Student-led Changes to Registration Status Procedure (Programme Transfers, Interruptions of Study, Withdrawals, Mode of Study)

Introduction

1. This procedure is designed to give detailed information to those supporting students through the processes of programme transfer; interruptions of study; student-led withdrawal; or changes in mode of study. It may also be referred to by students for further information on these processes.

2. Regular reviews of the documentation and outcomes may lead to updates to this procedure as needed.

Scope

3. The full procedure applies to all registered students (taught and research) from academic year 2024/25 onwards, with the exception of occasional (visiting) students.

4. Occasional (visiting) students may request a student-led withdrawal; they may not request a programme transfer or change in mode of study. Occasional (visiting) students may only request an interruption of studies if they are registered with the university for a minimum of 12 consecutive months. If an occasional (visiting) student makes a change to their registration at Imperial they must ensure that their 'home' institution are made aware of this change.

5. The procedure explains the processes by which a student may initiate a programme transfer; an authorised interruption of study; a student-led withdrawal; or a change in their mode of study (from full-time to part-time or vice versa).

6. The procedure does not include the processes for College-led, forcible withdrawals. Conditions for College-led withdrawals are set out in the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*, *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD;* the *Tuition Fee Policy*, the *Student Disciplinary Procedure*; the *Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure*; the *Unsatisfactory Engagement Policy and Procedure*; and the *Fitness to Study Procedure*.

Confidentiality and GDPR

7. During consideration of a student under this procedure, information may be shared that is sensitive, as well as personal information. It is important that this is acknowledged by ensuring that all information is considered in a confidential manner and that due care and attention is paid to the secure storage and timely destruction of information in line with the College retention schedule.

8. All College members should ensure that they remain up to date with current legislation. Further details about GDPR can be found on the College website at https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/information-governance/data-

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protection/gdpr/ or from their department local data protection coordinator or the College Data Protection Officer.

Parents, partners, and friends

9. An individual has the right to confidentiality after the age of 16 under UK law. This means that the College cannot share information with any third party without consent, unless under a legal obligation to do so (HESA returns, legally made police requests etc.) or for other dispensation under GDPR legislation. College policy is that consent should be in writing, which can then be kept with the case file for future reference.

10. Students should be advised to be clear when agreeing for someone to be contacted on their behalf of the scope of that permission. For example, is the consent given limited to a specific process or period?

11. Therefore, staff should ensure that:

    a. The person that they are communicating with (by phone or by email) is the student, for example by using an email address that they have supplied to the College or by confirming their identity on the phone.

    b. Correspondence is clearly directed to the student.

    c. If approached by a third party, no details are provided and they are clearly informed that without consent, no information will be provided.

Reasonable Adjustments for students with a disability

12. Whilst the College is committed to ensuring that its processes and procedures are inclusive, there may be occasions in which changes need to be made to support a student with a disability or other long-term condition as defined under the 2010 Equality Act. A student may make a member of staff aware, or staff may already be aware, that reasonable adjustments to the procedure are needed or should be requested. The College then will consider any requests and takes steps as appropriate to ensure that students with a disability are not disadvantaged.

13. There are a range of adjustments that may be considered appropriate, which will be dependent on the impact of the disability on the student. Examples include but are not limited to:

    a. Extensions to deadlines

    b. Amendments to the format for submissions or procedural documentation

14. Each request will be considered on its merits by the College. Where requested adjustments are not granted, or alternatives are offered, the reasons for this will be clearly explained.

15. If a student makes a request for adjustments but they are not registered as having a disability, the College reserves the right to seek evidence to support that this is the case.

Programme transfers

16. A student-led programme transfer is any request from a student to transfer from one programme of study to another. This includes transfers between subject disciplines; transfers between specialisms in a single discipline; and transfers between pathways of a course.

Please note that if a student is unable to complete the award for which they were originally registered, this will normally be considered as an exit award rather than a programme transfer.

17. Students do not have an automatic right to transfer their programme; any request is subject to academic approval and availability of places.

How to request

18. Grounds for approval of a request for transfer of one taught programme to another are set out in the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*.

19. Requests for transfer from one postgraduate research degree to another, excepting requests to transfer from MPhil to PhD or MD(Res) to PhD or PhD to MD(Res), will be considered along the same principles as those set out in the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*. Principles for the transfer of MPhil to PhD or MD(Res) to PhD or PhD to MD(Res) are set out in the *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD*.

20. Students wishing to request transfer of one programme of study to another should ensure they meet the admissions requirements of the programme of study they wish to transfer to.

21. A student who is considering transferring programmes should initially contact their Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor, Faculty Senior Tutor, Director of Studies or other nominated member of department staff to discuss their intentions. Each request for transfer will be considered individually.

22. Students who are in receipt of funding (i.e., a student loan or a bursary); and/or a Student Visa for which the College act as a sponsor, must familiarise themselves with the potential implications of a programme transfer on their funding and/or visa. Students can seek advice from the Student Financial Support team (student.funding@imperial.ac.uk) and the International Student Support team (international@imperial.ac.uk) as appropriate.

23. Students who have a Suggested Reasonable Adjustment Document (SRAD) should be aware that a SRAD is programme-specific, and if they transfer programmes a new SRAD will need to be created by the College's Disability Advice Service.

24. There is no formal deadline for the submission of programme transfer requests; however, departments are expected to take a sensible and consistent approach when approving in-year requests. Requests to transfer should be made at the earliest opportunity. If a request is submitted part-way through a year, it may not be possible for the student to transfer at the point of request.

25. Requests to transfer between postgraduate research programmes should be made at the earliest opportunity, and will not normally be permitted after the Early Stage Assessment unless the transfer is caused by something outside of the student's control; for example, a change in primary supervisor. If the request is to transfer from a PhD to an MPhil award, transfers may be made at any point of the registration.

26. Students wishing to formally request a programme transfer must submit the request in writing to the Directors of Study, or equivalent, of both the programme on which they are currently registered and the programme to which they are wishing to transfer.

27. If a student is requesting a transfer between two cognate taught programmes of study, it may be possible to transfer any previously completed credits to the new programme of study under the principles of credit transfer set out in the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of*

Study. This can only be authorised by the Director of Study, or equivalent, who are considering the request for programme transfer.

Consideration & Approval

28. Upon receipt of a written request from a student to transfer programmes, the Directors of Study (or equivalent) will consider the request against the criteria set out in the relevant regulations, in a timely manner. Each request must be considered individually, taking into account the student's circumstances.

29. It is expected that, when considering a request, the Directors will make an academic judgement to confirm if the modular learning outcomes of modules already completed map onto the programme to which the student wishes to transfer.

30. If the request is rejected, the Directors will write to the student to inform them of the decision and the reason for the rejection. A copy of this communication should be retained by the Department.

31. If the request is accepted, the Directors will write to the student to inform them of the decision; and also inform the Student Records team that the transfer is approved; whether any previously passed credits and marks will be transferred; the date from which the transfer will take effect; and the modules the student will be undertaking after their transfer.

32. If the student is in receipt of a Student Visa for which the College acts as a sponsor, the Student Records team will inform the Visa Compliance team of the approved programme transfer.

33. If a request is approved part-way through the year, the curriculum structure may require the student to take an authorised interruption of study for the remainder of the academic year and start their engagement with the new programme of study at the beginning of the next academic year.

Authorised Interruptions of Study

34. An Authorised Interruption of Studies (IoS) is available for Full-Time or Part-Time students who require an extended period of authorised absence from their studies and plan to resume at a future date. Common grounds for Authorised Interruption of Studies include, but are not limited to:

    - Health reasons (mental or physical health conditions)
    - Extracurricular pursuits e.g. elite sports
    - Employment opportunities/internships which may benefit the academic interests of the student
    - Financial circumstances
    - Personal reasons
    - Military service

35. Students registered on research programmes who are considering an Interruption of Study should also refer to the College's *Guidelines for Interruption of Studies for PhD, MPhil, MD(Res) and EngD students.*

36. The College has a separate policy on Maternity, Adoptive and Paternity Leave Provision for Students.

37. Students do not have an automatic right to an interruption. The College expects that students will normally complete their studies in a single continuous period. An Authorised Interruption of Studies is generally made at the request of the student, but the College reserves the right to enforce an Authorised Interruption of Studies. Any enforced Authorised Interruption of Studies must be approved by the Academic Registrar (or nominee).

38. During a period of interruption, students should not normally be expected to undertake any studies at the College. On resumption of their studies, students are expected to fulfil the same progression criteria for their programme of studies.

39. The College's *Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure* may provide alternative options to an Authorised Interruption of Studies.

40. The length of an Authorised Interruption of Studies granted to students following taught programmes will normally be for a period of 12 months. In some cases, students may be allowed to return to their studies within a shorter timeframe, which may result in a period of repeat teaching.[1] Authorised Interruption of Studies of less than 12 months for taught students are generally exceptional cases where it can be demonstrated that the circumstances leading up to the period of interruption affected the student's learning and engagement prior to the interruption start date. The minimum period for an Authorised Interruption of Studies will normally be 1 month.

41. The start date of an Authorised Interruption of Studies cannot normally be backdated by more than 1 month from the date that the interruption was requested. If the student holds a Student Visa for which the College acts as a sponsor, it is not possible to backdate the start of the period of interruption, as the College is legally required to report any interruption of study to the UKVI within 10 days of the commencement date.

42. Any single period of interruption of study will not normally exceed 12 months, unless authorised by the College due to exceptional circumstances (see paragraph 56). Students may not normally take more than a total of two years (24 months) as an Authorised Interruption of Studies, as this would exceed the stated maximum period of registration for the programme they are registered on, as set out in the Academic Regulations.

43. Students taking an Authorised Interruption of Studies will continue to be registered as students of the College during their period of interruption but they will not be enrolled for study. Access to any College facilities and resources (physical and virtual) during the Authorised Interruption of Studies will be agreed with the student and communicated to them. Students will not be liable for tuition fees during their interruption of studies; their fee liability will be calculated pro rata for the weeks attended before and after the interruption of studies. This is set out in more detail in the College's *Tuition Fee Policy*.

44. Departments should ensure that a designated and named point of contact is provided to the student who will be available to advise them regarding their return to study whilst they are interrupted.

How to request

45. A student who wishes to take an Authorised Interruption of Studies should initially contact their Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor, Faculty Senior Tutor, Director of Studies or other nominated member of department staff to discuss their needs. Each request for interruption must be considered individually, taking into account the particular circumstances of the student. Consideration will need to be given with regards to the outstanding learning, teaching

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[1] Tuition fees may be charged for repeat study, although the university may waive any fees for repeat study if appropriate.

and assessment that the student will need to complete on their return. Where the student has initiated an interruption at the point of assessments, advice and guidance will be needed to be given regarding managing the assessment, such as an application for Mitigating Circumstances.

46. A request for an Authorised Interruption of Studies must be made by the student, via the student portal (My Imperial). A request can be made by a representative of the student where the student is unable to undertake this themself, such requests should be made directly to the Student Records Team in Registry. Students (and their representative) should be aware that they may be required to submit supporting documents, such as medical evidence or other documentation.

47. In exceptional circumstances, for example if staff are concerned about a student's wellbeing, further confirmation may be sought from the student that they are intending to interrupt their studies and that they understand how this will affect their student status, funding, visa, and other applicable elements.

48. Students who are in receipt of funding (e.g. a student loan or a bursary); and/or a Student Visa for which the College act as a sponsor, must familiarise themselves with the implications of an authorised interruption of studies, on their funding and/or visa. Students can seek advice from the Student Financial Support team (student.funding@imperial.ac.uk) and the International Student Support team (international@imperial.ac.uk) as appropriate.

Consideration

49. Departments should take a supportive approach when considering applications for an Authorised Interruption of Studies. Departments should approve applications where the student has provided a good reason for the interruption as long as the interruption will be compatible with the student completing their studies subsequently and would not cause the student to exceed the maximum period of registration for their award.

50. The Senior Tutor, Director of Undergraduate Studies or Director of Postgraduate Studies (or equivalent) will determine whether or not the request for an interruption can be granted and will inform the student of their decision, normally within five working days. The College's Registry must also be informed of the period of the interruption so that this can be recorded on the student record.

51. Where a request for interruption is refused, the Department must provide a clear explanation for the decision to the student and provide one further opportunity for a student to resubmit their request.

52. An Authorised Interruption of Studies granted to a student on a taught programme will normally impact module registration for the period affected. The start date of the interruption period will be used to determine any module management updates required, based on enrolment and the module teaching period.

There are three main scenarios to highlight, noting that module registrations are specific to an academic year:

a. Modules where the student has completed the learning and assessment for the module before the period of interruption begins;

b. Modules for which the student is enrolled but which have yet to begin (they are due to start later in the academic year);

    c. Modules where the student has started the module, but the period of interruption begins mid-way through the delivery period of the module, so they cannot complete it as originally intended. Typically, this applies to 'long-thin' modules that span multiple terms, or where the interruption begins in the middle of a term. This includes modules where the learning for the module has been completed but not all the assessment(s).

Case (a). The module registration will remain on the student's record as the module has been completed. Module marks and outcomes for completed modules will be reviewed and confirmed by the relevant Board of Examiners, as per the usual process.

Case (b). These module registrations will be removed from the student's record. When they return from the period of interruption the appropriate module registrations will be made in that academic year for the equivalent or other modules.

Case (c). The registrations for these modules will be amended on the student's record. This could allow the student to have access to the teaching and learning materials of both instances of the module in connected EdTech systems, if desired. This arrangement acknowledges that the student has completed some of the learning for the module, so maintains their access to content in connected systems in the same way that access to completed modules is maintained when a student commences a period of interruption.

A specific re-registration requirement for equivalent or other modules will be set out in the return to study plan. When the student re-enrols, the module (or equivalent thereof) is re-added to the record in the subsequent academic year. This will allow access to the current teaching and learning materials, and submission of assessments and this module registration will be listed on the transcript. The overall module marks will be returned against this module. Note that in this case the start term of the module may be before the end date of the interruption.

An illustrative example is given in Appendix A.

53. Students commencing an interruption of study period prior to the end of the academic year will not normally have their academic progression considered by the College's Examiners' Progression and Award Board. A decision on progression will be made on academic grounds once the student is considered to have been enrolled and attempted all aspects of the programme year under consideration. Boards should ratify results for all modules a student has completed prior to commencing their Authorised Interruption of Studies.

Return to Study

54. Students who have taken an Authorised Interruption of Studies who wish to return earlier than originally agreed should submit a written request through their named contact for consideration. Requests will be considered on an individual basis and in the context of the particular circumstances of the student.

55. The point of contact (for example, the Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor, or Faculty Senior Tutor) will contact the interrupted student before their scheduled return to study date in order to confirm the student's programme of study upon their return and, regardless of the reason for their interruption, to identify and facilitate any support which may be required upon their return. This may include provisions for a phased return to study, where appropriate. Copies of communications sent to students should be retained. Departments should make suitable arrangements to accommodate a student's return to study where there have been significant changes to the programme during the period of interruption to enable the student to complete their programme of study.

56. Where a student has interrupted their studies on medical grounds, the university will generally require evidence confirming their fitness to return to study. The Department will advise the student what is required when they contact them in line with paragraph 54. In addition to evidence referred to above, the student may be required to have an interview with the Department, or another appropriate review mechanism, to ensure their fitness to return to study. Where the Department has concerns about a student's ability to return to study, they may refer a student for consideration under the *Fitness to Study Policy.* No equivalent evidence or approval from the Department is required for non-medical interruptions.

Requests for an extension to an authorised Interruption of Studies

57. Students who are unable to return to study following a period of interruption may request an additional period of Authorised Interruption of Studies, provided that this does not exceed the maximum allowable total period of interruption, as set out in paragraph 42. The student should make a submission to extend the interruption via the student portal (My Imperial) if the reason for the interruption remains the same, submitting additional documentation to support their extension request if required. Should the reason for the extension request be different to the initial Authorised Interruption of Studies the student should make a new submission via the student portal (My Imperial).

58. Requests for an extension to an Authorised Interruption of Studies which will take the student beyond the maximum period of registration for the programme of study will be considered by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). (See Appendix B)

59. Students should be aware that in exceptional circumstances, if their programme of study is to be withdrawn, it may not be possible to grant or extend an Authorised Interruption of Study, or that additional study will be required to meet updated requirements.

Student-led withdrawal

60. This document sets out the procedure for students wishing to withdraw from their programme of study. The College may forcibly terminate a student's registration for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

    a. Academic failure

    b. Unsatisfactory engagement

    c. Non-payment of tuition fees

    d. Non-enrolment beyond stipulated deadlines

    e. As a sanction under Student Discipline or Academic Misconduct procedures

    f. After consideration under the Fitness to Study procedure

    Procedures for College-led terminations of a student's registration are set out in relevant documentation including the College's *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*; *Unsatisfactory Engagement Policy and Procedure*; *Tuition Fee Policy*, *College Ordinances and Regulations*; and *Fitness to Study Procedure*.

61. Students have the right to request a withdrawal from their course, at any time during their programme.

62. Under the terms of the College's *Tuition Fee Policy*, a student will not be made liable for tuition fees if they choose to withdraw from their course within one month of starting. In all other cases, a student would ordinarily remain liable for all or a portion of their tuition fees, even if they choose to withdraw from their course.

How to request

63. A student who is considering withdrawing from their programme should initially contact their Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor, Director of Studies or other nominated member of department staff to discuss their intentions. Staff should make students aware of any appropriate alternative mechanisms, such as authorised interruptions of study.

64. Students who are in receipt of funding (i.e. a student loan or a bursary); and/or a Student Visa for which the College act as a sponsor, must familiarise themselves with the implications of a withdrawal from their course, on their funding and/or visa. Students can seek advice from the Student Financial Support team (student.funding@imperial.ac.uk) and the International Student Support team (international@imperial.ac.uk) as appropriate.

65. Students who wish to withdraw from their programme are required to notify their department. The decision to withdraw should then be sent in writing to Student Records, to confirm the student led withdrawal. Failure to make the notification in writing may result in continued registration and tuition fee liability for the student.

Consideration

66. A written notification from a student to withdraw from their course will normally be processed, without any additional authorisation requirement. Withdrawals will normally be recorded as being from the date the written notification was made.

67. In exceptional circumstances, for example if staff are concerned about a student's wellbeing, further confirmation may be sought from the student that they are intending to withdraw from their studies and that they understand how this will affect their student status, funding, visa, and other applicable elements.

68. If a student withdraws after they have completed summative assessments on their programme of study, but before the Board of Examiners has met to ratify the assessment outcomes, the Board of Examiners would ordinarily be expected to consider and ratify the student's results and confirm an exit award where appropriate.

69. Once a student-led withdrawal is completed, it is considered final and will not normally be reversed. It is not normally possible for a student to return to the same programme of study following the completion of a student-led withdrawal.

70. Students who have withdrawn from their programme of study may apply to other programmes of study at the College.

Exceptional cases

71. In exceptional cases, the College may agree to reverse a previous request to withdraw from a programme of study, where significant, material new information is received. It should be noted that even where such new information is received, the College may not reverse the withdrawal (for example due to the time elapsed since the original withdrawal) The student would be supported to reapply for their programme of study, if appropriate.

72. The College may, exceptionally, agree to backdate a withdrawal, for example if a student was unable to engage with their course but not well enough to submit a request for withdrawal. It will not normally be possible to backdate a withdrawal for students who are on a Student Visa for which the College acts as a sponsor. It may not be possible to backdate a withdrawal if the College has already reported a student as 'enrolled' as part of a statutory compliance return.

Mode of Study change

73. A mode of study change request is a request from a student to change their registration from full-time study to part-time study, or vice versa. It is not a request to change from on-campus learning to online study; this can only be achieved by transferring to a fully online programme of study (see 'programme transfers').

How to request

74. The circumstances in which a mode of study change for students on taught programmes of study is permitted are set out in the *Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study*.

75. In advance of making a request for a change in mode of study, students on taught programmes must satisfy themselves that an alternative mode of study is approved for their award. This information will be available in the Programme Specification which is published on the university's webpages. For taught awards, part-time modes of study are not commonly approved.

76. Students on taught programmes will not normally be permitted to change their mode of study in the final semester of their programme of study.

77. Students on postgraduate research programmes will not normally be permitted to change their mode of study after the Progress Review. If the thesis is submitted for examination before the Progress Review, as set out in the *Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD*, then students will not normally be permitted to change their mode of study after they have submitted their thesis for examination.

78. Students who are in receipt of funding (i.e., a student loan or a bursary); and/or a Student Visa for which the College act as a sponsor, must familiarise themselves with the potential implications of a mode of study change on their funding and/or visa. Students can seek advice from the Student Financial Support team (student.funding@imperial.ac.uk) and the International Student Support team (international@imperial.ac.uk) as appropriate.

79. Students on taught programmes of study who wish to request a change to their mode of study must submit a request in writing to their Director of Study (or equivalent).

80. Students on postgraduate research programmes who wish to request a change in their mode of study must submit a request in writing to both their supervisor and their Director of Postgraduate Study.

Consideration and approval

81. Upon receipt of a written request from a student to change mode of study, the Directors of Study (or equivalent) and/or supervisor will consider the request against the criteria set out in the relevant regulations, in a timely manner.

82. If the request is rejected, the Directors/supervisor will write to the student to inform them of the decision and the reason for the rejection.

83. If the request is accepted, the Directors/supervisor will write to the student to inform them of the decision; and also inform the Student Records team that the mode of study change is approved and from which date the transfer will take effect.

84. For postgraduate research students the thesis submission date and any milestone dates that are due after a change in the mode of study, will be adjusted.

Reasonable Adjustments

85. The College is cognisant of its responsibilities under the 2010 Equality Act and recognises that, on occasion, it may be appropriate for a student to change their mode of study as a reasonable adjustment for a disability or other long-term health condition. In such instances, the procedures set out above may be adjusted to ensure the College can provide appropriate support to individuals.

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Notes and latest changes:		

Appendix A: Example of module management

Please note that due to operational adjustments, the exact module codes used on the student record system may vary from those listed below.

Assume the student has the following module enrolments for the 2024/25 academic year, when they start the year all with registration code RE:

- Module A starting in term 201910 and lasting for just the autumn term 2024/25

- Module B starting in term 201910 and lasting for just the autumn term 2024/25

- Module C starting in term 201910 and lasting for just the whole of the 2024/25 academic year

- Module D starting in term 201910 and lasting for just the whole of the 2024/25 academic year

- Module E starting in term 201920 and lasting for just the spring term 2024/25

- Module F starting in term 201920 and lasting for just the spring term 2024/25

The student commences an Authorised Interruption of Studies beginning on 1 January 2025 and returns on 31 December 2025.

The modules for the 2024/25 academic year are amended to:

- Modules A and B – no change, these remain on the students record with code RE

- Modules C & D – the code for these modules is changed to RN

- Modules E & F – these modules are removed from the student's record

When the student returns from the period of interruption modules C, D, E & F are added tothe 2025/26 academic year. Modules C and D are added with the code RM; modules E and F are added with the code RE.

NB: The registration for modules C and D in 2025/26 can be amended from RM to RI, if the student requires access to the teaching and assessment materials of the module iteration they engaged with prior to their interruption of studies. This change would need to be requested by the academic department through the module management system.

Appendix B: Consideration of suspensions of regulations

On occasion, a student's individual circumstances may warrant the College to consider a suspension of its regulations, to adequately support a student in the completion of their studies.

Requests to suspend an academic regulation must be put forward on an individual basis, and by staff in the department in which the student is studying. Requests must be made by an appropriately qualified individual, for example, the Director of Study or Senior Tutor. Requests made by students themselves will not normally be considered.

To put forward a request to suspend regulations, the relevant member of department staff must complete a 'Suspension of Regulations Request Form' and submit it to the relevant Student Records Team inbox, along with any relevant evidence.

Upon receipt, the Student Records Team will review the request to ensure all required information is provided. The department may at this stage be required to provide additional information or evidence.

Once all information is received, the Academic Registrar (or nominee) will consider the case. Their decision will be communicated to the department. The Student Records team will keep a log of all approved cases, anonymised details of which are reported to the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee on an annual basis.