

# SUSPENSION OF STUDIES

## What is a Suspension?

A suspension of studies is a complete break from your work for a period of up to one year. This means that you will put your studies on hold to give you enough time to deal with the difficulties that are not allowing you to work on your research.

During a Suspension you are not to work on your research, dissertation/thesis or have any contact with your supervisor. A Suspension will allow you to deal with any personal difficulties and allow you to get back on track to be able to proceed with your research.

You are allowed a maximum 12 month suspension of studies **only once** during the course. This applies to both postgraduate and doctoral students.

## How do I apply for a Suspension?

Once you have decided, together with your supervisor, that you need to take a break from your studies you need to apply for a suspension of studies. In order to apply for a suspension of your postgraduate studies you need to fill in a form that can be accessed on the University of Malta website <https://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/students>.

You need to include a reason for requesting a suspension and the relevant documentation such as medical certificates. The form needs to be submitted to the Faculty of Education.

Doctoral students need to send a letter giving reasons for the request to the Chairperson of the Faculty Doctoral Committee.

## When should I apply for a Suspension rather than for an Extension of Studies?

If you are certain that for a period of time you will not be able to work on your research, dissertation/thesis then it is best to ask for a suspension of studies.

An extension of studies can only be given for a maximum of two and a half years. Asking for an extension when you know you will not be able to work is a waste of valuable time.

22. (1) The Board may allow students, for a good and sufficient reason, to suspend their studies for a maximum period of twelve months, irrespective of whether they are registered on a full-time or a part-time basis. In such cases, the period of suspension of studies shall not be taken into consideration for calculating the period of registration in the Postgraduate Course in terms of the duration requirement.

(2) A student who is on suspension of studies shall not follow any study- unit, sit for any assessment, or work on the dissertation.

*General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, 2008*

## When should I apply for an Suspension?

When working on your research you should be in regular contact with your supervisor.

Should you experience any difficulties and think that you will not be able to work on your research for a considerable period of time, the first person you should consult is your supervisor. Together with your supervisor you should decide the best way forward. In case of serious difficulties you may also contact the Dean or Deputy Dean.

You can apply for a suspension of studies at any point in time during your course.

## What should I do following the suspension of studies?

If you have asked for a suspension of studies close to your deadline for the submission of your dissertation/thesis, once the suspension is over you would need to send in a request for an extension of studies.

If you have asked for a suspension of studies once this is over you simply resume your work where you left off.

**You should make every effort to reach your deadline. Suspensions are not automatically granted.**

## What is a Justifiable Reason for a Suspension?

### Academic

If you have experienced any unavoidable delays in the research process that arise when working with the participants of the study; difficulties with writing and/or other academic issues. Your supervisor should submit a detailed report corroborating the difficulties you have experienced.

### Medical

If you have been unwell for a period of time. Supporting medical documents from your medical practitioner or from the University's counselling services need to be submitted. The medical documentation needs to be relevant to your specific case and signed by a specialist in the field. Medical certificates from your general practitioner are not usually accepted. If your issues are psychological, such as anxiety related difficulties, then you need to present a psychological profile from your psychologist/psychiatrist.

### Personal

Certain life events such as having a baby, getting married, family difficulties, death in the family may cause undue stress and changes that may not allow you to focus fully on your studies. Your request should be accompanied by documentation from a specialist indicating the difficulties you are encountering. Personal reasons that justify your requesting a suspension of studies include:

- ✦ Maternity leave
- ✦ Paternity leave
- ✦ Adoption leave
- ✦ Nursing or supporting a sick relative
- ✦ Familiar disputes such as separation/divorce
- ✦ Emergency circumstances
- ✦ Work-related issues

## How do I decide whether to request a suspension or extension of studies?

- ✦ Meet your supervisor and discuss your options.
- ✦ If you know for certain that you will not be able to work on your research for a period of time up to a maximum of one year, then it is best to opt for a suspension of studies.
- ✦ If the difficulties you are facing are temporary and you know that you will be able to continue to work and adhere to a time frame then an extension of studies would be a better option.

## What reasons do not justify being granted a suspension?

- ✦ Medical reasons that are not supported by documentation from a specialist.
- ✦ Personal reasons that are unaccounted for.
- ✦ Moving house.
- ✦ Leaving the Island for vacation purposes.
- ✦ Work-related issues that are not endorsed by employer.
- ✦ Academic-related issues not supported by supervisor.
- ✦ Lack of motivation to complete dissertation/thesis.
- ✦ To continue to obtain funding from a sponsor.

