

Study Break Policy

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Department / Function: Academic Quality and Standards

Owner: Register, Mr Stephen Plant

Oversight committee: Academic Board

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Regularity alignment with Office for Student (OfS) conditions

This Study Break Policy forms part of the London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) academic governance and student support framework and supports student wellbeing, retention, and academic continuity.

The policy aligns with **OfS Condition B1 (Academic Experience)** and **B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement)** by ensuring that students who require a temporary interruption of studies are provided with appropriate academic guidance, welfare support, and clear information regarding the implications of a study break. It further supports **OfS Condition B3 (Student Outcomes)** by promoting continuation and successful return to study, reducing the risk of permanent withdrawal.

The policy aligns with **OfS Condition C1 (Consumer Protection)** and **C5 (Treating Students Fairly)** by providing transparent, consistent, and accessible procedures for requesting and approving study breaks, including clear communication of financial, visa (where applicable), and progression implications.

In addition, the policy demonstrates compliance with **OfS Condition E2 (Management and Governance)** by ensuring defined responsibilities, oversight, and monitoring of study break trends within academic governance structures.

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

This policy sets out London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) approach to **Study Breaks**, also referred to as an **Interruption of Studies**. A Study Break is a formal, approved period of time during which a student temporarily pauses their studies with the intention of returning at an agreed point.

The policy ensures that decisions are **fair, transparent, consistent, and evidence-based**, and that students receive timely guidance on the academic, financial, and administrative implications of taking a Study Break. This supports LAAT's obligations for clear information and fair processes under OfS expectations and consumer protection principles.

2. Scope

2.1 Applicability

This policy applies to all students enrolled on higher education programmes delivered by LAAT under franchised or validated arrangements. It applies across all modes of study (full-time, part-time, blended, and approved online delivery), and to all LAAT teaching locations and approved learning platforms.

2.2 Exclusions and Precedence

This policy does not replace or override the academic regulations of LAAT's validating partner. Where any inconsistency arises, validating partner regulations take precedence, and this policy will be interpreted and applied accordingly. marjon.ac.uk

3. Definitions

Study Break: A formally approved temporary pause in studies, granted for a specified period, with the expectation that the student will return at an agreed time.

Last Date of Attendance (LDA): The last evidenced date a student attended or engaged academically. This date may affect fee liability, funding reporting, and academic record decisions.

Mitigating Circumstances: Significant and unexpected circumstances beyond a student's control that materially affect their ability to continue their studies.

Return to Study Plan: A documented plan confirming intended return date and any conditions or support arrangements required to enable successful re-engagement.

Reasonable Adjustments: Appropriate and proportionate modifications or support arrangements to ensure students are not disadvantaged, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

4. Principles

LAAT applies the following principles to Study Break decisions:

- **Fairness and consistency:** Decisions are made using clear criteria and applied consistently.
- **Supportive approach:** The purpose is to support student wellbeing and academic success, not to penalise students.
- **Proportionality:** Decisions reflect the nature and impact of the circumstances.
- **Academic integrity:** A Study Break must not provide an unfair assessment advantage; assessment outcomes up to the point of interruption are handled in line with relevant regulations. marjon.ac.uk
- **Transparency:** Students receive clear written outcomes and information on implications. officeforstudents.org.uk
- **Data protection:** All personal data is handled securely and lawfully (UK GDPR).

5. Governance, Committees and Terms of Reference

5.1 Governance and Oversight

Strategic oversight is provided by the Board of Governors. Academic assurance and operational oversight is delegated to the Academic Board.

5.2 Oversight Committee Responsibilities

The Academic Board will:

- Approve and periodically review the policy
- Monitor study break trends, risks, and consistency of decision-making
- Receive assurance on compliance with regulatory and validating partner requirements
- Recommend enhancements to strengthen student outcomes and retention

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Eligibility for a Study Break

A Study Break may be granted where a student is unable to continue studying due to mitigating circumstances. These may include, but are not limited to, health issues, personal or family circumstances, caring responsibilities, or other significant disruption. Students are encouraged to seek advice from Student Support before submitting a request.

6.2 Timings and Deadlines

Students must apply for a Study Break in accordance with published timescales. Requests will not normally be approved close to assessment periods where the primary purpose appears to be avoidance of assessment or the gaining of academic advantage. This approach reflects UK higher education practice and protects academic standards and fairness.

6.3 Maximum Duration

A Study Break will normally be approved for **up to one academic year** at a time. Requests exceeding this period will be considered only in exceptional and evidenced circumstances and remain subject to regulatory constraints, validating partner requirements, and maximum registration periods.

6.4 Academic Consequences and Assessment Integrity

LAAT will confirm how modules and assessments are treated at the point of interruption. Study Breaks must not create an unfair assessment advantage, and academic outcomes up to the interruption point will be managed in accordance with academic regulations and validating partner requirements.

6.5 Fees, Funding, and Student Finance

Students will be advised that taking a Study Break may affect tuition fee liability and student finance entitlement. LAAT will ensure appropriate reporting is undertaken and will guide students to seek specialist financial advice where required. Formal notification is essential to protect students' funding position and ensure accurate fee liability.

6.6 Health-Based Study Breaks and Fitness to Return

Where a Study Break is requested on health grounds, LAAT may require appropriate evidence, including confirmation from an independent professional where relevant, that the student is fit to resume studies prior to re-enrolment. Support planning will be put in place to facilitate a successful return to study.

6.7 Return to Study

Approval of a Study Break will include:

- an agreed return point, normally the next appropriate intake or academic cycle; and
- any conditions required for successful return, such as re-enrolment steps, a return-to-study plan, or evidence of fitness to return.

Students must confirm their intention to return by the deadline specified in the return communication. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal in line with institutional procedures.

6.8 International (if applicable)

Where applicable, students will be advised that taking a Study Break may have significant implications for immigration status. Students are expected to seek appropriate specialist advice before confirming a Study Break, and LAAT will provide guidance in line with its legal and regulatory responsibilities.

7. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

The detailed procedures for applying for, assessing, approving, recording, and returning from a Study Break are set out in **Appendix A**. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) ensures that Study Breaks are managed in a consistent, transparent, timely, and supportive manner, while protecting academic standards and regulatory compliance. The SOP should be read in conjunction with this policy and relevant academic regulations.

8. Regulatory, Partner and Legal Alignment

8.1 Validating Partner Requirements

This policy aligns with the regulations, academic standards, and expectations of LAAT's validating partner. In developing this policy, LAAT has had regard to the Student Regulations Framework of Plymouth Marjon University, in particular Section 11: Attendance, Interruption of Studies, Withdrawal and Fees, which informs sector practice in relation to interruption duration, assessment integrity, deadlines, and return-to-study arrangements. Where validating partner regulations are updated or amended, this policy and its associated procedures will be reviewed to ensure continued alignment.

8.2 Regulatory Framework

This policy supports LAAT's compliance with the Conditions of Registration set by the Office for Students, in particular:

- **Condition B2** – Information for students
- **Condition B4** – Fairness and transparency
- **Condition C1** – Consumer protection

8.3 Legal Requirements

This policy is informed by, and must be applied in accordance with, relevant legal and statutory obligations, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

9. Monitoring, Compliance and Review

9.1 Monitoring

Study Break activity, including volumes, reasons, duration, outcomes, and return-to-study rates, is monitored by the Student Support Team. Summary data and identified trends are reported to the Academic Board as part of LAAT's student retention, progression, and quality assurance arrangements.

9.2 Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy or its associated procedures may be addressed through appropriate academic or administrative processes. Any action taken will be proportionate, evidence-based, appropriately authorised, and subject to an auditable record.

9.3 Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where required due to changes in regulatory expectations, legal obligations, validating partner requirements, or institutional practice. The Policy Owner is responsible for initiating the review and presenting any proposed amendments through the appropriate governance routes.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Register (Policy Owner): Mr Stephen Plant**
Overall accountability for policy implementation
- **Head of Academic Quality: Dr Vishwanath Kokkonda**
Ensures policy compliance, documentation, and audit readiness.
- **Programme Lead: Mr Amarjeet Singh**
Academic advice, withdrawal review, approval oversight, compliance assurance
- **Student Support Officer: Ms Nadia Asim**
Responsible for operational monitoring and intervention.
- **Academic Staff**
Academic staff are responsible for the accurate and timely monitoring of student attendance and engagement.
- **Students**
Students are expected to take responsibility for their own attendance and engagement.

List of people and contacts

Role	Name	Contact email
Register	Mr Stephen Plant	Stephen.plant@laat.ac.uk
Head of Academic Quality	Dr Vishwanath Kokkonda	Vishwanath.kokkonda@laat.ac.uk
Programme Lead	Mr Amarjeet Singh	Amarjeet.singh@laat.ac.uk
Student support officer	Ms Nadia Asim	nadiaasim@laat.ac.uk

11. List of Documents

- Study Break Policy (Approved Version)
- Study Break Application Form
- Approval Decision Letter / Email Template
- Return-to-Study / Re-enrolment Plan
- Deferrals Policy
- Course Transfers Policy
- Withdrawals Policy

12. Evidence

- Study Break Policy (Approved Version)

- Study Break Application Form
- Approval Decision Letter / Email Template
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- Withdrawals Policy

Mapping table for evidence items related to OfS conditions

Evidence / Document	Purpose / What it Demonstrates	Relevant OfS Condition(s)
Study Break Policy (Approved Version)	Sets out formal procedures, eligibility, governance, and student protections for study breaks	B1 (Academic Experience), B2 (Resources & Support), C1 (Consumer Protection), E2 (Management & Governance)
Study Break Application Form	Records student requests and supporting information	C1 (Consumer Protection), C5 (Treating Students Fairly), F2 (Information Controls)
Approval Decision Letter / Email Template	Confirms decisions, conditions, and appeal rights	C1 (Consumer Protection), C5 (Treating Students Fairly), E3 (Accountability)
Return-to-Study / Re-enrolment Plan	Supports student reintegration and academic continuation	B1 (Academic Experience), B3 (Student Outcomes), C3 (Student Protection Plan)
Deferrals Policy	Regulates deferred entry and interruptions prior to enrolment	B1 (Academic Experience), C1 (Consumer Protection), C5 (Treating Students Fairly), E2 (Management & Governance)
Course Transfers Policy	Governs programme changes and credit transfer	B1 (Academic Experience), B4 (Assessment & Awards), C1 (Consumer Protection), E3

Appendix A – Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Study Breaks

A1. Purpose of the SOP

This SOP provides a clear, step-by-step process for managing Study Breaks (Interruption of Studies). It ensures that:

- students receive appropriate advice and support,
- decisions are evidence-based and consistent,
- academic and financial implications are clearly communicated, and
- accurate records are maintained for quality assurance and regulatory purposes.

A2. Stage 1 – Initial Advice and Early Discussion

- Students considering a Study Break are encouraged to contact the Student Support Team at the earliest opportunity.
- Student Support will discuss available options, which may include:
 - continuing studies with additional support,
 - a Study Break,

- deferral (where applicable), or
- withdrawal.
- Students are advised of the potential academic, financial, and administrative implications of a Study Break before submitting a formal request.

A3. Stage 2 – Submission of Study Break Request

- Students must submit a Study Break request using the approved LAAT process and within published timescales.
- The request must include:
 - the reason for the Study Break,
 - the proposed start date,
 - any supporting evidence where required (e.g. medical or professional documentation).
- Late requests may not be approved unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

A4. Stage 3 – Review and Eligibility Check

- The Student Support Team reviews the request to confirm:
 - eligibility under this policy,
 - completeness of information and evidence,
 - compliance with published deadlines.
- The Programme Team is consulted to confirm:
 - the student's academic position,
 - modules studied and assessments completed or outstanding,
 - the most appropriate return point.
- Where a Study Break is requested on health grounds, Student Support will confirm whether fitness-to-return evidence will be required.

A5. Stage 4 – Decision and Authorisation

- Study Break requests are considered by an authorised decision-maker in line with delegated authority arrangements.
- Decisions take into account:
 - the nature and impact of the circumstances,
 - academic progression and assessment integrity,
 - regulatory and validating partner requirements,
 - maximum registration and interruption limits.
- Requests intended to avoid assessment or gain academic advantage will not normally be approved.
- The decision and rationale are formally recorded.

A6. Stage 5 – Communication of Outcome

- The outcome of the request is communicated to the student in writing within a reasonable timeframe.
- Where approved, the communication will confirm:
 - the approved Study Break period,
 - the agreed return point,
 - any conditions attached (e.g. evidence of fitness to return),
 - re-enrolment requirements and deadlines,
 - guidance on fees and student finance implications.

- Where a request is not approved, reasons are clearly explained and alternative options signposted where appropriate.

A7. Stage 6 – Record-Keeping and Notifications

- All Study Break decisions, supporting evidence, and communications are recorded securely in LAAT's approved systems.
- Records are maintained in accordance with UK GDPR and institutional data retention requirements.
- Where applicable, external notifications (e.g. student finance, regulatory reporting) are completed in line with institutional procedures.

A8. Stage 7 – During the Study Break

- During the approved Study Break period:
 - students are expected to keep LAAT informed of any significant change in circumstances,
 - access to learning systems and services is managed in line with institutional arrangements,
 - ongoing support may be signposted where appropriate.

A9. Stage 8 – Preparing for Return to Study

- Students must confirm their intention to return to study by the deadline specified in the outcome communication.
- Where required, students must submit any requested fitness-to-return or supporting evidence prior to re-enrolment.
- Student Support and Programme Teams coordinate to:
 - confirm module enrolment,
 - agree a return-to-study plan,
 - ensure appropriate academic and pastoral support is in place.

A10. Stage 9 – Failure to Return

- Where a student fails to confirm their intention to return or does not meet return conditions within the specified timeframe, the student may be withdrawn from the programme in line with LAAT's Withdrawals Policy.
- The student will be informed in writing of any change in status.