

City Graduate School Committee

Draft policy revisions: Extensions and Suspensions

Summary

Following discussions at the City Graduate School Committee and comments within the APE it was agreed that the City Graduate School and Student and Academic Services would undertake a review its policies for Extension of Candidature and Suspension of Studies. The SMCSE BoS has also proposed changes to the timescales for consideration by the Graduate School. The purpose of this work would be to:

- support work to improve completions
- bring policies in to line with sector best practice
- ensure compliance with Tier 4 requirements

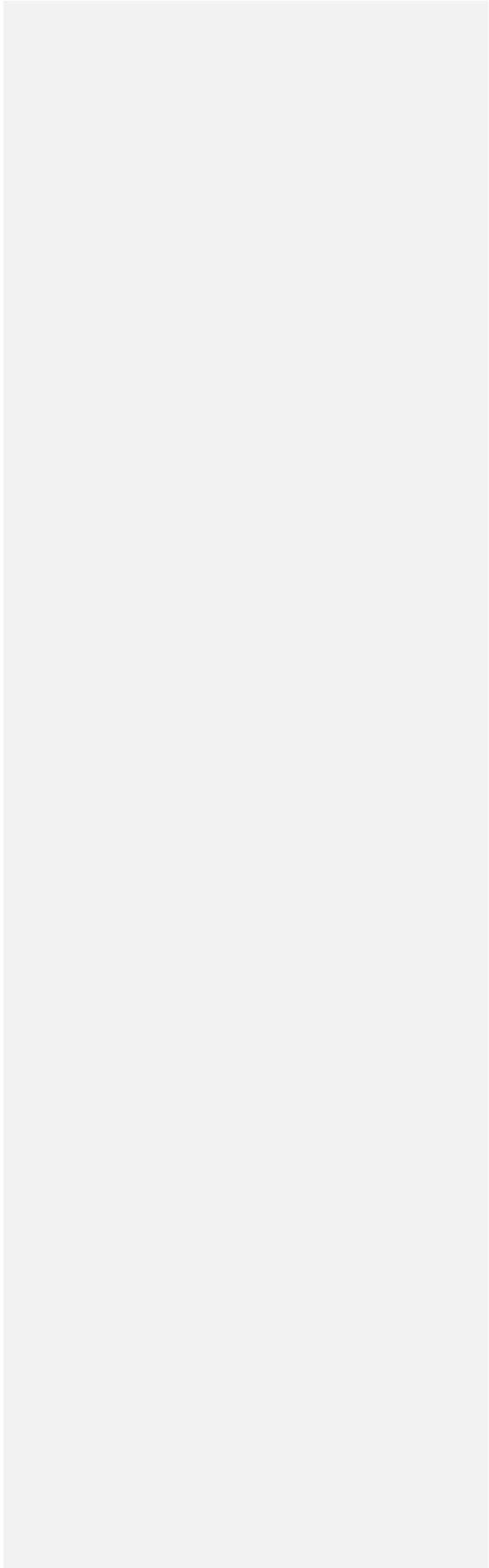
Additionally, the policies have been restructured to ensure that requirements at each stage are clearer, using a model now in line with the template used for other Senate policies.

The drafts are provided to support discussion and refinement of the drafts in advance of a wider consultation. Proposed changes are tracked.

City Graduate School Committee is asked to:

- comment on the revised policies

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Application for Extension of Candidature: Proposed revision to the policy

Current	Proposed	Comment
Application for Extension of Candidature		
<p>The following statements should be read alongside the University's Regulations for Doctoral Programmes and Masters Degrees by Research. The statements are intended to provide further clarity on the policies and processes that assure the quality and enhancement of research degree provision across the University and which are outlined in the Framework for Research Degrees Provision. The University's Research Degree Framework and Regulations apply equally to partnership provision 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 information provided to students. Any application for an extension of candidature requires approval from the School Board of Studies on the recommendation of the Senior Tutor/Director of Research. Evidence of extenuating circumstances must be clearly demonstrated in support of the application.</p>	<p>The following statements are intended to provide further clarity on the policies and processes that assure the quality and enhancement of research degree provision across the University and which are outlined in the Framework for Research Degrees Provision. The University's Research Degree Framework and Regulations apply equally to partnership provision 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 information provided to students.</p>	
	<p>Definition:</p>	
	<p>An Extension of Candidature lengthens the normal duration of a research student's studies to take account of a period of unexpected/unavoidable disruption which has slowed down academic progress significantly. An Extension of Candidature will enable a student to continue to progress their research/writing up but at a slower rate for a limited time, rather than interrupting progress completely.</p>	

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Principles:	General principles:	
<p>A student may request an Extension of Candidature beyond the cumulative maximum period of registration permitted by the regulations for the degree on which they are registered if the student is not able to submit the thesis for examination within the normal period of candidature;</p>	<p>A student may request an Extension of Candidature beyond the cumulative maximum period of registration permitted by the regulations for the degree on which they are registered if the student is not able to submit the thesis for examination within the normal period of candidature. The following principles apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do not have the automatic right to extend their candidature. The University expects students to normally complete their study in a single continuous period. • The extension must be genuinely in the student's best interest. As an Extension of Candidature will interrupt a student's progress on his/her programme, it can only be granted where there are clear grounds and supporting evidence. • An Extension of Candidature must be approved formally by the Board of Studies. • An extension of Candidature is included in the calculations towards the overall duration of study beyond the normal maximum period of study 	
<p>Applications for Extension of Candidature may be because of any one or a combination of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a period of persistent or lengthy illness of their own and/or of their dependants; • death of a close relative; • unforeseen events such as the theft of equipment; 	<p>Reasons for an Extension of Candidature:</p> <p>Applications for Extension of Candidature may be approved for any one or a combination of the following reasons that impact significantly on the progress of a student's research,:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a period of persistent or lengthy illness (of more than 12 weeks) of their own and/or of their dependants; 	<p>Do these reasons remain appropriate? Should health, medical or compassionate reasons also be included? What about professional commitments for PhD students who are also working/studying part-time?</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • temporary unavailability of research facilities; • other problems beyond the control of the student (such as problems within the School/Department, departure of the Supervisor). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • death of a close relative; • unforeseen events, such as the theft of equipment or the temporary unavailability of research facilities; • other problems beyond the control of the student (such as problems within the School/Department, departure of the Supervisor). 	
	Process for considering an application:	
<p>An application for Extension of Candidature must normally be submitted at least 3 months before the end of the maximum period of candidature. Approval of an extension of candidature will not normally be approved retrospectively save in exceptional circumstances;</p>	<p>All applications for an Extension of Candidature require approval from the School Board of Studies on the recommendation of the Senior Tutor for Research. Relevant information must be submitted in support of the application. If the School does not consider that it has sufficient evidence to make a decision, further documentation can be requested.</p> <p>An application for an Extension of Candidature can be granted where unforeseen circumstances have affected the progress of a student's research. A request must normally be submitted at least 3 months before the end of the maximum period of candidature. Retrospective applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>A student may apply for, and have approved, a maximum Extension of Candidature of six months only initially but a student may apply for a further Extension of Candidature should this initial period prove insufficient. No more than a maximum period of eighteen months Extension of Candidature will normally be approved.</p>	<p>Does the Graduate School Committee support these timescales? They appear to be more generous than other comparator institutions.</p> <p>International students on a Tier 4 Visa will be sponsored for additional six months visa extension in exceptional circumstances. No further extensions will be given. That</p>

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		means that some students might have to leave the UK and complete their thesis from overseas.
	Implications for the student of the Extension of Candidature:	Where are changes to registration status recorded? This is important generally, but particularly so for international students with Tier 4 visas.
<p>An extension of Candidature is included in the calculations towards the overall duration of study beyond the normal maximum period of study. The student and the supervisor(s) should consider any conditions placed on requests for Extensions of Candidature by Research Councils/sponsors and any penalty which may apply if funded students wish to extend their period of study;</p> <p>Students are required to provide progress reports during any Extension of Candidature;</p> <p>Students who fail to submit their thesis within the agreed extended period of candidature will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and their candidature will be regarded as having lapsed. A student 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.</p>	<p>An extension of Candidature is included in the calculations towards the overall duration of study beyond the normal maximum period of study.</p> <p>The student and the supervisor(s) should consider any conditions placed on requests for Extensions of Candidature by Research Councils/sponsors and any penalty which may apply if funded students wish to extend their period of study.</p> <p>All fee-paying students will continue to receive supervision during any Extension of Candidature. Students in 'writing-up' will not receive supervision during an Extension of Candidature;</p> <p>Students are required to provide progress reports during any Extension of Candidature. Reports must be provided on a monthly basis for student with a Tier 4 visa.</p> <p>Students who fail to submit their thesis within the agreed extended period of candidature will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and their candidature will be regarded as having lapsed. A student will be advised in writing that their period of</p>	

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	candidature has lapsed and may be required to re-apply for admission to candidature before being permitted to continue their research.	
	Implications for students with a Tier 4 visa:	
N.B. International students must contact the Student Centre for clarification on any visa implications during any application for an Extension of Candidature.	<p>Any adjustments made to a research degree candidature must continue to satisfy the conditions set by the Home Office. Student who wish to apply for and Extension of Candidature are advised to contact the Visa Compliance Team for Advice.</p> <p>During an Extension of Candidature the attendance of the student will continue to be monitored in line with published guidance.</p>	<p>International students on a Tier 4 Visa have to complete Authorised Absence Form for any agreed periods of absence up to 20 working days.</p> <p>Under certain circumstances the University is able to grant a short period of authorised absence up to a maximum of 20 working days (4 weeks) for reasons beyond the students' control. This allows students sponsored by the University under a Tier 4 visa to take a short period of leave from study, without the University having to cease sponsorship and report this to the Home Office. Evidence for the absence must be provided upon request. Please note that in exceptional circumstances, where appropriate evidence has been provided, City may consider authorising an absence up to a maximum of 60 days. This would be addressed on a case by case basis.</p>

Policy for the application of Periods of Suspension

Current	Proposed	Comment
Application for Periods of Suspension		
<p>The following statements are intended to provide further clarity on the policies and processes that assure the quality and enhancement of research degree provision across the University and which are outlined in the Framework for Research Degrees Provision. The University's Research Degree Framework and Regulations apply equally to partnership provision 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 information provided to students. All applications for a period of suspension requires approval from the School Board of Studies on the recommendation of the Senior Tutor for Research. Relevant documentation, such as a medical certificate, must be submitted in support of the application.</p>	<p><u>The following statements are intended to provide further clarity on the policies and processes that assure the quality and enhancement of research degree provision across the University and which are outlined in the Framework for Research Degrees Provision. The University's Research Degree Framework and Regulations apply equally to partnership provision 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 information provided to students.</u></p>	
	<p>Definition: <u>Due to unforeseen circumstances during the period of a research student's candidature it might be necessary for the student to seek a change in their registration status. A suspension of studies is defined as a formal pause of 3 to 12 months in a student's studies during which they are not required (or permitted) to engage</u></p>	<p>A definition has been added for clarity (particularly for a student reader). The SMCSE BoS has proposed that the policy is changed from 6 months</p>

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	<p><u>with their studies. The period of suspension is not included in the calculation on duration of candidature.</u></p>	<p>to 3. It is proposed that this would help to manage more timely completions.</p> <p>Further it is proposed that the maximum period of suspension is 12 months; this is more in keeping with the sector and would also support the management of completion rates. As set out below, a longer period of suspension might be possible but this would require approval as an exception.</p> <p>These changes would support improved academic standards.</p>
<p>Principles:</p> <p>A student may request a Period of Suspension if it is expected that their research will be significantly interrupted because of any one or a combination of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a period of persistent or lengthy illness of their own and/or of their dependants; • serious personal or domestic difficulties; • the opportunity to take up a temporary, short-term post which can be justified as being highly relevant to their thesis or research training; • Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Leave; • any other appropriate reason. <p>Requests for Periods of Suspension because of financial hardship will not be approved</p>	<p>General principles:</p> <p><u>A student may request a Period of Suspension if it is expected that their research will be significantly interrupted. The following principles apply:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Students do not have the automatic right to suspend their studies. The University expects students to normally complete their study in a single continuous period.</u> • <u>The suspension must demonstrated to be genuinely in the student's best interest. As a suspension of study will interrupt a student's progress on his/her programme, it can only be granted where there are clear grounds and supporting evidence.</u> • <u>Decisions to suspend a students' studies must be approved formally by the Board of Studies.</u> • <u>A period of suspension will not be included in</u> 	

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	<u>the calculations on duration of candidature.</u>	
	Reasons for a Period of Suspension:	
	<p><u>The following are circumstances in which a student might seek a Period of Suspension in order to manage:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>a period of persistent or lengthy illness (of more than 12 weeks) of their own and/or of their dependants;</u> • <u>serious personal or domestic difficulties;</u> • <u>an opportunity to take up a temporary, short-term post which can be justified as being highly relevant to their thesis or research training;</u> • <u>Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Leave¹;</u> • <u>jury service or other compulsory military service;</u> • <u>serious technical matters that are outside of the student's control.</u> <p>• <u>a.</u> <u>Requests for Periods of Suspension because of financial hardship will not be approved.</u></p>	Some additional detail for clarity.
	Process for considering an application:	
All requests for Periods of Suspension must normally be made in advance. Requests for retrospective Periods of Suspension may only be approved in exceptional circumstances;	<p><u>All applications for a period of suspension requires approval from the School Board of Studies on the recommendation of the Senior Tutor for Research. Relevant information, such as a medical certificate, must be submitted in support of the application. If the School does not consider that it has sufficient evidence to make a decision, further documentation can be requested from the student.</u></p> <p><u>All requests for Periods of Suspension must normally be</u></p>	As above, it is proposed that the maximum Period of Suspension should be 12 months. A further Period of Suspension would be subject to the approval of the Deputy President.

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¹ Students who suspend their period of candidature on the grounds of maternity, paternity or adoption leave are advised to also refer to the University's policy on Maternity, Paternity and Adoption leave.

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	<p><u>made in advance. Requests for retrospective Periods of Suspension may only be approved in exceptional circumstances.</u></p> <p><u>The Period of Suspension must be for a clearly defined period of time.</u></p> <p><u>Students may apply for, and have approved, a minimum Period of Suspension of 3 months and a maximum period of 12 months. Any subsequent applications for periods of suspension that exceed this length of time may only be considered under exceptional circumstances and upon appeal to the Deputy President.</u></p>	
Students may apply for, and have approved, a minimum Period of Suspension of six months and a maximum period of twelve months at any one time;		Change to term (see above) and restructure
A student may only apply for, and have approved, up to two Periods of Suspension during their whole period of candidature and no more than a total of twenty four months suspension will normally be approved. Any applications for periods of suspension that exceed this length of time may only be considered under exceptional circumstances and upon appeal to the DVC;		Restructured
	Implications for the student of the Suspension of Studies:	
A Period of Suspension will not be included in the calculations on duration of candidature but a supervisor should certify that the Period of Suspension will not delay the submission of the thesis by more than the length of the Period of Suspension;	<p><u>A Period of Suspension will not be included in the calculations on duration of candidature but a supervisor should certify that the Period of Suspension will not delay the submission of the thesis by more than the length of the Period of Suspension.</u></p> <p><u>A student is not expected to carry out any research during a Period of Suspension. Students will not have access to the University facilities during any period of</u></p>	

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	<p><u>suspension and they will not receive any supervision. Any research carried out during a Period of Suspension will be deducted from the overall period of candidature.</u></p> <p><u>Students on a period of suspension will remain students of the University and are subject to ordinary student regulations.</u></p> <p><u>Students in receipt of funding (RCUK or University studentship, for example) are advised that their funding may also be deferred during any period of suspension. Students are advised to contact their funding body immediately should they be considering applying for a Period of Suspension.</u></p>	
	<p>Implications for students with a Tier 4 visa:</p> <p><u>The University is required to report Tier 4 visa holders who are on a Period of Suspension to the Home Office. The students are expected to return to their home country for the duration of the leave of absence and their Tier 4 Visa will be curtailed.. In such an event the student will need to re-apply for a new visa when they are ready to resume their candidature.</u></p> <p><u>International students with a Tier 4 visa should be directed to the Visa Compliance Team when they indicate their intention to apply for a Suspension of Studies.</u></p>	<p>International students on a Tier 4 Visa have to complete Authorised Absence Form for any agreed periods of absence up to 20 working days.</p> <p>Under certain circumstances the University is able to grant a short period of authorised absence up to a maximum of 20 working days (4 weeks) for reasons beyond the students' control. This allows students sponsored by the University under a Tier 4 visa to take a short period of leave from study, without the University having to cease sponsorship and report this to the Home Office. Evidence for the absence must be provided upon request. Please note that in</p>

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		exceptional circumstances, where appropriate evidence has been provided, City may consider authorising an absence up to a maximum of 60 days. This would be addressed on a case by case basis.
A student is not expected to carry out any research during a Period of Suspension. Students will not have access to the University facilities during any period of suspension and they will not receive any supervision. Any research carried out during a Period of Suspension will be deducted from the overall period of candidature;		Restructured
Students on a period of suspension will remain students of the University and are subject to ordinary student regulations;		Restructured
	Returning from a Period of Suspension	
A student on suspension is required to submit an annual progress report during any Period of Suspension indicating both what progress they had made prior to the Period of Suspension and what progress they intend to make when they resume their research at the end of the Period of Suspension;	<p><u>Prior to returning to their research, a student on suspension is required to submit an annual progress report indicating both what progress they had made prior to the Period of Suspension and what progress they intend to make when they resume their studies.</u></p> <p><u>The University expects that when a student resumes their research candidature they are fit and able to do so. The supervisory team and the Senior Tutor/Director of Research should meet with the student and confirm that the student is fit to resume their candidature before re-registration is permitted.</u></p> <p><u>Students who have been granted for health reasons may be required to produce a letter from a medical practitioner confirming that the student is fit to return to studies.</u></p>	

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	<p><u>Any support arrangements and responsibilities of the student and/or the School to ensure that the students is able to engage with and meet the requirements of the programme must be agreed prior to the student's return.</u></p> <p><u>Students who fail to re-register after a period of suspension will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and their candidature will be regarded as having lapsed. A student 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.</u></p>	
Students in receipt of funding (RCUK or University studentship, for example) are advised that their funding may also be deferred during any period of suspension. Students are advised to contact their funding body immediately should they be considering applying for a Period of Suspension;		
Students who suspend their period of candidature on the grounds of maternity, paternity or adoption leave are advised to also refer to the University's policy on Maternity, Paternity and Adoption leave.		Added to footnote
N.B. International students must contact the Student Centre for clarification on any visa implications during any application for a Period of Suspension.		Revised section on Tier 4.
The University expects that when a student resumes their research candidature after a period of suspension they are fit and able to do so. The supervisory team and the Senior Tutor/Director of Research should meet with the student and confirm that the student is fit to		Restructured

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resume their candidature before re-registration is permitted.		
Students who fail to re-register after a period of suspension will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and their candidature will be regarded as having lapsed. A student 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.		Restructured