



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

University Policy and Guidance on Suspensions and Extensions of Study for Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs)

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1. Advice and Support

If PGRs require advice or support, they are advised to contact their Graduate School, Supervisor or Director of PGR Studies who can offer advice on the process and signpost to other sources of support.

A wide range of avenues for academic and pastoral support are available. Graduate Schools and other specialist [support and wellbeing services](#) around the University can help support PGRs through a range of situations and, depending on the nature of the individual circumstances, and can advise around suspension or extension processes or other support. If PGRs are in need of additional support or advice, they may find the following list of services and contacts useful:

- [University Support and Wellbeing page](#)
- [Postgraduate Support and Wellbeing page](#)
- [Disability Services](#)
- [Student Counselling and Wellbeing](#)
- [LUU Help and Support](#)
- [Information for international PGRs](#)
- [Annex 2 includes guidance on for UKRI funded PGRs.](#)
- [Annex 3 of this document include further guidance for PGRs sponsored under the Student Visa Route](#), and further advice is available from the Student Visa Advice Team.

It is understood that some circumstances are private or of a sensitive nature. If the grounds for the suspension/extension request are sensitive or confidential, and PGRs would prefer not to document details in GRAD, the Graduate School can provide advice and support, including applying for a suspension or extension outside GRAD.

If a PGR is disabled or has a long-term health condition (which has or is expected to last 12 months or more) that impacts on their day-to-day activities, they should be signposted and encouraged to register with Disability Services who will advise further on support and reasonable adjustments to their study and assessment. PGRs can find out more about Disability Services and [how to register here](#). Guidance for agreeing support and adjustments for a transfer or final viva is set out in a [document available here](#). Guidance in relation to Covid-19 and disability support is [available in Annex I of this document](#). The Graduate School can also advise you further. If a PGR requires an adjustment to the application process due to disability or accessibility, they should contact their Graduate School.

2. Policy

Where circumstances or events of sufficient gravity occur and adversely impact on a postgraduate researcher's progress, consideration will be given by the University to granting a period of suspension or extension of study (see the definitions given below) to mitigate against the difficulties encountered and to ensure the PGR is not disadvantaged.

The University recognises that some PGRs may be affected by illness or other circumstances that are outside of their control, which may significantly affect their studies. In many cases PGRs will recover any time that is lost during their candidature but where difficulties are sufficiently disruptive this may not be possible.

The University mitigates against the difficulties encountered, to ensure the PGR is not disadvantaged, by considering a period of suspension or extension of study which will lengthen the overall candidature and delay the deadline for submission of the thesis for examination. In the case of suspensions of study early in the candidature the date for transfer to a specific research degree category may also be delayed.

It is the responsibility of the PGR to notify their supervisors, Graduate School or Director of PGR Studies (DPGRS) or Graduate School when a problem occurs which means their progress is disrupted. Failure to take prompt action may lead to the PGR losing the time available to complete their studies or to be presumed to have withdrawn from their studies.

There are time limits for completing each research degree programme including the timescales for transfer which are outlined in the [University regulations and individual programme of study specification](#). When considering requests for suspensions and extensions of study the University will take due regard of the University's regulations, the University's [Equality and Inclusion Policies and Guidance](#) and external factors including the Home Office, Research Council requirements and professional bodies.

Responsibility for considering, and reaching decisions on, requests for suspensions and extensions of study is delegated by the Graduate Board to its Progression and Examinations Group (PEG) which also maintains this policy and guidance.

3. Definitions of Suspensions, Extensions and other absence

Suspension of studies

A “suspension” is a period of more than one month when a PGR temporarily leaves the programme and loses their registration status. Periods of suspension do not count towards the time available for completion of the degree. During a period of suspension:

- The PGR is not expected to progress their research or pay academic fees.
- Access to supervision, the library¹ or other University facilities (such as laboratories) is not available. Access to IT facilities, such as email will continue.
- Depending on the nature and circumstances for the suspension, it may be agreed that wellbeing and support contacts may continue during a period of suspension. Arrangements for contact and check-ins during a period of suspension should be agreed between the PGR and the School/Graduate School.
- The “clock” towards the deadline for submission of the thesis/deadline for transfer will stop when the suspension is in place.
- A suspension must be reported to UKVI and may have an impact on visa arrangements. PGRs should seek advice from the [Student Visa Advice Team](#) as early as possible.
- There may be an impact on funding and maintenance and consideration must be given to the terms and conditions of any studentship held by the PGR. There may also be an impact on eligibility for [council tax exemption](#).

Retrospective suspensions of study

It is important that Schools work with PGRs to formalise a suspension of studies at the earliest opportunity, and must not wait before submitting requests through to Doctoral College Operations. Delays in formalising suspensions of studies can impact a number of areas, including:

- The University is required to report suspensions of study to UKVI within 10 working days of the start of the suspension. Failure to comply with this could jeopardise the University’s compliance with UKVI requirements as well as causing the PGR to fall outside the immigration regulations and jeopardise their academic position.
- If a PGR is in receipt of study related funding, a backdated start of suspension date would mean that the PGR could receive funding they are not entitled to and be required to pay this back.
- It may also risk the University’s compliance with the service-level agreements for reporting changes of circumstances and audit requirements for funding bodies (including Student Finance England for Doctoral Loans, American and Canadian Loans) as well as UKRI and University scholarship funding
- Impacts on tuition fee charging.
- Delays can prevent PGRs from getting crucial and timely academic advice and support, and other professional, financial or immigration advice

¹ In exceptional circumstances only a School may submit a request (via DCO) to the library to maintain access

Suspensions will not normally be backdated for more than one month. A request for a retrospective suspension will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where the PGR can provide a good reason for not disclosing circumstances sooner. It is, therefore, essential that prompt action is taken to formalise requests. The GRAD workflow will ask the school to explain why it was not possible to submit the request at an earlier stage.

If a PGR is in receipt of study related funding further advice should be taken from the funding or scholarships team before a retrospective suspension can be considered. Please see the [Finance pages of the For Students website for further guidance](#). If the PGR is sponsored under the Student Visa Route, further advice from the Student Visa Advice Team must also be sought.

Extension of Study (thesis submission deadline)

An “Extension of study” is a lengthening of the candidature to take account of a period of unexpected/unpreventable disruption to studies which has slowed down academic progress significantly. During a period of extension:

- The PGR will not leave the programme of study and will continue to progress their research/thesis writing but with some disruption of study over a limited period slowing progress rather than interrupting progress completely.
- PGRs will have access to Library and IT and will be entitled to supervision.
- Supervision meetings will continue during a period of extension and should be recorded in GRAD as per the [Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Policy and Guidance for PGR's](#)
- PGRs will not normally be entitled to laboratory or other resources provided by the school. All research work, including experiments, should have been completed within the standard period of study and any period of extension granted should be for writing up the thesis.
- The PGR and Supervisor(s) should agree a timetable/work plan for completing the thesis which includes milestones. PEG may require sight of the timetable and a comprehensive timetable must be submitted to PEG for any request where the total period of extension over a candidature will exceed 12 months ([see section 5](#)).

Extension requests will normally only be considered in the last 6 months of the standard period of study and at a point when it is clear how much of the time lost has been compensated for during the standard period of study. Cases will be expected to show that circumstances have arisen which have significantly and adversely affected the progress of the research and against which precautions could not reasonably have been taken. Where circumstances arise earlier in the candidature, PGRs should discuss with their supervisors any difficulties and disruption caused and keep a record of this in GRAD. Keeping a log of issues and lost time in this way will make it easier when coming to make any extension request at the appropriate time.

Research projects require careful time management. Delays to the delivery of equipment and/or equipment breakdown are not uncommon. During periods of such inconvenience, consideration should be given to the other aspects of the research the PGR can progress to avoid impact on the length of the overall candidature. In such cases waiting until later in the period of study to

assess the impact is appropriate. Where an unexpected event/disruption to study occurs during the overtime period the extension request should be made at the point the event occurs.

Authorised absence

An authorised absence is a short period of absence (up to 4 weeks²) in any 12 month period, in addition to any period of annual leave (26 days (pro-rata for part-time)). During a period of authorised absence the PGR remains registered but is not expected to progress their research. Access to IT facilities such as email will continue. It is expected that the absence can be absorbed into the overall candidature, and the time away from studies must have no impact on the PGR's ability to meet the final thesis submission deadline which will not be extended on the grounds of the authorised absence.

An authorised absence does not need to be reported to UKVI though PGRs sponsored on a Student Visa should seek advice from the Student Visa Advice team.

Extension to transfer deadline

An extension to the deadline for transfer assessment can be considered to give PGRs a little extra time to complete submission for transfer where circumstances have impacted progress (e.g. illness). The final thesis submission deadline is not extended. Postponement of the transfer assessment beyond the University's timescales requires the permission of PEG and requests should be submitted via GRAD.

Please see the [transfer panel guidance](#) for advice.

Change to part-time

For full-time PGRs, it may be possible to consider a change to part-time study if circumstances prevent study on a full-time basis, but the PGR does not need to take a complete break via a suspension. Funding implications (and visa implications) should be carefully considered.

Please see the [Change of Research Degree Arrangements guidance](#).

² In exceptional circumstances up to 8 weeks may be authorised by the UKVI Compliance Manager. Requests should be made via PGR Progress on the completed pro-forma for requests for authorised absence exceeding 4 weeks.

4. Grounds for a Suspension or Extension of Study

Requests for suspension or extension are expected to be:

Described	A summary of the grounds for the request and how this led to a disruption to studies or slowed down academic progress significantly must be provided.
Proportionate	The length of time requested must be reasonable in the sense that it bears close relation to the events experienced by the PGR, and the impact on their progress
Supported	The School must support the request made by the PGR and be satisfied that there is a realistic, detailed, and agreed plan for completion between the PGR and Supervisor. The School must be satisfied that the request meets the requirements for independent documentary supporting information
Timely	A request for a retrospective suspension will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where the PGR can provide a good reason for not disclosing circumstances sooner. Please see earlier section for further advice. It is essential that prompt action is taken to formalise requests at the time the circumstances arise. In the case of an extension to study, depending on the circumstance it may in some cases be necessary to record why a suspension of studies was not requested or felt to be appropriate at the time.

Grounds for a suspension or extension of study

These are examples of circumstances normally accepted as grounds for a suspension or extension of study (provided that the length of time requested is reasonable in the sense that it bears close relation to the events experienced by the PGR): This list is not exhaustive, and each application will be considered on its own merits.

- Accidents or serious personal illness or injury (of the PGR) (accompanied by medical documentation).
- Significant personal difficulties or family illness which have affected progress.
- Bereavement/death or serious illness of someone the PGR is close to e.g. parent, grandparent, guardian, partner, sibling, child, close friend.
- Financial reasons/unexpected and serious financial hardship.
- Unexpected events e.g. theft, (accompanied by a police report/crime number),
- Equipment not being delivered or equipment breakdown.
- Maternity³ (the PGR must make a request before the maternity leave is due to begin) [see also the University's policy on support for pregnant students and students with very young children](#)), or Adoption Leave, Paternity, Parental, Partner.
- Carers leave or caring responsibility (see also the University's [Policy on Support for Students/PGRs Who Are Parents or Carers](#)).
- Systemic catastrophe in home country (e.g. war, natural disaster).

³ For PGRs who are UKRI funded further information can be [found in Annex 2](#).

- Placements (where the request is supported by the supervisor).⁴
- Where the documented impact of disability leads to a need for an extension as a reasonable adjustment, consideration should then be given to the length of time required. Schools should liaise with the PGR and the Disability Service before submitting requests for extensions in these circumstances. Disclosure at an early stage is encouraged as this will enable the University to identify needs and put in place appropriate support. [Disability Services](#) will advise further on support and reasonable adjustments for the period of study and assessments.

Maternity, Parental and adoption leave

A PGR who becomes pregnant is encouraged to discuss the support needs of this in relation to their programme of study at an early stage of the pregnancy. They may approach any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, and seek information and advice in the [University's policy on support for pregnant students and students with very young children](#). PGRs and Schools should consult this guidance at the earliest opportunity as a risk assessment may be required.

For PGRs, periods of maternity, parental and adoption leave are normally managed under the suspension of studies process (and/or authorised absence). Periods of suspension for maternity, parental or adoption leave are not included towards the normal overall limit on suspensions/extensions⁵ over a candidature. Suspensions of studies have to be recorded in whole months, however PGRs can commence or return from a period of leave at any point in the month, by recording some of the period of leave under the authorised absence category, in addition to any period of suspension. PGRs may also choose to take any period of annual leave immediately before or after a period of leave.

For PGRs who are UKRI funded further information can be [found in Annex 2](#) covering maternity, parental and adoption leave pay arrangements. Advice for University funded PGRs is available from the Graduate School. For PGRs in the UK on a student visa, periods of suspended study must be reported to UKVI. Periods of authorised absence or annual leave do not have to be reported to UKVI. [Please see Annex 3](#) for further advice.

Initial points of contacts for support on return to study are the Graduate School and Supervisors. It is recommended that a plan for return to studies is agreed, and further advice can be found in [later in this document](#). Registration will be open 1 month before the suspension end date. The Graduate School will contact PGRs at this time to provide further information about return to study and the registration process. If a PGR wishes to extend their period of leave they should let their Graduate School know, or complete the workflow in GRAD to request a further period of suspension. Further advice can be found in [later in this document](#). A PGR who is considering changing from full-time and returning to study on a part-time basis is advised to contact their Graduate School for further advice and support with the process. PGRs

⁴ Depending on the Terms and Conditions of any funding provider. PGRs holding a Student visa should take advice from the Student Visa Advice team before submitting requests. [See Annex 3](#)

⁵ 24 months for full-time study; 36 months for part-time study

considering a change to part-time will need to check implications with their funding provider, and PGRs who hold a student visa should take advice from the Student Visa Advice Team.

Circumstances where a suspension or extension of study may not be approved

In all cases the School should review the request submitted by the PGR to determine if the grounds would warrant a suspension or extension and that the length of time requested is reasonable in the sense that it bears close relation to the events experienced by the PGR.

Approval of requests for suspensions/extensions of study (or extensions to transfer) are not guaranteed. Schools do not have to approve every request made and there may be some cases in which the School finds that a request made is not supported by the documentary supporting information available, is not felt to be reasonable, or that a period of time shorter than that requested by the PGR is supported by the documentary supporting information.

It is not possible to give an exhaustive or definitive list of when it might be reasonable for a School to decline a request, as each case must be considered individually and on its own merits, taking into account the PGR's individual circumstances, the particular research project and other factors (including UKVI, UKRI and/or professional body regulations). Examples of situations which would not normally be considered as grounds for a suspension or extension include the following, although this list is not exhaustive. The process to be followed is [set out in section 7](#).

- Poor academic progress is not reasonable grounds for a suspension/extension. This should instead be managed through the Progress Support Process.
- Where the documentary supporting information does not support the period/request.
- Where the request should normally be reasonably considering as falling under an annual leave request; e.g. holidays, family celebrations, weddings (including the PGR's own) and honeymoons
- Where there is no clear relationship between the amount of extra time being requested and the problem being encountered by the PGR or where the length of time requested does not bear resemblance to the circumstances experienced. In all cases the length of time requested needs to be specified and reasonable, in the sense that it bears close relation to the events experienced by the PGR. For example, it is unlikely that a six months suspension of study will be granted for a minor illness.
- Where permission has been granted for the PGR to register concurrently for another programme of study and a request is based citing academic or other commitments linked to the other registration.
- Period of study abroad as part of their programme of study. Any time spent by a PGR at a host institution will be included within the standard period of study. No period of suspension or extension of study will be considered as the expectation is that supervision and the research project will continue during this period.

5. Periods of Suspension or Extension of Study

Requests for suspensions of study will not be granted indefinitely. It is normal practice for a period of up to 12 months suspension to be considered by the University at any one time, with a review at the end of that period if necessary. The minimum period of suspension is one calendar month. If an absence from study is expected to be less than one month a period of authorised absence can be considered. This should be requested through the GRAD workflow.

No PGR, commencing study from session 01 August 2012, will normally be granted periods of extension and suspension totalling more than two calendar years for a full-time student or three calendar years for a part-time student by the University. In the event of a PGR wishing to exceed this period, unless exceptional permission from PEG is granted (see below), they will be required to withdraw from the candidature, but may be permitted to apply to commence a new candidature. Requests for suspensions of studies on the basis of maternity or adoption leave are not included in the above limits. [Please see Annex 1 for guidance on COVID-19 suspension or extensions.](#)

Other limits may be placed on the length of suspension/extension by external funders/sponsors or professional bodies and consideration must be given to such factors. For PGRs who are UKRI funded for example, information may be needed in accordance with the terms and conditions for UKRI funding. Further information can be [found in Annex 2.](#)

Depending on the total period of suspension or extension requested, the School will be asked to submit the following for consideration by PEG in support of the case.

[Requests up to 12 months for full-time or 18 months for part-time](#)

The following information is required via the GRAD workflow:

- Period of suspension/extension requested
- A brief summary of the grounds for this request.
- If more than 1 month retrospective, why it was not possible to make the request earlier
- Details of financial sponsor/source of funding
- If applicable, that satisfactory medical documentation is held on file
- If an extension request, confirmation that a work plan has been agreed by the PGR and supervisor and is held in the school
- If an extension request, estimated % complete and % remaining
- Visa questions in the case of Tier 4/Student visa PGRs

[Requests up to 24 months for full-time or 36 months for part-time](#)

The following additional is required where separate requests will cumulatively total more than 12 months for full-time PGRs (or 18 months for part-time), in addition to the information required via the GRAD workflow as above:

- A comprehensive timetable for completion, with agreed milestones /formal structure for monitoring progress agreed between the PGR and supervisor

- For extensions: a report on the progress made over any earlier period of extension including work completed against the original timetable and what work is remaining (estimated % complete and % remaining), whether engagement is satisfactory with up-to-date meeting records in GRAD and whether these are new grounds which have arisen over the last period of extension
- Any other plans or support in place to support successful completion
- Confirmation that the School holds any relevant documentary information to support the period requested ([see section 6](#))

Exceptional permission to exceed the 24 months or 36 limits

If supported by the School, requests for exceptional permission in excess of the total length permitted under the University's regulations will be considered by at least two members acting on behalf of PEG (normally the Chair and one other member, neither of which will be from the same School as the PGR).

In all cases PEG must be satisfied that there is a reasonable prospect of submission of a thesis of the appropriate standard for examination if the additional period requested is to be granted. Extensions beyond the normal periods must include a realistic, detailed, and agreed plan for completion. When making such exceptional requests, the School must specifically consider and address the following (a proforma for these purposes is available, and should be completed by the Graduate School and submitted to DCO, in addition to the GRAD workflow):

- the individual mitigating circumstances;
- Academic progress made to date and whether the PGR is in good academic standing;
- whether the context of the research remain academically current;
- the availability of continued supervisory support and any resources required to complete the work within the School;
- a comprehensive timeline to completion which includes milestones/formal structure for monitoring progress agreed between the PGR and supervisor;
- Confirmation that the School feels that there is a reasonable prospect of submission of a thesis of the appropriate standard for examination if the additional period is to be granted;
- Whether these are new grounds which have arisen since any earlier request was approved;
- For extensions: a report on the progress made over any earlier extension period including details of work completed against the original timetable, what work is remaining (estimated % complete and % remaining); whether engagement is satisfactory with up-to-date records in GRAD;
- For suspensions: that there is a realistic prospect of a return to study after the period of suspension, with an agreed plan for return to study and completion;
- Any other plans or support in place to support successful completion (e.g. PSP);
- Confirmation that the School holds any relevant documentary information to support the period requested ([see section 6](#)).

It would be expected that repeated extensions, or periods of extended study beyond the normal limits would be linked to a period of additional academic support as defined under the [Progress](#)

[Support Process](#), with support targeted towards meeting the new extended deadline for submission.

6. Documentary supporting information for suspensions to extensions

PGRs are normally required to provide independent supporting information should be provided to the Graduate School outside of GRAD. This documentary supporting information should be retained by the Graduate School and not forwarded to DCO, but DCO may check that the Graduate School holds documentary supporting information.

Documentary supporting information would normally be an original document on letter-headed correspondence and signed by an appropriate third party, giving details of the circumstances, its dates and or duration and, where possible, its impact. An appropriate third party would be one who knows the PGR in a professional capacity, or one who can verify the circumstances and who is in a position to provide objective and impartial advice. Documentary supporting information will only be accepted from verifiable addresses. All evidence must be provided in English. It is the PGR's responsibility to provide translations of any non-English documentation, and any documents not in English or without translation will not be accepted as evidence. The translation must be certified as accurate by a Public Notary or translated by an accredited translator. Originals can be returned to the PGR if requested.

Where illness is proposed as the grounds for suspension or extension of study the PGR must provide the school with satisfactory medical documentation in support of the request. The medical certificate might take the form of a fit to study note, letter or report from a medical practitioner (e.g. GP or doctor). The documentary supporting information should help the school understand how the PGR's medical situation is affecting their ability to study. Schools should advise PGRs to obtain information which includes the dates and duration of any period when the PGR's health has completely prevented or will completely prevent them from studying/when they are not fit to study⁶. The presentation of a prescription or the box cover of medication or the submission of a series of medical appointments is not accepted as documentary supporting information as this gives no professional opinion of the capacity to study.

Where a request is made on the grounds of impact due to a long-term health condition or Disability and the PGR is receiving support from Disability Services separate medical documentation will not usually be required as long as a Support Summary Sheet from Disability Services is held by the school.

If a PGR's circumstances are connected with someone close to them, what the University needs to know is the impact on the PGR of the circumstances, and how their ability to undertake their research is affected, rather than the third-party details. Personal information about third parties should not be submitted unless necessary. If third party information is provided, or deemed essential by the school to the consideration of the case, it must be accompanied by consent for the University to process the data.

It is the PGR's responsibility to provide up-to-date objective documentary supporting information to support requests for suspensions/extensions of study. The school should ask

⁶ Or the dates and duration of any period when the PGR may be fit for study if their doctor thinks that returning to study will help them recover. The doctor should be asked to advise on how the PGR's health may affect their ability to study

the PGR to produce the original document (within a set time frame) prior to them making a decision. If the PGR fails to produce the original document or the school remains unclear as to the authenticity of the document on receipt of the original, the school should ask the PGR to provide additional or further documentary supporting information. It is a serious University disciplinary offence to make a false declaration, and action will be taken under the General University Disciplinary Regulations if a fraudulent statement is made or fabricated documents provided. Advice should be sought from the Student Cases Team.

A detailed list of acceptable documentary supporting information in support of requests, including additional information for PGRs who may be eligible for additional funding, can be found on the [If your research is disrupted page of the For Students website](#),

7. Suspensions & extension application process



Step 1: PGR Application

The PGR should:

- Notify their supervisor(s)⁷, Graduate School or Director of PGR Studies when a problem occurs which means their progress is disrupted.
- Request a suspension/extension of study, normally by submitting their request via the suspension/extension workflow in GRAD (via the change request menu).
- Provide up-to-date, objective [documentary supporting information to support requests](#) for suspensions/extensions.
- Check the implications of suspensions/extension on their funding with their scholarship awarding body or provider ([See Annex 2 for UKRI](#)). Other limits may be placed on the length of suspension/extension by external funders or professional bodies. There may also be an impact on eligibility for [council tax exemption](#).
- Take advice from the [Student Visa Advice Team](#) on the implications for their visa.
- If the deadline for transfer or thesis submission falls during the period a request is still under consideration, submit their work to meet their existing deadline. If an extension is subsequently approved, arrangements can be made to withdraw the original submission and resubmit following the period of extension. This will ensure that the original deadline for submission is met, and the work can still proceed to assessment, in the event that an extension is not approved.

Where the deadline for thesis submission falls during the period the request is still under

⁷ Supervisors are responsible for alerting the Director of PGR Studies, to any situation where it may become necessary to request a suspension or extension of study for a PGR, in a timely manner and must report if there has been no contact or missed supervision meetings with individual PGR for a month (unless absence has been authorised for illness or other suspension etc.) or where there is a pattern of absences and/or presumed non-engagement which is affecting the PGR's progress or causing concern for the PGR's well-being in accordance with the [University's Attendance Monitoring Policy](#).

consideration the PGR should be aware that IT access will stop 90 days after the maximum time limit for thesis submission.

It is understood that some PGRs might not be comfortable raising personal issues, particularly where the circumstances in question are private or of a sensitive nature. However the University can only take into account circumstances if it is made aware of them. If the grounds for the suspension/extension request are sensitive or confidential, PGRs will be supported to apply outside GRAD, if preferred⁸. Any documentary supporting information in support of the application should not be uploaded to GRAD, and should be provided to the Graduate School outside of GRAD. As part of the GRAD workflow, the PGR will be asked to confirm/provide:

- A summary of the grounds for the request.
- How this impacts their ability to progress their research.
- Dates of suspension or extension requested.
- For an extension request: A summary of work completed to date (% completed / not completed) and whether a work plan has been agreed with the Supervisor.
- Whether the Supervisors is aware of the request.
- Whether the information in the request may be shared with the supervisor(s).
- That all information provided is honest and accurate.
- That they understand that all information supplied may be shared with the Graduate School, Director of PGR Studies, Doctoral College Operations and the relevant University committee for the purpose of reviewing the request, and the supervisor (if permission was given to share this with the Supervisor).

Step 2: Graduate School Checks

Requests from PGRs are submitted to the Graduate School, who will:

- Acknowledge the request and provide advice and guidance to the PGR; signposting the PGR to other student support resources as needed, including Student Visa Advice Team, Disability Services, Counselling and Well-being, LUU or other, depending on the individual circumstances. (This should be referenced in the admin notes of the workflow).
-
- Arrange for the application to be reviewed by the Director of PGR Studies (and supervisor if permission was given to share this with the supervisor).
- Contact the PGR if any further information or evidence is needed; any documentary supporting information should be retained by the Graduate School. Where a PGR has applied for an extension of study but it is clear from the PGR's request that there has also been a period of absence from study which has not previously been formalised this should be discussed with the PGR and been formalised and recorded under one of the recognised routes (authorised absence, annual leave). (This should be referenced in the admin notes of the workflow).

⁸ If a PGR requires an adjustment to the application process due to disability or accessibility they should contact their Graduate School.

- Complete a recommendation to PEG where the request is supported by the School (including the proforma where the request will exceed the periods [set out in Section 5](#)). The School will give clear overview of the grounds for the request and the direct impact on the PGR's ability to progress their work; where there are multiple grounds the school should indicate which is the primary ground on which the request is being made. If further information is required DCO will request this outside of GRAD.
It is usually expected that the school will provide an independent overview of the grounds and impact demonstrating the school support for the request and not copy and paste the text from the PGR's request.
- Check if the supervision meeting records are up to date in GRAD and ask the PGR to bring these up to date if not. Where it transpires that the PGR has been absent from study the school must ensure that this has been formalised and recorded under one of the recognised routes (authorised absence, annual leave). (This should be referenced in the admin notes of the workflow).
For suspensions of study requests the school should make a judgement as to whether it's appropriate to request the record is brought up to date at the time of the request or wait for the PGR's return to study.
- For suspensions, where a PGR is applying for a suspension of study of 12 months or more, or applying for a new, continuing suspension of study bringing them up to 12 months cumulative suspension in total, at the point you acknowledge the suspension request schools should a) advise them to speak to their supervisors, or DPGRs if more appropriate (for instance where a PGR has not given permission for the details of the request to be shared with the supervisor), regarding their data in line with the University's data retention procedures and the exemption from the data quarantining process and b) flag this with their supervisor(s) directly, so that they may either liaise with the PGR to request the exemption or can submit the request on behalf of the PGR.
- Where ethics approval has been required, PGRs requesting an extension of study will need to report an amendment to a previous ethics review to the [Research Ethics and Governance Team](#), as an extension of study will result in a change to the end date of the programme. This should be discussed with the supervisor. Further information about the University's Research Ethics Policy, ethics review processes, requirements for researchers and training and support is available on the [Research Ethics pages of the Secretariat website](#).

When a PGR makes contact via means other than the GRAD workflow (e.g. email) and provides confirmation of their intention to request a suspension/extension the School should consider whether the information provided is sufficient for formal consideration of the request without the need for the PGR to make an application via GRAD. Requests which include confidential information can be submitted outside GRAD and PGRs should be supported to apply outside GRAD if preferred. A suspension of study application can only be submitted by the School where it holds documentary supporting evidence from the PGR (either a GRAD application or some other form of authorisation in writing e.g. email) requesting/agreeing to the suspension. If the Graduate School is in any doubt about permissions, please contact DCO for advice.

Step 3: Director of PGR Studies review

The Director of PGR Studies will consider requests for suspensions and extensions of study for PGRs. With the Graduate School, and depending on the individual circumstances, the Director of PGR Studies will also consider any other student support or signposting that may be needed, or any support arrangements that may need to be considered for a return to study after a period of suspension.

Step 3a: Director of PGR Studies approves the recommendation

Where the request is supported by the School's Director of PGR Studies, the Graduate School will complete a recommendation to DCO, disclosing brief details. A summary of the grounds should be included in the GRAD workflow (please see checklist in step 2). Where the grounds are sensitive or confidential only a brief general summary should be included in the GRAD workflow. PEG will request further information outside GRAD, if needed, to enable it to reach a decision on the request. Any documentary supporting information will be reviewed and retained by the Graduate School and is not shared with DCO or PEG as part of the routine consideration of applications. The Director of PGR studies will send a recommendation to DCO for consideration by PEG, by approving the GRAD workflow (completed by the Graduate School). Depending on the total length of suspensions/extensions over the candidature, additional information may be required, [as set out in section 5](#).

Step 3b: Director of PGR Studies does not approve the recommendation

Where a suspension/extension is not be supported by the School the reasons for declining the request should be documented and discussed with the PGR. A note should be added to the PGR's suspension/extension request in GRAD. The School's recommendation should then be forwarded to DCO (P&E) by email to pgrprogress@leeds.ac.uk for consideration by the Progression and Examinations Group (PEG).⁹ This will ensure the equitable consideration of requests across the Institution. In some cases PEG may request further information from the School.

Step 3c: Disagreement over the outcome of a request

Where there is a disagreement on the outcome of a request for a suspension or extension of study at School level (for example between the PGR/supervisor and the Director of PGR Studies) the case should be forwarded to the Head of the Faculty Graduate School for adjudication before any recommendation is made to PEG.

Step 4: Doctoral College Operations (Progression and Examination) review

⁹ In some cases advice from the Student Cases Team may be needed and cases may needed e.g. Fitness to Study Process.

Doctoral College Operations (Progression and Examination) will ensure that the application is within the agreed policy and that any regulatory aspects (including UKRI¹⁰, UKVI) have been considered or reported as needed. DCO will request further information from the Graduate School if needed and arrange for consideration of the request on behalf of PEG.

Step 5: Progression and Examinations Group review

Responsibility for considering, and reaching decisions on, requests for suspensions and extensions of study is delegated by the Graduate Board to its Progression and Examinations Group (PEG). PEG also reviews and maintain oversight of suspension and extension policy and guidance. In practice, to ensure decisions are taken without unnecessary delay, action is normally taken on behalf of the Group by its Chair or Deputy Chair on a weekly basis¹¹. When the Chair or Deputy is unavailable or the recommendation arises from within their own School the request will be considered by an alternative member of PEG. In particularly complex cases the Chair (or alternate) may refer the recommendation for consideration to a case conference. In such cases the Director of PGR Studies and/or supervisor may be invited to attend a meeting of with one or more representatives of PEG.

Step 6a: Notification of approved outcome by Doctoral College Operations

After consideration and approval of the request by PEG, DCO will update the student record to show the suspension/extension and revised maximum time limit (which will be displayed in GRAD. A formal notification to the PGR of the revised arrangements will be generated and sent. A copy is sent to the supervisors, Graduate School and to the fees, funding and scholarships teams. DCO will also report any suspension of study to UKVI and notify the PGR separately of that report.

Step 6b: Notification of declined outcome by Doctoral College Operations

Where PEG confirms the recommendation of the School not to approve a period of suspension or extension, DCO will notify the PGR of that outcome, as follows:

- The original deadline for transfer submission or maximum time limit for thesis submission will stand and the PGR must submit their work for assessment by this deadline.
- Where a transfer deadline or maximum time limit has passed and the PGR is out of time for submission (and submission has not been made by the original deadline), this will lead to the PGR being withdrawn from their studies. [Guidance on the appeal process](#) is set out below.

If a PGR is unhappy with the decision they should contact their Graduate School in the first instance. The Graduate School or Director of PGR Studies school should explain the decision to the PGR, and also explain any recommendations that have been made (e.g. to approve a

¹⁰ Where a PGR is UKRI funded a check with the PG Scholarships team is undertaken

¹¹ Under the delegated authority structure approved by PEG, staff in Doctoral College Operations may take action on behalf of the Group to approve requests within parameters approved each session.

period of time shorter than that which may have been requested) or explain the grounds on which an application was not approved.

Appeal process (if required)

If a PGR remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their application, they may appeal once PEG has confirmed the academic outcome on withdrawal, transfer assessment or thesis examination, using the Academic Appeals Procedure. Details of this process can be found on the [Student Cases website](#). [Leeds University Union Help and Support](#) can offer independent advice with the appeals procedure. An appeal must be received by the Student Cases Team within 20 working days of the notification from DCO confirming withdrawal or the academic outcome of the transfer or thesis assessment. Further information will be included in the letter from DCO.

8. After a suspension or extension is approved

During a period of extension

PGRs will be required to complete re-registration on the anniversary of their start date, up to the point the thesis is submitted for examination. The Graduate School will inform the PGR at the appropriate time if re-registration is required. PGRs are expected to re-register within 4 weeks of the anniversary of their start date. Failure to complete re-registration, may lead to their losing the time available to complete their thesis/submit for transfer or be presumed to have withdrawn from the University.

During a period of extension, supervision meetings should continue to be held in accordance with the [PGR Attendance Monitoring Policy](#). Engagement and progress will continue to be monitored in line with this policy.

Where PGRs are not progressing or engaging as expected, timely and appropriate support is crucial. Schools should avoid waiting for the end of a period of extension to review academic progression or engagement. It is essential that problems are identified and responded to as quickly as possible and any issues impacting progress or engagement during a period of extension should be addressed at the time they arise. If there are concerns with engagement or progress over a period of extension the Supervisor should inform the Director of PGR Studies and Graduate School. The School may need to give consideration to instigation of the Progress Support Process¹². If a PGR fails to attend during a period of extension action should be taken in line with the Attendance Monitoring Policy which may include the presumed withdrawn process.

Returning to study after a suspension

A PGR is expected to return to study immediately after the period of suspension has ended unless an additional period of suspension has been requested. In all cases the Director of PGR Studies should be satisfied that the PGR is able to resume study and any difficulties have been overcome. Where appropriate, documentary supporting information should be sought. For example when a PGR resumes study following a period of suspension due to ill-health it will be on the basis that they are medically fit to do so and satisfactory medical documentations should be provided by the PGR (e.g. through the provision of a fit to return to study note) and, if appropriate, evidence of engagement with support services to support fitness to study. In more routine cases expiration of the sick note will be sufficient.

PGRs are expected to return to their studies at the end of the period of suspension and to re-register within four weeks of their return. Registration will be open one month before their suspension end date. The Graduate School will contact the PGR at this time (to their University email address) to provide further information about the registration and return to study process. PGR's are not required or expected to begin re-registration until their period of suspension has

¹² or Fitness to Study Process

ended. However for PGR's in receipt of funding through the University, early access to registration is available to ensure there are no delays with receipt of stipends¹³.

PGRs are expected to re-register within 4 weeks of the end of their period of suspension to confirm they have resumed their studies. If a PGR is unable to restart their studies and requires a further suspension they should let their Graduate School know immediately or complete the suspension/extension workflow in GRAD to request a further period of suspension. The Graduate School can also provide information on the support services available within the University, if needed.

Unless a further suspension of studies request has been submitted, failure to complete re-registration or to contact the Graduate School, may lead to the PGR losing the time available to complete their thesis/submit for transfer or be presumed to have withdrawn from the University.

Support for a return to study after a suspension will be available from the Supervisors, Director of PGR Studies and either the Academic Lead for Student Support or the Graduate School Office. Depending on the circumstances for the suspension, and the length of time away from studies, it may be appropriate to arrange a return to study meeting and/or agree a return to study plan between the PGR and the School/Graduate School to support their return to study. This should be tailored to the individual circumstances and might consider such factors as:

- Signposting and encouraging engagement with University support and well-being services, for example Student Counselling and Wellbeing or Disability Services.
- Support available from the Director of PGR Studies, Graduate School or Academic Lead for Student Support.
- Academic support needed from the Supervisors, including the timetable for supervision meetings.
- An adjusted study plan to allow for a phased return to studies.
- Where a deadline for assessment (for example transfer or thesis submission) will fall shortly after a return to studies, to consider an extension to the deadline.

¹³ For PGRs who receive a stipend as part of a scholarship or studentship, this will not be paid unless the PGR is registered.

Annex I: Suspension and Extension Covid-19 guidance for PGRs

We have continued to monitor the impact of Covid-19 as it has developed throughout the pandemic. This guidance has been updated following the ending of the [Government's legal restrictions](#), and the easing of Covid-19 restrictions across the University from 01 April 2022, and to include the guidance to PGRs and Supervisors around assessment, and advice on Long-Covid.

For PGRs who were registered for study before 01 April 2022

The Graduate Board recognises that there may have been situations where progress was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and wants to ensure that there is no detriment to PGRs in terms of the time available to complete and submit their thesis. The approach seeks to be sensitive to the broad range of academic and personal impacts on individual PGRs and their projects, and recognises these will have been variable depending on the stage in the candidature and the individual circumstances.

In many cases it will have been possible to adapt the research plans to mitigate for the disruption. The University has prepared guidance for PGRs¹⁴, Supervisors and Examiners, including advice around assessment and submitting a Covid-19 impact statement to the thesis examiners. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also produced advice on [Doctoral Standards for Research Students and Supervisors](#).

In other cases, a suspension or extension of studies may be needed, to mitigate for impacts, delays or disruption to research plans. This may have included (list not exhaustive):

- Lack of access to research facilities and/or resources necessary for the research (for example, laboratories, libraries, archives, desk/study space, computing facilities or software) during Covid-19 restrictions/lockdown;
- Disruption relating to data collection, for example fieldwork delayed/cancelled, travel restrictions or difficulties with interviews during Covid-19 restrictions/lockdown
- Personal circumstances including bereavement, caring responsibilities, home schooling and/or where the PGR or members of the household were ill, self-isolating or shielding;
- Redeployment to a Covid-19 related research project;
- Paid or voluntary work due to Covid-19 (for example a return to, or increase in, clinical commitments).
- Ill health, with symptoms of Covid-19
- Impact of Covid-19 on existing health conditions.

If you experience any ongoing impacts related to the pandemic, please let your Graduate School know so that options can be explored, and advice and support can be offered. If you are disabled, or you have a long-term health condition and where there is a continuing impact from the pandemic, please [see the disability support section below](#). If you are ill with symptoms of Covid-19, [please see the advice in the section below](#).

¹⁴ Please see the [Guide to the thesis examination process](#)

Our advice to PGRs continues to be to discuss with your supervisor/s any difficulties and disruption caused by the pandemic, and keep a record of this in the GRAD supervision meeting records. Keeping a log of issues and lost time in this way will make it easier when assessing any lost time and coming to make any extension request.

The University can accept extension requests within six months of the end of the standard period of study as this will mean a PGR and their Supervisor will be in a good position to fully assess the disruption, mitigation, the amount of time lost and the length of extension required.

As previously confirmed, the University will approve all Covid-19 related requests which have been agreed with the Supervisor/s or Director of PGR Studies. We have made it as easy as possible for a COVID-19 extension to be given, and the following light-touch arrangements are in place:

- PGRs can make an extension request in the last 6 months of the standard period of study.
- Only a very brief summary (1 or 2 lines) of the reasons for the extension and confirmation of the period of time needed so that we can better understand what support a PGR might need.
- PGRs will not need to provide any additional documentary supporting information in support of a COVID-19 extension request.
- Any COVID-19 suspension or extension which is approved will not count towards the maximum period of suspension or extension normally permitted under University regulations (24 months for full-time PGRs, 36 months for part-time).

For PGRs registered for study from 01 April 2022 onwards

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions across the UK and the University from 01 April 2022 - and the move to the Living with Covid position - the remote starts policy for PGR was withdrawn. For new PGRs commencing study from 01 April 2022 onwards, suspension or extension requests will be considered in accordance with the standard policy and guidance for suspensions and extensions.

If you experience any ongoing impacts related to the pandemic, please let your Graduate School know so that options can be explored, and advice and support offered. If you are disabled, or you have a long-term health condition please [see the disability support section below](#). If you are ill with symptoms of Covid-19, [please see the advice in the section below](#).

Disability support, including Long-Covid

We understand that there may be different ways that Covid-19 may continue to impact some disabled PGRs and their studies.

If you are disabled or you have a long-term health condition and you are registered with Disability Services, they will advise further on support and reasonable adjustments for your research degree studies, in consultation with you and your School.

If you are experiencing any long-term health impacts from Covid-19 or have a diagnosis of Long Covid which impacts on your day to day activities (which has or is expected to last 12 months or more), you should also register with Disability Services who will advise further on support and reasonable adjustments for your research degree studies and assessments. You can find out more about Disability Services and [how to register here](#). Guidance for agreeing support and adjustments for a transfer or final viva is set out in a [document available here](#).

If you are ill with Covid-19

If you are ill with symptoms of Covid-19, we understand that medical documentation confirming this diagnosis may not always be possible. Please inform your Graduate School if you are ill and this impacts your studies. Please keep details of the period of time, and how, your studies were impacted, which can be used as the basis for a future extension request, should this be needed. There are also options for you to take a break from your studies, if needed, via an authorised absence or a suspension of studies. Your Graduate School can give further support and advice.

Annex 2: Research Councils (UK Research and Innovation – UKRI)

Set out below is further advice on arrangements for candidates holding research council funding.

For absences on the grounds of compassionate leave and short-term sick leave Graduate Schools should refer to the Emergency/Compassionate Leave Process and Guidance on the Postgraduate Scholarships Office SharePoint site.

More information for PGRs regarding sick leave, compassionate leave and maternity/paternity/parental/adoption leave is available on the If your research is disrupted pages of the For Students website [e](#).

Research Councils – Doctoral Training Grants (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC and STFC). *The regulations apply to all Research Councils, but please refer to the additional information relating to AHRC and ESRC below. The [UKRI regulations](#) are subject to changes made by UKRI.*

- All suspensions and extensions are managed internally by the University.
- Research Council funded PGRs are not entitled to receive maintenance payments while suspended (unless due to illness, maternity/adoptive leave or on the grounds of compassionate leave¹⁵).
- Payments of a Studentship must continue for absences covered by a medical certificate for up to 13 weeks within any 12-month period. If the illness lasts for more than 13 weeks the Studentship must be suspended for the period beyond the 13 weeks.
- Total periods of suspension must not normally exceed one calendar year (12 months) during the lifetime of the award, unless exceptional circumstances prevail.
- UKRI funded PGRs are entitled to 52 weeks of Maternity Leave if the expected week of childbirth will occur during the period of their award. The earliest Maternity Leave can commence is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. The first 26 weeks should be paid at full stipend rate, pro-rated as necessary for part-time students. The following 13 weeks should be paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks are not paid.
- UKRI funded partners are entitled to up to 2 weeks Ordinary Paternity Leave on full stipend. Ordinary Paternity Leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth. Those who share primary responsibility for a child, including partners are also entitled to an extended period of unpaid Parental Leave, up to a maximum of 50 weeks, with their studentship extended accordingly. Unpaid Parental Leave must be completed within 12 months of the birth of the child. This leave may be taken in up to 3 blocks of leave or all at once.
- Adoption Leave should be granted on the same basis as Maternity Leave.
- Postgraduate Scholarships Office is automatically notified of any periods of suspension or extension and will update the Je-S record accordingly.
- Enquiries from Graduate Schools on funding implications for suspensions/extensions requested by UKRI-funded PGRs should be sent to Postgraduate Scholarships Office (pg_scholarships@leeds.ac.uk) You may approve a single change in the mode of study from part time to full-time or vice-versa without prior approval from the relevant Research Council. You must not approve a change of the mode of study for health reasons unless medical evidence indicates that part time study is feasible and full-time study is not. You must not, without consultation with the Relevant Research Council, agree more than one change of mode of study during any one Studentship or a change of mode of study in the final six months of a Studentship.

¹⁵ Graduate Schools should refer to the Emergency/Compassionate Leave Process and Guidance on the Postgraduate Scholarships Office SharePoint site.

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AHRC WRoCAH and CDP - Block Grant Partnership (BGP) Regulations

- **Suspensions:** Prior approval is not required by AHRC, however, AHRC require suspensions to be recorded on Je-S within one month of their commencement. The total period of agreed suspensions is limited to a maximum of 12 months during the lifetime of an award (funded period) unless exceptional circumstances.
- Thesis Submission: PGR's are required by AHRC to submit their thesis in their funded period, in exceptional circumstances an extension may be possible.
- **Extensions:** Approval is not required by AHRC but they will not grant retrospective extensions after a PGR's submission date has passed. The total period of agreed extensions must not normally exceed 12 months during the lifetime of an award.
- All suspensions and extensions are managed internally by the University. Please contact your Graduate School in the first instance not WRoCAH.
- PSO is automatically notified of any periods of suspension and extension granted and will update Je-S and issue Revised Payment Schedules, outlining the payment for the remaining funding period, where required.
- **Transfer to Full PhD Registration:** If transfer to full PhD registration is not met within 12 months, maintenance payments will continue for a further three months (six months in exceptional circumstances) and then placed on hold until the transfer status has been confirmed on GRAD.
Continuing PGRs: In order for any due payments to continue after a period of suspension, PGRs should re-register as soon as possible.

ESRC WRDTP – Doctoral Training Partnership Regulations

- **Suspensions:** Prior approval is not required by ESRC, however, ESRC require suspensions to be recorded on Je-S within one month of their commencement. The period of suspension must not exceed one calendar year in any one instance. Total periods of suspension must not exceed one calendar year during the lifetime of the award (funded period). Please note, however, that if a PGR is in the overtime period, ESRC will expect a PGR to request an **extension** two to three months before the submission date deadline following standard University procedures.
- **Extensions:** If a PGR is in their overtime period and experiences problems relating to an accident, illness or exceptional personal circumstances during the course of study, the ESRC will consider a case for extending the submission deadline. Approval is not required by ESRC but they will not grant retrospective extensions after a PGR's submission date has passed. The total period of agreed extensions must not normally exceed 12 months during the lifetime of an award. Any request for an extension to the submission date due to illness cannot be considered unless evidence of illness has been provided at the time of illness. To apply for a submission date extension, standard University procedures should be followed, two to three months before the original submission date deadline. A request for an exceptional submission extension over 12 months may be submitted to ESRC for approval. These requests should not be made retrospectively. All PGRs should aim to submit by the end of their funded period .
- Overseas Institutional Visits, Internship Schemes, Difficult Language Training are treated by ESRC as extensions and do not require prior approval by ESRC. If successful, an extension of submission deadline should be requested following standard University procedures. The request should be made as soon as the Overseas Institutional Visit/Internship scheme has been formally approved.
- ESRC-funded PGRs wishing to go on **Maternity Leave** should contact Postgraduate Scholarships Office to obtain the Maternity Request Form for completion.
- **Transfer to Full PhD Registration:** If transfer to full PhD registration is not met within 12 months, maintenance payments will continue for a further three months (six months in exceptional circumstances) and then placed on hold until the transfer status has been confirmed on GRAD.

Continuing PGRs: In order for any due payments to continue after a period of suspension, PGRs should re-register as soon as possible.

Annex 3: Arrangements for PGRs in the UK on Student Visas

There are additional requirements placed upon the University by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) in relation to PGRs who are in the UK on a Student Visa. Any adjustments made to a candidature must continue to satisfy the conditions set by UKVI if the University is to continue to sponsor the PGR. These include:

- the PGR remains registered as full-time and makes progress with their research, attending all supervision meetings, seminars, training and other research events.
- If the PGR stops studying the University is required to make a report to UKVI and their immigration permission may be curtailed. In this event the PGR is required to leave the UK. PGRs whose study is suspended should be referred to the Student Visa Advice Team for advice.
- Any short periods of authorised absence must not have an effect on the PGR's ability to meet deadlines for their research studies, and the maximum time limit for submission of the thesis.
- If their programme requires ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) approval, and their period of study is extended, they may be required to apply for fresh ATAS clearance. Please consult the [ATAS page of the For Students website](#) for more information.¹⁶

Where illness or other personal circumstances impact a PGR, and where it is not feasible to manage the ongoing circumstances in conjunction with full-time studies, the School should discuss with the PGR applying to take a temporary break from their studies through an authorised absence and/or annual leave or a suspension of study. Timely and appropriate advice is crucial, with any emerging issues impacting progress or engagement addressed at the time they arise, to embed support or actions needed before problems escalate. Delays can turn relatively simple problems into much more complex ones, and can prevent PGRs from getting crucial and timely academic advice and support, and other professional or immigration advice. Failure to comply with this could jeopardise the University's compliance with UKVI requirements as well as causing the PGR to fall outside the immigration regulations and jeopardise their academic position. It is therefore important that Schools work with the PGR to formalise absences from study through one of these routes, and to encourage PGRs to take early advice from the Student Visa Advice Team so an informed decision can be made. Where a PGR is unable to study (e.g. due to ill-health, personal issues and maternity leave) it is important that action is taken at the time the circumstances arise. Schools must ensure that PGRs are not permitted to be absent from the University without this having been formalised, and must work with the PGR to record through this annual leave, authorised absence and/or suspension of studies. It is not acceptable for the matter to be reported retrospectively via an extension of study later in the candidature to compensate for an earlier absence.

¹⁶ This applies to any PGR on a time-limited visa. For more advice and guidance please contact the Student Visa Advice Team.

The University is required to report suspensions of study to UKVI within 10 working days of the start of the suspension. This withdraws sponsorship of the Student Visa and it is UKVI policy to cancel it. If this happens the PGR will be notified by email and will be given 60 days' notice to leave the UK or make a further visa application from the date of the curtailment notice. Depending on their circumstances, they should either leave the UK, make an application to the UKVI to remain in the UK in a different immigration category or resume their studies promptly so that the University can update the report it has sent to them. If they leave the UK they will need to apply for a CAS to enable them to apply for a new visa (entry clearance) from their home country before returning to the UK. Please [see the SES website](#) for detailed advice.

It is, therefore, **essential** that international PGRs holding Student Visas are aware of the following in the event of a suspension to their studies:

- The University will report their suspension of study to the UKVI.
- The UKVI may in turn cancel their visa.
- They may be required to leave the UK.
- If they leave the UK, they will need to request a new CAS and apply for entry clearance before returning to the UK to resume their studies.
- The PGR should seek advice from the [Student Visa Advice Team](#).

In exceptional cases the University may report absence to the UKVI but not recommend that a PGR leave the UK. Examples of this are where there is civil unrest in the PGR's home country or extreme medical incapacity. The PGR may then be advised to make an immigration application outside the rules. This would usually involve a referral for specialist immigration advice outside the University.

Where appropriate, Doctoral College Operations will report the absence to UKVI and inform both the PGR and School concerned that a report to the UKVI has been made. Failure to comply with this requirement could jeopardise the University's UKVI sponsor licence as well as causing the PGR to fall outside the immigration regulations. Schools must not wait for the PGR to submit medical documentation before contacting DCO.

During an extension of study, attendance should be monitored in accordance with established University policy. If the PGR fails to attend action should be taken in line with the Attendance Monitoring Policy.

Placements

UKVI visa regulations tightly limit the circumstances under which the University can allow international PGRs to undertake work placements. If a PGR is on a Student Route visa (formerly a Tier 4 visa), then the University can only allow them to spend time working at a collaborator's site (e.g. a placement/research visit at an industrial site) if the work is "an integral and assessed part of the course".

PGRs registered for the PhD with Researcher Employability Project are expected to undertake a Researcher Employability Project (REP), with a project or placement with a partner organisation. For more information please refer to the [programme of study](#)¹⁷.

Outside of the specific programme above, as a rule of thumb, a placement is likely to be possible if the PGR is not suspending their studies and the work is going to be included in the thesis. In these cases the University can continue to sponsor the PGR during their placement, but must notify the UKVI of the placement via the SMS and continue monitoring engagement.

In all cases, a change of study location workflow must be completed in GRAD. Normal attendance and engagement monitoring processes will apply with supervision meetings recorded in GRAD, and with the presumed withdrawn procedure implemented within the same timeframe if contact is lost with a PGR currently undertaking a placement. Please contact Doctoral College Operations for further advice.

¹⁷ This Programme is normally only available to candidates who have been awarded a studentship through the University of Leeds under the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities (WRoCAH) doctoral training programme

Annex 4: Suspensions and extensions during thesis examination

The Graduate Board's Progression and Examinations Group is responsible for considering, and reaching decisions requests for (i) suspensions/extensions to the resubmission deadline for candidates whose thesis has been referred for resubmission and (ii) extensions to the deadline for corrections of editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies for candidates recommended for award.

Suspensions/Extensions during the referral period

Cases where consideration will normally be given to an application for a suspension or extension are outlined in the relevant sections earlier in this document. In addition to these, the Progression and Examinations Group may give exceptional consideration to requests made where the PGR is now in full-time employment and is making a request on the basis of "pressures of work". Full details must be included in the case. Requests should be made using the GRAD suspension/extension workflow.

It is recognised that Faculty/School structures change with time, supervisors may leave for various reasons, the availability of the examiners to examine the resubmitted thesis may change and a once original topic may not remain so indefinitely. For this reason, referred PGRs will not normally be granted periods of extension or suspension totalling more than that set out in the table below. In the event of a PGR wishing to exceed this period, unless exceptional permission from the Progression and Examinations Group is granted, they will be required to withdraw from the candidature with no research degree award made.

Degree	Period for resubmission	Normal maximum total period of suspension/extension
Doctoral resubmissions (e.g. PhD, MD, Professional Doctorates)	within 18 months	Total 12 months
PhD submission referred for resubmission for MPhil	within 12 months	Total 8 months
MPhil submission referred for resubmission for MPhil	within 15 months	Total 10 months
Masters by Research resubmission	within 9 months	Total 6 months

Normal practice is for a period of up to 6 months to be considered at any one time, with a review at the end of that period if necessary. The minimum period of suspension is one calendar month. Requests for exceptional permission for suspensions and extensions in excess of the total length permitted will be considered by at least two members acting on behalf of the Progression and Examinations Group (normally the Chair and one other member). When considering such exceptional requests the School must address the following:

- The individual mitigating circumstances;
- The academic progress made to date against the notes for guidance;
- Whether the PGR is in good academic standing, including whether attendance for supervision meetings (which may be via Skype/telephone) has been satisfactory during the referral period (GRAD records should be up to date);
- The currency of the research;
- The availability of continued supervisory support and any resources required to complete the work set out in the notes for guidance;
- A comprehensive timeline to completion which includes milestones/formal structure for monitoring progress agreed between the PGR and supervisor;
- That there is a reasonable prospect of resubmission of a thesis of the appropriate standard if the additional period of suspension/extension requested is to be granted;
- The availability of a suitable team of examiners to examine the resubmitted thesis.

Extensions to the period for editorial and presentational corrections/minor deficiencies

For PGRs who have been recommended for award, it is important that clear deadlines are in place for the correction of the thesis. Therefore the PGR normally has 4 weeks (editorial & presentational corrections) or 12 weeks (minor deficiencies) from the date of the viva to complete and return the corrections to the internal examiner for checking.

The University does not prescribe whether a PGR is expected to work full-time on their corrections, or a number of hours per day, as it is acknowledged that at this point in their candidature many PGRs will already have taken up other responsibilities and commitments. In keeping with this, the Progression and Examinations Group will normally approve a period of extension if PGRs experience difficulties during the correction period and need extra time because of, for example, illness, work or family commitments. Requests should be made using the GRAD suspension/extension workflow. For PGRs recommended for the award of the degree and completing either editorial and presentational corrections or minor deficiencies, please bear in mind that, given the correction periods themselves are only 4 and 12 weeks, requests for long extensions (more than 8 or 16 weeks respectively) are unlikely to be approved unless the circumstances are exceptional.

Declining a suspension or extension request

Where a suspension/extension is not supported by the School the reasons for declining the request should be documented and discussed with the PGR. The process will follow that in section 6.