

**CARDIFF**  
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL  
**CAERDYDD**

**INTERRUPTION OF STUDY AND  
EXTENSION TO TIME LIMIT  
POLICY AND PROCEDURE  
(RESEARCH STUDENTS)**

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**Alignment with the Expectations and Core practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

This policy and procedure aligns with the following relevant Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

<b>Expectations for standards</b>	<b>Expectations for quality</b>
	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
<b>Core practices for standards</b>	<b>Core practices for quality</b>
	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
<b>Common practices for standards</b>	<b>Common practices for quality</b>
	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
	The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.

## **Interruption of Study and Extension to Time Limit Policy and Procedure (Research Students)**

The University's Student Life Services offer a comprehensive range of supportive services, including counselling, disability and dyslexia support, and financial advice. In addition, the Students' Union operate an independent Student Advice service to provide students with neutral support and guidance on a range of personal and academic-related matters. The services in the Centre for Student Life and Student Advice are available to research students and both are free, impartial, confidential and non-judgmental.

If you are an international student and are considering applying for an interruption of study or an extension, you are strongly advised to seek guidance from Student Visa Support on potential visa implications before making an application.

### **1. General statements**

- 1.1. This policy and procedure applies to research students for the duration of their candidature, including the 'thesis completion' stage, resubmission and corrections period.
- 1.2. It does not apply to undergraduate or postgraduate taught (including MRes) students, for which a separate interruption of study procedure exists.
- 1.3. Students undertaking Professional Doctorates should follow this procedure only in relation to the research stage of the programme. In the case of Professional Doctorate programmes that do not have distinct 'taught' and 'research' stages, the Programme Director shall determine whether this policy and procedure or the separate interruption of study and/or extenuating circumstances policies for taught students shall apply, as appropriate to the stage of the candidature.
- 1.4. As a research student, you are responsible for your academic progress. Continued registration on your programme of study is conditional on you maintaining adequate progress in accordance with the Policy and Procedure on the Monitoring of Research Students. If unforeseen circumstances disrupt your ability to study or affect your academic progress, you should report them to your School as soon as possible.
- 1.5. This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (Research Students).

### **2. Policy**

- 2.1. If you have extenuating circumstances, it may be appropriate for you to suspend your studies temporarily or to extend your time limit.
- 2.2. An **interruption of study** is defined as the complete cessation of your work for **more than 28 days**. A period of absence of less than 28 days may be approved by your School as a leave of absence (see section 4).

- 2.3. It is not an automatic right to interrupt your study as you are expected to complete your programme of study in a single continuous period where possible.
- 2.4. You may seek time away from your studies for reasons other than extenuating circumstances, such as to undertake a placement/internship or for maternity, parental or adoption leave (see section 6).
- 2.5. An **extension to your time limit** is an approved lengthening of your candidature to take account of significant disruption to your studies which you are unable to mitigate within the remainder of your candidature.
- 2.6. Applications for an interruption of study or an extension to the time limit are scrutinised rigorously and will be approved only where the cited grounds meet the criteria stated below and which can be verified by documentary evidence (see the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (Research Students)).
- 2.7. Insufficient academic progress is not a justifiable reason for an interruption of study or extension to time limit: an application will not be approved solely on the basis that you need more time to complete your thesis.
- 2.8. An interruption of study or extension will not be permitted where this will result in the total length of your candidature exceeding the overall time limit for the programme stipulated in the Research Degree Regulations.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.9. If you frequently submit applications for interruptions of study and/or extensions to your time limit on the basis of extenuating circumstances, your School may contact you to explore your circumstances.
- 2.10. If a School has growing concerns about any student's medical, psychological or emotional health, the Head of School may initiate the Student Support Intervention Policy and Procedure.
- 2.11. In extreme circumstances your Head of School may apply for an interruption of study or extension to time limit on your behalf.

### **Criteria**

- 2.12. You may make an application to interrupt your studies or extend your time limit only if you have been affected by circumstances relating to one or more of the following categories:
  - .1 Ill health – a serious time-limited illness or injury; or a long-term health condition or disability that has been newly diagnosed or has worsened or

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<sup>1</sup> This applies only to candidates commencing their studies from 1 October 2019.

is fluctuating, for which reasonable adjustments have not or cannot be put in place.

- .2 Compassionate grounds – a change in your personal, domestic or family circumstances, such as the death of a close family member or significant person, an unanticipated change in caring responsibilities (ill health of a dependent, for example), severe financial issues, or being a victim of a serious crime.
- .3 Exceptional professional commitments (part-time students in fees-payable period only) – if you are a part-time student working alongside your studies and your work commitments change unexpectedly and unavoidably. Taking up employment is considered a normal outcome of doctoral study and is not grounds for an interruption or extension when a student is in their thesis completion stage.
- .4 Professional placements/internships/work experience – if you undertake a placement/internship or period of work experience supported by your supervisor during the **fees-payable period** of your studies and this is not considered to be integral to your programme and within its planned timeframe.<sup>2</sup>
- .5 Unavoidable practical/logistical difficulties – unavoidable and disruptive difficulties beyond your control that affect your progress for a discrete period of your candidature. Any particular concerns or issues around supervision should be reported to your School at the time that they occur as they will not be permitted as retrospective grounds for an extension.
- .6 Maternity/Parental/Adoption Leave – see Policy on Maternity, Adoption, Paternity/Partner and Parental Leave for Research Students.
- .7 Jury service or compulsory military service.
- .8 Sabbatical office.

### 3. Application for an interruption of study

- 3.1. An application for an interruption of study should be submitted through your School. You should submit an Extenuating Circumstances: Adjustment to Programme Form (Research Students) and relevant supporting documentation to your School Office.

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<sup>2</sup> Students in receipt of Research Council funding are advised to check the terms and conditions of their studentship regarding placements before applying for an interruption of study. Student Visa holders are not permitted to undertake placements, work experience or internships that are not integral to their programme, except if the activity takes place wholly outside of the UK. Where the activity is outside of the UK, an application for an Interruption of Study may be made: note that if the duration is over 60 days, the Interruption of Study will be reported to the Home Office.

- 3.2. Applications are considered in accordance with the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (Research Students).<sup>3</sup> Your School's Extenuating Circumstances Group will consider your application and provide a report to your School's Director of Postgraduate Research, who will make a recommendation regarding your request. The full application will then be considered by a College Postgraduate Dean.
- 3.3. An application for an interruption of study must be made prior to the beginning of the proposed interruption. Retrospective applications will only be considered where there are compelling grounds to do so.
- 3.4. The period of absence should be the briefest possible that allows for the circumstances to resolve. The maximum period for an interruption of study is 12 months. A further application that would extend the period of absence beyond 12 months will be considered only where circumstances are compelling.
- 3.5. You should be aware that taking an interruption of study may affect any loan or studentship that you receive. Where there is objective justification, some funders will not permit an interruption of study of any significant period (e.g. where a project must be completed within a specific time-scale).
- 3.6. If you are a visa holder, taking an interruption of study may affect your right to remain in the UK: the University is obliged to report any absences of 60 days or more to UK Visas and Immigration. You should seek guidance from Student Visa Support before making an application.
- 3.7. If you are granted an interruption of study for reasons of ill health, you may be required to provide evidence that you are fit and able to return to your studies before being permitted to re-enrol. This may include statements from a GP or treating practitioner, and/or an occupational health assessment.
- 3.8. If an application for an interruption of study is approved by the University, the deadline for the submission of your thesis will be adjusted by a period commensurate with the length of the interruption. You will not be required to make a separate application to extend your deadline.
- 3.9. When you are expected to return to study, you will be asked to indicate your intention via the SIMS Online task. If you have decided not to return to study, you must inform the University of your intentions.

### ***Your rights during a period of interruption***

- 3.10. During a period of interruption of study, you will remain a current student of Cardiff University, but you will be suspending engagement with your research degree programme, and access to some University services will be curtailed. Your student record will reflect that you are not actively engaged

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<sup>3</sup> See section 6 for 'special category' applications.

with your programme for the duration of the interruption.

- 3.11. For the period of interruption, you will:
- retain IT login, email and intranet access, including SIMS;
  - retain access to electronic library resources;
  - have public access to libraries and University buildings;
  - have access to the Students' Union Student Advice;
  - have recourse to the student complaint, review and appeal procedures;
  - continue to have access to Student Support services, where ongoing support, such as counselling, has commenced;
  - continue to have access to use the University's Day Care Centre;
  - retain access to all Council Tax Certificates which have been issued to you. (Some students on an interruption will be entitled to a new certificate, but this is dependent on the Council Tax Regulations in force at the relevant time.)
- 3.12. However, for the period of interruption, you will not:
- receive supervision, either through meetings or correspondence;
  - be subject to progress monitoring;
  - be permitted access to laboratories, work or office space in your School, or to work space in the Doctoral Academy;
  - be permitted to engage in training workshops, research seminars or events delivered or facilitated by your School or the Doctoral Academy (Keeping in Touch Days may be an exception);
  - be permitted to undertake activities that relate to professional researcher development;
  - normally be expected, or be supported, to present your work at conferences, though there may be some circumstances where this is appropriate;
  - receive information about employment or voluntary opportunities available during the period;
  - if you are employed by the University, we may also need to suspend your employment contract if you are interrupting on the grounds of ill health.
- 3.13. If you are living in University accommodation you should seek advice from Residential Services in advance of your application, as you may be required to leave in the accommodation, depending on the duration of the interruption. If this is the case, your contract will be adjusted without penalty and you will be provided with notice to quit in accordance with your accommodation contract. Student Life Services will be able to advise you on alternative accommodation, should you require assistance.

### ***Interruption of study during the 'thesis completion'***

- 3.14. An interruption of study is not a usual adjustment when you are in your thesis completion stage. Whilst you are required to maintain contact with your supervisors and your progress will be monitored, you may not be working on your thesis at a regular pace, and taking breaks from your thesis because of other circumstances is not unusual. In addition, a consequence

of an interruption of study is that fee and stipend payments are suspended, and then restarted when a student confirms their ability to return to study, which is not applicable when you are completing your thesis. If you experience extenuating circumstances during your thesis completion stage which have a significant adverse impact on your ability to submit your thesis within your deadline, you should apply for an extension to your time limit.

- 3.15. However, if you need to take a clear break from your studies for a significant period during the 'thesis completion' stage (for maternity or adoption leave, or you become seriously unwell for a prolonged period, for example), you may apply an interruption of study in accordance with this procedure.
- 3.16. The following are not eligible grounds for an interruption of study during the 'thesis completion' stage:
  - professional commitments;
  - placement, internship or other work experience.

#### **4. Short absences: leave of absence applications**

- 4.1. A leave of absence is defined as the complete cessation of your work for no more than 28 days.
- 4.2. Your School may authorise a leave of absence of up to 28 days. You should complete a [Leave Request Form \(Research Students\)](#) and submit it with relevant supporting evidence to your School PGR Office for consideration by the Director of Postgraduate Research
- 4.3. A leave of absence will not result in any changes to your programme dates or deadline.<sup>4</sup> This is because you are expected to make up for limited absences within the total period of your candidature by adjusting your Research Plan as necessary. Where this is not feasible due to the cumulative impact of short absences, you may apply to extend your submission deadline (see section 5).
- 4.4. If you find that you are unable to return to study at the end of an approved leave of absence, you should apply for an interruption of study which can be backdated to the beginning of your absence: the retrospective period cannot be more than 28 days.

#### **5. Application for an extension to time limit (thesis deadline)**

- 5.1. You are expected to make up for limited periods of disruption during the course of your studies by adjusting your Research Plan and/or by using the contingency provided by the total period of your candidature. Advice from supervisors and reviewers should be taken to help mitigate disruption and to

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<sup>4</sup> Interruptions of study on the grounds of Paternity/Partner Leave are an exception. Students are entitled to up to 2 weeks' leave for Paternity/Partner Leave and any leave taken for this purpose will result in an adjustment to the [latest submission deadline](#) by a commensurate period.

support submission within your original deadline where possible.

- 5.2. If you experience unforeseen circumstances during your **'thesis completion' stage** which have a significant adverse impact on your ability to submit your thesis within your deadline, you may apply to extend your time limit by a period commensurate with the time affected.
- 5.3. In these circumstances, an application for an extension should be made 2 to 4 months before your submission deadline. Applications received less than 2 months before the deadline will not be considered, unless there are clear reasons which justify the late application. Applications will not be considered where the deadline for thesis submission has passed, unless there are compelling reasons.
- 5.4. In exceptional cases, you may apply for an extension when you are in your **'fees-payable' period** and your progress has been affected by intermittent extenuating circumstances for which interrupting your study was not appropriate. An application will be considered only where there is clear evidence from your annual review that (further) mitigation and adjustment to your Research Plan to enable submission by your current deadline is not feasible.
- 5.5. An extension will not be granted for circumstances that should have been managed as an interruption of study.
- 5.6. The following are not eligible grounds for an extension to time limit:
  - professional commitments;
  - placement, internship or other work experience.
- 5.7. An application for an extension to time limit should be made to your School in the first instance. Your School will consider your request and will make a recommendation to the relevant College Postgraduate Dean via Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations).
- 5.8. You may apply to extend your time limit on more than one occasion, but an application for a further extension should demonstrate new or ongoing circumstances that meet the criteria for an extension, and which have occurred in the extended period only.

## **6. Special category applications**

- 6.1. You may wish to take time away from your studies or extend your time limit on any of the following grounds, which are not defined as extenuating circumstances:
  - Maternity/parental/adoption leave
  - Professional placements/internships or work experience
  - Jury service or compulsory military service
  - Sabbatical office.

- 6.2. You should complete the relevant sections of the Extenuating Circumstances: Research Programme Adjustment Form and submit the application with supporting evidence to your School Office as described above.
- 6.3. In the case of maternity, adoption or parental leave, suitable evidence may include a MATB1 form, the child's birth certificate, or evidence of the placement of a child for adoption.
- 6.4. In the case of placements/internships or work experience, you should provide a statement that outlines the main skills and knowledge you will acquire, and how the experience will help to support your broader development as a doctoral researcher.
- 6.5. Applications made on these grounds will not be considered by your School's Extenuating Circumstances Group but will be reviewed by your School's Director of Postgraduate Research in the first instance. The application will be forwarded to Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations) for the consideration of a College Postgraduate Dean.
- 6.6. If you have maternity or adoption leave, you may wish to participate in activities relating to your research or doctoral training, such as attending a conference or workshop, or meeting with your supervisor or members of your research lab. Keeping in Touch (KiT) Days should be agreed in advance with your supervisor(s) and not amount to more than 10 days across the total period of leave.

## **7. Communicating the outcome of your application**

- 7.1. You will be informed of the decision of the College Postgraduate Dean in writing within **14 days** of the decision being taken. This will include any conditions associated with the approval and/or, in the case of an interruption of study, any conditions which must be satisfied before you will be permitted to return to your studies.

## **8. Unsuccessful applications**

- 8.1. If your application is not approved, your student record will remain unchanged. Any unauthorised period of absence will be dealt with under the Unsatisfactory Progress or Engagement Policy and Procedure (Research Students). If you do not submit your thesis by your deadline, your candidature will lapse and you will be withdrawn from your programme of study. You may still be permitted to submit your thesis as a Late Submission (see Policy on the Late Submission of Research Degree Theses).

## **9. Appeals**

- 9.1. If your application for an interruption of study or extension is not approved, or if it is approved for a different duration to the period requested, you may request a review of the decision under the University Review Procedure. A

request for review must be made on one or more of the grounds set out in the Procedure and must be received by the Student Cases team in the Registry within 14 days of the notification being sent.