

# INTERRUPTION OF STUDIES (RESEARCH DEGREES)

## **Equality and Diversity statement**

City, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

## **Interruption of Studies (Research Degrees)**

1. Postgraduate researchers may wish to take a break from their studies for a defined period if they have medical conditions or personal reasons which affect their ability to continue with their programme of study.
2. Interruptions of Studies are authorised breaks in periods of study and are managed in accordance with Senate Regulations 23 and 24. This Policy supports the Regulations by outlining the University's approach to Interruptions of Studies.
3. Postgraduate Researchers studying a programme with a taught element (e.g. MRes plus PhD, DPsych) are subject to the regulations for taught course interruptions of study whilst they are registered on the taught element.
4. The University's Research Degree Framework, Regulations and Policies apply equally to postgraduate researchers at partner institutions unless different arrangements have been agreed between the University and the partner institution and have received University approval. Details will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership and in programme handbooks provided to partnership researchers.
5. An interruption of studies will trigger a visa curtailment for international postgraduate researchers with a Tier 4 visa; the postgraduate researcher must leave the UK for the duration of the interruption of studies and reapply for a visa to re-enter the UK once the interruption is finished. Postgraduate researchers are strongly advised to contact the University's Visa Advice Team if they are considering an interruption of studies.

## **Principles**

6. The University expects postgraduate researchers to seek advice and guidance from relevant staff (e.g. Supervisors, Senior Tutor for Research) prior to making an application to interrupt their studies. This is to ensure that they are aware of how a break may impact on their studies and to receive advice on whether an interruption is the most appropriate option given their individual circumstances. Where a researcher declares a disability, physical health, welfare or mental health issue, they should be referred to:
  - Student Support for Welfare Support: [safeguarding@city.ac.uk](mailto:safeguarding@city.ac.uk)
  - Learning Success – Disability Support, [disability@city.ac.uk](mailto:disability@city.ac.uk)
  - Student Health Service, [healthservice@city.ac.uk](mailto:healthservice@city.ac.uk)
  - Student Counselling and Mental Health Service, [coun@city.ac.uk](mailto:coun@city.ac.uk)
7. Students do not have an automatic right to interrupt their studies. The decision on whether to grant an interruption of studies will be based on a postgraduate researcher's individual circumstances and the potential impact of interruption on the programme of research.
8. An interruption of studies will “stop the clock” on a postgraduate researcher's period of registration and will extend the researcher's expected end date by the duration of the approved interruption. An interruption of studies may be taken at any stage of the research degree, including in a period of writing-up. No tuition fees will be charged during an interruption and no stipend will be paid.

9. The following examples are circumstances for which a postgraduate researcher might seek an Interruption of Studies:
- a period of persistent or lengthy illness (of more than 12 weeks) of their own and/or of their dependants;
  - serious personal or domestic difficulties;
  - an opportunity to take up a temporary, short-term post which can be justified as being highly relevant to their thesis or research training;
  - Jury or Military Service;
  - Financial Hardship;
  - Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Leave (which are not subject to the cumulative limits that apply to other interruptions of study; students should also refer to the University's [maternity, paternity, adoption and student parent guidance](#));
  - as a reasonable adjustment to support a postgraduate researcher with a disability at the recommendation of a medical professional, a disability specialist or the University's professional support services;
  - equality issues which arise as a result of the postgraduate researcher's protected characteristic(s) under the Equality Act 2010 and where there is a need for City to ensure the student is not disproportionately impacted as a result.
10. Changes in registration status required as a result of supervisory difficulties, equipment/software failure, University building works, etc., which are deemed to be outside of the postgraduate researcher's control, should be considered as part of the Extension to a Period of Candidature Policy.
11. A postgraduate researcher may apply for an interruption of study of between 3 and 12 months in the first instance, and for a maximum of two calendar years in total. Where possible, an interruption of studies should align with the university's term or academic year dates. Requests for retrospective Periods of Suspension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and where the researcher can provide a good reason for not disclosing such circumstances sooner. No period of retrospective suspension can be granted to Tier 4 Visa holders.
12. An interruption of study for a period in excess of two calendar years may be granted by the Chair of the Doctoral College Board of Studies subject to the following conditions:
- i. The period requested will be considered on an annual basis and will not exceed five calendar years from the date when the period of interruption starts;
  - ii. The date when the submission of the thesis falls due following resumption of study falls within ten years of the date of original registration;
  - iii. Written assurances that the research will still be valid are provided by the supervisor and/or the Head of Department, with supporting documentation.
13. A postgraduate researcher should apply for an interruption of studies using the Interruption of Studies Form available via our progress monitoring software, signed by the researcher, supervisor, Senior Tutor for Research and Secretary to the School Research Programme Committee. The application must include suitable evidence which supports the researcher's application.
14. Applications for Interruptions of Study will be approved by the Doctoral College Board of Studies upon recommendation from the researcher's Senior Tutor for Research and

School Research Programmes Committee. If the Board of Studies does not consider that it has enough evidence to decide, further documentation can be requested from the researcher.

### **Access to the University**

15. Postgraduate researchers remain registered with the University whilst they are on a period of interruption, but as they will not be studying on their programme they will receive no supervision. Nor will they be able to:
  - attend lectures, seminars and training sessions for postgraduate researchers;
  - access university facilities, such as laboratories, libraries or postgraduate research study spaces.
16. Postgraduate researchers will normally have limited contact with University staff members whilst interrupting their studies. This is to enable relevant information to be communicated regarding the programme (e.g. programme changes) and to facilitate their return to the programme. Researchers will retain access to their University email account and IT services for this purpose during a period of interruption.

### **Assessments during the Interruption of Studies**

17. Postgraduate Researchers will not be expected to complete assessments, such as Annual Progress Reviews, during their period of interruption, however, completion of such assessments would be expected following their return, if appropriate.
18. Where the period of an interruption of studies covers the expected deadline for a progression assessment, such as MPhil to PhD transfer or submission of thesis for examination, these deadlines will be extended by the duration of the approved interruption of studies.

### **Returning to Study**

19. Liaison will take place with the postgraduate researcher prior to their return to the University to confirm the arrangements for the resumption of study. The supervisory team and/or the Senior Tutor for Research should meet with the researcher to support their return to the programme before re-registration is permitted. Consideration should be given to agreeing a revised research plan upon resumption of studies and/or discussion of the implications of any changes to the programme or regulations during the period of interruption, as appropriate.
20. Postgraduate researchers who have been granted an interruption of study for health reasons may be required to produce a letter from a medical practitioner confirming that the researcher is fit to return to studies.
21. Postgraduate researchers who fail to re-register after an interruption of studies will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and their candidature will be regarded as having lapsed. A researcher will be advised in writing that their period of candidature has lapsed and may be required to re-apply for admission to candidature before being permitted to continue their research.

Policy Title	
Interruption of Studies (Research Degrees)	
Policy Enabling Owner and Department	Responsible for Implementation and Department
Quality and Academic Development, Student and Academic Services	City Doctoral College
Approving Body	Date of Approval
Senate	13/05/2020
Last Reviewed	Review Due Date
13/05/2020 (Senate) 15/06/2012 (Education Committee) 22/04/2009 (APPSC)	13/05/2023
Publication of Policy <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	
For public access online (internet)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	For staff access only (intranet)? <input type="checkbox"/>
Queries about this policy should be referred to	
Quality and Academic Services <a href="mailto:QUAD@city.ac.uk">QUAD@city.ac.uk</a>	