



Interruption of Studies Policy for Doctoral Researchers



Scope: All research programmes leading to an award of City St George's, University of London.

Senate Regulations: Senate Regulation 24.

Summary: This Policy outlines the general principles for an interruption of studies for doctoral researchers.

Date approved/re-approved: July 2025.

Date for review:

To be reviewed by the end of 2028/29 academic year, with allowance for minor updates, as required.

Effective from: 1st of August 2025.

Equality and Diversity Statement

City St Georges, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

Introduction

1. Doctoral researchers may wish to take a break from their studies for a defined period if they have medical conditions or personal reasons which affect their ability to continue with their programme of study.
2. Interruptions of Studies are authorised breaks in periods of study and are managed in accordance with Senate Regulations 23 and 24. This Policy supports the Regulations by outlining the University's approach to Interruptions of Studies.
3. Doctoral researchers studying a programme with a taught element (e.g. MRes plus PhD, DPsych) are subject to the regulations for taught course interruptions of study whilst they are registered on the taught element.
4. The University's Research Degree Framework, Regulations and Policies apply equally to doctoral researchers at partner institutions unless different arrangements have been agreed between the University and the partner institution and have received University approval. Details will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership and in programme handbooks provided to partnership researchers.
5. An interruption of studies will trigger a visa curtailment for international doctoral researchers with a student visa; the researcher must leave the UK for the duration of the interruption of studies and reapply for a visa to re-enter the UK once the interruption is finished. Doctoral researchers are strongly advised to contact the University's Visa Advice Team if they are considering an interruption of studies.

Principles

6. The University expects doctoral researchers to seek advice and guidance from relevant staff (e.g. Supervisors, Senior Tutor for Research) prior to making an application to interrupt their studies. This is to ensure that they are aware of how a break may impact on their studies and to receive advice on whether an interruption is the most appropriate option given their individual circumstances. Where a researcher declares a disability, physical health, welfare or mental health issue, they should be referred to:
 - Student Support for Welfare Support: safeguarding@citystgeorges.ac.uk
 - Learning Success – Disability Support: disability@citystgeorges.ac.uk
 - Student Health and Wellbeing Service: wellbeing@citystgeorges.ac.uk or book an appointment [here](#).
7. Doctoral researchers do not have an automatic right to interrupt their studies. The decision on whether to grant an interruption of studies will be based on their individual circumstances and the potential impact of interruption on the programme of research.
8. An interruption of studies will “stop the clock” on a doctoral researcher's period of registration and will extend their expected end date by the duration of the approved interruption. An interruption of studies may be taken at any stage of the research degree, including in a period of writing-up. No tuition fees will be charged during an interruption and no stipend will be paid.
9. The following examples are circumstances for which a doctoral researcher might seek

an Interruption of Studies:

- a period of persistent or lengthy illness (of four weeks or more) of their own and/or of their dependants;
- serious personal or domestic difficulties;
- an opportunity to take up a temporary, short-term post which can be justified as being highly relevant to their thesis or research training;
- Jury or Military Service;
- Financial Hardship;
- Maternity, Paternity or Adoption Leave (which are not subject to the cumulative limits that apply to other interruptions of study);
- as a reasonable adjustment to support a doctoral researcher with a disability at the recommendation of a medical professional, a disability specialist or the University's professional support services;
- equality issues which arise as a result of the doctoral researcher's protected characteristic(s) under the Equality Act 2010 and where there is a need for City St George's to ensure the researcher is not disproportionately impacted as a result.

10. Changes in registration status required as a result of supervisory difficulties, equipment/software failure, University building works, etc., which are deemed to be outside of the researcher's control, should be considered as part of the Extension to a Period of Candidature Policy.
11. A doctoral researcher may apply for an interruption of study of between 3 and 12 months in the first instance, and for a maximum of two calendar years in total. Where possible, an interruption of studies should align with the University's term or academic year dates. Requests for retrospective Periods of Suspension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and where the researcher can provide a good reason for not disclosing such circumstances sooner. No period of retrospective suspension can be granted to student visa holders.
12. An interruption of study for a period in excess of two calendar years may be granted by the Chair of the Doctoral College Board of Studies subject to the following conditions:
 - i. The period requested will be considered on an annual basis and will not exceed five calendar years from the date when the period of interruption starts;
 - ii. The period of interruption must not result in a project end date that exceeds ten years from the date of original registration;
 - iii. Written assurances that the research will still be valid are provided by the supervisor and/or the Head of Department, with supporting documentation.
13. A doctoral researcher should apply for an interruption of studies using the Interruption of Studies Form available via the online system for doctoral researchers, signed by the researcher, supervisor, Senior Tutor for Research and Secretary to the School Research Degree Programme Committee. The application must include suitable evidence which supports the researcher's application.
14. Applications for Interruptions of Study will be approved by the Doctoral College Board of Studies upon recommendation from the researcher's Senior Tutor for Research and School Research Programmes Committee. If the Board of Studies does not consider that it has enough evidence to decide, further documentation can be requested from the researcher.

Access to the University

15. Doctoral researchers remain registered with the University whilst they are on a period of interruption, but as they will not be studying on their programme they will receive no supervision. Nor will they be able to:
- attend lectures, seminars and training sessions for doctoral researchers;
 - access University facilities, such as laboratories, libraries or postgraduate research study spaces.
16. Doctoral researchers will normally have limited contact with University staff members whilst interrupting their studies. This is to enable relevant information to be communicated regarding the programme (e.g. programme changes) and to facilitate their return to the programme. Researchers will retain access to their University email account and IT services for this purpose during a period of interruption.

Assessments during the Interruption of Studies

17. Doctoral researchers will not be expected to complete assessments, such as Annual Progress Reviews, during their period of interruption, however, completion of such assessments would be expected following their return, if appropriate.
18. Where the period of an interruption of studies covers the expected deadline for a progression assessment, such as MPhil to PhD transfer or submission of thesis for examination, these deadlines will be extended by the duration of the approved interruption of studies.

Returning to Study

19. Liaison will take place with the doctoral researcher prior to their return to the University to confirm the arrangements for the resumption of study. The supervisory team and/or the Senior Tutor for Research should meet with the researcher to support their return to the programme before re-registration is permitted. Consideration should be given to agreeing a revised research plan upon resumption of studies and/or discussion of the implications of any changes to the programme or regulations during the period of interruption, as appropriate.
20. Doctoral researchers who have been granted an interruption of study for health reasons may be required to produce a letter from a medical practitioner confirming that the researcher is fit to return to studies.
21. Doctoral researchers who fail to re-register after an interruption of studies will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and their candidature will be regarded as having lapsed. A researcher will be advised in writing that their period of candidature has lapsed and may be required to re-apply for admission to candidature before being permitted to continue their research.

Policy Title	
Interruption of Studies Policy for Doctoral Researchers	
Policy Enabling Owner and Department	Responsible for Implementation and Department
Doctoral College Board of Studies	Doctoral College Board of Studies School Research Degree Programme Committees
Approving Body	Date of Approval
Senate upon approval from the Doctoral College Board of Studies	9 th of July 2025
Last Reviewed & Version	Review Due Date
13/05/2020 (Senate) 15/06/2012 (Education Committee) 22/04/2009 (APPSC)	July 2028
Publication of Policy (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	
For public access online (internet)? ☒	For staff access only (intranet)? ☐
Website Link: https://www.citystgeorges.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/doctoral-researcher-policies/_nocache	Intranet Link:
Storage of Policy (<i>Previous versions of the policy must be stored in the drive by the author</i>)	
Drive Address: Doctoral College Documents	
Queries about this policy should be referred to	
Doctoral College doctoralcollege@citystgeorges.ac.uk	