



Guidelines on Deferral for Research Students

Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis, allow for deferral of a half or full academic year. Students and supervisors discussing deferral should consult the regulations as well as these guidelines.

A Deferral is for

- Situations where there are exceptional changes to a student's personal circumstances, or health-related or financial difficulties, which will make it difficult for them to engage with their studies for a substantial period, but where it is likely that they will be able to resume their studies in a reasonable timeframe.

Consultation

- The student should discuss options for managing the situation, including deferral with their principal supervisor. It is the student's decision to apply for a deferral, but it must be supported by his/her supervisor.
- Student Support and Development may also be of assistance in considering options.
- Any sponsoring agency should be consulted, and impact on funding clarified.

Options

- A deferral is in respect of a specific academic year (a full year), or a 6 month period

During a Deferral period

- Participation in the research programme and supervision is suspended.
- Use of University facilities, including library access, is suspended.

Fees

- If deferring a full academic year, which must be done before the date in late October published in the academic calendar, no fees apply.
- If deferring any 6 month period, 60% fees apply to the year most relevant to the deferral period.

Deferral is not appropriate

- For short periods (< 3 months) of interruption to studies.
- To compensate for lack of planning, used to avoid (or spread out) tuition fees. Students must plan how their fees and living costs are to be funded over the course of the project, including the writing up phase.
- To retrospectively 'cancel out' time judged to be unproductive. Principal supervisors and students both have a responsibility to address situations where productivity is low in a timely way.
- To avoid a non-progression recommendation being submitted.
- In situations where it is clear that the student is unlikely to be able to resume studies, and withdrawal is the more appropriate course of action.

Deferral is not necessary

- When a student is leaving DCU, or Ireland, to undertake a placement which is part of their research training.

Depending on period of interruption to studies:

6 month deferral

- Deferral form must be completed in advance
- Any 6 month deferral period can apply, i.e. it can span academic years if necessary
- 60% tuition fees apply in the year in which most of the deferred period falls. No fee adjustment is made to the other academic year's fee.
- Any overpaid fees will remain as a credit on account - or a student may apply for rebate.
- There is no fee to defer

Full academic year deferral

- Deferral is for a full academic year (October - September)
- The student must first register and then submit the completed deferral form to Registry before the October deadline.
- No tuition fees will apply
- Any overpaid fees remain as a credit on account - or a student may apply for rebate
- There is no fee to defer

Deferral should be approved in advance

- Retrospective deferrals will only be considered in exceptional cases where the student was unable, for a valid reason, to engage with the deferral process.
- Retrospective deferrals are limited to a half year deferral, as to do otherwise has implications for the validity of HEA reports and internal budgetary allocations.

Funding implications

- A period of deferral should be discussed with the funder, and clarity gained as to whether funding is to be lost, or a break taken and period of funding extended in this context.
- Because of Revenue rules, stipends cannot be paid during deferral periods.
- Students and supervisors should be aware of possible implications a deferral will have on the funding and other requirements stipulated by the funding body.
- GSO must be notified by the supervisor if a funded student is deferring, and it is the student's responsibility to get a GSO stamp, required on the deferral form.

Visa implications

- Student visas are linked to registration status. Applications for deferral require input from the international office to ensure that authorities have correct information regarding this.

Registration and Annual Review implications

- To defer a full year a student must first register, and then apply to defer the year prior to the deadline in October. In order for this to happen there has to have been a positive PGR2 recommendation to progress.
- While on a 6 month deferral the student must nonetheless engage in the PGR2 process to ensure the possibility of registration into the following year. The PGR2 reports should take into account the fact of deferral.
- For a 6 month deferral, registration will be amended in the most relevant academic year (whichever is most reflective of the period of deferral).

Registration period implications

- The minimum registration period is extended by a period corresponding to the deferral period.
- When returning from deferred year, the student is returned to the same year of study (i.e. if year two is deferred then the student is registered into year two on return).
- Where a student defers 6 months, they will be progressed into the next study period on their return e.g. student defers Jan-June in year 3, will then register for year 4 in the following academic year.

Process

- Discussion between principal supervisor, student and, where relevant, funder and international office.
- A formal application to defer (R-32R) is submitted to Registry. It requires principal supervisor and Head of School support, GSO input in cases of funded students, and international office input for non-EU students.

Returning to DCU after a period of deferral

- The onus is on the student to re-engage with the university after a period of deferral, otherwise registration will cease, and a student would have to formally apply to be re-admitted.

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Graduate Studies Office

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