

Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

PGR Registration Policy

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1. Purpose

1.1 After a postgraduate research (PGR) Student has registered for an award, they have a maximum and a minimum time to achieve that award. This policy states the registration, submission, withdrawal, and termination processes for the following degrees:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Professional Studies (DProf)
- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Doctor of Ministry (DMin)
- Doctor of Education (EdD)
- Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)

For registration to PhD by Publication see **PhD by Publication Policy**.

2. Registration and Submission Time Limits

2.1 The minimum submission period, excluding periods of suspension, must be completed before the thesis can be submitted.

2.2 The maximum period of registration is the total time allowed to complete the programme and for the award to be made. It includes periods of suspension, extension, writing up (submission pending) and resubmission.

2.3 The maximum submission period, excluding periods of suspension, is the final deadline for submitting the thesis for examination.

2.4 Figure 1: Table of time limits

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Mode of attendance</i>	<i>Minimum submission period</i>	<i>Maximum submission period</i>	<i>Maximum registration period</i>
PhD	Full time	2 years	4 years	10 years
	Part time	4 years	7 years	10 years
MPhil	Full time	1 year	4 years	8 years
	Part time	2 years	6 years	8 years
Professional Doctorate	Full time	2 years	4 years	10 years
	Part time	4 years	7 years	10 years

2.5 Students admitted to professional doctorate programmes with Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning will have their maximum submission period adjusted. Adjustments will amount to whole years at the rate of 90 credits equivalent to 1 year of part-time study (or 180 credits of full-time study). The minimum submission period will also normally be adjusted to the same extent.

2.6 Postgraduate Research students who enter with Advanced Standing will have their registration and submission periods adjusted accordingly. This is stated in the offer letter.

3. Periods of Leave

3.1 Students must speak with their Principal Supervisor about any period of holiday they intend to take during their studies. Students must carefully consider the timing of such absences to reduce the impact on their studies.

3.2 Students must let their Principal Supervisor know about any period of sickness likely to impact on agreed meetings, deadlines or progress. Students experiencing prolonged or recurrent periods of absence due to ill health can speak with their Principal Supervisor to see if a suspension of studies is appropriate.

3.3 Students on a student visa must comply with the requirements of their visa and the procedures set out by the University's Legal and Compliance Service in respect of absences from their programme must be followed.

3.4 Students and Principal Supervisors must consider the requirements of individual funding bodies when considering periods of leave.

3.5 Time taken as holiday leave or sick leave will not result in an extension to the student's registration period or submission periods. Significant periods of absence due to illness can be dealt with through suspension of studies.

4. Suspension of Studies

4.1 If a student is unable to either carry out or write up their research, they can apply for suspension of studies. A suspension of studies is time away from the programme of research; the minimum and maximum submission period is lengthened by the equivalent period of the suspension.

4.2 The student completes the [Application for Suspension of Studies](#) form with supporting evidence and submits it to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

4.3 A suspension of studies is not granted if it would cause the maximum period of registration to be exceeded unless an exceptional extension (see 5.4) is granted.

4.4 A suspension of studies is granted in whole months only, normally to a maximum of one year. Requests which are approved but do not follow this convention will have the start/ end dates revised by Registry Services and this is confirmed via email to the student.

4.5 Back dated suspensions are only permitted in exceptional circumstances and for reasonable periods of time. They are unlikely to be approved unless the student

supplies evidence that shows a good reason why the suspension was not applied when the issue(s) commenced. Backdated suspensions can be rejected if funding or visa issues have not been appropriately considered.

4.6 Following approval, Registry Services confirms the start and end dates of the period of suspension to the student, plus the revised date for submission (the maximum submission period).

4.7 The evolving nature of research can mean that substantial periods of suspension can be detrimental to the long term viability of the research project and is taken into account when considering repeat requests for suspension of studies.

4.8 Student visa holders must note that the University must report the suspension of studies to the Home Office who will curtail the visa, requiring the individual to leave the UK. It is the responsibility of the student concerned to make an application for a new visa before the end of the period of suspension.

4.9 During suspension of studies, the student will not accrue fees but can continue to be liable for fees already accrued.

4.10 During suspension of studies the student must not:

- represent themselves as being a student of the University of Chester;
- collect any data for their research;
- conduct any experimental work for their research;
- seek access to resources and facilities, other than the student email account, that the University normally makes available to students;
- seek access to supervision;
- begin or continue the writing up of their thesis.

4.11 If the University finds out about a suspected breach of clause 4.10, it will report this to the Head of Department who can report this to the PGR Academic Integrity Review Panel.

4.12 Before the expected resumption date, Registry Services emails the student to confirm the date on which their studies will resume. Registry also confirms, via email any outstanding actions in respect of Annual Progress Monitoring. Students who fail to return from their suspension of studies can, with due warning, be withdrawn from their programme.

5. Extension of Submission and Registration Period

5.1 The Student can apply for an extension to their final date for submission of thesis (maximum submission period) if the extension does not cause the student to exceed the maximum period of registration permitted.

5.2 An application for extension of submission period must be made on the [Application for Extension of Submission Period](#) with supporting evidence and submitted to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

5.2 The [Application for Extension of Submission Period](#) must explain why the student has been unable to complete within the maximum submission period.

5.4 A student is normally allowed one extension only and for a maximum of 12 months. Extensions will be granted in whole months only. The Associate Dean for PGR Studies and the Head of Department (or nominee) must approve applications for an extension of more than 12 months, for the continuance of an extension, and for an exceptional extension, of not more than 12 months, to the maximum registration period. The Associate Dean for PGR Studies will consult with Deputy Registrar.

5.5 If an application for extension of submission period is approved, Registry Services emails the student to confirm the revised submission deadline.

5.6 The Principal Supervisor is reminded that extensions negatively affect the University's completion rates. The Principal Supervisor must try to ensure that the student can submit within the maximum submission period; applications for

extensions must be exceptional.

6. Transfer to Submission Pending

6.1 Submission Pending is a registration status which acknowledges the student has completed their data collection, investigations and experimental work and is writing up their research. The submission pending status attracts a reduced programme fee as the student requires fewer resources and facilities.

6.2 A student can apply for submission pending status when they have:

- completed their data collection, investigations and experimental work;
- are writing up their thesis;
- completed three years of study for full time students or five years or study for part time students;
- all the main chapters or sections of the thesis in satisfactory draft form with clear and realistic plans for revision for submission.

6.3 The Principal Supervisor and the Senior Faculty PGR Tutor decide whether the student can transfer to submission pending status.

6.4 Submission pending status is granted for a maximum of 1 year, irrespective of the student's original mode of study. Students who do not submit their thesis for examination within the one year period are transferred to their original mode of attendance (e.g. full time) and will thereafter be charged the fees associated with their original mode of attendance.

6.5 If the application to submission pending status is approved, students will lose:

- normally, access to departmental research resources to support the investigative stages of the research project;
- coverage under the University's insurance for activities associated with conducting research.

6.6 A student applies for submission pending status by submitting the [Change to Submission Pending](#) form to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

7. Transfer to Resubmission Pending

7.1 Students given a resubmission recommendation at their first viva examination are transferred to the registration status of 'Resubmission Pending.' The fee is the same as Submission Pending.

8. Changes to Mode of Attendance

8.1 Students are admitted on either full-time or part-time mode of attendance. Students can apply to change their mode of attendance if they can demonstrate good reasons.

8.2 Delays to the research project that could reasonably have been foreseen and mitigated against are not normally accepted as good reasons for changing the mode of attendance. It can be more appropriate for the student to apply for a suspension of studies or extension of submission or registration period.

8.3 A student applies for a change to their mode of attendance by submitting the [Change of Mode of Attendance](#) form to the Student Administration Office in Registry Services.

8.4 If the change of mode of attendance is approved, Registry Services will calculate a new minimum submission period and a new maximum submission period, by determining the percentage of time the student had been registered on the programme; this percentage is then applied to the new mode of attendance, thereby ensuring the student receives the equivalent amount of remaining time based on their new mode of attendance. Calculations are based on date of registration on the central student records system and are done in whole months.

9. Withdrawal and Termination of Studies

9.1 Students can withdraw from their programme, known as voluntary withdrawal, at any time by writing to or emailing Registry Services.

9.2 Students who voluntarily withdraw are entitled to a pro-rata reimbursement of tuition fees paid for the year in which their registration is withdrawn. Research support fees (bench fees) are not reimbursed.

9.3 Students who voluntarily withdraw can be allowed to resume the same programme of research following an assessment by the relevant Senior Faculty PGR Tutor, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, to determine the validity and currency of the programme. Students reinstated in this way are treated as though they have been on a period of suspension and do not benefit from additional time following reinstatement. If a student has exceeded, or is close to exceeding, their maximum submission period (minus the period of suspension) or maximum period of registration (including the period of suspension) they must not be reinstated. However, the student can reapply for a new programme without advanced standing. Students who are reinstated recommence their studies at the point they left the programme; any progress assessment processes ongoing at the point of withdrawal will recommence at the same point in the process. The student's status is the same as at the point they withdrew.

9.4 The University can terminate a student's studies if the student breaches any regulations or policies. A student who wants to appeal against their termination of studies must use [QSM Handbook G11 – PGR Academic Appeals procedure](#).

9.5 Students who have their studies terminated by the University are not entitled to any refund. However, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) can authorise a refund in exceptional circumstances.