

## CODE OF PRACTICE ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES: APPENDIX 7

### PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING AN EXTENSION, WITHDRAWAL OR SUSPENSION OF STUDIES FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) is committed to providing a high quality educational experience for all students, with appropriate academic support, administrative structures and good welfare services and facilities. This procedure is Appendix 7 of an inter-related framework of procedures under the *Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees*.
- 1.1. This procedure details how a student studying on a postgraduate research (PGR) degree may request an extension, withdrawal or suspension of studies.

#### 2. Scope

- 2.1. This procedure applies to all current PGR students registered with LSTM, whether based on-site, off-site or split-site, and studying full-time or part-time. Former students may appeal only if they were prevented by exceptional circumstances from raising the matter while registered.
- 2.2. The procedure covers examination of a thesis leading to one of the following awards:
  - Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
  - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD)

#### 3. General Principles

- 3.1. In considering requests for extensions, withdrawals and suspensions, the following general principles shall apply:
  - 3.1.1. Requests will be dealt with fairly and consistently.
  - 3.1.2. The outcome of a request will be communicated promptly to the student with clear reasons given for the decision.
- 3.2. In making arrangements for extensions and suspensions, LSTM will endeavor to treat all students in line with the RCUK procedures for Research Council funded students, subject to compliance with the requirements of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and the availability of funding.

#### 4. Extensions

- 4.1. Extensions of study will only be considered where there are severe mitigating circumstances.
- 4.2. Students requesting an extension to their submission date must complete an Extension Request form, signed by the Primary Supervisor, and submit it to the PGR administrative team for signature by the Director of Postgraduate Research (DPR).
- 4.3. Extension requests will be considered only for students whose submission deadline is

within the next six months, and will not be considered for students who could reasonably have been expected to request a suspension of studies.

- 4.4. Students requesting an extension will be asked to provide evidence to support their application and must explain why they could not have requested a suspension.
- 4.5. Overseas students studying on a Tier 4 visa should seek advice from the Academic Registrar if the extension period means that their visa will expire before they are due to complete their programme.

## **5. Withdrawal**

- 5.1. Students who are considering withdrawing from their programme should communicate any issues with their Primary Supervisor at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.2. Students should complete a Withdrawal Form (to be signed by the Primary Supervisor) and submit it to the PGR Administrative Team for signature by the DPR.
- 5.3. Externally sponsored students are responsible for informing the sponsor that they are withdrawing from their studies.
- 5.4. Refund of tuition fees will be processed in accordance with the *Code of Practice on Payment and Refund of Tuition Fees*.
- 5.5. In the case of students who fail to engage with their studies or make contact with their supervisory team for a period of more than one month, the *Deemed Withdrawn Procedure* may be invoked as detailed in the *Procedure for Monitoring the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students*.
- 5.6. LSTM is obliged to report to UKVI any student studying on a Tier 4 visa who withdraws from their programme, and they will be required to return to their home country.

## **6. Suspension**

- 6.1. Students may request a suspension of studies at any time during their programme. Common grounds for suspension are ill-health; maternity/paternity leave; personal issues; and financial issues.
- 6.2. Students who are considering suspending studies should communicate any issues with their Primary Supervisor at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.3. If the Primary Supervisor agrees that a request for a suspension of studies is the best course of action, he/she will advise the student to fill in a Request for a Suspension of Studies form (to be signed by the Primary Supervisor) and submit it to the PGR Administrative Team for approval by the DPR.
- 6.4. Suspensions will be applied for in whole calendar months up to a maximum of one year
- 6.5. A student who is suspended from studies will not be expected to work on their thesis, so will not have access to LSTM computing services apart from email and will not receive formal supervision, although it is recommended that the student keep in touch with their supervisors during the suspension period.
- 6.6. The period of suspension will be added on to the date when the student is expected to complete their studies, effectively extending the maximum submission date.
- 6.7. During the period of suspension the student will not be liable to tuition or bench fees.
- 6.8. Students who are sponsored are responsible for notifying and obtaining permission from their sponsor before suspending studies.

- 6.9. Overseas students who are considering requesting a suspension should seek advice from the Academic Registrar, as LSTM is obliged to report to UKVI any student on a Tier 4 visa who suspends studies. The student is required to return to their home country for the duration of the suspension and failure to do so could jeopardise their future immigration status.
- 6.10. A suspension on financial grounds differs from a Financial Suspension, which is a sanction imposed by LSTM following non-payment of fees. More information can be found in the *Code of Practice on Payment and Refund of Tuition Fees*.
- 6.11. Students returning from suspension should notify the PGR Administrative Team at least two weeks before their return date so that arrangements may be made to re-register the student. In cases where the absence was due to ill-health, students will be asked to provide a doctor's note confirming their fitness to resume studies before being re-registered.
- 6.12. In the case of students who fail to return to LSTM after a period of suspension, the *Deemed Withdrawn Procedure* may be invoked as detailed in the *Procedure for Monitoring the Academic Progress of Postgraduate Research Students*.