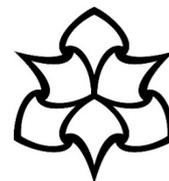


CODE OF PRACTICE ON EXTENSIONS AND SUSPENSIONS

2019-20

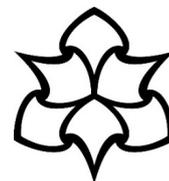




Code of Practice on Extensions and Suspensions 2019-20

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Major changes for 2019-20

The Code of Practice on Extensions and Suspensions is reviewed annually. Changes may be made throughout the year, so please refer to the [Graduate School website](#) for the latest version of this document. Major changes for 2019-20 are below:

Section	Amendment/Addition
All	Additional text has been included throughout to clarify the options available to students who are required to resubmit their thesis.
3.3 & 3.4	Minor updates to the text to ensure the regulations mirror those of the Exceptional Factors applied to students studying at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level at the university.
8.2	Direct link provided to the 2019-20 Regulations for the Payment of University Fees and other related Financial Information for ease of reference.
9.4	International Office added as a team to contact if a student returns home during the approved extension period (to ensure compliance with the university sponsor license).
11.4	Regulation confirms suspensions are not permitted during a student's non-submission period.

This Code of Practice is owned and updated by the Manchester Metropolitan University Graduate School on behalf of Academic Board. Queries should be directed to the Graduate School (gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk).

Introduction

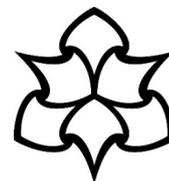
Manchester Metropolitan University produces a suite of documents that outline the formal regulations and procedures for postgraduate research degrees.

The **Code of Practice on Extensions and Suspensions** provides specific guidelines about the process for research students requesting an extension to their studies (where they require additional time to submit their thesis due to exceptional factors) or suspending their studies (where they are prevented from making progress with their work due to exceptional factors).

This document should be read alongside the:

- Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees
- Institutional Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees
- Research Degrees Handbook
- Guidelines on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees

These documents are available on the [Graduate School website](#).



Extensions

1. Introduction

1.1 Postgraduate research students are expected to meet their thesis submission deadline date (or resubmission deadline date, where this applies). Where there are valid and evidenced exceptional factors, a student may apply to their Faculty Research Degrees Committee for an extension to the deadline date for the submission of their thesis, thesis corrections, revised thesis or resubmission.

1.2 An extension happens at the end of a student's period of study or post examination and is defined as an extension of time beyond the given thesis submission or resubmission deadline date. A student can request an extension, but there is no guarantee that an extension will be granted.

2. Making an application

2.1 Where a student has exceptional factors and requires additional time to submit or resubmit their thesis, they must complete the extension of period of registration (RD4) form. The form must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence to support their application.

2.2 An application for an extension to the thesis submission deadline date should normally be submitted at least three months before a student's thesis submission deadline date and as early as possible before the deadline for the submission of corrections, a revised thesis or a resubmission. Where there are exceptional circumstances, a retrospective request for an extension may be considered, and must include an explanation from the student as to why the request was not submitted within the appropriate timeframe.

2.3 To apply for an extension, a student will need to demonstrate that they have made reasonable progress to date and have 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.

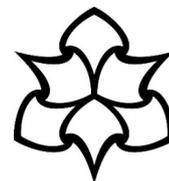
3. Reasons for an extension

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

3.2 Cases relating to illness should normally use the suspension procedure rather than extension. In cases of long-term health issues where a suspension may not be appropriate, students must speak with their Director of Studies about whether a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) would be helpful to ensure wider support for them over a prolonged period of time. The PLP makes recommendations for 'reasonable adjustments' or additional support that can be put in place to assist a research student with a disability with their study.

3.3 Some examples of what might be considered a valid exceptional factor are listed below. These would need to be fully evidenced and must have affected the student's ability to submit the thesis.

- An unforeseen intellectual change or the emergence of a body of new evidence which will affect the outcome of the research
- Inability to progress with research studies due to the lack of required University resources (e.g. essential laboratory equipment, software etc.)



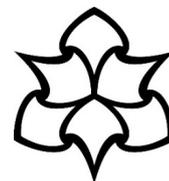
- Failure of University IT systems
- Sudden illness or injury during the period when a student is working on the thesis for submission such as flu, gastroenteritis or a broken arm
- A worsening of a long-term health condition during the time a student is working on the thesis
- A close family member or friend died around the time of a thesis submission
- Personal problems, for example court proceedings or separation from a spouse or partner, which have affected the student around the time of thesis submission
- A close family member becoming unexpectedly ill around the time of a thesis submission which either required the student to look after them or the news caused the student to feel stressed, anxious or depressed.
- Being the victim of a crime, e.g. assault or subject to a theft.

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

- Completing, submitting the thesis too late, and missing the submission deadline (time management problems, delay with getting the thesis bound, etc.)
- Non-availability of books or journals
- Not backing up the thesis electronically; students are expected to take appropriate precautions to back their work up.
- A long-standing condition for which the student has a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) in place where 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)
- Visa issues
- House moves, family celebrations or other events where a student has control over the date or could choose not to participate
- Problems with postal delivery of the thesis (students are advised to obtain receipts if submitting in this manner)
- 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
- Factors which lead to a request in excess of 12 months.

4. Evidence requirements

4.1 All applications for extensions should be accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence of impact – such as a fully completed ‘summary of progress’ section within the extension of period of registration (RD4) form.



4.2 Supporting evidence should normally be submitted at the same time as the application form. If this is not possible, students must clearly indicate the reasons for the delay on the form. Where there are reasons of confidentiality, students should refer only to this on the form.

4.3 Evidence in a language other than English must be translated and certified prior to the submission of a student's application.

5. Work plan

5.1 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.

5.2 A student's work plan should provide a schedule of the outstanding work and the timeframe for completing each section.

5.3 Extension requests without work plans, with incomplete work plans or insufficient detail, will not be approved.

6. Extension time limits

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

7. Application outcomes

7.1 Where the application is approved, the student will be notified via email of the revised thesis submission or resubmission date. The student can contact the Faculty Research Degrees team regarding any tuition fee liability.

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

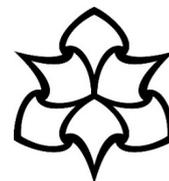
- Inadequate reasons are given for seeking an extension
- Acceptable evidence has not been provided
- A work plan has not been provided or the work plan does not provide sufficient details to justify the requested extension period

8. Implications of extending studies

8.1 A student's tuition fees will be adjusted to take into account their extension period in accordance with the [University's Financial and Legal Services policies](#).

8.2 Students will be charged a monthly non-submission fee 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). Details of the non-submission fee and other University fees can be found in the Financial Services document: [2019-20 Regulations for the Payment of University Fees and other related Financial Information](#) for Postgraduate Research Students.

8.3 In the case of a resubmission/re-presentation following a referral for further work, students who enrolled on their research degree in or after the academic year 2013/14 will be required to



continue to pay fees until they resubmit/re-present their thesis to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will notify Student Billings once the resubmitted thesis has been received.

8.4 If a student is in receipt of a studentship, they 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 student is funded by one of the UK Research Councils. The student must seek advice from their Faculty Research Degrees Team in order to confirm the financial implications of an extension in advance of applying.

8.5 If a student is sponsored by an external sponsor, it is the student'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. Where a student is funded by a UK Research Council, the student must contact the University Graduate School (gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk) so that the relevant Research Council can be notified as soon as possible.

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

8.7 Where the thesis submission or resubmission deadline date, or the deadline for submission of corrections or a revised thesis has lapsed, and the requirements for the award have not been completed, students will be deemed to have withdrawn.

9. Implications of extending studies for international students

9.1 Manchester Metropolitan University has been granted a Home Office Tier 4 Sponsor Licence and must ensure that it complies with the conditions of the Licence.

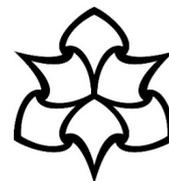
9.2 International Students who are sponsored by the University under its Tier 4 Sponsor Licence are required to meet monthly contact points during their extension period and keep their contact details up to date via their Faculty Research Degrees Administrator. International students who are intending to stay in the UK for the duration of the requested extension must ensure that they have appropriate leave to enable them to continue their studies and must renew their immigration permission before it expires.

9.3 International students will be required to include a copy of their current passport and immigration permission with their request for an extension (these will include the travel visa and a copy of both sides of the biometric resident permit).

9.4 For international students who return home during the approved extension period, they must notify their Faculty Research Degrees Administrator and the International Office (visaextension@mmu.ac.uk), and they must update their contact details (address, telephone and email).

10. 20-day grace period

10.1 If a student has mitigating circumstances which means they will not be able to submit their thesis by the given thesis submission deadline date, and they need a short period of additional time to complete, students can apply to their Head of Faculty Research Degrees (HFRD) to request a 20 (University) working day grace period in which to submit their thesis.



10.2 No fee will be charged providing that the student submits their thesis within the 20 working day period. The student will need to receive email confirmation from their HFRD, which must be presented to the Faculty Research Degrees Administrator before the submission deadline date, otherwise a non-submission fee will automatically be charged.

10.3 If a student knows that they will require longer than the 20 working day grace period to submit their thesis, or the 20 working day grace is not approved by the HFRD, a formal extension using the extension of period of registration (RD4) form must be applied for prior to their thesis submission deadline date.

10.4 Should a student be granted a grace period, but after the 20 working days still require longer to submit their thesis, they will then need to apply for a formal extension at this point. In all instances, the first period of the non-submission fees will be payable from the student's original thesis submission deadline date, and the student can access details of this fee payment from the [University Financial and Legal Services website](#).

10.5 The 20-day grace period cannot be requested if the original submission deadline date has already been extended.

Suspensions

11. Introduction

11.1 When exceptional circumstances prevent a student from making progress with their research studies they can request an authorised temporary break of study (known as a suspension) be approved by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.

11.2 Students are advised to discuss their intention to request a suspension with their Director of Studies (DoS) before completing and submitting an application for suspension (RD5) form. Requests for suspension must be submitted prior to the proposed date of suspension so the Faculty Research Degrees Committee can consider the request. Retrospective applications for suspension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

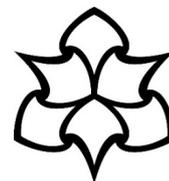
11.3 Please note a student can request a suspension of study, but there is no guarantee that a suspension will be granted. Approval will be dependent on the circumstances and the level of evidence provided.

11.4 Suspensions are not permitted during a student's non-submission period.

12. Definition of suspension

12.1 A suspension is a recognised and authorised break from a student's research when no academic engagement is possible/occurs. In all cases, documentary evidence (e.g. a letter from their GP or their employer) must accompany the application.

12.2 If a student's application for suspension is approved, the student will be notified via email. The student's revised thesis submission date will then be confirmed with them upon their return to normal study. The Director of Studies may contact the student to discuss their return to study. However, it is the student's responsibility to notify the Faculty Research Degrees Team of their return at the end of the suspension period.



12.3 A suspension will normally 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 student's studies. For students in receipt of a studentship, funding will stop during a period of suspension

12.4 For short periods of absence (for international students only), where a suspension is not appropriate (e.g. to return home urgently following an immediate family emergency), students must obtain approval from their Director of Studies for an authorised leave of absence. Following approval, students will need to contact the International Office (visaextension@mmu.ac.uk) to discuss the options available to them depending on how long they would need to be absent. Students will be required to complete and submit a 'Change of Study Address' form (available on request) to the International Office who will be able to guide them on whether they will need to apply for a new visa. Students must ensure that they keep their Faculty Research Degrees Team up to date regarding their plans throughout the process.

13. Categories of voluntary suspension

13.1 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 that of reasons for an extension. Cases relating to illness should use the suspension procedure rather than extension procedure.

13.2 In cases of long-term health issues where a suspension may not be appropriate, students should speak with their Director of Studies about whether a Personal Learning Plan would be helpful to ensure wider support for them over a prolonged period of time.

Medical (including personal family reasons)

13.3 Medical evidence is required for all health related suspensions. Medical reasons include:

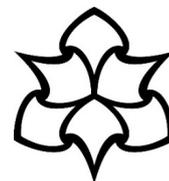
- Ill health (for periods exceeding one month in duration)
- Ongoing health issues or disability.

13.4 Before a student 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

13.5 Examples of non-medical reasons include:

- Caring responsibilities
- Illness of a dependent or a close family member
- Sole carer for children and the elderly/vulnerable
- 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 Maternity Guidelines](#). As early as possible in the pregnancy/adoption process, students are advised to discuss with a suitable member of staff (e.g. their Director of Studies), the most appropriate options for supporting them through their pregnancy etc.



- Competitive sports. The category of 'Competitive Sport' should be used where a student needs to take suspension 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). Students 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.
- A victim of crime.
- Attendance at court for jury service or as a witness.
- Bereavement or divorce.
- Significant financial hardship.

13.6 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
- Travel difficulties
- Holidays
- Moving house

14. Categories of compulsory suspension

14.1 For reasons of academic or personal misconduct, the University may apply a suspension from attendance at the University for a specified period, not exceeding one year. A student's registration status throughout this period will be 'Suspended'. The procedure for this can be accessed from the [Procedure for Handling Academic Misconduct](#) document on the Manchester Metropolitan University website.

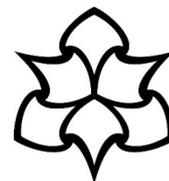
14.2 The Finance Service Centre under certain circumstances (e.g. non-payment of fees) can suspend a student's studies. This will occur where the University has had a number of failed attempts to contact the student to reach a resolution. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Finance Service Centre at fsc@mmu.ac.uk to negotiate a payment arrangement.

15. Implications of suspending studies

15.1 There will be an impact upon a student's funding provision (e.g. stipend payments) via scholarships that will either be stopped or re-adjusted and/or be required to be repaid for the period of a suspension.

15.2 During the period of suspension, students will be unable to access the following University facilities:

- Library
- University provision, such as teaching, tutorials and academic supervision
- University accommodation and counselling services
- VLE and e-learning
- Their University student email account. Students are, therefore, advised to ensure that their Faculty Research Degrees Team has been notified of an alternative email address for them.



15.3 While on suspension, students will not be covered by University insurance. However, any pre-existing University processes (such as investigations into plagiarism, fitness to practise, misconduct, etc.) will normally continue during any approved suspension.

15.4 During the period of a student's suspension, they will not be charged tuition fees. If a student 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. If a student is funded by a UK Research Council, they must contact the University Graduate School (gsresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk) so that the relevant Research Council can be notified as soon as possible.

16. Implications of suspending studies for international students

16.1 For international students, their right to remain in the UK will be affected by a suspension from their research. As a Home Office Tier 4 sponsor, the University is legally required to report any changes to a student's status to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). International students are strongly advised to discuss their suspension with the International Office (visaextension@mmu.ac.uk) prior to submitting a request.

16.2 The University is required by law to withdraw immigration sponsorship for international students taking a suspension who have entered the UK on a Tier 4 Student visa. This will normally mean that the student will be required to leave the UK for their period of suspension (as will any of their dependants). In certain circumstances, the University may be able to continue immigration sponsorship for a maximum period of eight weeks during which time the University's statutory responsibilities as a Home Office Tier 4 sponsor will apply.

17. Making an application and evidence requirements

17.1 To apply for a suspension, students must complete an application for suspension (RD5) form.

17.2 All suspension requests must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence to support the application.

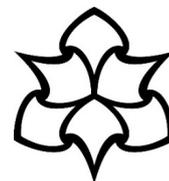
17.3 Suspension on appropriately evidenced medical grounds will normally be authorised. This is on the basis that the medical evidence provided is from a UK registered medical professional. Where the medical evidence is from a non-UK registered medical professional and is not in English, a certified translation must be provided by the student.

17.4 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.

18. Failure to return from a suspension

18.1 As a registered student on a suspension, a student 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.



18.2 A student's withdrawal in these circumstances shall not affect their liability to pay any unpaid tuition fees or other fees or charges.

19. Extension to a suspension

19.1 A suspension will normally be approved for a maximum period of 12 months. If a student is unable to return to their studies at the end of the suspension, they will need to apply for an extension to the suspension. A further suspension application form should be completed and submitted with up-to-date supporting evidence. As the student will not be able to access their student accounts while suspended, they will need to contact their Faculty Research Degrees Team to request an offline version of the application for suspension (RD5) form. Please note that the evidence that a student submitted to support their original suspension request cannot be used when requesting an extension to suspension.

19.2 Where a student 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 out of date. Approving a further extension to the suspension may not be in a student's best interests and may be refused. Subsequent requests for suspension of studies will be considered on a case-by-case basis and, if a student has not made significant progress on their research study, the [Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure for Postgraduate Research Students](#) may be instigated and their research registration may be terminated.

19.3 Students will normally be withdrawn from their studies if the total amount of suspension exceeds 24 months throughout the duration of their studies.

Support for students

Students can get further support from University services:

- [Students' Union Advice Centre](#), s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk, +44 (0)161 2476533
- [Student Support Officers](#)
- [Disability Service](#), disability.service@mmu.ac.uk, +44(0)161 247 3491
- International Office, international@mmu.ac.uk, +44 (0)161 247 2000 (students should provide their Manchester Met Student ID number in any correspondence).