



University of
St Andrews

Length of study and associated fees for postgraduate research students

Document type	Policy
Scope (applies to)	PGR only
Applicability date	01/01/2020
Review / Expiry date	31/07/2028
Approved date	27/08/2025
Approver	Senate Policies
Document owner	Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality
School / unit	Education and Student Experience
Document status	Published
Information classification	Public
Equality impact assessment	None
Key terms	Academic policies/Student progression/Length of study for PGRs
Purpose	This policy lays out the study periods for all postgraduate research degrees, including periods of continuation and extension. It includes the process for requesting an extension.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.8	Addition of information for Art.Dip.(Adv.) periods of study.	Approved	Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	27/08/2025

1. Periods of study

Students are registered to study on either a full-time or part-time basis. The permitted fees and periods of study are as follows:

MSc(Res) or MSt(Res) or Art Dip. (Adv.)

Students are expected to complete the MSc(Res) or MSt(Res) within 12 months of full-time study or 24 months of part-time study. All students are expected to pay 12 months of full-time equivalent [fees](#). In exceptional circumstances students may request an extension of up to three additional months.

Students are expected to complete the Art Dip. (Adv.) within 12 months of full-time study and pay 12 months of full-time fees. In exceptional circumstances students may request an extension of up to three additional months.

MPhil (by research route), MPhil (including taught credits) or MFA

Students are expected to complete the MPhil (research) within 24 months full-time study or 48 months of part-time study.

Students are expected to complete the MPhil or MFA within 24 months full-time study, 48 months of part-time study or 72 months via flexible study. Students on the flexible mode of study will be given up to 48 months to complete the taught requirements, and up to 24 months to complete the research requirements. The minimum engagement allowed for purely research degrees or portions of degrees is 50% full-time equivalent. All students are expected to pay the full 24 months of full-time equivalent [fees](#).

A continuation period of six months for full-time students, or 12 months for students who have been part-time for at least six months prior to the continuation period, will be allowed for students who are unable to complete within the allotted time period. Students do not need to make a special request for this continuation period but they must notify Registry PGR Support and have the documented (email) support of their supervisor. In exceptional circumstances students may request an extension of up to six additional months, in three-month increments, following the continuation period.

PhD, DPerf and DProf

The PhD, DPerf and DProf consist of 36 months of full-time study, or equivalent part-time study (or as specified by external funding bodies, e.g. research councils). Students must pay a minimum of 36 months full-time (or part-time equivalent) [fees](#) before graduating¹. The earliest a student may submit their thesis or portfolio is after 24 months of full-time study, or the equivalent part-time study, having already matriculated into their third year.

¹ For specific exceptions, such as when a student transfers to the University after starting a PhD elsewhere, or for individual co-tutelle arrangements, see the policy on [Registration and Induction of Postgraduate Research Students](#).

A continuation period of 12 months for full-time, or 24 months for students who have been part-time for at least one year prior to the continuation period, will be allowed for students who are unable to complete within the allotted time period. Students do not need to make a special request for this continuation period but they must notify Registry PGR Support, and have the documented (email) support of their supervisor.

Students are expected to submit their thesis for examination no later than the end of their fourth year of full-time study. In exceptional circumstances students may request an extension of up to 12 additional months. Students must complete their doctoral studies within 60 months of full-time equivalent study.

Extended periods of study due to fieldwork may be granted at the discretion of the Provost. This is most likely to occur when the specifics of the fieldwork project or location lead to a student requiring longer to complete their degree, such as the need to learn a difficult language not taught outside the fieldwork location.

As an exception, where doctoral study has been funded by an external agency with specific funding conditions, those conditions will take precedence.

EngD

Students are expected to complete the EngD within 48 months of full-time study, or part-time equivalent, of which coursework and attendance at colloquia normally comprise 25% and supervised research culminating in the submission of a thesis or a research portfolio comprises 75%. The research work is carried out both in the University and in the laboratories of the sponsoring industrial organisation.

A continuation period of 12 months for full-time, or 24 months for students who have been part-time for at least one year prior to the continuation period, will be allowed for students who are unable to complete within the allotted time period. Students do not need to make a special request for this continuation period but they must notify Registry PGR Support, and have the documented (email) support of their supervisor.

Students must pay a minimum of 48 months full-time (or part-time equivalent) [fees](#) before graduating. The earliest a student may submit their thesis is after 36 months of full-time study, or equivalent part-time study, having already matriculated into their fourth year.

Students are expected to submit their thesis for examination no later than the end of their fifth year of full-time study. In exceptional circumstances students may request an extension of up to 12 additional months.

As an exception, where doctoral study has been funded by an external agency with specific funding conditions, those conditions will take precedence.

MD (by thesis)

Students are expected to complete an MD by thesis within 24 months of full-time or 48 months of part-time study. All students are expected to pay 24 months of full-time equivalent [fees](#). The work may be carried out entirely at the University, in a recognised research laboratory or hospital, or in a combination of the above locations. Alternatively, suitably qualified candidates may apply to submit for the degree by portfolio (see [Higher Degrees Policy](#)).

A continuation period of 12 months for full-time, or 24 months for students who have been part-time for at least one year prior to the continuation period, will be allowed for students who are unable to complete within the allotted time period.

In exceptional circumstances students may request an extension of up to 12 additional months.

2. Annual leave

Students are entitled to reasonable periods of holiday, provided that these are properly agreed in advance with the principal supervisor and conform to the stipulations of the funding body (if applicable). In line with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) research council terms and conditions, postgraduate research students may take up to 37 days of annual leave per year (pro rata for part-time students) unless otherwise stipulated by their funding body. The annual leave allowance must include the five statutory bank holidays (1st and 2nd January, May Day, and the 25th and 26th of December), and the period in December and January during which the university is closed. If a period of annual leave means that a student will be away from St Andrews for a period of greater than 28 consecutive days (including weekends), or 37 days over Christmas, when University is closed, a change of location application must be completed through MySaint. Due to UKVI restrictions, students on a Student Visa must complete a change of location application through MySaint for any time away from the University which will result in the student being at an alternative location for periods exceeding 28 consecutive days. This includes periods spent on annual leave.

Annual Leave allowances are included in standard period of study calculations. They cannot be rolled over from one academic year to the next, and cannot be used to extend a student's end of studies date. Annual leave for research students does not need to be reported centrally and should be monitored as necessary in each School.

3. Continuation

At the end of the fee-paying period of study (full-time or part-time), students are eligible for a period of continuation which is granted automatically and included within the expected end date of the programme. MSc(Res) and MSt(Res) students are excluded from this provision and are not eligible for a continuation period.

A continuation fee is charged and due on the first day of the continuation period, or the first day following the end of a student's funding (for example, if a PhD student has 3.5 years of funding, a continuation fee for the remaining 6 months will be charged). Where doctoral study has been funded by an external agency with specific funding conditions, those conditions will take precedence. Once the continuation period has elapsed, a student may

in exceptional circumstances apply to the Associate Provost Students for a period of extension as defined in this document.

4. Extensions

Extensions are granted on a quarterly basis. Extensions differ from continuation periods in that the latter reflect the inherent variability of a substantial program of research, whereas the former are intended to make allowance for exceptional circumstances. Students may apply for one quarter initially or multiple quarters. Extension fees will be charged for each quarter requested and will be due on the first day of the extension period.

Regardless of the length of the extension, students must check in with their supervisors at least once per quarter to ensure that adequate progress is being made towards completion. If a student is unable to complete their studies by the end of their extension period they will be referred to the Associate Provost Students and may face termination of studies.

Students seeking an extension should always discuss it with their supervisor in the first instance. Once the student has the support of their supervisor, they will apply to the Associate Provost Students, via [MMS](#), no later than three months before their end date. The following information must be submitted with an extension request:

- The grounds for requesting an extension, eg, medical or personal, giving full details of the circumstances. As extensions are only approved in exceptional circumstances, a compelling case must be made. Academic reasons will not normally qualify as exceptional.
- Documentary support for the request where appropriate. Evidence must be provided if the request is on medical grounds. Students seeking evidence to support an extension request on medical grounds should contact a Student Services Wellbeing Adviser (theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk), who will be able to provide a form to request a medical letter from a doctor. It is the student's responsibility to request, obtain and pay for (if needed) any medical reports.
- A realistic and full plan for completion by the end of the extension period which will need to be approved by the principal supervisor. This plan will need to include specific details and timings.
- Support from the School's Director of Postgraduate Research Studies.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	New policy		Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	17 July 2019
1.1	Addition of a part-time continuation period for part-time students		Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	18 July 2019

1.2	Amendments to better facilitate part-time study for EngD/DEng students		Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	17/12/2019
1.3	Amendmended to clarify periods of annual leave for postgraduate research students.		Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	17/12/2020
1.4	Changes to Associate Provost titles	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	03/08/2021
1.5	Minor changes to reflect updated UKVI rules and a minimum requirement of 50% FTE engagement for PGR study.	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	09/06/2023
1.6	Addition of text previously held in the PGR fieldwork policy	Approved	Emily Feamster, Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	23/08/2023
1.7	Clarification regarding how continuation fees are charged for different funding arrangements.	Approved	Emily Feamster, Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	01/07/2024
1.8	Addition of information for Art.Dip.(Adv.) periods of study.	Approved	Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	27/08/2025