



## The Union Advice Service Guide to Change of Plan

This Advice Service Guide explains what you need to do if you have a Change of Plan. This includes:

- ✓ **Repeating your studies.**
- ✓ **Transferring Courses.**
- ✓ **Suspending your Studies (abeyance/time out).**
- ✓ **Withdrawing from your course.**

This guide contains information on the **main implications** of changing or leaving your course and the procedures involved.

We would encourage you to seek advice from your College and SFE (where appropriate) before you make your decision.

If you are considering changing or leaving your course you will need to think about all of the relevant information before making a final decision, for example:

- ✓ **Time limits** – when does your period of registration end? Will you have enough time?
- ✓ **Academic practices** – Does your programme and Senate allow for extra time?
- ✓ **Professional expectations** – Are you on a professional course, do you have other guidelines to follow along with Brunel's regulations? For example the College of Occupational Therapists (COT)
- ✓ **Financial considerations** – Are you liable for Tuition Fees and Accommodation Fees still? What about you're SFE funding?

**The above may well restrict the options available to you.**

- **International Students - Please note:**

As you are likely to be studying on a Visa there are different rules governing what you may and may not do, and your stay in the UK may be affected. Seek advice from Student Centre Immigration before you take any action.

- Email: [immigration@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@brunel.ac.uk)

- Call: 01895 268092
- <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/studentcentre/visas/Pages/default.aspx>

- **Need guidance?**

The **ADVICE SERVICE** will be happy to talk through the practical and financial implications of changing, leaving or suspending a course. If you are unsure about your course you may find it helpful to talk it through with some of the following people:

- Personal tutor or Senior Tutor.
- [Student Centre, Welfare Team.](#)
- [Professional Development Centre.](#)
- ✓ **Repeating your studies**
  - The rules regarding **repeating study** can be particularly complex and it is recommended that you always seek advice from the **ADVICE SERVICE** on what this may mean for you.
  - If you are repeating studies with accepted Extenuating Circumstances then you will **not** have tuition fee liability but you will still require a maintenance loan (if applicable).
- ✓ **Transferring to another course or another University**
  - Transferring to another course is something that needs to be agreed by your **current** department AND the prospective department/University.
  - If you intend to change University, you should inform your College/department and Student Finance England and they will reassess your entitlement.
  - If you are changing your course internally and have permission of relevant College's admission tutors, please contact [Student Centre](#). Student Centre staff will be happy to assist you with the procedures.
- ✓ **What could repeat study or transferring course/University mean for me financially?**

**If you are a Home/EU Student:**

- Usually at the start of your course, you would be funded for each year of your study. There is also an additional 'gift' year in which you can be funded for repeats and suspensions etc.
  - ✓ For example, as a 3 year undergraduate student you would be funded for 3 years plus an additional gift year (totalling 4 years of 'funding package').
  - ✓ This additional gift year of funding is a "safety net" as it is recognised that some students may need to repeat a year of study for various reasons.
  - ✓ If you need to repeat a year, you will use a year out of your 'funding package'.
  - ✓ If you need to repeat more than once, you're 'funding package' may be depleted to the point that it may not cover all your course years.

- If you have had previous study or already repeated a year and then need to repeat subsequent years you may need to fund the subsequent years yourself as you will have used your “safety net” year of funding.
  - ✓ For example, if you studied a year of UG studies at another University and then came to Brunel to commence a 3 year programme and then have to repeat a year, it is likely you will have to support yourself for one academic year.
- If you decide to transfer courses or University once the academic year has commenced, depending on when you make this decision, you may well still be liable for fees (see page ).
  - ✓ For example, if you decide to transfer in term 2, you will still be liable for Tuition Fees for a portion of the year.
- There are options which may help to extend your ‘funding package’.
  - ✓ For example if you’ve had a particularly difficult year due to health or personal reasons, the ADVICE SERVICE can help you to negotiate with SFE to ask them to fund you for more years than you are entitled to.
  - ✓ SFE have discretion to do so and often agree if the evidence of your circumstances is compelling. Please see our Guide to [Compelling Personal Reasons](#)
- **Repeating your studies, if you are an International Student:**
  - You will need to discuss with your sponsor as to whether they can continue to fund your extra year of study needed for repeats.
  - You may also need to extend your visa for this additional year of study.
    - ✓ Email: [immigration@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@brunel.ac.uk)
    - ✓ Call: 01895 268092
- **Transferring to another course or University, if you are an International Student:**
  - You will need to discuss with your sponsor as to whether they can continue to fund your new course.
  - You are also likely to need a new visa with the new University Course details.
    - ✓ Email: [immigration@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@brunel.ac.uk)
    - ✓ Call: 01895 268092
- **What are the Academic implications of repeating?**
  - ✓ There may be timeframes that you need to be aware of when repeating your studies.
  - ✓ You should consider whether you have enough time to complete the course you are registered for.

- ✓ A normal period of study will be approved for each mode of study for each programme of study and assessment, this will be outlined in your **programme specification**.
- ✓ Each mode of study in which a programme is offered, the maximum period of registration shall be the normal period of **study plus two years up to a maximum period of registration for any programme of five years**.

**Speak to the ADVICE SERVICE or to your personal tutor to establish your maximum period of registration.**

- **Suspending your studies/time out (Abeyance)**

- ✓ In order to suspend your studies, you should first speak to your Personal Tutor to discuss issues you may have and any alternative options available to you.
- ✓ Once you have made your decision and agreed a date to return to study, you should then ask your tutor to notify Student Centre who will complete a “change of circumstances” electronic form.
- ✓ You should also let SFE know yourself that you are suspending. Write to SFE and send a letter by Recorded Delivery- you can visit the ADVICE SERVICE if you need help with this.
- ✓ If you live in Halls of Residence contact the Accommodation Office for advice regarding your period of notice and whether you have to leave your room.
- ✓ The University will not normally agree to periods of abeyance of more than one calendar year in the first instance.

- **If you are an International Student and want to suspend your studies/take time out (abeyance)**

- ✓ International Students should urgently seek advice from the Student Centre as the periods of suspension of studies are limited for international students and permission to stay in UK may be affected if studies are suspended for more than a month.
- ✓ Taking time out of your course for any reason will have immigration implications and you may need to return to your home country during the time that you have suspended your studies. Always contact Student Centre for advice before making your decision.

- **What may suspending (abeyance/time out) my studies mean for me financially?**

- ✓ **Student Funding**

- Full-time students who need to take a break from their studies, but who want to return — i.e. ‘intercalate’ or suspend their studies

– often fall through the net of both the student support and means tested benefits systems and may find it difficult to get financial support.

- If it has been agreed by the University that you can suspend temporarily, SFE will normally suspend your financial support for up to one year and reinstate it when you return. The university has a duty to inform the SFE about your suspension.
- SFE may request that you repay any parts of the loan you have received for periods when you were not actually in attendance at university. These rules are complex and students who suspend due to medical reasons are treated differently.
- Those students who suspend on non-medical grounds are not entitled to any further funding from the day of their suspension (although SFE may *discretionary* agree to pay loan instalments i.e. they *don't have to* pay you but they *may*, depending on your reasons for suspension- **seek advice from the ADVICE SERVICE**).
- Sometimes SFE does not act quickly enough on your information about your suspension and may continue paying you your loan instalments. There is always a scope for negotiation with SFE if they want you to repay the funding they say you were not entitled to, for example if your financial circumstances are difficult.
- If you do not repay the 'unused' funding and SFE refuse to pay your any further loan instalments during your suspension, the debt created may result in reduction of funding in next academic year.

**If you have been asked to repay SFE any overpayment that they have made to you during your suspension, you can always negotiate with them to ask that you can pay the overpayment back once you have completed your degree or earn enough to meet the repayment threshold. Speak to the ADVICE SERVICE for help.**

## Withdrawing

**If you wish to withdraw you should follow these steps:**

- ✓ Inform your personal tutor, Senior Tutor or Course Leader- so that they can complete the electronic **Student Record Amendment Form**.
- ✓ Notify the SFE.
- ✓ If in Halls of Residence contact an **ADVICE SERVICE** Adviser or the Accommodation Office for advice regarding your period of notice and leaving your accommodation early.
- ✓ If you rent off-campus you may have difficulty in getting out of your tenancy if it is for a fixed period of time. You should contact an **ADVICE SERVICE** Adviser for further advice.

- ✓ If you are going to be unemployed on leaving University you can make a claim for Jobseeker Allowance (JSA) at your local JobcentrePlus.

- **What may Withdrawing mean for me financially?**

- If you are not in receipt of Tuition Fee Loan, you will be liable for fees personally. Therefore YOU will have to pay a portion of fees yourself, depending on when you withdraw.
- If you receive Tuition Fee Loan, your fee liability, i.e. what you owe for tuition so far, should not exceed what you can borrow from the government in form of the tuition fee loan. Please see an **ADVICE SERVICE** adviser if you are experiencing difficulties with this.
- If you are going to withdraw from your course and start again on a new one next year or in the future, you should always seek advice from the **ADVICE SERVICE** on what student funding you would be likely to receive. Depending on your situation you may have to fund some of your new course yourself. Alternatively seek advice from your 'new' University's Student Union advice centre.
- You may be asked to repay some parts of the funding that you have been paid by SFE. You are entitled to funding as long as you are registered as a student. Once you withdraw, SFE will require you to repay certain amount of the most recent loan instalment; the amount will be divided by how many days in the Term and you will be asked to pay back for the days you have not attended, i.e. from your withdrawal date until the date of your next instalment. The rules are similar as with Suspending (see above). You can negotiate with SFE about repayment options or rates.
- You can ask SFE a question about the repayment options [here](https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/forumdisplay.php?f=910)

If you have paid your fees yourself, you might be entitled to some refund if you withdraw. **There is no automatic entitlement to a refund of tuition fees after enrolment for students who withdraw from their programme of study.** However, at the discretion of the Academic Registrar, refunds may be applied as follows:

**If you transfer, withdraw or suspend your studies during the academic year, your fee liability is as below:**

- ✓ Home/EU Students:

- Withdrawal in Weeks 1 and 2: No tuition fee charge so no need for a refund
- Withdrawal in Weeks 3 to 14: 25% tuition fee liability
- Withdrawal in Weeks 15 to 28: 50% tuition fee liability
- Withdrawal in Weeks 29 onwards: 100% tuition fee liability

- ✓ International Students:

- Withdrawal in weeks 3 to 4: refund of 90% of the full fee payable

- Withdrawal in weeks 5 to 14: refund of 67% of the full fee payable
- Withdrawal in weeks 15 to 18: refund of 33% of the full fee payable
- Withdrawal after week 18: no refund

**International students are required to go back to their home country after withdrawing from a course. Seek advice from Immigration Team in the Student Centre.**

**What advice and help can I expect to receive from the Advice Service?**

- Help you to understand your options.
- Talk through with you what financially this will mean for you.
- Check draft letters and statements before you submit them.
- Talk through realistic outcomes and what you could expect.
- Help you decide whether repeating, suspending, transferring or withdrawing are the best and most realistic option for you.

**If you would like advice on the Academic Misconduct process then please complete our online enquiry form on [Brunelstudents.com](http://Brunelstudents.com) and a member of the Advice Service Team will get in touch!**