



## Guidance on seeking an extension or an interruption of studies for research degrees

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## Summary

This document applies to all PGRs enrolled on MRes, PhD and professional doctorate degrees.

Although they differ in scope, the processes underlying interruption of studies and extension are largely the same. There is no automatic right to either interruption of studies or extension. Applications for extension and interruptions must be made in a timely fashion, with the support for your Director of Studies, and the Graduate School must approve all requests.

## What is an extension?

An **extension** relates to a specific examination submission deadline, allowing additional time – less than three months – to meet the requirements of the submission. It does not change any of your later deadlines, including your maximum registration date.

### *Extension request parameters*

1. There is no minimum period for an extension request but normally the maximum is **90 days** for **doctoral** PGRs and **60 days** for **MRes** PGRs.
2. You must decide whether an extension is necessary and, if so, you must propose an appropriate new deadline date in the request. The Graduate School May approve this date or a different date that it judges to be appropriate based on the information and evidence provided.
3. You must consider the impact of an extension upon your research. This will include ethical application considerations such as needing to request an extension to your approval timeframe through Haplo, for example.
4. Retrospective applications and those submitted within a short period (e.g. less than two weeks) before the deadline in question will not normally be considered (any late application needs to be accompanied by evidence explaining why a late request is being made).
5. An approved extension will alter a specific examination submission deadline, not any subsequent deadlines or your overall maximum period of registration.

### *Reasons for approving an extension request*

6. There is no definitive list of reasons for which an **extension** request may be approved but they will normally relate to short-term (less than 90 days in duration, or, in cases of MRes, less than 60 days in duration) medical, academic, personal or financial issues that will have a significant impact on your ability to meet an upcoming examination submission deadline, but not severe enough to warrant an interruption of studies. The Graduate School will require relevant, and up to date, evidence with applications - see *evidence* below.
7. There is no definitive list of reasons for which an interruption of studies or extension request may be denied but they include cases in which:

- a. The reason for the request is that you have made insufficient progress in your research degree i.e. 'to catch-up';
- b. The request is the result of employment commitments or similar, which have not changed materially since you enrolled;
- c. Insufficient evidence to support the request is presented to the Graduate School.

### ***Extension requests and PGRs on payroll***

8. An approved extension to a deadline has no effect on your paid duties. Should you need to adjust or take time away from your paid duties, this must be agreed separately with your line manager in accordance with University Human Resources' policies and procedures.

### ***Tuition fees and finance for PGRs with approved extension requests***

9. In cases of extension, it is your responsibility to ensure your tuition fees are paid; they will not be suspended, nor will any invoicing deadlines be altered or extended, during the period of extension. An approved extension could take you into a new fee invoicing period, with the result that you incur tuition fees that you would not have incurred without the extension – these cannot be waived by the Graduate School or the Board.
10. If you are in receipt of a tuition fee waiver, studentship (internally or externally funded), or other funding linked to your research degree registration, you must check the terms of your funding before requesting an extension. In some cases, the funding may cease, expire or be withdrawn because of the extension.

### ***Applying for an extension***

11. The extension request<sup>1</sup> form can be found on the PGR blackboard page.<sup>2</sup>
12. If you are unable to obtain support from your Director of Studies and/or line manager (for GTAs), please contact the Graduate School.
13. You can download a 'receipt' of the form for your information. Due to the amount of requests we receive, we cannot send copies of the form to you.
14. You will normally be informed of the outcome no later than 2 working days of the application, and this notification will be sent by e-mail to your Edge Hill student e-mail account.
15. If an extension request is approved, the notification will confirm the approved revised examination submission deadline.
16. Applications are not guaranteed and PGRs should continue to work to their *current* deadline in the event that your application is rejected.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://forms.office.com/r/4CST4yS00C>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://learningedge.edgehill.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContentEditable.jsp?content\\_id=3502079\\_1&course\\_id=270202\\_1](https://learningedge.edgehill.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContentEditable.jsp?content_id=3502079_1&course_id=270202_1)

### ***Evidence to support your extension request***

17. Depending on the reason for the request, you should normally provide supporting evidence.
18. Evidence will normally be supplied in an electronic format. Examples of supporting evidence include the following:
  - a. Doctor's letter or fit note
  - b. Statement from a counsellor
  - c. Hospital appointment letter
  - d. Crime reference number
  - e. Eviction notice
  - f. Bereavement evidence (e.g. notice of service, obituary, news report, letter from Personal Tutor, family member or friend)
  - g. Letter from domestic violence services
  - h. Letter from Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme
  - i. Letter from Edge Hill mental health adviser
  - j. Letter from Edge Hill Disability adviser
19. If you are unsure of whether evidence is required, please consult the Graduate School.
20. Evidence should cover at least the period that has given rise to the extension request.
21. Any data that is collected is stored as per our privacy statement.

### ***International PGRs extension request considerations***

22. If your presence in the UK is dependent upon a visa, detailed queries regarding how an extension might affect you should be directed to the International Office in advance of applying for extension.<sup>3</sup>
23. If you require a visa to study in the UK, you may request an extension to either your project registration submission deadline or progression viva submission deadline as per UK PGRs.
24. You may request an extension to your *maximum* final viva submission deadline but please note:
  - a. If the new deadline occurs before your visa expires, the process is as per UK PGRs.
  - b. If the new deadline occurs after your visa expires, you must contact the International team as soon as possible to extend your visa. An approved

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<sup>3</sup> [Visa@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:Visa@edgehill.ac.uk)

extension to your final viva submission deadline does not guarantee a visa extension.<sup>4</sup>

- c. If the new deadline occurs after your visa expires and you have not obtained an extension to your visa, UK immigration rules require you to complete your degree from outside the UK.

25. An approved extension to your final viva submission deadline may mean your viva must take place after your visa expires. You should seek advice from the International team regarding options for re-entering the UK for your examination.

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<sup>4</sup> [Visas@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:Visas@edgehill.ac.uk)

## What is an interruption of studies?

**Interruption of studies** allows the postgraduate researcher (PGR) ('you') to take between three and twelve months away from the project, depending on your route of study, without losing that time from your registration period; it effectively moves the remaining deadlines by the same amount of time as the approved interruption of studies.

### *Interruption of studies parameters*

26. For **doctoral** PGRs: the minimum duration of any single standard interruption of studies request is 90 days; the maximum duration is 365 days. Normally, you will only be permitted a maximum of 365 days interruption of studies in total for the duration of your registration on the research degree. Any exception to this is subject to the approval of the Graduate School.
27. For **MRes** PGRs: the minimum duration of any single standard interruption of studies request is 60 days; the maximum duration is 90 days. Normally, you will only be permitted a maximum of 90 days interruption of studies in total for the duration of your registration on the research degree. Any exception to this is subject to the approval of the Graduate School.
28. You must decide whether undertaking an interruption of studies is necessary and, if so, you must specify a start date and return date in the request. The Graduate School may approve these dates or different dates that it judges to be appropriate based on the information and evidence provided.
29. Retrospective applications will not normally be considered.
30. You must consider the impact of an interruption of studies upon your research. This will include ethical application considerations such as needing to request an extension to your approval timeframe through Haplo, for example.
31. If your application is approved, you are not expected to work on your research as you are interrupted from your studies which impacts your PGR registration status.<sup>5</sup>
32. If you request an interruption of studies to begin during term 1 of your first year on the research degree, approval of the application may require you to restart your degree the following autumn instead of interrupting your studies.<sup>6</sup>
33. Interrupting your studies will alter your remaining period of registration, and examination submission deadlines therein, by the period of interruption of studies. So, if you interrupt for 90 days, your remaining examination submission deadlines will be pushed back by 90 days. Where your interruption of studies is approved close to a deadline, the deadline moves by the same period. For

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<sup>5</sup> You will still have access to your student email. Contact the Graduate School for any clarification.

<sup>6</sup> N11.4 – Research Degree Regulations - <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/research-degree-regulations/>

example, if you interrupt your studies two weeks before a deadline, that deadline will move to two weeks after your date of return.

34. Interrupting your studies *may* impact your approved examination team. You should make arrangements to review your team with your supervisory team upon your return to study.
35. You should make arrangements to maintain contact with your supervisors during the period of interrupted studies. GTAs must keep in touch with their line manager and HR. International PGRs must also keep in contact with the International Office.
36. In order to support PGRs who are taking maternal/paternal/adoption leave, parental interruption of studies operates in the same way as standard interruption of studies, although the time allowed differs. See 'Parental interruption of studies' for more details.
37. If you are supported, sponsored or in linked in any way to an external provider you must consult their guidelines on time away from studies. Interrupting your studies at Edge Hill does not impact the requirements from an external provider.
38. Interrupting your studies may have council tax exemption implications. It is your responsibility to inform the University, and appropriate council, of any change in student status, if your interruption of study is approved<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Parental interruption of studies***

39. In addition to the standard interruption of studies available, parental interruption requests are also available.
40. If you (or your partner) are pregnant, or if you are adopting a child, you may request parental interruption of studies. The points stated elsewhere in this document apply to parental interruption of studies with the following exceptions:
  - a. You may request up to 90 days parental interruption of studies per pregnancy/adoption (a 'parental instance'; i.e. not per child in cases of multiple births) that you experience as a new parent during your time on the research degree.
  - b. These 90 days per parental instance are in addition to the maximum standard interruption of studies of 365 days across the registration period. Any parental interruption of studies days in excess of the 90 days for a single parental instance will use up standard interruption of studies days (if any are available).
    - For example, you may request 90 days of parental interruption of studies combined with up to 365 days of standard interruption of studies (if you have not previously interrupted your studies) which would result in 455 days of interruption of studies (N.B. the Graduate School Board of

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/service/council-tax-exemption/>

Studies may approve a shorter period than requested in the interests of your progress on the degree).

- In this example, should you need a subsequent period of interruption of studies, you would have already used up all of the standard interruption of studies available to you; should you need a subsequent period of parental interruption of studies, you could only interrupt your studies for 90 days.
- c. Parental interruption of studies cannot be used to reclaim standard interruption of studies previously used, nor does it increase the total number of standard interruption of studies days available to you across the registration period for non-pregnancy/adoption reasons.
- d. Requests for parental interruption of studies are conditional upon receipt of a MATB1 form or official government notification of adoption, so you should provide a copy to the Graduate School as soon as it becomes available.

### ***Reasons for approving an interruption request***

41. There is no definitive list of reasons for which an **interruption of studies** request may be approved but they will normally relate to serious medical, personal or financial issues, or interruption of studies as a new parent (see 'Parental interruption of studies'), that will have a significant impact on the progress of your research. The Graduate School will require relevant, and up to date, evidence with applications - see *evidence* below.
42. There is no definitive list of reasons for which an interruption of studies request may be denied but they include cases in which:
  - a. The reason for the request is that you have made insufficient progress in your research degree i.e. 'to catch-up'<sup>8</sup>;
  - b. The request is the result of employment commitments or similar, which have not changed materially since you enrolled;
  - c. Insufficient evidence to support the request is presented to the Graduate School.

### ***Interruption of studies and PGRs who are also on the payroll***

43. If you are a research degree student who is also on the University payroll – Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), or staff:
  - a. Because interruption of studies suspends your studies, your whole studentship package, where applicable, is also suspended (you must not carry out teaching or other paid duties, and you will receive no salary – excluding statutory sick pay – and no accommodation allowance). Such an

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<sup>8</sup> Interrupted PGRs should not be studying during their period of interruption. Accordingly, during a period of interruption, supervisors will not be available to discuss or feedback on your research. Seek clarification from the Graduate School if you have any questions.



interruption of studies request, therefore, requires confirmation that you have notified your line manager and HR directly.

- b. Should you need to adjust or take time away from your paid duties, this must be agreed separately with your line manager in accordance with University Human Resources' policies and procedures.
- c. A period of leave from your paid duties (e.g. teaching) for any purpose that has been agreed with your line manager (e.g. annual leave), **does not apply** to your registration on the research degree. Line manager approval for leave from your paid duties (including parental/adoption leave) is not approval for an interruption of studies or for an extension to any research degree deadlines; only the Graduate School can grant an interruption of studies or extension.

### ***Tuition fees and finance for PGRs on interruption of studies***

44. In cases of interruption of studies for Home PGRs, your annual fee will be recalculated according to Academic Registry's Withdrawal/Interruption of Studies Tuition Fees Liability Procedure.<sup>9</sup> If you are an international PGR, please see 'International PGRs', below.
45. If you are in receipt of a tuition fee waiver, studentship (internally or externally funded), or other funding linked to your research degree registration, you must check the terms of your funding before requesting an interruption of studies. In some cases, the funding may cease, expire or be withdrawn because of the interruption of studies.

### ***Applying for an interruption of studies***

46. The interruption of studies request form<sup>10</sup> can be found on the PGR blackboard page.<sup>11</sup>
47. If you are unable to obtain support from your Director of Studies and/or line manager (for GTAs), please contact the Graduate School.
48. You can download a 'receipt' of the form for your information. Due to the amount of requests we receive, we cannot send copies of the form to you.
49. You will normally be informed of the outcome no later than 2 working days of the application, and this notification will be sent by e-mail to your Edge Hill student e-mail account.
50. If an interruption of studies request is approved, the notification will also confirm the changes to your remaining examination submission deadlines that result from the period of suspension.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/tuition-fee-regulations/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://forms.office.com/r/ppgFMZjwpa>

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[https://learningedge.edgehill.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContentEditable.jsp?content\\_id=3502079\\_1&course\\_id=270202\\_1](https://learningedge.edgehill.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContentEditable.jsp?content_id=3502079_1&course_id=270202_1)

51. Should your **interruption of studies** be approved by the Graduate School, you are expected to do the following:
- a. You are required to stop any research degree work during this time of interruption as you are not classed as a registered student.
  - b. You are expected to contact the Graduate School, and your supervisors, on the basis agreed at application.<sup>12</sup>
52. An extension to a period of interruption of studies can only be approved if you have time remaining from the maximum period of registration permitted.
53. Applications are not guaranteed and PGRs should continue to work to their *current* deadline in the event that your application is rejected.

### ***Evidence to support your interruption of studies request***

54. Depending on the reason for the request, you should normally provide supporting evidence.
55. Evidence will normally be supplied in an electronic format. Examples of supporting evidence include the following:
- a. Doctor's letter or fit note
  - b. Statement from a counsellor
  - c. Hospital appointment letter
  - d. Crime reference number
  - e. Eviction notice
  - f. Bereavement evidence (e.g. notice of service, obituary, news report, letter from Personal Tutor, family member or friend)
  - g. Letter from domestic violence services
  - h. Letter from Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme
  - i. Letter from Edge Hill mental health adviser
  - j. Letter from Edge Hill Disability adviser
  - k. Requests for parental interruption of studies are conditional upon receipt of a MATB1 form or official government notification of adoption, so you should provide a copy to the Graduate School as soon as it becomes available.
56. If you are unsure of whether evidence is required, please consult the Graduate School.
57. Evidence should cover at least the requested period of interruption of studies.
58. Any data that is collected is stored as per our privacy statement.

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<sup>12</sup> GTAs are also required to keep in touch with HR, as a result of payment implications, and International PGRs must keep in touch with the International Office, to avoid any visa implications.

### ***Return from interruption of studies***

59. Your date of return is that specified in the approval notification e-mail. Your period of registration will automatically resume on this date.
60. On this date of return, you must send communication to your DoS and the GS to state you have returned from interruption and to arrange a supervision meeting.
61. If you are unlikely to be ready to return to your research by the agreed return date, you may request an extension to your period of interruption of studies, which should be made before the end of the agreed interruption of studies period.
- a. The request to extend the period of interruption of studies must be made in writing using the standard interruption pro forma; a supporting statement from your Director of Studies is also required.
  - b. The same standard of evidence applies to extension of interruption of studies as to the original request.
  - c. Any periods of interruption of studies you have taken to date during your time on the research degree will be a factor when considering an application for an extension.
62. When you return from interruption of studies, your progress will automatically be placed under review in accordance with the *research degree student progress review policy*<sup>13</sup>. This is to allow you, your supervisory team, or the Graduate School to identify a need for additional support during the period of transition, if necessary. Progress reviews will need to be completed in a timely manner.
63. Prior to your return from an interruption of studies that was approved on medical grounds, you will need to provide the Graduate School with medical evidence that confirms you are fit to return.
64. Please note, if you require DBS clearance to complete your research project, you may need to obtain new clearance prior to your return.
65. Once you have returned from interruption of studies, you must ensure that all ethical approvals in relation to your project are still in place and have not expired.

### ***International PGRs interruption of studies considerations***

66. If your presence in the UK is dependent upon a visa, detailed queries regarding how interruption of studies might affect you should be directed to the International Office in advance of applying for an interruption or extension.<sup>14</sup>
67. If you are in the UK on a tier 4 visa, UK immigration rules do not allow you to interrupt your studies.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/9099/>

<sup>14</sup> [Visa@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:Visa@edgehill.ac.uk)

68. If you are in the UK on any visa other than tier 4, you are able to interrupt your studies as per a UK PGR, but you must maintain your own immigration permission in the UK.

## Appeals

69. The consideration of a request for interruption of studies or extension requires academic judgement in relation to the appropriateness of the application and your stage in the research degree. There is no right of appeal against this academic judgement. However, if you believe there has been a procedural error, the normal academic appeals process can be followed. Further details can be found in the appendices of the [Academic Regulations](#).



At Edge Hill, we are committed to respecting and protecting your personal information. To find ways in which the Graduate School uses your data, please see <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/departments/support/ig/>.

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