Code of Practice: Postgraduate research students Suspensions and Extensions

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* The University has adopted the principles of Designing for Diverse Learners, and all policy documents should be written with reference to these principles. Further information is available at the [Designing for diverse learners website](https://designingfordiverselearners.info/).
* An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) must be considered for all new and amended policies. Further information is available from the [EIA section of SharePoint](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/EDI/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments-(EIAs).aspx).
* This document is available in alternative formats from [**policy@hull.ac.uk**](mailto:policy@hull.ac.uk).
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This Code of Practice is owned and updated by the Doctoral College on behalf of Research Degrees Committee. Queries should be directed to the Doctoral College ([doctoralcollege@hull.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralcollege@hull.ac.uk))

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# Introduction

All important documents such as Codes of Practice, Terms of Reference and programme regulations relating to research degrees can be found in the [online Quality Handbook.](hhttps://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality)

This Code of Practice on Extensions and Suspensions provides specific guidelines about the process for postgraduate research students (PGRs) to request a suspension of studies or intermission (where PGRs need to pause their studies as they are unable to make progress during a specific timeframe) or an extension to their studies (where additional time is required in order to submit the thesis **due to exceptional factors**).

During Covid, the University introduced a Covid extensions and suspensions policy and process, to support PGRs affected by closure of archives, labs and other facilities, as well as other Covid-related situations such as caring responsibilities, school closures and illness. **This code of practice and associated processes now supersede any processes and policies put in place to mitigate the impact of the pandemic**.

This document should be read alongside the:

* [Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research students](https://preview-uni-hull.cloud.contensis.com/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/docs/quality/research-degree-provision/ucop-postgraduate-research-students.docx)
* [Criteria for Progress in Postgraduate Research students](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/docs/quality/research-degree-provision/criteria-for-progress-in-pgr-students.docx)
* [Code of Practice: Standards and Criteria for Research Degrees](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/docs/quality/research-degree-provision/standards-and-criteria-for-research-degrees.docx)
* [Code of Practice: Chairing Research Degree by Thesis Vivas](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/docs/quality/research-degree-provision/chairing-research-degree-by-thesis-vivas.docx)
* [Code of Practice: Research Degrees Termination of Candidature](https://preview-uni-hull.cloud.contensis.com/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/docs/quality/research-degree-provision/ucop-termination-of-candidature.docx)
* Policy on maternity, paternity and adoption leave for funded postgraduate research students
* Student pregnancy and new parent policy
* Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees – found in the [online Quality Handbook.](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality) under *Programme Regulations Including Exam Boards.*
* PGR handbook
* PGR supervisor handbook
* Information, guidance and forms are available on the [Doctoral College’s SharePoint site](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/DoctoralCollege/SitePages/Home.aspx).

# Part 1: Suspension of studies

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** A suspension of studies (sometimes also called an intercalation or intermission) is a recognised and authorised break from a programme of study when no academic engagement is possible/occurs and when exceptional circumstances prevent a PGR from making progress with their research studies.

**1.2**  In all cases, documentary evidence (e.g. a letter from their GP or their employer) must accompany the application and all requests for a suspension of study must be approved by the Chair of Research Degrees Committee or their delegate. If PGRs feel unable to provide documentary evidence for whatever reason, they are encouraged and advised to contact the Doctoral College to discuss this, so that this can be taken into account when assessing the application.

**1.3** PGRs are advised to discuss their intention to request a suspension with their supervisor and / or Graduate Research Director and the PGR Life Team to ensure they understand the process and the implications of suspending and before completing and submitting an application using the Special Cases form.

**1.4** Requests for a suspension must be submitted at least one month prior to the proposed date of suspension so the Chair of Research Degrees Committee or their delegate can consider the request.

**1.5** PGRs willbe notified of the outcome of their application for a suspension of studies via email from the Doctoral College.

**1.6** PGRs will be allowed to appeal against any decision should they wish to do so, if their reason for appeal falls into one of the accepted reasons. PGRs can find this information on the Doctoral College’s [SharePoint site](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/Services/DoctoralCollege/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B8DE507A5-D266-4E76-B53C-0A01F2C6911C%7D&file=PGR%20Special%20Cases%20Appeal%20Form.doc&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1).

## **2. Periods and duration of authorised suspensions**

**2.1** A suspension will only be considered for approval for a minimum period of one month and a maximum period of one year at any given time. The total time of suspension should not normally exceed 24 months over the duration of the PGR’s studies for full-time PGRs and 48 months for part-time PGRs.

**2.2** For PGRs in receipt of a scholarship or studentship, funding will stop during a period of suspension, unless the suspension relates to sickness or maternity / adoption leave, for which additional supporting evidence will be required.

**2.3** There are set dates (two occasions per month) from which suspensions are allowed to start. PGRs must therefore choose the most appropriate start date of their suspension of studies for their situation.

**2.4** For international PGRs only, where a suspension is not appropriate (for example a requirement to return home urgently for a short time period only due to an emergency situation), PGRs must seek advice from the International Engagement and Compliance Team regarding an authorised leave of absence of up to 30 working days per academic year of their programme. PGRs must also keep their supervisor and the Doctoral College informed of their intention to take a leave of absence.

**2.5** Suspensions are not permitted during a PGR’s non-submission period.

## **3. Retrospective suspensions of study**

**3.1** Requests for suspension must be submitted prior to the proposed date of suspension so the Chair of Research Degrees Committee can consider the request.

**3.2** Retrospective applications for suspension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**3.3** Applying for a retrospective suspension of study does present extra problems related to the PGR’s record as well as funding that the PGR and the University has received, and for the student record and statistical returns.

**3.4** Should PGRs have received funding during their period of suspension they will be asked to repay this funding, unless a suspension is due to sickness or maternity / adoption and this has been agreed in advance.

**3.5** PGRs studying on a Visa are not permitted to apply for or be granted a retrospective suspension of study. PGRs and academic units are advised to seek advice from the University International Engagement and Compliance Team should this issue arise.

**3.6** In addition, PGRs who have received Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) support may experience funding difficulties if a retrospective suspension of study is approved - the PGR **must** contact the Student Support team in advance to discuss this.

**3.7** Retrospective suspension of study **must** therefore be seen as exceptional and, when applied for, **must** come with the full support of the academic unit, and with clear evidence of the rationale behind the request.

## **4. Return from a period of suspension and new end date**

**4.1** Should a suspension of studies be granted, the Doctoral College will contact the PGR in writing to confirm the date the suspension starts and ends, and the revised thesis submission date and end of funding date (if applicable).

**4.2** It is the PGR’s responsibility to notify their supervisor and the Doctoral College when they have returned at the end of the suspension period.

**4.3** The Doctoral College or a Graduate Research Director may contact the PGR to discuss the return to study.

**4.4** Should PGRs wish to extend their period of suspension, they must apply to this [via the correct form](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/Services/DoctoralCollege/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0978D47D-B967-47D2-B605-CBE835838827%7D&file=Special-Cases-Application-Form-v07.23.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true), at least one month before their initial period of suspension has expired.

## **5. Categories of voluntary suspension**

**5.1** An application for suspension covers both medical and non-medical circumstances and all incidents will be judged on a case-by-case basis. The circumstances may be similar to those for an extension.

**5.2** Cases relating to illness should use the suspension procedure rather than extension procedure.

**5.3** In cases of long-term health issues where a suspension may not be appropriate, PGRs should speak with their Supervisor, Graduate Research Director and / or the Doctoral College about whether additional support or a change to mode of study would be helpful to ensure wider support is available over a prolonged period of time.

### Medical (including personal family reasons)

**5.4** Medical evidence is required for all health-related suspensions. However, If PGRs feel unable to provide documentary evidence for whatever reason, they are encouraged and advised to contact the Doctoral College to discuss this, so that this can be taken into account when assessing the application, as each application will be judged on its own merits.

Medical reasons include:

* Ill health (for periods exceeding one month in duration)
* Ongoing health issues or disability.

**5.5**  Before a PGR returns to their research following a period of suspension on medical grounds, they will be required to submit a medical certificate to confirm that they are fit to return, unless the original medical certificate submitted indicated that they would be fit to return at the end of the certified period.

### Non-medical

**5.6** Examples of non-medical reasons include:

* Caring responsibilities
* Illness of a dependent or a close family member
* Sole carer for children and elderly/vulnerable relatives or friends
* Maternity, paternity and/or adoption Leave. For maternity, paternity and adoption leave, statutory guidelines must be followed in accordance with the University’s Student Pregnancy [and New](https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/students/Pregnancy-and-Maternity-Guidelines--Students.pdf) Parent policy[.](https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/students/Pregnancy-and-Maternity-Guidelines--Students.pdf)
* Competitive sports. The category of ‘Competitive Sport’ should be used where a PGR needs to take a suspension of studies to enable them to compete at international level, without disadvantaging their academic studies.
* Sabbatical Officer – second term of office.
* Career – a change in work circumstances (e.g. promotion or a new job). PGRs must be able to demonstrate clearly their increased workload responsibilities, showing how they have an adverse impact on their studies. A request on these grounds would usually only be for a temporary period of time and must be accompanied by a letter from their employer.
* Being a victim of crime.
* Attendance at court for jury service or as a witness.
* Bereavement or divorce.
* Significant financial hardship.

**5.7** Examples of unacceptable reasons for requesting suspension include:

* Problems with equipment or technology.
* Lost work, for example due to the thesis not being backed up appropriately.
* Travel difficulties.
* Holidays.
* Moving house (unless in exceptional circumstances such as forced eviction, or where financial hardship has caused the need to move house).

Should PGRs or their supervisors have any questions regarding 5.6 and 5.7, they are encouraged to contact the Doctoral College to have an informal discussion ahead of submitting the application.

**5.8** While on suspension, PGRs will not be covered by University insurance.

**5.9** Any pre-existing University processes (such as investigations into plagiarism, fitness to practise, unsatisfactory progress, misconduct, etc.) will normally continue during any approved suspension.

**5.10** PGRs in Emergency Progress measures will not be expected to work during a period of suspension of studies. The Emergency Progress process will pause and recommence when the PGR resumes their programme after the period of suspension has ended.

**5.11** During the period of suspension, PGRs will not be charged tuition fees.

**5.12** If a PGR is sponsored by an external sponsor, they must ensure that they have contacted the funding body to inform them of their suspension prior to its start.

**5.13** PGRs funded by a UK Research Council must contact the Doctoral College so that the relevant Research Council can be notified as soon as possible and their record updated on the UKRI database.

**5.14** PGRs funded by the University must contact the Doctoral College as soon as possible to discuss implications for funding and thesis submission.

## **6. Implications of suspending studies for international PGRs**

**6.1** For international PGRs, their right to remain in the UK will be affected by a suspension from their research. As a Home Office PGR Visa sponsor, the University is legally required to report any changes to a PGR’s status to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). International PGRs are strongly advised to discuss their suspension with the International Engagement and Compliance Team prior to submitting a request.

**6.2** The University must notify UKVI and withdraw Student visa sponsorship for international students taking a suspension of studies. This will normally mean that the PGR will be required to leave the UK for their period of suspension (as will any of their dependants) and reapply for a visa, using a new CAS, to resume their studies. PGRs must ensure they understand the visa implications prior to requesting a suspension of studies.

**6.3** In certain circumstances, the University may be able to continue sponsoring a PGR’s visa for a short period of absence from studies, providing the University can continue to carry out its sponsorship duties and the PGR can still complete their studies within their existing period of visa sponsorship. PGRs are advised to contact the International Engagement and Compliance Team for advice and guidance in advance of any period of absence.

Students who are elected as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer may be eligible to maintain their current Student visa sponsorship during a suspension of studies in order to undertake the role, subject to conditions. Students must contact the International Engagement and Compliance Team prior to undertaking a role as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer.

## **7. Making an application and evidence requirements**

**7.1** To apply for a suspension, PGRs must complete an application for suspension at least one month before the start of the suspension period [via the correct form.](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/Services/DoctoralCollege/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0978D47D-B967-47D2-B605-CBE835838827%7D&file=Special-Cases-Application-Form-v07.23.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true)

**7.2** As stated earlier, PGRs must gain approval from their supervisor and Graduate Research Director in advance of applying for a suspension. If PGRs feel they are unable to do so, they must contact the Doctoral College ([doctoralcollege@hull.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralcollege@hull.ac.uk)) as soon as possible.

**7.3** All suspension requests must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence to support the application, otherwise they will not be considered.

**7.4** Suspension on appropriately evidenced medical grounds will normally be authorised. This is on the basis that the medical evidence provided is from a UK registered medical professional. Where the medical evidence is from a non-UK registered medical professional and is not in English, a certified translation must be provided by the PGR. Again, we understand that on some occasions providing medical evidence is not possible or likely to cause additional stress. In such cases, the PGR (or their supervisor / other member of staff if more appropriate) is encouraged to contact the Doctoral College to discuss this.

**7.5** Examples of acceptable evidence for non-medical requests include:

* Death certificates for bereavement.
* Crime numbers for victims of crime situations.
* Third party medical certificates relating to serious illness in the immediate family.
* Copies of bank statements or letter from the bank/building society for financial hardship/bankruptcy.

## **8. Failure to return from a suspension**

**8.1** A PGR will be deemed to have withdrawn from the University if they do not return to study by the approved end date of the suspension and they have not applied for an extension to the suspension.

**8.2** Should PGRs wish to extend their period of suspension, they must apply for this [via the correct form](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/Services/DoctoralCollege/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0978D47D-B967-47D2-B605-CBE835838827%7D&file=Special-Cases-Application-Form-v07.23.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true) at least one month before their initial period of suspension has expired.

**8.3** Where this does not happen, a retrospective suspension of studies is unlikely to be granted and the Faculty can request for the programme of studies to be terminated.

**8.4** A PGR’s withdrawal in these circumstances shall not affect their liability to pay any unpaid tuition fees or other fees or charges.

## **9. Extension to a suspension**

**9.1** A suspension will normally be approved for a maximum period of 12 months. If a PGR is unable to return to their studies at the end of the suspension, they will need to apply for an extension to the suspension [via the correct form](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/Services/DoctoralCollege/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B0978D47D-B967-47D2-B605-CBE835838827%7D&file=Special-Cases-Application-Form-v07.23.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true).

**9.2** A further suspension application form should be completed and submitted with up-to-date supporting evidence. If PGRs are not able to access the Student Portal and SharePoint while suspended, they should contact the Doctoral College to request an offline version of the Special Cases form. **Please note that the evidence submitted to support the original suspension request cannot be used when requesting an extension to suspension.**

**9.3** Where a PGR has requested a number of extensions to a suspension, there may be concerns about the length of time they have been away from their research, resulting in the research they have already undertaken being superseded or out of date. Approving a further extension to the suspension may not be in a PGR’s best interests and is likely to be refused.

**9.4** Subsequent requests for suspension of studies will be considered on a case-by-case basis and, if a PGR has not made significant progress on their research study, the Code of Practice Research Degrees: Termination of Candidaturemay be invoked and their student registration may be terminated.

**9.5** PGRs will normally be withdrawn from their studies if the total amount of suspension exceeds 24 months throughout the duration of their studies.

**9.6** Suspension requests will not be approved if the length of time requested means that the PGR will exceed the maximum duration of registration, as specified in the programme regulations available in the Online Quality Handbook under *Programme Regulations including Exam Boards.*

## **10. Access to services**

**10.1** Access to Hull University and Students’ Union (HUSU) services may be affected by the PGR’s period of suspension of study. Once the PGR’s status has been amended on the Student Information System, this information is transferred to other systems, e.g. to Students’ Union and Library / room access systems.

**10.2** The main effects are as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| **Accommodation** | PGRs who suspend studies (or have their studies suspended) for more than one month and who live in University-owned accommodation will be required to leave the accommodation and re-apply before their return to study. |
| **Library** | PGRs who suspend studies will retain full access to the library, however they will be unable to take out any materials. This can be amended for exceptional cases if required. |
| **Doctoral College** | Access to the Doctoral College is not usually suspended during the period of suspension of study. |
| **24 hour PC lab** | Access to the 24-hour PC labs is dependent on the PGR’s Library access. |
| **IT services** | Whilst suspending studies, PGRs retain their ICT user account and their access to the Student Portal. PGRs will retain access to the virtual learning environment (Canvas), and their Student cards will continue to work on door access controls. These are the default positions and can be amended for exceptional cases if required. |
| **Students’ Union** | PGRs who suspend their studies retain access to the Students’ Union advice centre, but are no longer members of the Union and, as such, lose all the rights of membership. As a result, they are not permitted to use the Union's licensed areas (bars), societies or sports teams. PGRs who suspend their studies can apply to the Union for associate membership if they wish, which will give them full access to some Union facilities. They can also apply to the Sports and Fitness Centre for a public membership of the facilities. |
| **Student Support** | Access to Student Support may be restricted for PGRs who suspend their studies. PGRs who suspend their studies on grounds of a disability or ongoing health condition **should** contact Student Support in advance of their return to study. Any PGR who may require support during their period of suspension of study **must** contact Student Support prior to applying for suspension of study. |
| **Skills Team, Student Futures, Counselling Service** | PGRs retain access to the Skills Team, Student Futures and the Counselling Service while they suspend their studies. Some services are based in the Library for which physical access may be restricted (see above). |

## **11. Summary of financial implications of a suspension**

**11.1** There are many financial consequences for PGRs who suspend their studies. PGRs with queries regarding their entitlements and liabilities while suspending study **should** contact either Student Support or the Student Union Advice Centre, preferably before applying to suspend their studies. Some information referenced in this section may not be applicable to PGRs studying on a Student visa where UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements and conditions apply. PGRs studying on a Student Visa may also have additional costs relating to their visa status and **should** seek advice from IECT in advance of applying for a suspension of studies.

**11.2** Should any PGR – whether Home or International - not seek appropriate advice, the University cannot be held responsible for any unforeseen expenses or issues that arise as a result of a suspension.

**11.3** The following table outlines the main financial consequences of a suspension of study.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **University Scholarship** | University PhD Scholarship PGRs will have their stipend and fee waiver (plus any other financial awards) paused during the period of suspension of studies. |
| **University scholarship** | University PhD Scholarship PGRs who are sick can receive their stipends for those periods covered by a medical certificate of up to thirteen weeks within any 12 month period. |
| **Sponsors/Other Scholarships** | Sponsors may or may not be willing to continue financial support during a period of suspension of study. PGRs **should** check with their sponsors and the Doctoral College before requesting suspension of study. It is the responsibility of the PGR to inform their sponsor that they are suspending their studies and they are strongly advised to do so. |
| **Council Tax** | Council Tax exemption will be expected to continue for the period of suspension of study. Council Tax exemption certificates will be available from the Central Hub as normal, although whether the PGR is, or is not, exempt is a matter for discussion between the PGR and the relevant Local Authority. |
| **Access to Learning Fund (ALF)** | PGRs will still be eligible to apply for the Access to Learning Fund. |
| **Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)** | PGRs receiving Disabled Students Allowance will have this funding suspended. PGRs receiving support funded through the Disabled Studnets Allowance (DSA), such as note-taking, mentoring or specialist study skills tuition **should** be aware that this support will be suspended during the period of suspension of study. PGRs who have assessments to undertake during the period of suspension of study, and who would normally have a support worker for these assessments, **should** discuss this with the Student Support team well in advance. |
| **PGRs receiving an NHS Bursary** | The guidelines are particularly complicated in this area and PGRs **must** check with their supervisor in the first instance. |
| **PGRs receiving money from the TDA** | Contact the Teaching Development Agency for further information at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) |
| **Welfare Benefits** | PGRs will not generally be entitled to welfare benefits (unless they already have entitlement), as the government considers them to be a full-time student until they complete their course. Because of this lack of available public financial support, they may have no option but to work, unless they have another source of income. PGRs may be able to claim some benefits if unable to work (e.g. due to illness, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, etc.) |

# Part 2: Extensions

## **12. Introduction**

**12.1** There are a number of different types of extension and so it is important that PGRs and supervisors are clear on what type of extension is required. An extension is defined as an extension of time beyond a given end date as follows:

a) An academic extension to the research period of the research degree.

b) An academic extension to the research period of the research degree with funding (this would only apply to those PGRs already in receipt of funding).

b) An extension to the thesis finalisation / writing up period of the research degree.

c) An extension to the deadline for thesis corrections, amendments, or resubmission.

**12.2** Both PGRs and their supervisors should be aware that, as a rule, funded extensions to the research period will not be awarded.

**12.3** Where there are **valid and evidenced exceptional factors** PGRs may apply for an extension to the research period but in very exceptional circumstances only – see 14.4 below. Those PGRs on a scholarship can also apply for an extension to their funding. In both cases, supporting evidence must be supplied at the point of application, and any application submitted without supporting evidence will not be considered and no appeal will be allowed.

**12.4** PGRs are expected to meet their thesis submission deadline date (or thesis corrections / amendments or resubmission deadline date, where this applies). As such, it is of paramount importance for both PGRs and supervisors to plan a research project that can be realistically delivered within the timeframe of the research degree.

**12.5** However, where there are valid and evidenced exceptional factors (see 14.4 below), PGRs may apply to Research Degrees Committee for an extension to the deadline date for the submission of their thesis, thesis corrections or amendments, or resubmission.

**12.6** Where there are valid and evidenced exceptional factors PGRs on a scholarship may also apply for an extension to the research period and an extension to their funding. Supporting evidence must be supplied at the point of application, and any application submitted without supporting evidence will not be considered and no appeal will be allowed.

**12.7** An extension should therefore start at the end of the research period, the end of the thesis finalisation / writing-up period or post examination.

**12.8** A PGR can request an extension, but there is no guarantee that an extension will be granted.

## **13. Making an application**

**13.1** Where a PGR has exceptional factors and requires additional time to research, submit or resubmit their thesis, they must complete the Special Cases form, available on the [Doctoral College’s SharePoint](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/DoctoralCollege/SitePages/Home.aspx) site. The form must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence to support their application.

**13.2** An application for an extension to the thesis submission deadline date should be submitted at least three months before a PGR’s thesis submission deadline date and as early as possible before the deadline for the submission of corrections, amendments or a resubmission.

**13.3** Where there are exceptional circumstances, a retrospective request for an extension may be considered, and must include an explanation from the PGR as to why the request was not submitted within the appropriate timeframe. Please note however that retrospective extensions are rarely granted.

**13.4** To apply for an extension, a PGR will need to demonstrate that they have made satisfactory progress to date which means passing MYMs, AMPs, not being under an Emergency Progress Review, providing evidence of having attended all supervisory meetings and having a justifiable reason for the extension. They must also provide a work plan of how they intend to complete the research during the extended period of time requested.

**13.5** In the case of request to extend the research period, as well as the requirements set out above, PGRs must also provide evidence of the event or situation resulting in the need for an extension to this period, as well as evidence of attempts to mitigate. Applications submitted without this will not be considered.

## **14. Reasons for an extension**

**14.1** The reasons for an extension should be based on severe, unexpected, relevant and evidenced exceptional factors.

**14.2** Cases relating to illness should normally use the suspension procedure or a change to the mode of study, rather than extension. In cases of long-term health issues where a suspension may not be appropriate, PGRs must speak with their supervisor and / Graduate Research Director about what measures need to be put in place to ensure wider support for them over a prolonged period of time. Such measures include recommendations for ‘reasonable adjustments’ or additional support that can be put in place to assist a PGR with a disability with their research.

**14.3** Some examples of what might be considered valid exceptional factors are listed below. These would need to be fully evidenced and must have affected the PGR’s ability to submit the thesis.

* Inability to progress with research due to the lack of required University resources (e.g. essential laboratory equipment, software etc.)
* Failure of University IT systems.
* Sudden illness or injury during the period when the PGR is working on the thesis for imminent submission.
* A worsening of a long-term health condition during the time the PGR is working on the thesis for imminent submission.
* A close family member or friend died at the time of a thesis submission.
* Personal problems, for example court proceedings or separation from a spouse or partner, which have affected the PGR at the time of thesis submission.
* A close family member becoming unexpectedly ill at the time of a thesis submission which either required the PGR to look after them or resulted in severe stress.
* Being the victim of a crime.

**14.4** Some examples of what might be considered a valid exceptional factor when applying for an extension to the research period are listed below. These would need to be fully evidenced and must have affected the PGR’s ability to submit the thesis.

* Inability to progress with research due to the lack of University resources (e.g. essential laboratory equipment, software, lab closures etc.) **when this is the only work the PGR was able to undertake at this time.**
* Complete lack of supervision.

**14.5** The following are not considered exceptional factors and will not be accepted as valid grounds for an extension by Research Degrees Committee:

* Completing, submitting the thesis too late, and missing the submission deadline (time management problems, delay with finalising thesis layout).
* IT problems.
* Non-availability of books or journals.
* Not backing up the thesis electronically; PGRs are expected to take appropriate precautions to back their work up.
* A long-standing condition for which the PGR has reasonable adjustments have been put in place which mitigate the impact of the long-standing condition.
* Financial problems (other than cases of the most extreme hardship, e.g.

redundancy/bankruptcy).

* House moves, home renovations, family celebrations or other events where a PGR has control over the date or could choose not to participate.
* Normal work commitments reducing time available for research.
* Long-standing appointments (legal, medical, etc.) which could be re-arranged.
* Cover for childcare.
* Unrealistic time plan.
* Holidays or periods of absence taken earlier in the registration.
* Poor academic progress.
* Requirement to improve language skills.
* Proof-reading of thesis.
* Problems with supervision that had not been raised earlier during the registration period.
* Changes to the research topic or direction that have previously been agreed by the PGR and supervisor.
* Not being aware of deadline dates.
* Delay in obtaining official certified translations of evidence into English.
* Lack of progress.
* Visa issues (these will be considered on a case-by-case basis).
* Any other factors which lead to a request in excess of six months.

## **15. Evidence requirements**

**15.1** All applications for extensions should be accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence of impact on progress. However, we understand this is not always possible or appropriate. As such if PGRs are unable to provide documentary evidence, they are advised to contact the Doctoral College to discuss this, or ask their supervisor or an appropriate member of staff to do so on their behalf.

**15.2** Supporting evidence should normally be submitted at the same time as the application form. If this is not possible, PGRs must clearly indicate the reasons for the delay on the form, otherwise the request will not be considered and the application will be rejected. Where there are reasons of confidentiality, PGRs should refer only to this on the form.

**15.3** It is the PGR’s responsibility to ensure that any evidence in a language other than English is translated and certified prior to the submission of an application.

## **16. Work plan**

**16.1** All applications for extensions must be accompanied by a work plan to demonstrate how the requested period will be used effectively in order to complete the outstanding work for the award.

**16.2** A PGR’s work plan should provide a schedule of the outstanding work and a realistic timeframe for completing each section, and must be approved by the supervisor and Head of School.

**16.3** Extension requests without work plans, with incomplete work plans or insufficient detail, and without supporting evidence (other than for reasons of confidentiality) will not be considered and the application will be rejected.

## **17. Extension time limits**

**17.1** Extensions are normally for periods of up to three months; longer extensions of up to six months (or for separate extensions that cumulatively total six months) may be requested if sufficient evidence is provided.

**17.2** In all cases, the extension request must bear a close relationship to the grounds cited, and appropriate documentary evidence must be provided in support of the application.

**17.3** In all cases, extension requests will not be considered if such an extension takes the PGR past the period of maximum registration on their programme.

**17.4** Extensions are intended to be time-limited, unique allowances of extra time. Therefore applications for subsequent extensions are highly unlikely to be approved, except in the most exceptional of cases.

## **18. Application outcomes**

**18.1** The Doctoral College will notify PGRs of the outcome via email.

**18.2** Where the application is approved, the PGR will be informed of the revised thesis submission, resubmission date or end of research period where appropriate. It is the PGR’s responsibility to check that the information is correct and raise any concerns as soon as possible. The PGR can contact the Finance team regarding any tuition fee liability.

**18.3** An extension is not a right and it may be refused where, for example:

* Inadequate reasons are given for seeking an extension.
* Acceptable evidence has not been provided.
* A work plan has not been provided or the work plan does not provide sufficient details to justify the requested extension period.
* An extension would cause the PGR’s length of registration at the University to exceed the maximum duration as set out in the programme regulations.
* Previous extensions have been granted but agreed progress has not been made.
* The PGR is the subject of an RDC investigation or Faculty request for an investigation due to any of the reasons set out in the Code of Practice Research Degrees: Termination of Candidature, which is available under *Research Degree Provision* in the [online Quality Handbook.](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality)

**18.4** PGRs will be allowed to appeal against any decision (unless stated otherwise in earlier sections of this Code) should they wish to do so, if their reason for appeal falls into one of the accepted reasons. PGRs can find this information on the Doctoral College’s [SharePoint site](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/Services/DoctoralCollege/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B8DE507A5-D266-4E76-B53C-0A01F2C6911C%7D&file=PGR%20Special%20Cases%20Appeal%20Form.doc&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1).

## **19. Implications of extending studies**

**19.1** Should any PGR – whether Home or International - not seek appropriate advice, the University cannot be held responsible for any unforeseen expenses or issues that arise as a result of an extension.

**19.2** Tuition fees will be adjusted to take into account the extension period in accordance with the University’s fees policy.

**19.3** PGRs will be charged fees for the duration of any agreed extension, with effect from their original submission due date. Additional non-submission fees may be charged for any subsequent extension(s).

**19.4** PGRs should be aware that if they have applied for and are granted an extension to the research period, standard tuition fees apply.

**19.5** PGRs in receipt of a scholarship should be aware that an extension to the thesis submission deadline does not mean that they will receive additional funding. Restrictions may apply if the PGR is funded by one of the UK Research Councils. The PGR must seek advice from the Doctoral College in order to confirm the financial implications of an extension in advance of applying.

**19.6** If a PGR is sponsored by an external sponsor, it is the PGR’s responsibility to contact the funding body to inform them of their intention to apply for an extension, and where the application is approved, confirm the revised thesis submission deadline date with them.

**19.7** Where a PGR is funded by a UK Research Council, the PGR must contact the Doctoral College so that the relevant Research Council can be notified as soon as possible and their records updated on the UKRI database.

**19.8** PGRs should make themselves aware of any additional accreditation, professional, disciplinary or sponsor-related requirements that may affect their extension request before they apply.

**19.9** Where the thesis submission or resubmission deadline date, or the deadline for submission of corrections or amendments has lapsed, and the requirements for the award have not been completed, PGRs will be deemed to have withdrawn and their programme of study will be terminated.

## **20. Additional implications of extending studies for international PGRs**

**20.1** The University of Hull has been granted a Home Office Student Visa Sponsor Licence and is required to fulfil certain sponsor duties in relation to the visa sponsorship of international students and comply with Home Office sponsor guidance and the Immigration Rules.

**20.2** International PGRs who are sponsored by the University under its Student Visa Sponsor Licence are required to meet the attendance and engagement monitoring requirements of their programme and submit documentary evidence to support this, including regular supervision meeting records in accordance with the Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research Students.

**20.3** International PGRs who are intending to stay in the UK for the duration of the requested extension must ensure that their visa allows them to do so and may be required to apply for a visa extension to cover the extended study period. **It is not the responsibility of the Doctoral College or the academic units to do so.**

**20.4** International PGRs who require clearance under the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) to study in the UK may be required to apply for a new ATAS certificate if they are granted an academic extension and must provide appropriate evidence of their ATAS extension application to the International Engagement and Compliance Team.

**20.5** International PGRs must consult with the International Engagement and Compliance Team before submitting an application for an academic extension and the PGR must ensure they understand the visa implications of applying to extend their studies.

**20.6** The International Engagement and Compliance Team will be asked to complete the appropriate section of the special cases form before the application can be submitted.

**20.7** For international PGRs who wish to return home during the approved extension period, they must seek permission from the Doctoral College and IECT.

**20.8** In addition, PGRs who return home must update their contact details (address, telephone and email in the my.hull.ac.uk portal.

### **21. Support for PGRs**

PGR Support Services at the University of Hull provide a range of services to support all students: [Student support | University of Hull](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.hull.ac.uk%2Fchoose-hull%2Fstudent-life%2Fstudent-support&data=05%7C01%7CK.SkeltonClarke%40hull.ac.uk%7C7078d0e9be044894bb9408dbcaf2d88b%7C490a81977b834f1089b983189be3835e%7C0%7C0%7C638326916985779512%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=iTmTe5GolNStz0307TzYaXRjWTh4r3fVZvEBfvK63%2B4%3D&reserved=0)

[HUSU Advice Centre](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhulluniunion.com%2Fadvice&data=05%7C01%7CK.SkeltonClarke%40hull.ac.uk%7C7078d0e9be044894bb9408dbcaf2d88b%7C490a81977b834f1089b983189be3835e%7C0%7C0%7C638326916985779512%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rCTCSc0XuQq9ZwGIOphDL%2FFIJ%2F1CRw1duNHqQ3n%2FICY%3D&reserved=0) provides confidential, impartial and independent advice and guidance on a range of different issues.

A full list of [Graduate Research Directors](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/DoctoralCollege/SitePages/Current-GRDs.aspx) can be found on the Doctoral College’s SharePoint site. Their role is to provide help, support and guidance to both PGRs and colleagues working with PGRs.

The [Doctoral College’s SharePoint](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/DoctoralCollege/SitePages/Home.aspx) site is dedicated to supporting PGRs and those colleagues who supervise or support PGRs.

Regulations, policies and codes of practice can be found on the [University’s Quality Handbook webpage](https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/quality).