawal because of a medical-related reason. Medical evidence should accompany the claim.
7. Doctoral students can self-certify sick leave for up to six days. They should inform their supervisors if they need to take such leave. This period is not covered by sick pay provision and should be funded out of any stipend. Temporary withdrawal is not required for sickness of six days or fewer and will not result in an extension to the registration period.
8. Doctoral students can request a period of sick leave and/or temporary withdrawal for periods of seven days or over. Temporary withdrawal can be requested for longer than 13 weeks, but funding will be suspended from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> week up until the end of the temporary withdrawal date approved by the Admission, Progression and Examination Subcommittee (APESC).

9. When a doctoral student takes a period of temporary withdrawal for Covid-related illness, they are entitled to payment of their funding package for a period of up to 28 weeks in a 12-month period. Examples of Covid-related illness include contracting Covid-19, long Covid, a new or pre-existing mental health condition associated with the pandemic, shielding, and a new or pre-existing condition for which treatment has been affected by the pandemic. Medical evidence should accompany the claim when it is not too onerous for the doctoral student to procure it.
10. If a self-funded student contracts Covid-19, they are permitted to claim up to 2 weeks of financial support at the UKRI stipend rate (pro-rated for part-time doctoral students). The temporary withdrawal application must be accompanied by evidence of a positive test.
11. A doctoral student's registration will be extended by the same duration as the approved period of temporary withdrawal whether they are funded or self-funded.

#### Jury Service

12. Doctoral students who take a period of temporary withdrawal due to jury service are entitled to an extension of their funding package to match the period of jury service, up to a maximum of 12 months.
13. A doctoral student's registration will be extended by the same duration as the approved period of temporary withdrawal, whether they are funded or self-funded.

#### Parental leave ([students studying on a visa should refer to the CAS guidance for doctoral programmes](#))

14. Funded doctoral students are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity leave if the expected week of childbirth will occur within their funded period. The earliest that maternity leave, taken as temporary withdrawal, can commence is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.
15. The first 26 weeks should be paid at full stipend rate, pro-rated for part time doctoral students.
16. The following 13 weeks should be paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks are not paid.
17. Partners are entitled to up to two weeks paid Ordinary Parental Leave on full stipend. Ordinary Parental Leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth. Partners are also entitled to an extended period of unpaid parental leave, up to a maximum of 50 weeks, with their studentship extended accordingly. Unpaid parental leave must be completed within 12 months of the birth of the child. This leave may be taken in up to three blocks of leave or all at once.
18. Adoption leave should be granted on the same basis as maternity leave. There is no qualifying period for maternity, parental or adoption leave. Additionally, their Studentship end date should be updated to reflect the period of leave.

#### Absences not related to illness, jury service or parental leave

19. Section A2 of the University regulations permits temporary withdrawal for reasons other than illness, jury service or parental leave.
20. When applying for temporary withdrawal for reasons other than illness, jury service or parental leave, funded doctoral students have the option of continuing to receive their funding package for up to a maximum 1 month in a 12-month period, unless the temporary withdrawal is a funded internship or paid placement. Funding will be suspended from the end of the 1-month period until they return to their doctoral degree.

#### Visas

21. Doctoral students on a Student Visa are advised to check the terms and conditions of their visa before applying for temporary withdrawal. The terms of the visa take precedence over this policy.

<sup>1</sup> [A2 regulations for research degrees | University of Surrey](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Guidance and support | Research | MySurrey](#)

<sup>3</sup> [UKRI-150321-TrainingGrantsTermsConditions-Mar2021.pdf](#)

Policy owner	Chair of APESC
Policy author	Julie Davies on behalf of APESC
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