

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF

INTERRUPTIONS, DELAYED UPGRADES AND EXTENSIONS FOR (RE-) SUBMISSIONS

Overview

All requests are considered by the relevant School Director of PGR Education and they will be responsible for making the decision on whether to approve the request in the light of the evidence presented. They may also consult with the Departmental PGR Leads and other stakeholders as necessary.

It is in the School's interest to ensure that suspensions of regulations requested are submitted in a timely manner with **all** the necessary supporting documentation present. Any inconsistencies in the documentation will be queried by the Doctoral School before the request reaches the School Director of PGR Education, which will inevitably result in a delay to communicating the outcome of the request to the student and other relevant stakeholders.

Interruptions

1. The College's [Research Degree Regulations](#) (Section 5) permit students to interrupt up to a maximum of two years of study on financial, health and personal grounds if supported by **appropriate supporting documentation**. As far as possible, this supporting documentation should demonstrate illness/difficulty that is commensurate with the duration of the interruption that has been requested

All requests for interruptions of study, irrespective of year of study should now be submitted online by the student via the new [online interruption request form](#). The completed web form must be accompanied by:

- Appropriate supporting documentation **in English**. If in another language it is the student's responsibility to provide an official translation. Failure to do so may delay consideration of the request by the School Director of PGR Education.
- Placement opportunities will also be considered as grounds for an interruption, and an **offer letter** should be provided as evidence, including start and end dates of the placement.

Students are referred to the *Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Students* (<https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/documents/pdf/exams/extenuatingcircumstances-guidanceforstudents.pdf>) for details of the types of documentation which are required to support such requests.

The Doctoral School will seek supervisory support of any such application separately, before preparing the file for a decision by the School Director of PGR Education. The Doctoral School will NOT progress any such request without the support of the supervisor/department.

2. The College makes annual Statutory returns on student numbers to HESA after 31 July so therefore cannot approve requests for retrospective interruptions into the previous academic year after this census point. Supervisors are therefore asked to ensure that interruption requests are submitted well before the 31 July deadline. In the event that there is a delay in obtaining

supporting documentation for an interruption request, the supervisor should contact the Doctoral School for advice on how to proceed. This advice applies equally to retrospective interruption requests made during an academic year, where delays can mean that students are liable for fees when not studying and/or that funding is affected.

Please note:

3. Inconsistencies in the rationale or timeline for completion provided will be queried by the Doctoral School, which will delay consideration of the request by the School Director of PGR Education.
4. The Doctoral School is aware that students can consent to their medical information being disclosed to staff in their School/Department by the Health Centre, to support Extenuating Circumstances applications, but the Doctoral School is exempt from these arrangements owing to the considerable delay this will cause in processing suspensions of regulations requests. Medical evidence should always be provided at the time of original submission of the request on the [online interruption request form](#).
5. In the writing-up year interruptions will **only** be permitted for long term/ serious extenuating circumstances where these are such that the student is unable to undertake work at all. This will enable the College to approve interruptions should there be serious illness (e.g. cancer, heart attack, difficult pregnancy). Any other illnesses/temporary problems will be dealt with by an extension, which is in line with practice at other HEIs. See point 8 below.
6. External funding bodies may have their own rules regarding interruptions. These rules will always take precedence over the College's. If the student is in receipt of funding, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to check that the funding agreement does not preclude the interruption and to ensure that the student is aware of the implications of the interruption on their stipend and submission deadline.

Delayed Upgrades

7. The [Research Degree Regulations](#) (Section 7) stipulate the following deadlines for upgrades from MPhil to PhD.

*The first attempt to upgrade must be undertaken within the first **20 months of full-time study**, or the **first 40 months of part-time study**. If the student is not successful on the first attempt, they may be granted a **second and final attempt before the end of the second year of full-time study, or the fourth year of part-time study**.*

Delays to upgrades can **only** be permitted for **exceptional** cases (on the same grounds as for extension requests: maternity leave, death or terminal illness of close relative, hospitalisation or very serious illness of student). The Research Degrees Programmes Committee (RDPC) will be routinely monitoring adherence to upgrade deadlines.

Extensions to (re-) submission deadline – one to six months duration

8. Requests for extensions to submissions and resubmissions will **only** be approved in **very exceptional** cases (maternity leave, death or terminal illness of close relative, hospitalisation or very serious illness of student). A delayed upgrade attempt is not an acceptable reason for not submitting on time.
9. Supervisors must submit a request for an extension via the [Online PGR request form](#).

The completed web form submission must be accompanied by:

- An Extension form with all applicable sections filled in and signed.
- Appropriate supporting documentation **in English**. If in another language it is the student's responsibility to provide an official translation. Failure to do so may delay consideration of the request by the Doctoral School Director (Quality, Enhancement and Inclusion).

Students are referred to the *Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Students* (<https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/documents/pdf/exams/extenuatingcircumstances-guidanceforstudents.pdf>) for details of the type of documentation which is required to support such requests

Please note:

- Incomplete extension forms or inconsistencies in the rationale or timeline for completion provided will be queried by the Doctoral School, which will delay consideration of the request by the Doctoral School Director (Quality, Enhancement and Inclusion).
 - If the student needs more than 6 months the supervisor will need to re-apply and make a case for another extension, which will only be granted in exceptional cases up to another 6 months giving a total of one year's extension.
 - If a Research Council has agreed to a longer extension, the College will approve an extension for the same period.
10. External funding bodies may have their own rules regarding the approval of extensions. These rules will always take precedence over the College's. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to confirm that if the student is in receipt of funding, either external (Research Council) or internal (College Studentships and the student has been made aware of the implications of the extension. In many cases the approval of an extension by the College does not necessarily mean approval by the funding body and may therefore count as a late submission.
 11. In cases where students are not producing work prior to the submission deadline and are not meeting deadlines set, the department should invoke the formal warning process cf. webpage for template warning: <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/staff/teaching/aqpo/templates-and-forms/formal-warnings-and-termination-of-registration.aspx>. If a student fails to submit and an extension is requested after the submission deadline, any approval of an extension will include as a condition that the formal warning process be invoked with a view to terminating the student's registration within 6 months should the student not submit within this time. An extension will

initially be granted for 6 months as in the case of students for whom an extension application was submitted prior to the deadline (see 7 above).

Extensions for students holding Student Route or Tier 4 visas

12. It is recognised that students holding College sponsored visas who request an extension to the submission deadline may also be eligible to apply for a new Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to renew their student visa. However, the College will **not** support an application for a new CAS unless there are significant and severe extenuating circumstances associated with the student's request for an extension that are supported by adequately documented evidence as appropriate.

Please note:

- Where there are no significant and severe extenuating circumstances the School Director of PGR Education may approve an extension, but require the student to complete his/her studies in the home country, returning to the UK on a visitor visa for the viva, if this is required in person.
- Extension requests for students holding College sponsored visas will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant School Director of PGR Education **Their decision will be final and not open to appeal.** Supervisors are therefore strongly encouraged to ensure that such requests are submitted on time so that in cases where students have to return to their home country they have enough time to make the necessary arrangements. They are also encouraged to provide detailed information as part of the extension request so that a decision can be made with all relevant facts to hand.