



Summary of changes to Research Student Policies

2022/23 Academic Year

This document summarises changes made from the University's Regulations and Policies that were in force in 2021/22.

Student Regulations and Policies

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Introduction

This document sets out a summary of the changes that have been made to the Academic Regulations and student facing policies since the start of the last academic year in September 2021. These changes will take effect in the next academic year i.e. 2022/2023.

It is very important that students familiarise themselves with these changes to the Academic Regulations and student facing policies.

The full versions of the student policies can be viewed on the University's website.

Summary of Changes

Academic Regulations: Postgraduate Research

Removal of the Annual Assessment of progress requirement for MA/MSc/LLM (by Research), PhD (by Published Work), and MD (by Published Work).

Addition of Regulation for practice-based doctorates which mirrors the existing Regulation for Professional Doctorates, i.e. the external examiner "should" not "must" have experience of at least one exam.

The criteria for determining whether a student is a member of staff and therefore requires two external examiners has been clarified to ensure that all candidates are treated equitably.

The circumstances in which Independent Chairs are appointed have been expanded.

The maximum duration of PhD by Portfolio extended from 36 to 60 months.

To encourage timely completions, all PGRs will either submit their thesis by their 'expected' deadline (as indicated in table A4.1.3) or they must apply for permission from the Research Degrees Board to enter the final 12 months of study. Because of this change, the Regulation relating to extensions beyond the maximum period of registration has been clarified.

Removal of requirement to submit three copies of work.

Research Assessment Handbook

Amendment to requirements for oral examinations to give more flexibility for Schools to decide whether a viva takes place in person on campus or online via MS Teams. More detail has been added about how the format of the viva will be determined.

Examinations: Independent Chairs section updated to reflect amendments to Regulations detailed above.

Annual Assessment of Progress section updated to reflect amendments to Regulations detailed above.

Clarification that the Mitigating Circumstances process does not supersede requests for extensions to the maximum period of registration that have been approved by Research Degrees Board.

Updates to reflect that all research degree documentation is now located on the Student Hub.

Ethical Principles

Revisions to Section 4: Ethical principles for work using animals

Ethics Pack for Research Degree Students

Updated weblinks from Student Support pages to the new Student Hub pages and an update on the new criteria for students (in particular Masters students) applying for HRA approval.

Academic Regulations for Professional Doctorates

Changes of Mode will now be approved by the Research Degree Tutor and they also authorize interruptions of over 12 months.

Removal of A2.9.

Expected period of registration - Continuation beyond expected thesis submission times are approved by Research Degrees Board and subject to a maximum additional period of 12 months registration.

Examiners for Students at Stage 2 - regulations amended to reflect those in the Research Degree Regulations.

Amendments to requirement for independent chairs of examination.

Admissions Policy and Applicant Complaints Procedure

Minor changes to terminology to reflect current practice.

Clarification that undergraduate applicants must have 5 GCSE passes at Grade C.

Clarification of archive of Applicant Records to reflect the updated retention policy.

Admissions Policy for Applicants with a Criminal Conviction

Clarification that DBS checked are managed by the Admissions Office.

Assessment Handbook

The Assessment Handbook has been discontinued. It has been split into the following documents:-

- Academic Appeals Procedure
- Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure for Academic Misconduct
- Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

Changes have been made to the Mitigating Circumstances process as follows:

Extensions will now only be permitted with evidence of mitigating circumstances. The standard extension period permitted is 7 calendar days, increasing to a maximum of 14 calendar days in exceptional circumstances. Cases requiring a longer period would necessitate deferral to the next assessment period.

Mitigating Circumstances must now be submitted in advance of the assessment deadline or examination; or up to a maximum of 3 calendar days after the deadline if the issue requiring mitigation occurred on the day of the deadline / examination. Mitigating Circumstances applications will be considered by a panel of Academic Registry managers, chaired by a member of the Registry Leadership Team, meeting every two days. The Mitigating Circumstance Panel may approve extensions of up to 7 calendar days or decline applications, communicating decisions to students the same day. Cases which may be considered for a longer extension or other outcome would be referred to a Personal Tutor or Year Tutor who will hold a Mitigating Circumstances Meeting with the student within 5 working days of the referral.

Clearer guidance of what constitutes Mitigating Circumstances and what does not has been included in the Policy, as well as information on the evidence required.

Late submission without Mitigating Circumstances submitted within 7 days of the deadline will receive the maximum of the minimum pass mark (40% level 3-6; 50% level 7). Late submission without Mitigating Circumstances submitted later than 7 days after the deadline will receive 0% or a fail.

Changes have been made to the *Academic Appeals Procedure* as follows:

Addition of 'We aim to resolve all appeals through our internal processes. If you initiate legal proceedings against the University on the same or a related matter, any appeal will be paused until those proceedings are complete.' This amendment has been made following advice from the University's solicitors.

In light of OIA guidance on dealing with group complaints and appeals, addition of 'If the issue that is the subject of the appeal affects a group of students, a collective appeal may be raised. A signed statement should be included from all students confirming that they have been personally affected by the issue and authorising the University to correspond with a single named spokesperson.

Addition of clarification that appeals against category 4 academic misconduct cases will proceed straight to the second stage.

Clarification that following changes to the structure of Schools and Faculties, first stage appeals can be considered within the School subject to the member of staff having expertise in assessment and no previous involvement.

Formalisation of the role of the Student Casework Team in 'triaging' first stage appeals.

Addition of an informal resolution clause to provide an opportunity for straightforward first stage appeals to be resolved without a formal meeting in line with the interim measures from the summer of 2021.

Addition of 'If the outcome that you are seeking as a result of your appeal cannot be reasonably delivered because, for example, it is not permitted by the University's Academic Regulations or Professional Body Regulations in the case of professionally accredited courses, the First Stage Appeal Chair will explain why this is the case and what might be a reasonable alternative outcome in the circumstances.'

Clarification of the timescales for first and second stage appeals with a view to providing an improved service for students: It is the University's aim to deal with first/second stage appeals within 25 working days. If this is not possible for any reason, we let you know why and when you might expect to receive a response

Clarification that action will be taken where an error or irregularity is identified which affected a group of students.

Email Use Policy

Amendment to Appendix B: student accounts are now deleted 60 days after being locked. Previously it was 90 days after being locked.

Fitness to Practise Procedure

Addition of new clause 2.11 'Where the cause for concern may also constitute a criminal offence and has been reported to the police, action under this Procedure will normally be deferred pending the outcome of the police investigation and/or prosecution. The University may impose interim precautionary measures during this period, with due regard for the safety and interests of the public, students and staff.'

Addition to 3.2 'This internal Procedure is intended to be fair and to comply with the rules of natural justice. At all stages of this Procedure the student is entitled to be accompanied and/or represented by a person of their choosing, who may be a member of the Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre. There is no objection if the person is legally qualified, so long as that person understands and respects the nature of the proceedings and does not adopt an adversarial or overly legalistic stance.'

Addition of 3.4 - 'The University recognises that it can be a stressful experience for students who are involved in fitness to practise proceedings, therefore, students will be advised of the range of support services that are available in Student Wellbeing Services.'

Amendment to 5.2 'Where an interim suspension may be required, the Head of School will refer the matter to the Academic Registrar who will conduct a review in consultation with relevant members of staff including the Head of School and Director of Student Services to determine whether an interim suspension or other interim precautionary and/or support measures are required, to invoke the interim suspension in line with the Regulations for the Conduct of Students.'

Addition of 5.4 'If a student should withdraw during this process and prior to a final outcome, the Head of School may decide not to proceed with a formal meeting or hearing. This decision will take account of the risk to public safety and any PSRB requirements. In these circumstances, a formal note will be placed on the student's record to state that a fitness to practise process was underway at the point of their withdrawal. '

Addition within 13.1 'e. to inform the University's Safeguarding Officer where a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk or other safeguarding issues arise, who may in turn notify the relevant authorities;'

Fitness to Study Procedure.

This Policy has been replaced in its entirety with the new Support to Study Policy and Procedure. Support to Study aims to promote a positive and inclusive university environment which enables students to engage effectively with all aspects of their studies, encouraging students to be proactive in seeking help and support at the earliest opportunity.

Regulations for the Conduct of Students

Amendment of references to Fitness to Study replaced with Support to Study throughout.

References to the Assessment Handbook amended to reflect that the Academic Appeals Policy and Academic Misconduct Policy are now standalone documents

Addition of record of action section - 'Where interim measures are imposed or a finding of misconduct is made, a record will be made on the student's Starfish record.'

Addition of 'contracting' to assessment/examination offences within the code of conduct.

Smoking Policy

Amendment to smoking cessation advice and guidance.

Student Complaints Procedure

Clarification that the procedure applies to apprentices.

Amendments to terminology to reflect organizational change e.g. People Team, Student Casework team.

Replacement of references to Vice Chancellors nominee with 'Complaint Review Panel'

11.7 - addition of 'The Academic Registrar may decide to conduct a review in consultation with relevant staff from the School or Service, the People Team and Student Wellbeing Services to determine whether any interim precautionary and/or support measures are required to protect the interests of all parties whilst the investigation is ongoing.'

12.5 - addition of 'Additional members may be co-opted where required e.g. a nominee from a partner institution.'

Student Protection Plan

The Student Protection Plan has been reviewed and updated in order to make it clearer for students what will happen in various different 'potential' circumstances. It has been expanded to include more extensive information relating to particular circumstances as required by the Office for Students and to take on board current good practice across the sector.