

Guidelines for requesting an extension to the thesis deadline for PhD, MPhil, MD[Res] and EngD candidates

Introduction

1. This document provides guidance to departments and candidates on the university's procedure for requesting an extension to the thesis submission deadline and applies to all students registered on Imperial's postgraduate research programmes.
2. This procedure is to enable candidates to seek an extension to the thesis submission deadline, in cases where circumstances beyond their control has affected progress towards their final submission deadline.

General Principles

3. Imperial requires postgraduate research candidates to submit their thesis for examination within the agreed timeframe noted in the [Academic Regulations](#). This is normally 48 months from the programme start date for full-time candidates, and 72 months from the programme start date for part-time candidates.
4. The thesis deadline extension procedure allows candidates to request an extension to the final thesis submission deadline logged by the university on their central student record. As part of a thesis extension request, candidates are expected to provide details of any circumstances affecting their progress towards their final submission deadline.
5. Prior to the submission of a thesis deadline extension request to the Registry Assessment Records Team, departments are advised to consider whether an Interruption of Study is appropriate and in the best interest of the candidate.
6. For further guidance on the College's Interruption of Study procedure, please refer to the [Guidelines for Interruption of Studies for Research Students](#). Students sponsored by Imperial on a student visa and their supervisors are reminded to contact the International Student Support Office immediately if they are considering taking an interruption.
7. Approval of a thesis deadline extension will extend the candidate's thesis submission deadline and programme registration. **International students sponsored Imperial on a student visa are advised to contact the International Student Support Office if they have any queries about the impact of an extension on their visa.**

8. Approval of a thesis deadline extension will allow candidates to proceed to thesis examination in the usual way, with no detriment to their academic record.
9. Departments are expected to monitor their thesis submission rates against a submission benchmark of 4 years, as part of Imperial's quality assurance and review processes. This benchmark provides an internal mechanism for the university to ensure that there are no underlying issues which are affecting overall student performance within the department. Departments are reminded that theses submitted within an agreed extension period will be recorded as 'late' on Imperial's formal record as far as the university's Performance Indicators are concerned.
10. The department, in consultation with the candidate, should ensure that the proposed new deadline is realistic and achievable for submission. One thesis deadline extension per candidate is expected to be sufficient. Subsequent extension requests may not be approved.

Thesis Deadline Extension Procedure

11. All requests to extend the thesis deadline must be made using the appropriate Thesis Deadline Extension Request Form (accessible via the [Research Degrees – Administration](#) section of the Registry website), and submitted to the Registry's Assessment Records Team for consideration no later than six months from the thesis submission deadline confirmed by the university.
12. All extension requests must include a supporting statement from the candidate's main supervisor. A detailed and agreed plan for completion should accompany the request, along with a proposed new submission deadline as agreed by the candidate and main supervisor.
13. All requests should be submitted in advance of the thesis submission deadline. In cases where this has not been possible, the department will be asked to comment on the circumstances leading to the retrospective extension request.
14. Candidates who have not submitted their thesis for examination by the given deadline, without prior approval for an extension, will be contacted by the Registry Assessment Records Team within a month of non-submission with information regarding any action required. Candidates who fail to submit a Thesis Deadline Extension Request in accordance with this procedure within six months of the confirmed submission deadline will be considered as withdrawn from their programme of study at Imperial.
15. Requests resulting in an extension period of 12 months or more to the candidate's original thesis deadline must be accompanied by an independent statement from an expert in the field confirming that the research is still novel and valid.

16. All thesis deadline extension requests are subject to departmental approval by the Director of Postgraduate Studies. Upon approval, requests must be submitted to the Registry Assessment Records Team for processing.
17. It is expected that most thesis deadline extension requests will be made in the final year of student registration and fee-free writing up period.
18. Candidates not in their fee-free writing up period at the point of thesis extension will by default have their active research period extended at the point of extension request approval and will be liable for full fees for the duration of the additional registration period granted.
19. Entry to the writing up period can also be facilitated during the extended registration period granted, where appropriate. Further information on Imperial's writing up policies can be found here: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/research-degree-examinations/Writing-Up-Procedure.pdf.pdf>
20. In seeking an extension to the thesis deadline, appropriate supporting evidence should be provided by the candidate to their main supervisor and Director of Postgraduate Studies.
21. Any supporting documentation submitted alongside the completed Thesis Deadline Extension Request Form will be held on the candidate's record, in accordance with the College's [retention schedule](#).
22. As nominees of the Director of the Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI), a panel comprising the Deputy Directors (Academic) of ECRI may be required to consider and approve requests, particularly those resulting in an extension period of 12 months or more to the initial thesis submission deadline.
23. Once processed, the confirmed outcome will be communicated to the departmental postgraduate administrator by the Registry Assessment Records Team.
24. All requests for extensions to the thesis submission deadline will be recorded by Imperial. Information relating to all thesis deadline extension requests received will be reported to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee annually.

Appealing the outcome of a thesis deadline extension request

25. Candidates are reminded that failure to submit a thesis deadline extension request within six months of the thesis submission deadline confirmed by the university, or rejection of a retrospective request or extension, may result in withdrawal from the programme.

Policy/Procedure

Guidelines for requesting an extension to the thesis deadline for PhD, MPhil, MD[Res] and EngD candidates.

26. All students required to withdraw have the right of appeal through the Academic Registrar to an Appeal Committee of the Senate. The right of appeal relates only to the withdrawal decision and not to the results of any examination or academic assessment on which the decision may be based.
27. Further information on Imperial's appeal procedures is published on the [Academic Governance](#) pages.

Document Control

Document title:	Guidelines for Late Case Requests for PhD, MPhil, MD[Res] and EngD candidates		
Version:	3	Date:	January 2025
Location and filename:	R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\9. Research Programmes\Late case request guidance		
Approved:	N/A		
Effective from:	July 2016		
Originator:	Assessment Records, Registry		
Contact for queries:	Head of Assessment Records (Registry)		
Cross References:	Thesis Deadline Extension Request Form		
Notes and latest changes:	Amendments made on 25/01/2023 Amendments made on 14/01/2025		