

DCU

Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Guidelines on Deferrals for Research Students

1. Introduction

There may be situations where a student is required to defer their studies, due to changes in their circumstances, which 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. These may include changes in family or personal circumstances, work commitments, or medium to long-term illness. If these circumstances do not align with your case, please refer to [Guidelines on Suspension of Study 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.

2. Consultation

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

3. Criteria for a deferral of studies

A student may apply for a deferral where there are changes in family or personal circumstances, work commitments or medium to long-term illness, i.e. anything that may impact for more than 3 months. If you are availing of statutory leave, please refer to [Guidelines on Suspension of Study for Research Students](#).

If these circumstances do not align with your case, please refer to [Guidelines on Suspension of Study for Research Students](#).

4. Duration

An application for deferral can be made for half year (6 months) or a full academic year (October to September).

5. Access to University facilities

The student's participation in the research programme is postponed until they return from deferral and the student will not be entitled to supervision or to use the University facilities, including the library.

6. Where deferral is not appropriate or necessary

Deferral is not appropriate:

- For short periods (less than 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 the student is unlikely to be able to resume studies, and withdrawal is the more appropriate course of action.

Furthermore, deferral is not necessary when a student is leaving DCU, or Ireland, to undertake a placement which is part of their research training. In these situations, students and supervisor must consult with the guidance document for [Remote Supervision of Research Students](#).

Retrospective deferrals will not normally be possible.

7. Registration Period for programme

The minimum registration period is extended by the period corresponding to the deferral. Consistent with [DCU Marks and Standards](#), **the maximum period of registration is not extended.**

When returning from a deferral of academic year, the student is returned to the same year of study e.g., if year two is deferred then the student is registered into year two on return.

Where a student defers half year (6 months), they will be progressed into the next study period on their return e.g. if a student defers March to August in year three, they will then register for year four in the following academic year.

The maximum registration periods for completion of research programmes are published in the [Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research & Thesis](#).

8. Financial Implications with the University

Duration of Deferral	Fee Liability
Full academic year	0%
Half year (6 months)	60%

Please refer to the section on the application process for information on application deadlines. Fee liability quoted above is for applications received in line with deadlines. Applications not received in line with these deadlines may be liable for half year or full year fees depending on the individual circumstances.

9. 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 deferred 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.

Graduate Studies Office (GSO) must be notified by the supervisor if a funded student is deferring, and it is the student's responsibility to secure a GSO stamp, required on the deferral form, in advance of submission of the form.

10. International Students

The basis of the student visa will not apply in the period of deferral as the student will not have an active registration. It is the student's responsibility to meet the requirements of their student visa.

11. Application Process

Before applying for a deferral, the student must discuss the matter with their principal supervisor to determine if this is the most appropriate action.

To make an application for deferral, the form (R-32R) must be submitted to Registry before the corresponding deadline. [The application deadlines can be found on the form](#) and the deadline for a full academic year deferral is also published on the [academic calendar](#). The application requires principal supervisor and head of school support as well as GSO input in cases of funded students.

To defer a full academic year or half year (6 months) a student must first register, and then submit the application form to Registry. It is also required that a positive annual review (PGR2) recommendation is in place.

While on a half year (6 month) deferral:

- the student must engage in the annual review (PGR2) process to ensure the possibility of registration into the following year. The PGR2 reports should note the fact of deferral.
- registration will be amended in the most relevant academic year (whichever is most reflective of the period of deferral).

12. Outcome of Application

Registry colleagues will update the student on the status of their application once all documentation has been reviewed and processed.

13. Returning to study

It is recommended that the student discusses their return to study with their principal supervisor.

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.

14. Useful links

- [Student Support & Development](#)
- [Deferral Application Form \(R-32R\)](#)
- [Guidelines on Suspension of Study for Research Students](#)

15. Version Control

Document Name:	Guidelines on Deferrals for Research Students
Version Reference:	Version 3
Document Owner:	Registry
Last updated:	17 th October 2025