

Student Suspension Procedure



Student Suspensions

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A Student Suspension is where the University places short-term conditions on a student's access to the University campus, teaching and/or placement activity. The University has a duty to consider the safety and wellbeing of the University community. The issuing of a suspension does not mean that the University has decided that a student has done something wrong. We only issue suspensions where we feel it is necessary to safeguard the student, other students or staff, or the wider community.

We will normally issue a suspension when concerns have been raised about possible breaches of the University Student Conduct, Fitness to Study or Fitness to Practise Procedures. For students living in the University's student accommodation, this can include consideration of whether the Accommodation Licence Agreement has been breached.

We may also issue a suspension where a student has been arrested by or is being investigated by the Police and the type of investigation or charges mean that it is difficult for the student to study on their course. For apprentices, this can also include an investigation conducted by the employer, for example, as part of a Human Resources or Police Professional Standards investigation.

Suspensions are issued to support these wider investigations and processes, allowing the University to make a more informed decision on case, while ensuring that everyone involved is appropriately safeguarded.

Support during suspensions

If a Student Suspension is issued to you, you will be able to access Student Support Services for guidance and wellbeing support as needed. More information is available on our [support services webpage](#). If you are suspended from accessing campus, you won't be able to come to meetings with support teams in person and will normally need to access support online.

You will also be able to access guidance and advocacy support from the Students' Union, and more information is available on the [Student Advice Team webpage](#).

If you have a disability, you can request that a reasonable adjustment is made to prevent you from being disadvantaged in this process. For example, you may ask for extra time to read paperwork. You should notify the University as soon as possible if you need a reasonable adjustment.

Students studying at a partner institution

If you are studying on a University of Staffordshire course delivered by a partner institution, it is the partner's rules on student conduct, which will apply. The partner will therefore apply its own rules on student suspensions. However, where a course leads to professional registration, such as for teaching or a health profession, the Fitness to Practise Procedure and Student Suspension Policy will apply. If this applies to you, you should contact your institution for more information.

If you are studying on a course delivered by a partner institution, but are staying in University of Staffordshire owned accommodation, this procedure will apply.

Student Suspensions

When concerns are raised

If a concern is raised about you which indicates that we may need to issue a suspension, a relevant, senior member of staff (as defined below) will decide whether to issue a student suspension.

Outlined below are examples of potential reasons for raising a concern. This list is illustrative and not exhaustive

- The University has received a complaint about a student's practice
- The University is investigating a complaint about a student's conduct
- There is a serious concern for a student's wellbeing or that of others
- A student is being investigated by the Police

If this happens, we will follow the appropriate University procedure, which could be the [Student Conduct](#), [Fitness to Study or Fitness to Practise](#) Procedures.

If a concern is raised which means that there might be a concern for others, the University will assess whether we need to put some immediate emergency conditions in place to safeguard you, other students and staff or the wider community.

Issuing a student suspension

Student suspensions can be issued by Executive Deans or Directors, or other senior member of University leadership. Sometimes, in complicated cases we might refer a case to a group of relevant, appropriate University staff (normally called an Incident Management Team) to make a decision.

For courses leading to professional registration, a member of the School's senior management team who has responsibility for making Fitness to Practise decisions may issue a student suspension.

Information considered when deciding to issue a suspension

The University will review the information available to assess the level of risk to you and others on campus. This will inform the decision to suspend some or all access to University campuses, services, or your placement. We will also assess the impact on you as a result of the suspension and agree what support we can offer to you.

Depending on the nature of the concerns raised, and your individual circumstances, we may ask a senior member of staff with responsibility for wellbeing, safeguarding or residential services for comments. If you are studying on an international visa, we will ensure that relevant International Visa Compliance colleagues are consulted to understand how any student suspension would affect your ability to study in the UK.

Once the University has reviewed all of the information, we will decide whether to issue a Student Suspension.

Apprenticeships

If you are studying on an apprenticeship, a suspension might be instigated by, or at the request of, your employer. Suspensions might be issued because of your actions or conduct on or off-the-job. The nature of apprenticeships mean there will be additional factors that we need to consider. We will ensure that a relevant member of University staff with apprenticeship experience, and your employer are involved in relevant discussions about the impact that the suspension might have on your learning and employment. A suspension may necessitate you being put on a Break in Learning.

The University will not normally impose any suspension or restrictions of access which relate to your employment. These would be factors that would be considered and monitored by your employer.

Types of suspension

We understand that being suspended can impact on your wellbeing, and on your studies. Where possible, we will try to issue the least restrictive suspension that we can. The following terms may be included in a suspension. That you

- Cannot attend teaching or assessment activities. This may be in person, online or both. We will ensure that a student in this situation is not academically penalised for any assessment deadlines that they miss during a suspension of this type
- Cannot access online materials
- Cannot attend placement
- Cannot access some or all parts of the University campus
- Cannot contact other students or members of staff of the University
- Cannot participate in some University activities
- Cannot participate in Students' Union activities or access Students' Union venues
- Need to move to alternative accommodation, or need to temporarily leave our accommodation

The courses which are delivered on campus often rely on students having access to resources and lectures which are only available in person. This means that, if we need to suspend you from accessing campus, you would be unable to engage with your studies.

This may mean that you are suspended from engaging with your studies either by attending lectures or tutorials on campus or via remote learning. This also means that you would also not be expected to engage with any assessments, and we will do all that we can to ensure that you are not academically penalised for any assessment deadlines that you miss during this time.

**Suspensions
related to police
investigations**

If you have been arrested by the Police, we may need to issue a student suspension while we wait for more information about the case. This could be where we have concerns that the incident could cause a safety issue for others on campus, for example, if someone is arrested for violent conduct. The University also needs to be considerate of the impact on the safety or security of the University's network infrastructure or campus facilities.

We know that police investigations can take a significant amount of time to complete, especially where a case is going to court, or where electronic device downloads are needed. If we need to suspend you for these reasons, it can mean that you could be suspended for over 12 months while we wait for legal processes to conclude. This can mean that you are unable to complete your course within their registration period for the course. Please see the "What if I can't complete in time?" section of the Academic Regulations for more information on registration periods.

During longer periods of suspension like these, we will ensure that you have access to guidance and support about decisions on your long-term studies.

**Issuing a
suspension**

We will normally issue a suspension letter by email and will notify relevant staff and departments within the University, including the student's Academic Mentor and Course Leader. If you are an apprenticeship student, we will also notify your employer. In some cases, we might invite you in for a meeting with relevant professional services and support staff so that we can issue the suspension letter in person.

In the letter we will normally explain what the reason for the suspension is, the terms of the suspension, along with some details of the concerns that have been raised.

**Providing
information
about the
circumstances**

Student suspensions are issued as a precautionary measure, to allow us to ensure the safety of everyone involved, or on campus, including the student who is suspended. They will normally be issued at the same time that an investigation is started into the circumstances, for example, through the Student Conduct or Fitness to Practise Procedures, or while a police investigation is undertaken.

When we issue a suspension, you will have the opportunity to provide information about the situation. This will be provided to the person or Incident Management Team who has made the decision, to see if this would change their decision.

When providing information about the situation, you are limited to submitting evidence that directly challenges the basis of the suspension. Specifically, you may only present information that demonstrates why the grounds for the suspension were incorrect or incomplete. For example, this could include evidence showing that you were not present at the location where the incident occurred at the time it happened.

The person who issued the suspension will not normally consider new information, or information which provides mitigation for why a situation occurred. For example, if you have breached University fire regulations, we may not consider information which demonstrates that you were unwell at that time. This is because, regardless of your health, the University has a duty to ensure the safety of the University's campus and community.

When a suspension is issued, you will be notified of the opportunity to provide this additional information. Any information needs to be supported by evidence which meets the University's expectations on [standards of evidence](#).

Additional information must be provided to the Regulations and Compliance team within two weeks of the suspension being issued. The letter will explain how to provide this information.

Once the information is provided, the Regulations and Compliance team will assess whether it meets the requirements outlined above. If it does not, we will write to you to explain the reason why.

If the information provided meets these requirements, the person who issued the suspension, or appropriate nominee, will consider whether it would be reasonable to change the suspension. In doing so, they may decide to leave the suspension in place, to change the level of suspension or remove it entirely. In certain circumstances the person might decide to increase the level of suspension.

Once they have made a decision, a written decision will be sent to explain the decision, and the reason why that decision has been made. We will normally do so within two weeks of receiving all of the information.

Length of suspensions

A student suspension will only be issued when we have evidence or concerns which demonstrate that it wouldn't be appropriate for a student to be engaging with us in some way. In most cases this means the suspension will only be in place while we get more information about the concerns. A suspension will normally only be in place until we have finished a process, such as a Student Conduct or Fitness to Practise case. In some cases, especially those involving a police investigation, the suspension might last for a longer period of time, while we wait for the legal processes to be completed.

The suspension letter will explain when we believe that the Student Suspension will end, or when we think we will need to review it.

Appealing the Suspension decision

Grounds for appeal

You are able to appeal against the suspension decision, although the grounds for doing so are limited. Any appeal must be in writing, to regulations@staffs.ac.uk, and must be supported by evidence. Appeals must be submitted within two weeks (excluding bank holidays and University closures) of the decision. After that, an appeal will only be accepted if you have demonstrated that there was

nothing that you could have done to submit it on time. For example, that you were in hospital at the time that the appeal needed to be submitted.

The following constitute the only grounds on which you may appeal a student suspension decision. These must be made clear in the appeal:

- a. That there was a material procedural error or irregularity which has significantly impacted on the outcome. This means that there was a demonstrable procedural problem that compromised the integrity of the process, or that the process took a significant deviation from the written procedure without good reason.
- b. That the decision was manifestly perverse. This means that the decision was blatantly unreasonable, unjust, or illogical to the point of being obviously flawed, or deviated significantly from fairness or established principles in an unmistakable way.

We will check that the appeal is:

- On time, within two weeks (excluding banks holidays and University closure) of the decision.
 - Meets one of the reasons to appeal.
- and
- Is supported by evidence.

If the appeal does not meet all the above, we will not consider it and we will write to you explaining the reason why.

Consideration of the appeal

Appeals which are eligible are normally considered by an Executive Dean or Director who hasn't been involved in the case. In some cases, we may need to ask another appropriately senior member of university management to consider the appeal.

Their decision will be confirmed to you in writing, normally within two weeks (excluding bank holidays and University closures). An appeal can result in the suspension being left in place, the level of suspension changing, or the suspension being removed entirely.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator

If you disagree with the appeal decision, you have the right to make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within one year of the decision. You may only make a complaint to the OIA if you have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. More information is available on the [OIA's website](#).

Monitoring Suspensions

Continual monitoring of ongoing suspensions

The University appreciates that suspensions can have an impact on your wellbeing and studies, particularly where a suspension has been in place for some time.

To ensure that you are appropriately supported, the University will monitor all suspensions at appropriate intervals through the Suspension Review Group. The Suspension Review Group will include relevant staff with responsibilities for the following areas:

- Safeguarding
- Risk management
- Conduct and Fitness to Practise
- Student accommodation
- International student visa compliance knowledge

The Suspension Review Group will need up to date information about the status of any investigation. For internal University investigations, we will ensure that an update is provided by the Investigating Officer, or relevant internal staff member.

Where a suspension is issued due to a police or other external investigation, it is the responsibility of the student to provide the Registry with regular updates on the status of the investigation.

Where new information is available, or the circumstances have changed, the Suspension Review Group can make recommendations to the person who originally issued the suspension. These recommendations can include

- That the level of risk has reduced, and that the suspension can be removed entirely
- That the level of risk has reduced, and that the terms of the suspension can be made less restrictive
- If the group has requested an update from you which has not been provided in a reasonable amount of time, a recommendation can be made that you are withdrawn due to lack of engagement with the University

The recommendation and relevant information will be provided to the original decision maker or appropriate nominee, who will confirm their new decision to you in writing.

Where a suspension has been in place for a longer amount of time, the Group may also review how long you have been registered in study on your course, and whether you could reasonably be expected to complete within your registration period. Where it is noted reasonable, the group can request that an Award Board review your academic profile. This could result in your withdrawal for failing or being unable to reasonably complete your course within the expected timeframe, which could lead to us issuing you with a lower award. Please see the [Academic Regulations](#) sections “What if I can’t complete in time?” and “What if I don’t get enough credit for my award?” for more information.

You will be notified if there is a manifest change to the suspension following the review.

After a suspension is lifted

A suspension is normally lifted once the process has been fully completed, or we have enough information to determine that the suspension is no longer needed. When a suspension is lifted, we will

make sure that you have access to support to reengage. This might mean that the course team will need to reassess where you are in your studies. Where possible, we will help you to catch up on any learning and assessments that you might have missed as a result of the suspension.

If we think that you have missed too much to catch up on, we may need to put you onto a break in studies. If you are an apprenticeship student, a break in studies is not applicable. Instead, we will recontract with your employer. You will need to catch up or you will be unable to claim funding.

Other Information

Restrictions in place relating to legal cases or Police investigations

We often issue suspensions where a student has been arrested, interviewed or is otherwise involved in certain types of legal investigation, for example, relating to access of inappropriate materials online. With these cases, the police will normally issue an order which places prohibitions or restrictions on a person's access or behaviour. This could be a Sexual Harm Prevention Order, bail conditions or a restraining order. In these cases, we need to see a copy of the order and its prohibitions so that we can ensure that the University can support the student to study without breaching the terms of the order.

If you are involved in this type of case, but an order hasn't been put into place, we will normally need to issue a suspension and won't be able to lift it until the police case has closed, or an order has been put into place. This is because we won't have any details about the alleged offence, what it relates to, or what restrictions could be in place. This means that it would not be possible, or not appropriate, to allow you access to University campus or facilities.

Examples of types of suspension

We will try to issue the least restrictive suspension that we can. Where possible, we will issue a suspension only from the area or areas where the concern has arisen. Below is a list of illustrative examples of the types of suspension, and when we might issue them. This is not meant to be exhaustive, and each student case is considered based on the individual circumstances involved.

- Where a student breaches fire regulations in student accommodation, we may issue a suspension from accommodation and restrict campus access to daytime hours only.
- Where a student behaves inappropriately in a placement setting, we might suspend their access to placement settings.
- Where concerns about conduct have occurred in a Students' Union venue, we might suspend access to some or all Union venues.
- Where there are concerns about violent conduct, we are likely to issue a suspension for the whole campus, at least until we have examined the level of risk to the University's community.
- Where a student has been arrested for accessing inappropriate materials online, we are likely to issue a suspension for the

whole campus, at least until we have more information about any prohibitions, restrictions or other legal orders that are in place.
