



Guidance on changes of circumstance for postgraduate research students (including suspension of status and extension of time)

Education Committee

Valid from Michaelmas term 2024

Version history

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Postgraduate research (PGR) students may experience changes to their circumstances affecting their study for a number of reasons, including health issues, family/personal circumstances, or delays to their research caused by difficulties with access to resources, facilities or equipment. Disabled PGR students may require reasonable adjustments to enable them to complete their programme successfully, and the impact of their disabilities and the adjustments they require may change over time.
- 1.2. Due to the length of time students spend on PGR programmes (e.g. a maximum of four years for a full-time DPhil), short-term issues (such as e.g. two weeks of time lost due to an acute illness) are expected to be accommodated within the overall length of the programme without any need for adjustments. Students should plan their research project so that it can be completed within the normal maximum timeframe for their programme, allowing some leeway for short-term issues, and some vacation time off (noting that PGR students should expect to spend a minimum of 44 weeks of the year on their studies).
- 1.3. However, some students will experience changes to their circumstances which mean that they need to take time away from their programme or need longer to complete their programme. Some students will be unable on an ongoing basis to work at a full-time pace.
- 1.4. This document provides guidance on options for PGR students who experience changes to their circumstances which affect their study, including suspension of status for a period; extension of time to complete their programme; transfer to part-time study from full-time study (for the duration of their programme or for a fixed time period); or exceptionally adjusting a student's milestone and maximum submission deadlines (for students who are unable on an ongoing basis to study at full-time pace but do not need to transfer to part-time (50% FTE) study).
- 1.5. The guidance is intended to ensure that there is awareness of the potential options, and consistency in the treatment of relevant applications for PGR students experiencing changes to their circumstances, across the collegiate University.

2. Suspension of status

- 2.1. Regulations regarding suspension of status are set out for all postgraduate research degree students in the [General Regulations governing Research Degrees](#), §5.1. Boards are permitted to grant up to six terms of suspension of status, for not less than one or more than three terms at a time, for both full-time and part-time students. Applications to boards for suspension of status are made via the [GSO.17 application form](#).
- 2.2. Applications for dispensation exceptionally to permit a further period of suspension of status beyond what can be granted by a board (where a student has already been granted six terms of suspension of status during the PGR programme or is seeking more than three terms at a time) are considered by Education Committee (this function is delegated to officers in the Education Policy Support team or to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Chair of Education Committee). A [form and guidance](#) on submitting dispensation requests are available. Departments/faculties should check with their divisional education officers to see if dispensation requests should be submitted on their behalf by divisions.
- 2.3. If a board declines a request for suspension of status, the student should be directed to the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#), so that they know how to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.
- 2.4. If Education Committee declines a request for exceptional further suspension of status, the student can submit an [appeal](#) against the decision, which is heard by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case. Since appeals must be made within 14 days of the date of the Education Committee decision, it is important that decisions are communicated to students as soon as possible.
- 2.5. The starting point is that the University expects students embarking on its courses to study for the continuous period of the course, as this ensures that the student is able to progress their studies smoothly. However, suspension of status may be appropriate where a student is unable to study to any significant extent for a specific time period. Reasons for this may include but are not limited to health reasons, personal/family circumstances, or undertaking an agreed internship/other employment in certain circumstances.
- 2.6. It should be made clear to students that suspension of status does not carry any stigma and is simply an acknowledgement that a student is unable to study for a period, for good reason.
- 2.7. When students suspend status, they retain their University card and Single Sign On (SSO) access to online resources, including email, and access to University libraries (unless they are [suspended due to non-payment of fees](#); the University also reserves the right to withdraw access to facilities and services in certain other appropriate circumstances).
- 2.8. Students are eligible to use the University's [Counselling Service](#) and [Careers Service](#) during a period of suspension of status. If a student has a disability advisor at the [Disability Advisory Service](#), they are welcome to remain in contact with them while suspended (e.g. to discuss what support might be needed on their return to study and to review their Student Support Plan), but certain services accessed through the

Disabled Students Allowance (such as specialist mentoring or study skills tuition) will not be available to them until they return to study.

- 2.9. Students staying in accommodation provided by the [Graduate Accommodation Office](#) should contact the office about whether they can remain in their current accommodation and the implications their suspension of status may have on entering into a new tenancy agreement. Students staying in college accommodation should contact their college.
- 2.10. More information for students on access to facilities and resources during a period of suspension is available at [Changes in student status](#).
- 2.11. Suspension of status will not always be the best option for all students, and consideration where appropriate should be given to the other options covered in this guidance, such as an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study, or for adjusting milestone and maximum submission deadlines. In some cases, where there is no prospect in the foreseeable future of a student being able to study to any significant extent, withdrawal, with a potential future application for reinstatement, is likely to be the best option.

Fees, funding and visa implications of suspension of status

- 2.12. If students are funded by a University or college scholarship, Research Council, or another body such as a charity, they may need to make a separate application to their funder for suspension of status, and will need to comply with that body's requirements for suspension, which may not be the same as those of the University course. They should check for any instructions in their scholarship/funding offer letter documents, and seek advice from the graduate studies administrator in their department/faculty.
- 2.13. Students receiving loans to fund their studies should also seek advice on the implications for their funding of suspension of status. Students in receipt of UK government doctoral or Masters loans can seek advice from the [Student Fees and Funding team](#). Students in receipt of US federal loans must inform the [US loans team](#) if they are considering suspension of status. [Guidance](#) for these students is available.
- 2.14. All students should consider the fees implications of suspension of status. Information on when [refunds](#) are available due to suspension of status is available. Students should bear in mind that fees and continuation charges [usually increase annually](#); students will be liable for any increased fee/charge applicable to when they return from suspension of status.
- 2.15. Students studying on a student visa need to consider the visa implications of suspension of status as their visa may be cancelled. The [Student Visa Compliance team](#) is available to advise students, and guidance is available at [Visa & Immigration – Changes in student status](#).

Suspension of status for health/disability reasons

- 2.16. Students may need to apply to suspend status when it is clear that they are/will be unable to study to any significant extent for a time period, for health reasons. This will be due to health issues affecting them for more than a few weeks, including (but not limited to) exacerbation or change in impact of a disability or long-term health condition. Students should not expect to suspend status for a short period of acute illness.

- 2.17. The need for a student to request to suspend status for health reasons may sometimes be known in advance, e.g. for a planned operation and recovery. On other occasions, it may become clear after a few weeks that a student is experiencing more than short-term health issues and will need to suspend. Please see below for more guidance on the timing of suspension of status/retrospective suspension.
- 2.18. Requests for suspension made for health reasons would normally be expected to be supported by medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional, demonstrating that a student is not expected to be able to study for an extended period of time. If the student can provide medical evidence they already hold which supports the application and the period of time requested, no further evidence may be required.
- 2.19. If a student needs to suspend status due to exacerbation or change in impact of a disability or long-term health condition, and evidence of the condition has already been provided to the University (e.g. to the Disability Advisory Service), it will not always be necessary to provide new medical evidence. When a student wishes to suspend status for this reason, consideration should be given, and the Disability Advisory Service consulted as necessary, as to whether other reasonable adjustments should be considered (i.e. are they unable to study to any significant extent at present, or are they able to study but not at full-time pace?).
- 2.20. Alternative options for students with a disability or long-term health condition may be an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study, or for adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines (either instead of or following a period of suspension of status). Consideration should also be given to what other reasonable adjustments may be required. Please note that student visa holders cannot switch to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies.

Suspension of status for personal/family reasons

- 2.21. Students may need to apply to suspend status because their personal or family circumstances mean that they are unable to commit to study at present. These might include but are not limited to childcare or other caring responsibilities, the impact of bereavement, or the impact of a crime, over an extended time period. Students would not be expected to request suspension of status due to circumstances affecting a period of a few weeks only.
- 2.22. Specific guidance on student maternity, extended paternity and adoption leave is available.
- 2.23. The need for a student to request suspension of status for personal/family reasons may sometimes be known in advance, e.g. if it is known in advance that they will have childcare or other caring responsibilities for a specific time period. On other occasions, it may become clear after a few weeks that a student's circumstances have changed such that they are unable to commit to study and will need to request suspension. Please see below for more guidance on the timing of suspension of status/retrospective suspension.
- 2.24. Evidence to support a suspension of status for personal/family reasons will vary depending on the circumstances. It is appreciated that in some circumstances providing any evidence may be difficult, and that a student may only be able to provide

a statement as part of their application. However, in some cases it may be possible for a student to provide relevant evidence, which could be a statement from someone within the collegiate University aware of the student's circumstances (e.g. a college welfare lead).

- 2.25. Where a student wishes to suspend status due to ongoing personal/family circumstances (e.g. ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities) consideration should be given to as to whether suspension of status is the best option for the student (i.e. are they unable to study to any significant extent at present, or are they able to study but not at full-time pace?).
- 2.26. Alternative options for students who are able to study but not at full-time pace due to their personal/family circumstances may involve an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study, or for adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines (either instead of or following a period of suspension of status). Please note that student visa holders cannot switch to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies.

Suspension of status due to taking up an agreed internship/other employment/studying on another course

- 2.27. Full-time students may need to suspend status because they are taking up an agreed internship or another full-time paid job, or are studying on another course (noting the University's policy on concurrent enrolment in the [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#), section 2.3.4). Suspension of status for these reasons would normally be expected to be planned and agreed at least one term in advance with the department/faculty, with the internship/job/other course lasting at least one term and being necessary/relevant to the PGR programme.
- 2.28. Requests for suspension of status due to taking up an agreed internship/another paid full-time job/studying on another course should be supported by proof of the internship/job/course offer and relevant dates.
- 2.29. Some students will undertake internships, or specific intensive training (e.g. language study), as a planned part of their PGR programme, and are expected/required by their programme/funder to remain on course instead of suspending status while undertaking the internship/training. Students should seek advice from the graduate studies administrator in their department/faculty on the requirements of their programme and funder.
- 2.30. Students studying on a student visa need to consider the visa implications of suspension of status due to taking up an internship/other paid work/studying on another course, and whether they are able to suspend status for this reason. Please contact the [Student Visa Compliance team](#) for advice.

Suspension of status for financial reasons (voluntary)

- 2.31. Students may sometimes choose to suspend status for financial reasons, and may be allowed to do this voluntarily as an alternative to being suspended by the University for non-payment of fees. Students in these circumstances may choose to apply to suspend status in order to take up paid employment. This may be appropriate if the student is able to demonstrate that a time-limited period of full-time paid employment will address the financial issues and enable the student to return to their programme.

- 2.32. The University provides [Paid Work Guidelines for Oxford Graduate Students](#). If a PGR student currently studying full-time wishes to take up paid employment beyond those guidelines on an ongoing basis, and therefore is not able to study at full-time pace, an alternative option may be an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study, or exceptionally for adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines (either instead of or following a period of suspension of status). Please note that student visa holders cannot switch to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies.

Student maternity, extended paternity and adoption leave

- 2.33. The [University Policy on Student Maternity, Extended Paternity and Adoption Leave](#) provides details of the arrangements for students who are about to have or adopt a child. Students are entitled to up to three terms of suspension of status for maternity, extended paternity, or adoption leave. This is calculated separately from the six terms of ordinary suspension of status which boards may permit, and no application for dispensation to Education Committee is required. Further details and guidance are included in the [Policy](#). Students in receipt of scholarship funding should contact their funder as soon as possible to confirm what funding may be available for the period of parental leave. Student visa holders can only suspend for one term for these reasons under Home Office rules.
- 2.34. On return from suspension of status for maternity/extended paternity/adoption leave, some students may be unable to study full-time due to ongoing childcare responsibilities. An application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study, or for adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines should be considered in these circumstances.

Timing of suspension of status/retrospective suspension

- 2.35. Applications for suspension of status should normally be made and approved either in advance of the requested period of suspension, or within a few weeks of the beginning of the requested period, when it becomes clear that a student's circumstances have changed such that they are unable to commit to study and need to suspend.
- 2.36. For example, suspension of status due to a planned operation, a period of caring responsibilities known in advance, or an agreed internship/job/other course should normally be agreed prior to the period of suspension. Suspension of status due to health reasons or personal/family circumstances should be considered as soon as it becomes clear that a student is experiencing more than short-term issues. For example, if a student realises halfway through Hilary term that a health issue which has been affecting them for all/most of the term will not be resolved quickly, it will be appropriate for them to request to suspend status for Hilary term.
- 2.37. It will sometimes take a little more time for it to become clear that a student has not been able to study to any significant extent during a particular term, and to process and approve an application. It will generally be reasonable to consider an application for suspension of status if the application is made during the term for which suspension is requested, even if towards the end of the term, e.g. an application made at the end of Hilary term to suspend status for Hilary term could be approved.

- 2.38. However, very careful consideration should be given to applications for suspension of status made retrospectively, i.e. for a term earlier than the one during which the application is made. Suspension of status is intended to allow students the time to address the circumstances which are preventing them from studying, e.g. to recover from health issues, and retrospective suspension does not allow this. Retrospective suspension also causes difficulties with return to study, as it may not allow for timely consideration of any adjustments required on the student's return.
- 2.39. Retrospective suspension of status should therefore usually only be considered if the end date of the requested period of suspension is still in the future, so that the student has time away from study and so that any arrangements for their return to study can be considered. For example, if suspension of status is requested during Michaelmas term for a period of three terms covering the preceding Trinity term, Michaelmas term and Hilary term, it may be reasonable to approve suspension for the whole period, if it is clear that the student was not able to study to any significant extent during Trinity term as well as during the later terms. Reports by the student and supervisor in [Graduate Supervision Reporting](#) (GSR), as well as the application for suspension of status and supporting evidence, should be taken into account when considering whether the student was able to study to any significant extent during a requested retrospective term of suspension of status. As with all applications for suspension of status, suspension should only be considered for up to three terms at a time.
- 2.40. Exceptionally, it may occasionally be reasonable to approve suspension of status for one or at most two terms prior to the term in which suspension is requested, even if the end date of the requested period of suspension is now in the past. For example, an application may be made in Trinity term for suspension of status for Hilary term, with the student being on course for Trinity term and not requesting suspension for that term.
- 2.41. Such a request could exceptionally be approved if it were clear (taking into account evidence including [GSR](#) reports) that the student was not in practice studying during Hilary term but was able to study during Trinity term. The student would also need to provide evidence to demonstrate that they could not reasonably have sought help (including requesting suspension of status) sooner. Students are expected to progress their own academic studies and to seek help when they encounter difficulties, and failure to do so should be taken into account when deciding whether or not to grant retrospective suspension of status.
- 2.42. In such cases, consideration should also be given as to whether the student is indeed currently able to study, if suspension of status is not requested for the current term. Consideration should also be given as to whether an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study, or for adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines may be appropriate.
- 2.43. Retrospective suspension of status for a term more than a year in the past should not be granted save in the most exceptional cases. For example, suspension of status should not be granted for Michaelmas term 2024 if requested during Michaelmas term 2025. If there are such exceptional circumstances that it is felt that it may be appropriate to grant retrospective suspension of status for a term more than a year in the past, and other options have been considered and deemed unsuitable, the

department/faculty or college should seek advice from the relevant division and/or the [Education Policy Support team](#) before any suspension of status is granted.

- 2.44. It may occasionally become clear that more than a year in the past, a student experienced disruption to their study such that they will not be able to submit their thesis by their maximum submission date. However, retrospective suspension of status should not be used as a means of extending the time available for a student to work on their thesis. If a student needs additional time before submitting due to earlier disruption to their study, an extension of time can be granted. Please see guidance below on [extension of time](#), including guidance on agreeing [prospective extension of time](#).
- 2.45. Suspension of status voids any milestone examination, i.e. Transfer of Status or Confirmation of Status (whether passed or failed) completed during the term(s) for which suspension of status is granted. Whether one of these milestone examinations was completed during the relevant term therefore needs to be checked when considering an application for retrospective suspension of status.
- 2.46. If a student wishes the outcome of a Transfer of Status or Confirmation of Status examination to stand despite being completed during a term for which they were later granted suspension of status, an application to Education Committee for dispensation to permit this should be made. A [form and guidance](#) on submitting dispensation requests are available. Departments/faculties should check with their divisional education officers to see if dispensation requests should be submitted on their behalf by divisions.
- 2.47. Dispensation to permit the milestone examination to stand would be expected to be granted on behalf of Education Committee if work was submitted and the interview took place during the term prior to the student suspending status, but the outcome of the Transfer of Status or Confirmation of Status examination was not approved and processed until the term for which they suspended status.
- 2.48. It may also be possible to grant dispensation on behalf of Education Committee to permit the milestone examination to stand if work was submitted and/or the interview took place early in the term for which the student has suspended status, and the reasons for suspension of status arose after the examination took place.
- 2.49. Suspension of status cannot be granted after a student has submitted their thesis for examination, including for the term in which they submitted their thesis, or for any term prior to this, i.e. a student cannot retrospectively suspend status in order to withdraw their thesis submission. If a student is unable to submit their thesis by their maximum submission date, an application for [extension of time](#) should be made, or, if there is no prospect of them being able to complete the thesis in the foreseeable future, [withdrawal with a potential future application for reinstatement](#) should be considered.
- 2.50. Students funded by University or college scholarships, one of the Research Councils or another body such as a charity, or receiving loans to fund their studies (e.g. US federal loans or UK government doctoral or Masters loans) will need to comply with their funding/loan-granting body's requirements on whether retrospective suspension of status is possible, which may not be the same as those of the University, and should seek guidance on the [funding and visa implications of suspension of status](#) before suspension of status is approved.

- 2.51. In some circumstances, loan funding may need to be repaid. If scholarship stipends have already been paid during the period which is subsequently covered by a retrospective suspension of status, it may not be possible to provide funding for all remaining terms of study, beyond the total terms of funding originally awarded. The provision of any additional funding may involve an application process, so the student should contact their funder for further details.
- 2.52. In particular, students in receipt of US federal loans are strongly advised not to apply for retrospective suspension of status, to avoid a situation in which they inadvertently borrow funds for a period in which they are ineligible to receive these loans. Guidance on retrospective suspension of status for students in receipt of US federal loans is available as part of the University's [US loans team's consumer information](#) (under the R2T4 Policy). Advice should be sought from the [US loans team](#).
- 2.53. All students should bear in mind the fees implications of retrospective suspension of status.

Return to study from suspension of status

- 2.54. Consideration should be given to preparation for a student's return to study (to a greater or lesser extent depending on the reasons for the suspension of status and the length of the suspension). Where a student has suspended status for reasons of health or disability, consideration should be given in advance to any reasonable adjustments which may need to be put in place on their return, with discussions taking place with the [Disability Advisory Service](#) as necessary.
- 2.55. Students who suspended status due to long-term health conditions/disabilities, or due to caring responsibilities, should consider (if they have been studying full-time) whether they are able to return to full-time study, or whether they should apply to transfer to part-time study from full-time study or for adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines. Please note that student visa holders cannot switch to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies.
- 2.56. Where a student does not need to transfer to part-time study on an ongoing basis, or adjust their milestones and maximum submission deadline, they may still benefit from a phased return to study, i.e. studying at a slower pace for an initial period. In some cases they may wish to apply to transfer to part-time study for a limited time, e.g. for one or two terms, with the intention of later returning to full-time study (with permission from Education Committee if necessary for more than one change of mode of study). They may need to apply to defer an upcoming milestone but not all their deadlines.
- 2.57. Where there is no requirement for any formal transfer to part-time study or deferral of a milestone, some students may still wish to agree informally with their supervisor a slower pace of study for an initial period on their return from suspension of status. Such agreements should be recorded in writing (e.g. in [GSR](#) reports) in order to provide evidence for any later deferral of a milestone or extension of time which may be required.
- 2.58. In some cases, consideration will need to be given to a student's fitness to study in advance of their return. The GSO.17 suspension of status application form allows both departments/faculties and colleges to set conditions for return, and the GSO.17a

return from suspension form asks if these conditions have been met, and states that 'In cases where not all conditions have been met, return from suspension must first be discussed and agreed with the relevant body'. Where these conditions relate to fitness to study and there are concerns that conditions have not been met, or other concerns that a student may not be fit to study at present (or not fit to study without adjustments), fitness to study procedures should be followed.

- 2.59. [Fitness to Study procedures](#) for departments/faculties are available, with stages 1 and 2 of the procedures being led by departments/faculties for PGR students, and stage 3 involving referral to the University Fitness to Study Panel. Further guidance on using the procedures is available from [Student Welfare and Support Services](#) or [Education Policy Support](#). Colleges may also have their own fitness to study processes.
- 2.60. Where a department/faculty or college is setting conditions for return at the point of a student's suspension of status, it may be useful, if the conditions are related to the student's health, to consider at that point whether it will be necessary to follow fitness to study procedures on their return. It may also be useful to consider at that point whether it is likely that an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study or for adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines should be pursued in time for their return.
- 2.61. For student parents, the [University Policy on Student Maternity, Extended Paternity and Adoption Leave](#) includes guidance on planning for return to study.
- 2.62. Even where there is no requirement for any adjustments to be made for a student, arrangements may need to be put in place to ensure that they are able to work effectively from the beginning of their return to study. The student and their supervisor(s) should liaise to arrange an early meeting on the student's return, and any meetings with other staff which may be needed. Students may need to receive training and updates on any relevant changes while they were away. For students in laboratory-based subjects, arrangements may need to be made in advance with regards to experiments and access to equipment.

3. Extension of time

- 3.1. Regulations regarding extension of time are set out in the [General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#), the [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Letters](#) and the [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Science by Research](#). For the DPhil, boards may grant up to six terms of extension of time for full-time students, or three terms for part-time students. For the MLitt and MSc (Res), boards may grant up to three terms of extension, for both full and part-time students. Applications to boards for extension of time are made via the [GSO.15 application form](#).
- 3.2. Extension of time can only be granted once a student is approaching their maximum submission date, e.g. as they approach twelve terms of enrolment if they are a full-time DPhil student.
- 3.3. Applications for dispensation exceptionally to permit a further period of extension of time (where a board has already granted the maximum number of terms of extension of time within its authority) are considered by Education Committee (this function is delegated to officers in the Education Policy Support team or to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Chair of Education Committee). A [form and guidance](#) on submitting dispensation requests are available. Departments/faculties should check with their divisional education officers to see if dispensation requests should be submitted on their behalf by divisions.
- 3.4. If a board declines a request for extension of time, the student should be directed to the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#), so that they know how to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.
- 3.5. If Education Committee declines a request for exceptional further extension of time, the student can submit an [appeal](#) against the decision, which is heard by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case. Since appeals must be made within 14 days of the date of the Education Committee decision, it is important that decisions are communicated to students as soon as possible.
- 3.6. Students should plan their research project so that it can be completed within the normal maximum timeframe for their programme (or during their funded period if shorter and specified by their funding body), allowing some leeway for short-term issues, and some vacation time off. However, this will not be possible for some students, and granting extension of time may be appropriate if there is both good reason for a student not having been able to submit their thesis by the normal maximum submission date, and a realistic prospect of them submitting the thesis in the foreseeable future. Reasons for students requiring extension of time may include but are not limited to health issues, family/personal circumstances, or delays to their research caused by difficulties with access to resources, facilities or equipment. Students in medicine and related areas returning to a clinical position before submitting their thesis may also require extension of time.
- 3.7. Applications for extension of time should be made early enough in the term ending with the current maximum submission date, to allow applications to be resolved before the beginning of the requested term of extension of time. Applications should include a plan of work from the student showing how they will complete the thesis in the time requested, and comment from their supervisor on whether the plan is realistic.

- 3.8. Extension of time should normally be granted for one term at a time, even if it appears that the student is likely to need more than one term of extension. This allows for monitoring of their progress and whether their plan of work is realistic.
- 3.9. It may however occasionally be appropriate exceptionally to grant extension for up to a maximum of three terms at a time, if it is apparent that it would be impossible for the student to complete the thesis during one term of extension of time, and there is a realistic plan of work strongly supported by the supervisor to complete the thesis in the time period requested. The student's progress should of course be closely monitored, including via [Graduate Supervision Reporting](#) (GSR).
- 3.10. It may sometimes become apparent that there is no prospect of a student being able to submit their thesis in the foreseeable future, even with extension of time. In these cases, withdrawal, with a potential future application for reinstatement, is likely to be the best option.

Fees, funding and visa implications of extension of time

- 3.11. Students will normally be liable for [continuation charges](#) (the University Continuation Charge and College Continuation Charge) for each term of extension of time. Where extension of time is directly due to health or disability reasons, application can be made to the [Joint Panel on Remission of Fees](#) for a waiver of the University Continuation Charge. Individual colleges may have separate processes for waivers of the College Continuation Charge.
- 3.12. If students are funded by a University or college scholarship, through a Research Council, or another body such as a charity, they may need to make a separate application to the funding body for any extension of their funding, and will need to comply with that body's requirements for extension, which may not be the same as those of the University. Students should follow any instructions in their scholarship/funding offer letter and can also seek advice from the graduate studies administrator in their department/faculty. It is not guaranteed that any funding can be extended if the period of study is extended.
- 3.13. Students receiving loans to fund their studies should also seek advice on the implications of any extension of time. Students in receipt of UK government doctoral or Masters loans can seek advice from the [Student Fees and Funding team](#). [Guidance](#) for students in receipt of US federal loans is available.
- 3.14. Students receiving Disabled Students' Allowance should contact the [Disability Advisory Service](#) to establish whether there are implications of any extension of time for which funding body will pay for any disability-related study support.
- 3.15. Students studying on a student visa need to plan ahead for the timing for a new visa application, if the extension of time goes past their current visa end date, and for a new [ATAS](#) application if required. The [Student Visa Compliance team](#) is available to advise students, and guidance is available at [Visa & Immigration – Changes in student status](#).

Extension of time for health/disability reasons

- 3.16. Students may sometimes be unable to submit their thesis by the normal maximum submission date for reasons of health or disability. Where students are unable to study to any significant extent for a period of time due to health reasons, including exacerbation or change in impact of a disability or long-term health condition, this

should be addressed by granting suspension of status where appropriate. Where students are unable to study at full-time pace due to disabilities or long-term health conditions, this should normally be addressed before they reach their maximum submission date, by an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study or for adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines. However, there are some occasions where it is appropriate to grant extension of time for health/disability reasons.

- 3.17. There may be occasions where a need for a student to study at less than full-time pace due to disabilities or long-term health conditions becomes apparent once they have reached their maximum submission date. If a student has already reached their maximum submission date, it is not in their interest to transfer to part-time study, because boards may grant up to six terms of extension of time for full-time DPhil students, but three terms for part-time DPhil students. They should instead be granted extension of time, to give them the extra time they need to complete their thesis. The approximate rate at which they are working (e.g. studying at 50% rate) should be recorded in applications for extension of time, to provide evidence that they are effectively studying part-time, if an application later needs to be made to Education Committee for exceptional further extension of time.
- 3.18. There may also be occasions where it is accepted that a student's study was disrupted for health reasons at an earlier stage in their programme, and that they were unable to study to any significant extent for a time period, but it is now too late to suspend status retrospectively. In such cases, students may need to be granted extension of time once they have reached their maximum submission date, based on the time lost earlier in the programme. This extension of time could be agreed in advance, as soon as it is clear that it will be needed (see guidance on prospective extension of time below).
- 3.19. Requests for extension of time made for health reasons would normally be expected to be supported by medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional. This may be evidence dating from the time of disruption of study earlier in the programme. If a student needs extension of time due to a disability or long-term health condition, and evidence of the condition has already been provided to the University (e.g. to the [Disability Advisory Service](#)), it will not always be necessary to provide new medical evidence.
- 3.20. Consideration should also be given to whether the student requires any other reasonable adjustments, including adjustments for their viva.

Extension of time for personal/family reasons

- 3.21. Students might sometimes be unable to submit their thesis by the normal maximum submission date due to personal/family circumstances. These might include but are not limited to childcare or other caring responsibilities, the impact of bereavement, or the impact of a crime, over an extended time period.
- 3.22. Where students are unable to study to any significant extent for a period of time for personal/family reasons, this should be addressed by granting suspension of status. Where students are unable to study at full-time pace for such reasons, this should normally be addressed before they reach their maximum submission date, by a transfer to part-time study from full-time study or adjustments to their milestone and maximum submission deadlines (please note that student visa holders cannot switch

to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies). However, there are some occasions where it is appropriate to grant extension of time due to personal/family circumstances.

- 3.23. There may be occasions where a need for a student to study at less than full-time pace due to personal/family circumstances becomes apparent once they have reached their maximum submission date (usually this will be due to childcare or other caring responsibilities). If a student has already reached their maximum submission date, it is not in their interest to transfer to part-time study, because boards may grant up to six terms of extension of time for full-time DPhil students, but three terms for part-time DPhil students. They should instead be granted extension of time, to give them the extra time they need to complete their thesis. The approximate rate at which they are working (e.g. studying at 50% rate) should be recorded in applications for extension of time, to provide evidence that they are effectively studying part-time, if an application later needs to be made to Education Committee for exceptional further extension of time.
- 3.24. There may also be occasions where it is accepted that a student's study was disrupted for personal/family reasons at an earlier stage in their programme, and that they were unable to study to any significant extent for a time period, but it is now too late to suspend status retrospectively. In such cases, students may need to be granted extension of time once they have reached their maximum submission date, based on the time lost earlier in the programme. This extension of time could be agreed in advance, as soon as it is clear that it will be needed (see guidance on prospective extension of time).
- 3.25. Evidence to support an extension of time for personal/family reasons will vary depending on the circumstances. It is appreciated that in some circumstances providing any evidence may be difficult, and that a student may only be able to provide a statement as part of their application. However, in some cases it may be possible for a student to provide relevant evidence, which could be a statement from someone within the collegiate University aware of the student's circumstances (e.g. a college welfare lead).

Extension of time for research-related reasons

- 3.26. Students may sometimes be unable to submit their thesis by the normal maximum submission date due to delays to their research outside of their control. Students should of course plan their research project so that it can be completed within the normal maximum timeframe for their programme, allowing some leeway for short-term issues. However, some students will experience more significant unplanned delays.
- 3.27. Where such delays mean that students are unable to study to any significant extent for a period of time, this should be addressed by granting suspension of status. However, some students will be able to continue studying but will experience delays and disruption meaning that they require extension of time.
- 3.28. Such delays to research will generally take place earlier in the programme, well before a student's maximum submission date. If it is clear that the delays were significant enough that extension of time will be required, this could be agreed in advance, as soon as it is clear that it will be needed (see guidance on prospective extension of time).

- 3.29. Delays to research outside a student's control which might lead to an extension of time could include difficulties with access to resources, facilities or equipment necessary to their research. This could include delays in gaining access to archives or to specialist laboratory equipment, or difficulties with the equipment. Other delays could involve unplanned issues with fieldwork or in gaining access to research participants (including visa-related delays for fieldwork abroad, or delays in obtaining [ethics approval](#)).
- 3.30. Delays outside a student's control may also occur due to disruption to their supervisory arrangements. As set out in the [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#) (section 4.4.6), supervisors should avoid absence on leave without appropriate temporary supervision being arranged, and leave will not normally be approved without such arrangements being in place. However, there may sometimes be unplanned supervisory absences, and if there are any significant delays in making other arrangements for their students, some students may require extension of time if a lack of supervision has caused delays to their research. If a student is exceptionally without supervision for all or most of a term, it should be considered whether suspension of status for that term is most appropriate.
- 3.31. Applications for extension of time due to delays to research outside a student's control should include confirmation of the delays from the student's supervisor(s). Delays should be recorded via [Graduate Supervision Reporting](#) (GSR) at the time of the disruption, to provide evidence for any future extension of time required.
- 3.32. Some PGR students in medicine and related areas will have taken leave of absence from a clinical position in order to complete their degree, but may need to return to this position before submitting their thesis. Applications for extension of time due to return to a clinical position should include a plan of work from the student showing how they will complete the thesis in the time requested, and comment from their supervisor on whether the plan is realistic, taking into account their work commitments.

Timing of applications for extension of time/prospective extension of time

- 3.33. While extension of time can only be granted once a student has reached their maximum submission date, it will usually be clear before this that a student will require extension of time. Applications should be made early enough in the term ending with the current maximum submission date, to allow them to be resolved before the beginning of the requested term of extension of time. This is important in order to ensure that accurate maximum submission dates are recorded in the student records and examination management systems.
- 3.34. Students and supervisors should discuss any potential need for extension of time as soon as it becomes apparent that this may be required, and should record such discussions via [Graduate Supervision Reporting](#) (GSR). Students are asked to provide their proposed timetable to submission when applying for Confirmation of Status, and should indicate if they believe at that point that extension of time is likely to be needed.
- 3.35. Students can be informed that such evidence from [GSR](#) and Confirmation of Status applications will be taken into account if an application for extension of time is made once they are about to reach their maximum submission date. However, in some cases it will be clear that a student will definitely require extension of time due to earlier disruption to study, and they would like certainty that this will be granted in the future. This situation may arise in particular when it is accepted that a student's study

has been disrupted, and that they were unable to study to any significant extent for a time period, but it is now too late to suspend status retrospectively. It may also arise if a student lost study time due to an agreed internship for which they could not suspend status, e.g. due to funder requirements.

- 3.36. In such cases, departments/faculties and colleges should consider agreeing in writing in advance that an extension of time will be granted once the student reaches their normal maximum submission date, instead of granting retrospective suspension beyond the parameters set out in this guidance.
- 3.37. Discussion should take place between the student, supervisor(s), department/faculty and college before such an agreement of prospective extension of time is made. Evidence of the disruption which has led to the extension of time being required should be considered at this point. A written record of the agreement should be sent to all parties (an e-mail from or on behalf of the Director of Graduate Studies in the student's department/faculty will suffice), clearly stating that the student will be granted an extension of time for a specific term(s) once they have reached their maximum submission date. The agreement should also be recorded via [Graduate Supervision Reporting](#) (GSR).
- 3.38. Once the student's normal maximum submission date is approaching, discussion should take place to check that they would still like to receive the previously agreed extension of time, or whether they will now be able to submit to the normal deadline (reassuring them that they will receive the extension if they wish). If they confirm that they do still want to receive the extension of time, it can then be formally processed and approved via the [GSO.15 application form](#). The written agreement should be attached to this application form, but no other evidence should be required at this point, as it will have been considered when the agreement was made.
- 3.39. A term of extension of time agreed prospectively counts towards the maximum number of terms of extension of time for which a student can apply. Further terms of extension of time can be requested if required.
- 3.40. Students may sometimes express concerns regarding being liable for [continuation charges](#), if they are granted extension of time as opposed to retrospective suspension of status. They should be made aware that fees [usually increase annually](#) and that they would be liable for any increased fee applicable to when they return from suspension of status; there are therefore financial implications of both suspension of status and extension of time. Where extension of time is directly due to health or disability reasons, application can be made to the [Joint Panel on Remission of Fees](#) for a waiver of the University Continuation Charge. Individual colleges may have separate processes for waivers of the College Continuation Charge.

Two week divisional extensions

- 3.41. Divisions and the Department for Continuing Education (OUDCE) are able to grant short exceptional extensions to a student's maximum submission date of up to two weeks, without any requirement for an extension of time application via the [GSO.15 application form](#). These divisional extensions are designed for unexpected acute circumstances which arise as a student is about to submit, and mean that they cannot submit by their maximum submission date, but are able to submit within a maximum of two weeks of that date.

- 3.42. Divisions/OU DCE should ensure there is a process (which can be light-touch) for granting these short extensions (likely to involve students contacting their graduate studies administrator who will contact the divisional office). Reasons for granting these extensions include but are not limited to acute illness (or flare-up of a long-term condition) just before the submission date, affecting the student or someone for whom they have caring responsibilities; last-minute technical/computer problems; or acute illness or similar affecting the student's supervisor(s), if this means a short delay to them reading a final draft of the thesis which then slightly delays the student submitting.
- 3.43. Students should plan to submit by their maximum submission date, and should not assume that they can work to a deadline of two weeks later than this. These divisional extensions are designed to address unplanned short-term issues arising in the days before the submission date, where a student was otherwise on track to submit on time.
- 3.44. When a student is granted a divisional extension of up to two weeks, they should be recorded as having submitted to their maximum submission date, i.e. by the end of their final term, rather than during the following term (e.g. a student due to submit by the end of Michaelmas term 2024 who is granted a two week extension and therefore submits early in Hilary term 2025 should be recorded as having submitted by the end of Michaelmas term 2024). Students are therefore not liable for fees/continuation charges for the following term.
- 3.45. A student's college should be informed when they are granted a divisional extension of up to two weeks, to ensure that the student is not made liable for the College Continuation Charge for the following term.
- 3.46. Students cannot receive divisional extensions of more than two weeks. If they are unable to submit after a two week extension, they will need to apply for a full term of extension of time via the [GSO.15 application form](#) in the usual way; it is not possible to receive extensions of greater than two weeks but less than a term.

4. Transfer to part-time study from full-time study

- 4.1. If a research degree programme is offered on both a full-time and part-time basis, boards are permitted to grant permission for a student to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time (and vice versa) **once** during their studies, except where the special regulations for the course prohibit any change. Applications to the board for change of mode of study are made via the [GSO.4 application form](#).
- 4.2. Applications for a student to change mode of study for a second or subsequent time, or to approve a transfer from full-time study to part-time study where a programme is offered only on a full-time basis, are considered as dispensation requests by Education Committee (this function is delegated to officers in the Education Policy Support team or to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Chair of Education Committee). A [form and guidance](#) on submitting dispensation requests to Education Committee are available.
- 4.3. If a board declines a request for a change of mode of study, the student should be directed to the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#), so that they know how to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.
- 4.4. If Education Committee declines a request for a further change of mode of study, or for a transfer from full-time to part-time study where a programme is offered only on a full-time basis, the student can submit an [appeal](#) against the decision, which is heard by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case. Since appeals must be made within 14 days of the date of the Education Committee decision, it is important that decisions are communicated to students as soon as possible.
- 4.5. A transfer from full-time to part-time study is likely to be the best solution for a student if it becomes clear that they are unable to study at full-time pace on a long-term or permanent basis, due to disability or long-term health condition, or personal/family circumstances (usually ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities), but are able to study on a part-time basis.
- 4.6. Part-time study may also be appropriate if a student's circumstances have changed such that they need to take up paid employment beyond the parameters set out for full-time students in [Paid Work Guidelines for Oxford Graduate Students](#). This might include employment by the University or a partner, related to their research.
- 4.7. Applications to transfer from full-time to part-time study due to disability or long-term health condition should normally be supported either by an updated Student Support Plan or statement in support from the [Disability Advisory Service](#), or by medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional demonstrating that a student is unable to study at full-time pace. Further medical evidence is not normally required if the request is supported by the [Disability Advisory Service](#) and evidence has previously been supplied to them. Consideration should also be given as to whether the student requires any other [reasonable adjustments](#).
- 4.8. Applications to transfer from full-time to part-time study due to personal/family circumstances (usually ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities) should be supported by a statement from the student. It would also be appropriate if available to

provide a statement from someone within the collegiate University who is aware of the student's situation (e.g. a college welfare lead).

- 4.9. Applications to transfer from full-time to part-time study for employment reasons should be supported by evidence of employment and a statement from the student.
- 4.10. Applications to transfer from full-time to part-time study due to disability or long-term health condition, or ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities would normally be expected to be approved by the board, as long as it is clear that a student is unable to study full-time but is able to study part-time. Where a board has the power to approve an application of this kind due to the programme being offered on a part-time basis, but considers that it should not be approved, advice should be sought from the relevant division or if necessary the [Education Policy Support team](#). Where Education Committee needs to approve a transfer to part-time study but the board does not support a request of this type, the application should be sent to Education Committee with a statement explaining why it is not supported by the board.
- 4.11. Applications made for employment reasons should demonstrate that it is realistic, and supported by the supervisor, for the student to study and complete their programme on a part-time basis alongside paid employment.
- 4.12. When a student wishes to change mode of study for a second or subsequent time, e.g. if they wish to transfer back to full-time study having previously transferred from full-time to part-time study, there should be discussion between the department/faculty, college and student as to whether this is the best option, before making the necessary application to Education Committee. If the application is not supported by the department/faculty and/or college, but the student wishes it to be considered, it should be passed on for a decision to be made on behalf of Education Committee.
- 4.13. A transfer back to full-time study may be appropriate if the student's circumstances have changed such that they are now able to study full-time again, e.g. their health has improved, they no longer have caring responsibilities, or their employment situation has changed. In some cases, it may be that a student is now able to study at greater than part-time (0.5 FTE) pace, but is not able to study at full-time pace, and therefore consideration should be given instead to an application to exceptionally adjust their milestone and maximum submission deadlines.
- 4.14. If a student has already reached their maximum submission date, it is not in their interest to transfer to part-time study, because boards may grant up to six terms of extension of time for full-time DPhil students, but three terms for part-time DPhil students. Where a need for a student to study at less than full-time pace becomes apparent once they have reached their maximum submission date, they should instead be granted extension of time, to give them the extra time they need to complete their thesis. The approximate rate at which they are working (e.g. studying at 0.5 FTE rate) should be recorded in applications for extension of time, to provide evidence that they are effectively studying part-time, if an application later needs to be made to Education Committee for exceptional further extension of time.
- 4.15. It may sometimes become apparent following a transfer to part-time study that a student is still unable to study to any significant extent for the foreseeable future. In these cases, withdrawal from the programme, with a potential application for reinstatement in future, is likely to be the best option.

Fees, funding and visa implications of transfer to part-time study

- 4.16. Students will be liable for fees/continuation charges at the part-time rate if they transfer to part-time study. It is best practice to remind them that fees/charges [usually increase annually](#).
- 4.17. If students are funded by a University or college scholarship, through a Research Council, or another body such as a charity, they will need to make a separate application to the funding body for transfer to part-time study, and will need to comply with that body's requirements for such a transfer, which may not be the same as those of the University. Students should follow any instructions in their scholarship/funding offer letter and can also seek advice from the graduate studies administrator in their department/faculty. They should also seek advice regarding any plan to transfer back to full-time study. It is not guaranteed that any funding can be adjusted in line with changes to/from part-time.
- 4.18. Students receiving loans to fund their studies should also seek advice on the implications for their funding of a transfer to part-time study (or a transfer back from part-time study to full-time study). Students in receipt of UK government doctoral or Masters loans can seek advice from the [Student Fees and Funding team](#). Students in receipt of US federal loans must inform the [US loans team](#) if they transfer from full-time to part-time study or vice versa. [Guidance](#) for these students is available.
- 4.19. Student visa holders cannot switch to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies. The [Student Visa Compliance team](#) is available to advise students, and guidance is available at [Visa & Immigration – Changes in student status](#).

5. Adjusting milestone and maximum submission deadlines

- 5.1. Some students may be unable for good reason (normally disability or long-term health condition, or ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities) to study at full-time pace on a long-term or permanent basis, but are able to study at substantially greater than part-time (0.5 FTE) pace, and therefore transfer to part-time study from full-time study does not seem appropriate. In such cases, application by way of a dispensation request can be made to Education Committee for a student's milestone (Transfer of Status and Confirmation of Status) and maximum submission deadlines exceptionally to be adjusted in advance (rather than via deferral of Transfer or Confirmation of Status, or extension of time).
- 5.2. A [form and guidance](#) on submitting dispensation requests to Education Committee are available (departments/faculties should check with their divisional education officers to see if dispensation requests should be submitted on their behalf by divisions). This function is delegated to officers in the Education Policy Support team or to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Chair of Education Committee. If Education Committee declines a request for adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines, the student can submit an [appeal](#) against the decision, which is heard by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case. Since appeals must be made within 14 days of the date of the Education Committee decision, it is important that decisions are communicated to students as soon as possible.
- 5.3. Exceptional adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines are likely to be the best solution for a student if it becomes clear that they are unable for good reason to study at full-time pace on a long-term or permanent basis but are able to study at substantially greater than part-time (0.5 FTE) pace. Such students will not need the amount of extra time gained from a transfer to part-time study, or wish to extend the length of their degree programme to such an extent, but will be unable to submit by the normal maximum submission date of a full-time student. This will normally be due to disability or long-term health condition, ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities, or very occasionally employment reasons.
- 5.4. Students studying at less than full-time pace but substantially greater than part-time (0.5 FTE) pace could be granted deferral of Transfer and Confirmation of Status and extension of time in order to give them the extra time they need to complete their programme. Applications for such deferrals of milestones and extension of time can only be made once a student is approaching the milestone deadline or maximum submission date. However, if it is clear from earlier in their programme that a student is unable to study at full-time pace, for good reason (normally disability or long-term health condition, or ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities), it is likely to be more appropriate to adjust their milestone and maximum submission deadlines in advance.
- 5.5. Students who are granted adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines remain enrolled as full-time students.
- 5.6. Applications to exceptionally adjust milestone and maximum submission deadlines can be made at any time from the beginning of a student's programme, once it is clear that they are unable for good reason to study at full-time pace on a long-term/permanent basis. They can also be made at a later stage; for example, a request to adjust the

Confirmation of Status and maximum submission deadlines can be made after a student has passed Transfer of Status. If it only becomes clear that a student is unable to study at full-time pace after they have reached their maximum submission date, it is likely to be possible to address the situation by granting terms of extension of time.

- 5.7. Applications to exceptionally adjust milestone and maximum submission deadlines due to disability or long-term health condition should normally be supported either by an updated Student Support Plan or statement in support from the [Disability Advisory Service](#), or by medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional demonstrating that a student is unable to study at full-time pace. Further medical evidence is not normally required if the request is supported by the [Disability Advisory Service](#) and evidence has previously been supplied to them. Consideration should also be given as to whether the student requires any other reasonable adjustments.
- 5.8. Applications to exceptionally adjust milestone and maximum submission deadlines due to personal/family circumstances (this will normally be ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities) should be supported by a statement from the student. It would also be appropriate if available to provide a statement from someone within the collegiate University who is aware of the student's situation (e.g. a college welfare lead).
- 5.9. Applications to exceptionally adjust milestone and maximum submission deadlines for employment reasons should be supported by evidence of employment and a statement from the student.
- 5.10. A first application to adjust milestone and maximum submission deadlines due to disability or long-term health condition or ongoing childcare or other caring responsibilities, which is supported by appropriate evidence, would normally be approved by Education Committee, as long as it is clear that a student is unable to study at full-time pace on a long-term/permanent basis but is able to study with adjusted deadlines.
- 5.11. Applications to adjust milestone and maximum submission deadlines for employment reasons would be expected to be very rare, and are most likely to be approved if the student is employed by the University or a partner in work related to their study. Such applications should demonstrate that it is realistic, with the support of the supervisor, for the student to study and complete their programme alongside paid employment, with the adjusted deadlines.
- 5.12. It may sometimes become apparent, after adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines have been granted, that a student is unable to work to these deadlines. If they have not yet reached their (adjusted) maximum submission date and are able to study at part-time (0.5 FTE) pace, an application for transfer to part-time study from full-time study should be considered. If they are still able to work at substantially more than 0.5FTE but at a lower intensity than previously envisaged, or if they have reached their maximum submission date, a further application, supported by appropriate evidence, can be made to Education Committee for a further adjustment to the deadlines, demonstrating that the student is now studying at a slower pace than accounted for by the original adjustments. Such applications will be exceptional.

- 5.13. If a student is unable to study to any significant extent for the foreseeable future, withdrawal from the programme, with a potential application for reinstatement in future, is likely to be the best option.

Fees, funding and visa implications of adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines

- 5.14. Since students who are granted adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines remain enrolled as full-time students, they remain liable for full-time fees/continuation charges. Once they reach the end of their fee liability and are liable for the [University Continuation Charge \(UCC\)](#), application can be made to the [Joint Panel on Remission of Fees](#) for a waiver of the UCC for an appropriate number of terms, to reflect their rate of study. Individual colleges may have separate processes for waivers of the College Continuation Charge.
- 5.15. If students are funded by a University or college scholarship, through a Research Council, or another body such as a charity, they may need to make a separate application to the funding body for any extension to their funding due to extending their time on course, and will need to comply with that body's requirements, which may not be the same as those of the University. Students should follow any guidance in their funding offer letter, and can also seek advice from the graduate studies administrator in their department/faculty. It is not guaranteed that funding would be extended in line with any extension to the study period.
- 5.16. Students receiving loans to fund their studies should also seek advice on the implications for their funding of extending their time on course due to adjustments to deadlines. Students in receipt of UK government doctoral or Masters loans can seek advice from the [Student Fees and Funding team](#). Students in receipt of US federal loans should seek advice from the [US loans team](#). [Guidance](#) for these students is available.
- 5.17. Students receiving Disabled Students' Allowance should contact the [Disability Advisory Service](#) to establish whether there are implications of extending their time on course for which funding body will pay for any disability-related study support.
- 5.18. Students studying on a student visa need to consider the visa implications of extending their time on course due to adjustments to deadlines and whether this is possible for them under Home Office rules. If they require a visa extension they need to plan in advance for the timing and for a new [ATAS](#) application if required. The [Student Visa Compliance team](#) is available to advise students, and guidance is available at [Visa & Immigration – Changes in student status](#).

6. Reasonable adjustments for disabled PGR students

- 6.1. The options set out in the preceding sections of this guidance may often be used by disabled PGR students. [Guidance for staff on supporting disabled students](#) is available. Where a disabled student experiences, or would experience, a substantial disadvantage in comparison to students who are not disabled, the University is under a duty to make [reasonable adjustments](#) to avoid that disadvantage, and has an [anticipatory duty](#) not just to respond to individual student needs, but to anticipate needs wherever possible and respond appropriately.
- 6.2. Adjustments for disabled PGR students may include the options set out in this guidance of an application for [transfer to part-time study from full-time study](#) even when the programme is normally only offered on a full-time basis; and of an application for [adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines](#) (in advance, rather than via deferral of Transfer or Confirmation of Status, or extension of time), where a student is unable to study at full-time pace on a long-term or permanent basis, but is able to study at substantially greater than part-time (0.5 FTE) pace, and therefore transfer to part-time study does not seem appropriate. The availability of these options should be highlighted and offered proactively to students who are likely to benefit from them. Please note that student visa holders cannot switch to part-time status on their current visa, and it is not usually possible to sponsor them for a visa for part-time studies.
- 6.3. Disabled PGR students should be encouraged to register with the [Disability Advisory Service](#) (DAS) if they have not done so already, but a student does not need to have been referred to or be registered with DAS to apply for the above adjustments (they would need other medical evidence in support of their application if they were not able to provide DAS support for the request).
- 6.4. DAS can offer students individual support including agreeing a [Student Support Plan](#). However, many reasonable adjustments should be put in place and arranged proactively by a student's department/faculty, under the University's [anticipatory duty](#). [Guidance on reasonable adjustments for research students](#) is available.
- 6.5. PGR students can be granted adjustments to their examinations (i.e. Transfer and Confirmation of Status interviews, and final viva) due to disability. Applications for adjustments are made via the [GSO.19 form](#). Form [GSO.19c](#) gives information on the application process for students and staff. Applications can be made at any time from offer to submission, and the availability of adjustments and the process to follow should be communicated proactively to PGR students who are likely to benefit from them.
- 6.6. Guidance on adjustments to PGR vivas and milestone interviews is available as Annex C of the [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#). This includes:
 - general adjustments that will remove barriers for all disabled candidates: it is recommended that over time departments seek to embed these arrangements routinely as inclusive practice that will eliminate the need for special requests;
 - individual adjustments which it is appropriate to offer all disabled candidates;
 - additional individual adjustments appropriate for particular disabilities.

7. Withdrawal and application for reinstatement

- 7.1. Regulations regarding withdrawal and application for reinstatement are set out in the [General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#), [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Letters](#), and [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Science by Research](#) and for Probationer Research Students, in the [General Regulations governing Research Degrees](#). The [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#) provides more detail (section 2.3.2).

Withdrawal

- 7.2. Withdrawal from the programme, with a potential future [application for reinstatement](#) within the permitted timeframe, is likely to be the best option for a student where they are unable to study to any significant extent for the foreseeable future and/or have run out of time on their course (once other options have been considered). In particular, withdrawal should be considered when other appropriate options (such as applications for [suspension of status](#) for a specific period, [extension of time](#), a [transfer to part-time study from full-time study](#), or exceptional [adjustments to milestone and maximum submission deadlines](#)) have already been utilised or considered, but the student is still unable to study. Notification of withdrawal is made via the [GSO.29 form](#).
- 7.3. Once a student's enrolment has been withdrawn, they are no longer registered as a student of the University and do not have access to University facilities or services, including University card and Single Sign On (SSO) access to online resources and email. Withdrawal is not a punitive process, but a reflection of the fact that a student is not able to engage with their studies at the current time, and that therefore an ongoing relationship with the University is not appropriate.
- 7.4. If a student does not wish to withdraw from their programme, but is unable to meet an upcoming milestone or submission deadline, and it does not appear that further deferral of the Transfer or Confirmation of Status deadline, or extension of time, would realistically enable them to submit (and other options have been considered), then the application for deferral, or for extension of time, can be declined. This would result in them being withdrawn from their programme due to not having met the deadline.
- 7.5. If a board declines an application for deferral or for extension of time, resulting in the student's withdrawal from the programme, the student should be directed to the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#), so that they know how to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision. Departments/faculties should seek advice as appropriate from their division or if necessary the [Education Policy Support team](#). If Education Committee (i.e., through delegated authority, officers in the Education Policy Support team or the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Chair of Education Committee) declines a request for an exceptional further deferral, or for exceptional further extension of time, the student can submit an [appeal](#) against the decision, which is heard by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case. Since appeals must be made within 14 days of the date of the Education Committee decision, it is important that decisions are communicated to students as soon as possible.

Application for reinstatement

- 7.6. When a former student has resolved the issues, which prevented them from studying and led to their withdrawal from their programme, they can apply to reinstate their status on the graduate register. In the majority of cases this should be when they are ready to submit their thesis. If a former student wishes to apply for reinstatement, they are responsible for resourcing this and the University is under no obligation to provide supervision. The University's responsibility in this situation is limited to advising on and assisting with the process of reinstatement.
- 7.7. The relevant board may grant permission for reinstatement provided that no more than twenty-four months have passed since the former student's enrolment was withdrawn, **and** that they had not already, before withdrawal, spent the maximum permitted number of terms (plus permitted extension of time) on course (i.e. eighteen terms for a full-time DPhil student). Applications for reinstatement are made via the [GSO.23 application form](#).
- 7.8. Applications for dispensation exceptionally to permit reinstatement which cannot be granted by the relevant board are considered by Education Committee. This function is delegated to officers in the Education Policy Support team or to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Chair of Education Committee. A [form and guidance](#) on submitting dispensation requests are available. Departments/faculties should check with their divisional education officers to see if dispensation requests should be submitted on their behalf by divisions. If Education Committee declines the request, the former student can submit an [appeal](#) against the decision, which is heard by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case. Since appeals must be made within 14 days of the date of the Education Committee decision, it is important that decisions are communicated to students as soon as possible.
- 7.9. Applications for reinstatement should be supported by the former student's college and their former supervisor. The candidate's application should include a clear work plan and timetable, which should be endorsed by the former supervisor, so that it is clear whether it is realistic for them to be able to submit their thesis for examination within the available time left on the register if granted reinstatement. Where the former supervisor is no longer available, the board will need to appoint an assessor to check on the appropriateness of reinstatement. If the assessment is satisfactory then reasonable steps should be taken to identify a new supervisor for the purposes of submission. If no supervisor is available, the application should normally be declined.
- 7.10. When considering applications for reinstatement, boards should take into account factors such as the currency and validity of the thesis, the availability of appropriate supervision, the amount of work required before submission (if the student is not ready to submit), and whether the former student successfully completed Transfer and Confirmation of Status before their enrolment was withdrawn.
- 7.11. The majority of applications to boards for reinstatement will be made when the former student is now ready to submit their thesis. While reinstatement is not guaranteed, it is usually granted in such cases. Reinstatement will need to be granted for one term for the purposes of submission (an extension of time for one term will also need to be granted by the board if necessary). This will give the student a short time, if they wish,

to finalise their thesis while enrolled, with access to University facilities and to their supervisor.

- 7.12. Applications for reinstatement where a candidate is not yet ready to submit and would need to be re-enrolled for more than one term should be considered very carefully, particularly in terms of whether there is a realistic work plan and timetable to complete the thesis in the time requested (applications will need to be sent to Education Committee if a greater number of terms of extension of time than the board can grant would be required). Such applications are expected to be exceptional and to have strong support from the former supervisor or strong assurance from the department/faculty that a new supervisor can be put in place. Applications should demonstrate that the candidate is now able to engage with their studies successfully. Consideration should also be given where appropriate as to whether the candidate would require any reasonable adjustments on their return, to enable them to complete the programme successfully.
- 7.13. Applications for reinstatement which need to be considered by Education Committee should be passed on after scrutiny by and with the endorsement of the relevant board. Applications should provide all the information required for an application to the board, and also include a statement explaining why it is reasonable for Education Committee to permit reinstatement and outlining the circumstances which have prevented earlier submission. Education Committee will take into account the length of time since the former student's enrolment was withdrawn; the reasons for the delay; and the views of the board, supervisor and college.
- 7.14. Where an application made before the twenty-four month time-limit is supported by all parties and includes assurance that the research is still current, and the former student is now ready to submit, Education Committee will usually grant permission for reinstatement. Applications which need to be considered by Education Committee where the candidate is not yet ready to submit, and would need to be re-enrolled for more than one term, will need very strong support from the board, supervisor and college, and demonstrate why it is now realistic for the former student to return and complete the thesis in the time requested. Applications made after the twenty-four month time-limit will be exceptional, and such applications should include strong assurance from the supervisor and board that the research is still current.
- 7.15. In the exceptional cases where a former student did not pass Confirmation of Status before withdrawal, reinstatement should be made dependent on completion of an assessment equivalent to Confirmation. This assessment should be completed successfully before reinstatement is either granted by the board or an application is made to Education Committee. If reinstatement is granted, an application should then be made to Education Committee for Confirmation of Status to be waived, on the basis that the equivalent assessment was completed successfully before reinstatement. Students in this situation should also have enough terms remaining on course (having not used them before withdrawal) to complete their thesis following reinstatement within the normal time limits (including the terms of extension of time which the board can grant). An exceptional case would need to be made to Education Committee if further extension of time were required.
- 7.16. If a former student did not pass Transfer of Status before withdrawal, a new application for admission will be more appropriate than application for reinstatement. This would, if

admission were granted, allow them a fresh start, with all permitted terms of suspension of status and extension of time being available to them as a new student. If a former student seeks advice about this option, consideration should be given as to whether, if admitted as a new student, they should be advised to apply for particular adjustments, for example whether they should apply to be admitted as a part-time student. It should be noted that if a former student were successful in a new application for admission, fees paid towards their former programme would not count towards their new programme.

Fees, funding and visa implications of reinstatement

- 7.17. In the rare cases where students withdraw before the end of their [fee liability](#) and are then granted reinstatement, they will upon reinstatement become liable for any outstanding fees up to the required maximum for their programme.
- 7.18. More commonly, upon reinstatement students will already have paid the required maximum fee for their programme. They will be liable for [continuation charges](#) for all terms for which they are enrolled following reinstatement. If they have been granted extension of time alongside reinstatement, directly due to health or disability reasons, application can be made to the [Joint Panel on Remission of Fees](#) for a waiver of the University Continuation Charge. Individual colleges may have separate processes for waivers of the College Continuation Charge.
- 7.19. If students were funded by a University or College scholarship, through a Research Council, or another body such as a charity before their withdrawal, and are not reinstating only to submit immediately, they should check any guidance in their funding offer letter. They can also seek advice from the graduate studies administrator in their department/faculty on the availability of any further funding. Students who received loans to fund their studies before withdrawal should also seek advice. Students in receipt of UK government doctoral or Masters loans can seek advice from the [Student Fees and Funding team](#). Students who were in receipt of US federal loans should inform the [US loans team](#) of their reinstatement. [Guidance](#) for these students is available.
- 7.20. Individuals who require a student visa need to consider the visa implications of reinstatement and plan ahead if they need a new visa application or need to make a new [ATAS](#) application for extra time. The [Student Visa Compliance team](#) is available to advise students, and guidance is available at [Visa & Immigration – Changes in student status](#).

8. Useful links and other guidance

The following is a list of links to policy, guidance, regulations, forms and websites which have either been referenced in this document or may also be useful when addressing PGR student changes of circumstance.

a) [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#)

Sets out the framework the University expects to see underpin the provision of its research degrees at Oxford.

b) General examination regulations covering research degree programmes:

[General Regulations Governing Research Degrees](#)

[General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#)

[General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Letters](#)

[General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Science by Research](#)

There are also special regulations for research degrees in different subject areas which can be found from the [Examinations Regulations contents page](#).

c) [Graduate Studies Office \(GSO\) forms](#)

List of and links to GSO forms for exceptional circumstances, including forms for change of mode of study, suspension of status, extension of time, and withdrawal and reinstatement.

Links to GSO forms relating to milestone progression and examination are available on a [separate webpage](#).

Many GSO forms are now available in On Course Applications in eVision. [Guidance for staff](#) on using eVision for these applications is available.

d) [Graduate Supervision Reporting \(GSR\)](#)

GSR is used by graduate students, supervisors, college advisors, and Directors of Graduate Studies to review students' academic progress.

e) [Dispensation applications to Education Committee](#)

Form and guidance for making applications to Education Committee, where what is requested is beyond what the board can grant according to regulations.

Information on [appeals](#) against an Education Committee decision is also available.

The Education Policy Support team can be contacted regarding individual student cases and queries via [e-mail](#).

f) [University Student Complaints Procedure](#)

If a student is dissatisfied with the decision of a board concerning a request for suspension of status, extension of time, or change of mode of study (where such applications are within the remit of the board and cannot be considered by Education

Committee), they should be directed to this Complaints Procedure, so that they know how to make a complaint to the responsible body.

g) [Changes in student status](#)

Includes guidance for graduate students on access to facilities and resources during a period of suspension of status.

h) [Fees and funding](#)

Guidance for students on fees and funding, including [fee liability](#), [continuation charges](#) and [US loans](#).

i) [Joint Panel on Remission of Fees](#)

Information on making applications to the Panel, including requests for fee/continuation charge waivers on health or disability grounds.

j) [UKRI terms and conditions for training funding](#)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) terms and conditions for training funding (including grants for studentships) and related guidance

k) [Changes in student status affecting student visas](#)

Advice for students on the impact of changes to their status on their student visa.

l) [Supporting disabled students](#)

Guidance for staff, including the Common Framework for supporting disabled students, the processes and procedures followed at Oxford, good practice examples, and advice on embedding an inclusive approach.

Includes [guidance on implementing reasonable adjustments and the anticipatory duty](#) and specific guidance on [reasonable adjustments for research students](#).

m) [Disability Advisory Service](#)

Guidance for students on support available.

n) Adjustments for disability for vivas and Transfer and Confirmation of Status interviews

Annex C of the [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#) provides guidance on adjustments to vivas/interviews.

Applications for adjustments are made via the [GSO.19 form](#). Form [GSO.19c](#) gives information on the application process for students and staff.

o) [University Counselling Service](#)

Guidance for staff, covering the Counselling Service, College Counsellors, Link Counsellor Programme, making a referral, and Peer Support Programme.

p) [Counselling and mental health](#)

Guidance for students on support available.

q) [Fitness to Study](#)

Information for staff, including Fitness to Study procedures for departments/faculties. [Information for students](#) is also available.

r) [Student parents](#)

Guidance for students including the University Policy on Student Maternity, Extended Paternity and Adoption Leave.

s) [Student Welfare](#)

Guidance for staff on University support services. Information for students on [wellbeing at Oxford](#) is also available.

t) [Paid Work Guidelines for Oxford Graduate Students](#)

Guidelines which aim to ensure that any paid work undertaken does not adversely affect students' success in their studies or their ability to complete their course on time.