



PhD Academy: Change of circumstances guidance – extension applications (non-COVID)

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Change of circumstances guidance – extensions (non-COVID)

1. Overview
 - 1.1. *What does this guidance cover?*
 - 1.1.1. This guidance covers the application submission and decision-making process for applications by research students to extend their period of registration with the School under regulation 11 of the *Regulations for Research Degrees*. These can be found in the [LSE Calendar](#).
 - 1.1.2. **NB: Applications for funded extensions under the School's COVID-19 extensions scheme are covered by a different process.** Information on the COVID-19 extensions process can be found [here](#), alongside the School's overall guidance for students whose research has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - 1.1.3. The following are also not covered by this guidance.
 - i. Progress review deadlines.
 - ii. Upgrade deadlines.
 - iii. Deadlines for submission of amended theses.
 - iv. Deadlines for submission of final thesis copies to the LSE Library.
 - 1.2. *What is an extension application?*
 - 1.2.1. The maximum standard period of registration for your programme will be set out in your programme regulations. The end date for your period of registration is your final thesis submission deadline.¹ An extension application is an application to extend your period of registration with the School, and thereby also to extend your thesis submission deadline.
 - 1.3. *How many times can I apply for an extension? How long can I apply for?*
 - 1.3.1. The *Regulations for Research Degrees* do not restrict the minimum or maximum potential duration of submission deadline extensions, or the number of occasions on which a student can apply for an extension. However, please note the following.
 - 1.3.2. All students are likely to experience some disruption to their progress during the course of their studies due to, for example, acute illness or episodic high workload pressure, which the School expects students to accommodate within the maximum standard period of registration for their programme. **Accordingly, you should only apply for an extension if you feel you will need 8 or more weeks (pro-rata for part-time) of additional registration to account for the cumulative disruption that you have experienced across the period of your registration.**
 - 1.3.3. The School expects students only to request the minimum duration of extension necessary to allow them to submit an examinable thesis. Accordingly, it is expected that individual extension requests will not exceed 12 months (pro-rata for part-time), and the School will generally not grant more than 24 months (pro-rata for part-time) of extension in

¹ If you are not sure of your submission deadline, please [contact the PhD Academy](#) for confirmation as soon as possible.

total to any student.

- 1.3.4. Given the minimum and maximum expected durations of extension requests stated above, it is generally expected that students will not need to apply for an extension on more than 2 occasions.
- 1.4. *When can I apply for an extension?*
- 1.4.1. As students are expected to attempt to adjust for any periods of disruption experienced during their period of registration, in order to attempt to submit within their original submission deadline, it is generally expected that students will not apply for an extension until they are within six months of their final submission deadline. If you would like to submit an application more than six months ahead of your submission deadline, we strongly recommend contacting the PhD Academy to discuss your application in advance. To submit a query, please use our enquiry system. which can be accessed [here](#).
- 1.5. *Will I have to pay fees if I'm granted an extension?*
- 1.5.1. If the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair approves your extension application, yes, you will be liable to pay the full fee amount for each further year of study plus any inflationary increase unless you are exempt.² LSE's table of fees can be found [here](#).³
2. Application guidance
- 2.1. *What do I need to do before I submit?*
- 2.1.1. Please ensure that you have read the School's general guidance on change of circumstances applications for postgraduate research students, and consider whether an extension is the right adjustment to account for your circumstances. The School's general guidance is available [here](#), along with guidance for other change of circumstances adjustments, such as changes of study mode (full- to part-time, and part- to full-time) and interruptions (temporarily suspending your registration).
- 2.1.2. The PhD Academy team manage the School's change of circumstances application system for postgraduate research students. Accordingly, if you have any questions about the application process once you've finished reading this guidance, please do contact us. We will be able to advise you on topics such as the sorts of evidence the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair will expect, the application of the School's [standards of evidence policy](#) to the extensions application process, how much you need to write in each section of your application, how to write your work completion plan, and how long the extension application process is likely to take. To submit a query or arrange a meeting about any of this, please contact us [here](#).

² Students can only be exempted from the requirement to pay fees during any period of extended registration.

- (i) Students who have submitted their thesis and been examined, but have a significant period of revisions to complete (i.e., 12 months). If you fall into this category, you may be allowed to re-register with a zero fee while revising your thesis.
- (ii) Students with disabilities may be allowed to register beyond the maximum period of study at a zero fee if this has been recommended by the School's Disability and Wellbeing Service (DWS) as a reasonable adjustment and recorded in an My Adjustments plan.

³ If you need help interpreting the Table of Fees, please [contact the PhD Academy](#).

- 2.1.3. In order for your application to be considered by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair, both your supervisory team and your programme director will need to confirm their support. Accordingly, it is vital that you discuss your application with your supervisors and programme director and secure their support before submitting your application.
- 2.1.4. The School's [standards of evidence policy](#) is available here. You should read this thoroughly, and bear this in mind when gathering evidence to support your application. If you have questions about evidence requirements for the extensions process, please contact the PhD Academy [here](#). If you have a MyAdjustments plan, you should also consider contacting the Disability and Wellbeing Service to discuss whether this needs to be updated.
- 2.1.5. The PhD Log is the authoritative record of your engagement with your studies. If your PhD Log records are incomplete, the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair may determine that there is insufficient evidence of engagement with your studies to consider your application. Accordingly, please ensure that your PhD Log records are accurate, up to date, and have been approved by your supervisors before applying. This is particularly important for students with visas (see below.)
- 2.1.6. If you are in receipt of studentship funding and granted an extension under this mechanism, you will not automatically receive an extension to your funding, and you will be expected to pay fees during the period of your extension. Accordingly, if you are in receipt of studentship funding of any kind, please [contact the Financial Support Office](#) to discuss your situation before applying.
- 2.2. *My research requires ATAS clearance. Do I need to think about this when applying?*
- 2.2.1. If your research requires [Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\)](#) clearance and your request is granted, you will need to apply for new clearance within 28 days of the date on which you are notified that your extension request has been approved. If this applies to you, the PhD Academy will confirm what you need to do to make an application at the point at which your extension application is received. This will be re-confirmed if your extension application is successful.
- 2.3. *I am a visa holder. What do I need to consider and do before applying?*
- 2.3.1. If you are a visa holder, please contact the [Student Advice and Engagement Team](#) for guidance on the criteria you will need to meet in order for the School to continue supporting your visa during the period of your requested examination before you submit your application. This is important as the School continues to support visas wherever possible when deadline extensions are granted, but can only do so based on criteria set out by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), about which only SAET can advise you.
- 2.3.2. If you intend to apply for a post-study visa, such as the Graduate visa, please contact the [Student Advice and Engagement Team](#) for guidance before you submit your application to ensure you understand the potential implications of your extension application.
- 2.3.3. The PhD Log is the authoritative record of your engagement with your studies. As UKVI will only allow the School to continue supporting your visa if the PhD Log demonstrates that you have been engaging with your studies, please ensure that your PhD Log records are accurate, up to date, and have been approved by your supervisors before applying.
- 2.4. *Can I draft my application in the application system? Can I share my application with my supervisors using the application system before I submit?*

- 2.4.1. No, and no. The School's online application portal will not allow you to submit a draft application. Accordingly, we recommend that you save drafts of your application elsewhere before submitting. We recommend specifically discussing your draft application before uploading it to the School's change of circumstances application management system. The form will ask you to provide/confirm the following.
- i. Your funding status.
 - ii. Your visa status and whether you have contacted the Student Advice and Engagement Team for advice about this.
 - iii. Whether you have discussed your application with your supervisor or department contact, and if so, who you've discussed your application with.
 - iv. The new submission deadline you'd like to request.
 - v. The main reason for your request (from a drop-down list).
 - vi. A narrative section describing the main reason for your request, which should describe the factors which will prevent you from submitting your thesis by your current submission deadline.
 - vii. A work completion plan setting out how you will progress to completion if your extension is granted.
- 2.5. *What should I include in my workload completion plan?*
- 2.5.1. Your plan should indicate how you will use the time between the point at which you submit your application and the extended deadline that you are requesting. This does not need to provide exhaustive detail. However, this should include sufficient detail for your supervisor, programme director and the Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee to assess whether you will be able to submit an examinable thesis with your amended deadline. As your application will also be considered in light of all the circumstances, including any previous adjustments to your registration, such as changes in study mode (full- to part-time) and periods of interruption, it is important that your work completion plan demonstrates that an extension is the *right* adjustment to account for the disruption you have experienced. Given the potential range of viable plans for completion, the PhD Academy does not provide 'example' work completion plans.⁴ However, your work completion plan must specifically include the following components.
- i. A description of the progress you have made to date in the production of your thesis.

⁴ You should use clear and direct language when producing your completion plan. We also recommend including references to target chapter/paper lengths. Some examples of effective uses of language for work completion plans are included below.

- "For the chapter entitled [INSERT], I have completed [INSERT] in terms of fieldwork and data collection. I still have to complete [INSERT]. This will be completed between [INSERT] and [INSERT]. I will submit interim drafts to my supervisory team for feedback by [INSERT] and [INSERT]."
- "For the paper entitled [INSERT], I have written/drafted [INSERT]% of the paper, which will be approximately [INSERT] words, to an examinable standard. I still need to draft [INSERT]%. This will be completed between [INSERT] and [INSERT]. I will submit an interim draft to my supervisory team for feedback by [INSERT]."

- ii. The remaining work which you will need to complete in order for you to be able to submit an examinable thesis.
- iii. The ways in which you have re-framed your project in order to minimise the duration of the extension you have requested.⁵
- iv. A timetable setting out when you will complete each aspect of the remaining work described in your plan. Your work completion plan should be structured on a chapter-by-chapter/paper-by-paper basis and include both (i) deadlines agreed with your supervisors for submission of interim drafts and (ii) deadlines for agreement that each chapter/paper is complete for the purposes of submission. This is the most straightforward way to ensure that your supervisors, programme director and the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair are able to assess the viability of your work completion plan.
- v. A description of the supervisory arrangements which will be implemented to support you during the period of the requested extension and any other School or non-School support you will access. This section will ideally set out a schedule of supervisory and other support meetings which will occur during the period of your requested extension. This does not necessarily need to provide specific dates, but should provide sufficient detail to assure the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair that you will be appropriately supported during the period of your requested extension.

2.6. *How can I submit an application? What is required in order for me to apply?*

2.6.1. The extension application form can be accessed [here](#).

2.7. *What happens after I submit my application?*

2.7.1. Your application will be forwarded to your lead supervisor, who will be asked to confirm the following on behalf of your supervisory team as a whole.

- i. That they (or a relevant departmental colleague) have discussed your request with you, including a discussion of alternative options.
- ii. That they have Please provide a departmental statement for RDSC review that outlines your comments on the application.
- iii. That your work completion plan is realistic and feasible.
- iv. Their decision on whether to support your request.

2.7.2. If your lead supervisor supports your application, it will be passed to your programme director, who will be asked to confirm the following.

- i. Their rationale for supporting or not supporting your application.
- ii. Any conditions – such as course work plans, amendments to upgrade dates/requirements, etc. – the department would like to be attached to your extension if

⁵ This step is essential, as the purpose of the extension application process is to provide you with sufficient time to produce an examinable thesis, and an examinable thesis will not necessarily be the same as the thesis you planned to submit before you decided to apply for an extension. Your plan should therefore explicitly describe which papers/chapters you have decided to re-frame or remove in order to keep the length of the requested extension to a necessary minimum.

your application is granted.

iii. Their decision on whether to support your request.

2.7.3. If either your lead supervisor or your programme director do not support your application, it will go no further in the School's change of circumstances application management system, and it will not be considered by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair. If you would still like your application to be considered, in the first instance, you should attempt to address this within your department by discussing your application with your supervisory team and your programme director. You are also welcome to [contact the PhD Academy](#) for advice at this stage.

2.7.4. If your lead supervisor and your programme director both support your application, it will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Subcommittee for consideration. Applications are forwarded to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair in batches, generally once per week. The Chair normally makes decisions on applications within 5-10 working days of receipt. However, during periods of peak business, it can sometimes take longer for applications to be considered. Complex applications and applications requiring consultation with supervisors or other teams within the School, such as the Student Advice and Engagement Team, can take longer, particularly where students and departments are asked to consider amending the duration of the requested extension or to provide supplementary documentation.

2.8. *What happens once the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair has made their decision?*

2.8.1. The PhD Academy team will generally process application outcomes within 5 working days of the date on which the RDSC Chair's decision is made. This means that applications normally proceed on the following indicative timescales.

2.8.1.1. Straightforward applications

- i. *Week 1*: Submission of application.
- ii. *Week 2*: Authorisation by lead supervisor and programme director.
- iii. *Week 3*: Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair decision.
- iv. *Week 4*: Notification of outcome by PhD Academy.

2.8.1.2. Complicated applications

- i. *Week 1*: Submission of application.
- ii. *Week 2*: Authorisation by lead supervisor and programme director.
- iii. *Weeks 3-5*: Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair decision.
- iv. *Week 6*: Notification of outcome by PhD Academy.

2.9. *What happens if my application is approved?*

2.9.1. If your application is approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair, you will be notified of the outcome by the PhD Academy team. If you are in receipt of School

administered funding or are a visa holder, the PhD Academy will notify the relevant teams.

2.10. *What happens if my application is not approved?*

2.10.1. If your application is not approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair, you will be notified of the outcome by the PhD Academy team. This will include a statement from the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair setting out the reasons for their decision.

2.11. *Can I submit an appeal against an extension decision?*

2.11.1. The School's change of circumstances processes for PhD students are not covered by formal appeals processes. Accordingly, you will not be able to submit a formal appeal against an extension decision made under the School's change of circumstances process.

2.11.2. As noted above, if your supervisors do not support your request, you should discuss this with your department in the first instance. You are also welcome to [contact the PhD Academy](#) for advice at this stage.

2.11.3. If the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair does not approve your application, you should carefully consider the rationale provided by the Chair as part of your outcome notification. These will often provide guidance which will help you to understand whether alternative adjustments may be more appropriate to your circumstances, or what you might need to do in order to submit a further extension request.⁶

⁶ If your application was rejected due to a lack of evidence, the Chair's feedback should outline the types of evidence they would need in order to approve your application.

Version log

Review interval	New review start date	New review due by
Termly	November 2023	December 2023

Version history

Version	Publication date	Approved by	Notes
22-23.1	Unknown	PhD Academy Manager	Extant version.
22-23.2	INSERT	PhD Academy Manager	Change in document template. Introduction of version control and log. No change to the substance of processes or expectations, but significantly increased detail throughout.

Contacts

Query type	Contact	Email
Operational	PhD Academy, Research Degrees Management Team	phdacademy@lse.ac.uk
Policy	Peter Mills, PhD Academy Manager	p.b.mills@lse.ac.uk

Feedback

Mechanism description	Mechanism access details
Email	phdacademy@lse.ac.uk

Communications and Training

Query	Answer	Notes
Will this document be publicised through internal communications?	<u>Yes/No</u>	This will be published internally within the Phd Academy, externally on the PhD Academy website, and noted for discussion at the next DPD Forum meeting.
Will training needs arise from this document?	<u>Yes/No</u>	PhD Academy staff will be asked to read and digest the guidance, and will have the opportunity to raise questions in team meetings.