

## Guidance for Doctoral and MPhil students and PGR Supervisors

We know that you will be worried about the impact that the current situation will have on your research degree studies and your ability to progress and complete your degree. We have therefore established a set of overarching University principles, guidance and information for Doctoral and MPhil students in all faculties, which will be supplemented with more detail from your Academic Units/Disciplines.

### Principles of our support for you

- Our aim is for you to progress and complete your research studies according to your original timetable wherever possible, and to minimise any delay to the completion of your project. This may require adjustments to your project plans, for which we will provide you with appropriate support;
- Our evaluation of theses will take account of the different activities that can be undertaken during Covid-19 restrictions, but we expect that both the quality of the thesis and the integrity of the qualification will remain, as befits 3 years of full-time study (or part-time equivalence);
- We will review and take account of your individual circumstances during this period, including the difference in approach being taken by external funders, as appropriate.

### Guidance for our research students

#### 1. Review of the Impact of Covid-19 Disruption

Ideally, you should have an 'impact support review' so that we can understand how you have managed to progress during the disrupted period and to consider the impact of this disruption on your research degree. This review will be undertaken using the Annual Progress Review (APR) process in the PGR ePortfolio.

If your APR is due before the end of this academic year, this will be arranged by your School as usual.

If you do not have an APR scheduled during this timeframe, your School will be asked to arrange an extraordinary 'impact review' (using the APR process) to consider the impact of the Covid-19 disruption on your research degree.

This will ensure that all students have an 'impact review' before the start of the 20/21 academic year.

#### 2. Interruption to Study

*An Interruption of Study stops the clock on your research degree candidature. Any period of time approved as an interruption, will be added on to your current candidature dates and you will be provided with updated 'end of minimum candidature' and 'latest thesis submission' dates, as appropriate. During the period of interruption, no tuition fees are payable. **However, please note that if you are in receipt of a stipend from the University, stipend payments would be suspended during any interruption of studies.***

If you choose to interrupt your studies, this can be supported through our normal procedures. However, due to the current Covid-19 disruption and uncertainty of the duration and impact of

the disruption, we will be more supportive of requests for interruptions that are retrospective – eg are submitted following the Covid-19 disruption period. This will give you the time to determine the real impact of the current situation on your progress.

If you are applying for a retrospective interruption and are in receipt of a stipend from the University, please contact your Graduate School for advice on how the interruption may impact on your stipend payments.

If you are choosing to interrupt your studies for a reason other than Covid-19, or you are wanting to extend a current interruption of studies, please contact your Graduate School for advice on how to action this.

### **3. Extensions to Minimum Candidature**

As a research student, you have a period of minimum candidature during which tuition fees are paid. This is normally the period when you are expected to conduct and complete your primary research (e.g. FT PhD students have a 3-year period of minimum candidature, PT PhD students have a 6-year period of minimum candidature). If you require any additional time for primary research beyond this minimum candidature period, further tuition fees are normally required for this additional period.

**However, if you find that your primary research has been disrupted due to the Covid-19 situation, we will support a tuition-fee-free extension beyond the normal end of minimum candidature eg you will not have to pay extra for this extension. This will enable you to complete the primary research that you were unable to during the disrupted period.**

Any application for a required period of tuition fee-free extension should be supported by documentation already gained via the online web forms that we created at the end of March 2020, through the APR and the during the review of impact on progress. PG Deans may require further supporting information on a case by case basis. This allows us to have a documented statement of impact and a recommendation of additional 'candidature' from the supervisor for consideration by the PG Dean.

### **4. Extensions to Submission Deadline**

Currently, if you are due to submit your thesis by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020, you can apply for a fee-free extension of up to 3 months to your submission deadline.

**We will review this '30<sup>th</sup> September 2020' date at the end of July 2020 and will consider extending and/or adjusting this period as the situation progresses and we will inform you of any changes to this.**

### **5. Shape of your thesis**

We anticipate that the thesis that you will be expected to produce and submit for examination will be of equivalent quality and rigour to one that would have been produced under normal circumstances. We will provide you with high level suggestions for adjustments but more detailed information will be developed by the Faculty/Academic Unit/discipline for both you and your supervisors, so that they can share alternative research approaches and support you to achieve any changes that you need.

### **6. Impacted Thesis**

We expect that the quality of the thesis is maintained, however, there is an acknowledgement that the thesis may have to change from what was originally intended. To recognise this we will:

- add an addendum to the Examiner Handbook relating to impacted theses (also referenced in communications to examiners)
- revise the Research Degree Examination Entry Form to allow you to include an impact statement, which can be sent to Examiners for information
- allow you to include an impact statement in your thesis, if you choose to do so.

## **7. Viva Examinations**

Vivas will be carried out remotely until further notice and guidance has been produced: [FMS](#) and [HaSS/SAgE](#).

## **8. Supervisory Support**

The expectation is that normal supervisory arrangements continue, however, if this is not possible, this may be grounds for an extension to submission deadlines and minimum candidature, or for you to delay your APR.

## **9. PGR Training**

The aim is to provide support and guidance for you on possible adjustment to research plans at short notice, where appropriate to your research degree studies.

## **10. In-Sessional English Language Support**

If you are undertaking In-Sessional English, the Team are keen to continue to support you. For those of you already registered on modules, lesson materials will be sent to you directly by your tutor and you will have the opportunity to ask them questions online.

You will have the opportunity to book 1-to-1 online Writing Tutorials. Details about the booking procedure is available on the [In Sessional English website](#).

## **11. Revised FAQs**

We have updated our FAQs regarding our approach to supporting your research.

In them, we have included information on travel and insurance cover, which you should read if you are on Outside Study away from the UK.

We would encourage you to keep working on your research degree studies, where this is possible and use the time to reflect on the impact that the Covid-19 disruption is having on your studies in terms of primary research, timelines, etc. We would also stress the importance of maintaining regular contact with your supervisors. In addition, if you have any queries, you can contact your Graduate School, who are there to provide you with support and advice.