Advise intermitting students

What to consider
- Reasons for intermission
- Specialist support
- Academic issues
- How the process works

Where to find support
- Student Support
- SU Advice Centre
- Registry/Student Administration
- Online

How to return
- Keep in touch
- Check Essex email account
- Revisit academic reading
- Arrange a Departmental Adviser meeting
How to… advise intermitting students

What to consider
Intermission (temporary withdrawal/leave of absence) provides a student with the opportunity to take a break from their studies for a defined period of time. It is not uncommon – around 300 students intermit from their studies each year, most commonly for health reasons or to resolve personal problems. Talk to the student about why they want to intermit and, and make them aware of the range of issues that they might need to consider and who can give them more information. Give them advice on relevant academic issues such as availability of module choices when they return, the timing of their leave, and the impact it could have on their studies, funding and motivation. Once a student has decided to intermit they must submit a request for approval using the online intermission request form.

Where to find support
It is important that students who are considering intermission take well-informed decisions, and make a successful return to complete their studies. There are several sources of advice and information, including Student Support, the SU Advice Centre, Registry at the Colchester campus and Student Administration at Southend. Encourage students to contact one of these services at the earliest possible stage in the process to ensure they are aware of the support that is available to them: in some cases, it may be possible to provide advice and support that enables a student to carry on with their studies. There are intermission webpages, which provide comprehensive information, covering what to do at each stage of the process at www.essex.ac.uk/students/mystudy/intermission/

How to return
It can be daunting to return to University after a break, and students are often concerned about fitting back in both socially and academically. Messages and information from the school/department/centre can help them to keep in touch, continue to feel part of the University, and to prepare to restart their studies. A few months before they are due to come back to us, encourage students to revisit the intermission web pages for detailed advice and information on preparing for their return to University. It is also useful if they do some academic reading in the weeks before they return to re-engage with their studies. Make sure they know who to contact with any queries, and that it is vital that they continue to check their Essex email account.

Tip: It is important that international students are aware of immigration rules and requirements before they apply to intermit. Visit www.essex.ac.uk/immigration for more information.

Tip: This information may also be useful when advising a student who is considering withdrawing from the University: it could be that they don’t know about the opportunity to take a break from their course.

Tip: Invite an intermitting student to a meeting during their first term back to check how they are settling in and to make sure that they are aware of any changes in the department.

Look out for more postcards in the series, e-mail Learning and Development (‘ldev’) or visit the website (‘/ldev/resources’).