

# Requirements when considering requests for leave of absence and rate of study variations

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Students are able to request a leave of absence or variation to their rate of study, in order to ensure that they can continue with their study in, or after, a period of difficulty or to enable them to capitalise on an opportunity that will enhance their studies.
- a. **Leave of absence** is defined as time away from study and can be granted in special circumstances, with appropriate evidence, for a pre-agreed length of time from 1-12 months to allow students to pursue a development opportunity or manage a personal circumstance.
  - b. **Varying the rate of study** is defined as any personalised arrangement granted in special circumstances, with appropriate evidence, to complete modules and assessments at a different rate to that set out in the course specification in order to support a student with a long-term extenuating circumstance.
- 1.2 Leave of absence does not apply in situations where the University has put in place extraordinary measures to vary learning, teaching and assessment to address national or international events, for example, industrial action by staff or pandemic.

### Explanatory Note

- Extenuating circumstances necessitating a varied rate of study are those for which the consequences are ongoing rather than related to a specific assessment (see Quality Handbook (QH) Section 17A).
- Stipulations from accrediting Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs) should also be taken into account when considering a request.
- Students studying online learning courses offered in partnership with Wiley are excluded from the provisions of this supplement and should refer instead to QH Section 10E.

## 2. Considerations

- 2.1 Students must be fully informed of the implications of a decision to take a leave of absence or a variation in study rate. Effective communication must also be established between Student Support Services, Student Financial Support Services, and the course team.
- 2.2 The process by which students may request a leave of absence or variation in study rate must be clear and consistently applied, and include a process for appeal of the decision.
- 2.3 Leave of absence does not apply in situations where the University has put in place extraordinary measures to vary learning, teaching and assessment to address national or international events.
- 2.4 The decision to grant a leave of absence or variation in study rate is made by the Dean. Where a leave of absence has been granted during a period where there are extraordinary measures in place, described above (2.3), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance) must be informed. Appeals should be considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance) or their nominee.
- 2.5 Students should be supported during their leave of absence, whilst studying at a reduced rate and upon return to full time study. This includes: continuing to receive course communications; access to learning rooms and learning materials; an agreed plan of contact with their personal tutor; and an agreed return to study process. The agreed variation or leave of absence should be appropriately recorded on the student record.
- 2.6 No unfair academic advantage should be gained by the agreement to vary a student's rate of study. Each request should be considered on its own merits taking into account the student's circumstances and the University's ambition that students are able to personalise their learning experience where possible.

### Explanatory note

- QH Section 16 notes that the period of absence will not be included for the purpose of calculating students' maximum registration period.

<b>Policy owner</b>
CADQ

<b>Change history</b>			
<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approval date:</i>	<i>Implementation date:</i>	<i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>
Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	New
Mar 2017	14.03.17	14.03.17	Change of decision making authority to Head of Department
Sep 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	Clarification of maximum registration periods and cross reference to QHS10E for Wiley online learning courses
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	None
Sept 2019	11.09.19	01.10.19	None
Mar 2020	01.04.20	01.04.20	Changes to address implications of COVID-19 outbreak. Dean to grant LoA requests, with DVC AQD informed. Appeals to DVC AQD. LoA requests do not apply where the University has put in place extraordinary measures to vary learning, teaching and assessment, during in times of national or international emergency
Sept 2020	16.09.20	01.10.20	None
Sept 2021	07.09.21	01.10.21	None

<b>Equality Analysis</b>		
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Sept 2016	01.10.17	CADQ