

## HIGHER DEGREE EXTENSIONS – CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

1. Applications for extensions to the time limits for the submission of theses by research degree students, and dissertations by taught Master's students, will be considered at regular meetings of the Deans and the Director of Postgraduate Studies. They will consider all applications rigorously and seek to ensure fair and consistent treatment of students across the University. Decisions on research degree candidates will be reported to the Research Degrees Board. Details of the normal deadlines for different postgraduate study schemes are given in the Annex to this document.
2. Extensions should only be requested in exceptional circumstances. It is expected that students and departments will make every effort to avoid seeking extensions. All postgraduate students should be aware of their final deadline and should be working towards it. Staff supervising postgraduate students should stress the importance of meeting the deadline, both for the students themselves, and for the University, which must be able to demonstrate to external bodies that it achieves satisfactory submission rates.

With regard to doctoral theses, Research and Funding Councils place particular emphasis on the achievement of satisfactory submission rates. The AU criteria for the award of the PhD state that:

*In judging the merit of a thesis submitted in candidature for the degree of PhD, the examiners shall bear in mind the standard and scope of work which it is reasonable to expect a capable and diligent student to present after a period of two or three years (as appropriate) of full-time study, or its part-time equivalent.*

It is essential that PhD projects are developed and planned from the outset with the aim of completing the research within the registration period. Students are likely to enter employment after completing the registration period and thus any work remaining to be completed in the 'writing up' period should be limited to what can be achieved within the pressure of employment.

3. It is the responsibility of departments to present to the Deans and Director of Postgraduate Studies a full and reasoned case on behalf of students seeking extensions. Applications should be forwarded to the Deans' Office well in advance of the deadline for submission of the thesis/dissertation to allow time for consideration of the request. Applications should include:

- an application form, available from the Deans' Office and on the Web, giving full details of the student and candidature, to be signed by the supervisor and head of department.
- a letter from the student explaining the reasons for the request.
- a supporting letter from the department confirming that the grounds advanced by the student are genuine and have prevented the submission of the work, and that given the additional time the student will be able to submit work for examination.
- independent corroborative evidence of problems cited, e.g. medical evidence, evidence from employers.
- a statement prepared by the student and supervisor outlining the progress so far and a schedule of work leading to completion within the extension period.
- where candidates are funded by Research Councils, evidence that, where appropriate, the Council concerned has also approved an extension.

If any of the required material is not provided, the request will be referred back to the department and consideration of the request delayed.

4. In the case of research students, it is expected that any significant problems with the student or the research project will be recorded at the time they occur at the relevant Faculty Research Monitoring Committee meetings, and appropriate action taken. Longstanding problems of which the Faculty has not been made aware should not form the basis of last minute extension requests.
5. Applications can only be made on the following grounds:
  - medical grounds. Clear evidence of the problem and its impact on the student's studies, from a doctor, must be provided.
  - serious domestic difficulties, e.g. divorce/breakup of long-term relationships. Evidence is required, focusing on the impact of the problem on the student's work.
  - compassionate grounds, e.g. bereavement. Evidence is required, focusing on the impact of the problem on the student's work.
  - unforeseen research difficulties. The nature of original research is such that students are likely to encounter difficulties which must be overcome. Projects should, however, be devised to allow for successful completion within the deadline in spite of such difficulties. Extensions can only be considered under this heading where significant and unforeseen problems arise which cannot be tackled without extra time being allocated.

- inordinate professional commitments. It is expected that full-time students in their writing up period will obtain employment, and that part-time candidates will be in employment. Projects should be devised which can be completed despite this. Extension requests under this heading must involve more than the normal pressures of these types of employment and require evidence from the employer.

Note that wherever possible students should attempt to submit work for examination within the original deadline. Extensions should be sought where substantial difficulties have prevented students from completing their work on time. It is not intended that extensions should be sought to allow students to improve the standard of their submission in the absence of substantial problems. In such cases, work should be submitted for examination and if not of the required standard, extra time may be allowed by the examiners for resubmission.

6. Normally only one extension will be allowed. Extensions may be sought for any period, but normally will be for six or twelve months. Departments will need to make the case for an appropriate length of extension. Extensions may also be requested where students are resubmitting theses or dissertations for examination.
7. Once the Deans and Director of Postgraduate Studies have considered an application, the outcome will be communicated to the department. It is the responsibility of the department to inform the student of the outcome. The Deans' Office will also inform the Faculty Secretary of the decision, so that the Faculty can record it, and the Academic Office, which will amend the student's record accordingly and notify the Research Degrees Board (in cases involving research degrees).

alm April 2008

## Annex – Time Limits for Higher Degree Submissions

All students will be informed of their deadline at the start of their registration and should be working towards that deadline. Deadlines may change as a result of changes in the mode of study or the study scheme (eg, MPhil to PhD) or as a result of periods of temporary withdrawal. Students should ensure that they are aware of the new deadlines in such cases. The information below describes normal deadlines but all students should check their own deadlines with the Academic Office.

1. Full-time PhD: normally students will complete their research within the three year registration period. They have a further year in which to complete the ‘writing up’ of the thesis. Extension requests may be considered from students who cannot submit within the fourth year.
2. Part-Time PhD: students will register either for three years or five years and have a submission deadline of either five years or seven years from the start of the registration (note that students beginning prior to September 2008 may have longer deadlines).
3. Full-time MPhil/LLM by Research: students will register for a minimum of one year. The final submission deadline is three years from the start of the registration.
4. Part-time MPhil/LLM by Research: students will register for a minimum of two years. The final submission deadline is four years from the start of the registration (five years for students who began the research prior to September 2008).
5. Full-time Master’s: the University allows a maximum deadline of two years from the start of the registration but departments may set their own, shorter deadlines. Many departments require students to submit within twelve months of the start of registration. Extensions to the two year deadline can only be given by the Deans. However, where departments set their own, shorter deadline, they may grant short extensions themselves, of up to three months. They are expected to require students to present appropriate evidence and to make a strong case. Extensions should be reported to the Deans. Any extension longer than three months to a departmental deadline must be referred to the Deans.
6. Part-time/Distance Learning Master’s: the University allows a maximum deadline of five years from the start of the registration but departments may set their own, shorter deadlines. Any application for an extension to these deadlines should be referred to the Deans.