Briefing Document: Changes to PGR Programmes - Periods of Study Review

Scope: To review:
- Definitions of periods of study, and the ways in which these are communicated.
- Internal reporting of submission and completion periods.
- Whether it is possible to offer greater flexibility of part-time study.
- The way in which progress is monitored to support timely student progress.

Why: Key reasons for the review's scope include:
- The need to ensure that the University is well positioned to bid for Research Council studentship funding, including aligning practice internally where possible.
- Confusion over different programme duration measurements internally and externally.
- Increased requests for variation to part-time study, feedback from Athena SWAN groups that reviewing this was important for equality & diversity objectives.
- Student wellbeing emphasis drives monitoring and early recognition of progress problems.
- Data from PRES surveys highlighted the importance to students of robust monitoring.

The Working Party reviewed practice across the Russell Group and identified areas of good practice within the University, both of which fed into its final recommendations.

Who: The Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research and of the Doctoral College, is the lead for the review and its implementation, supported by College Directors of PGR. The review was led by a Working Party with broad representation, and there was wider consultation.

Changes arising:
1. Programme duration
- Students should undertake effective planning to submit in a timely fashion, including contingency planning.
- Entrants from 2019-2020:
    - Students with funding will plan to submit by their funding end date.
    - Projects for self-funded students will reflect the lengths of funding commonly available to students in their discipline.
    - The maximum period of study will be measured to submission.
    - Visa lengths will be six months longer than programme lengths to allow most students to complete their studies (e.g. preparation for viva and amendments) without a visa extension.

2. Reporting on submission and completion periods:
- Data should be measured from the same point.
- Research Council funded students should continue to be separated out in ASER data, and the data should be broken down to take account of different funding lengths.

3. Part-time study:
- From 19-20 entry, study will be offered at 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9 and 1.0 FTE.
- Tier 4 visas can be issued for part-time study.
- Pro-rata contact events, regular review of progress three times per year (for pre and from 2019-2020 entry).
- Success of Changes between FT & PT study or in PT hours) reviewed by the student and the supervisory team.

4. Monitoring & supporting progress:
- More effective and interventionist (and therefore supportive) monitoring to support timely submission.
- Better use of 'Unsatisfactory Student Progress and Engagement' procedure.
- One meeting per term specifically to cover "Progress", to feed into the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR). **This is not a new requirement for FT students:** we are supporting work to embed this existing requirement.

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MPhil to PhD Upgrade: entrants from 2019-2020
- Completion of upgrade to take place within the first 12 months of study (pro-rata for PT).

Annual Monitoring Review (AMR): pre and from 2019-2020 entrants
- AMR will take place earlier in the year to avoid clashes with upgrade and in the first year will be streamlined to take account of upgrade.

Continuation: pre and from 2019-2020 entrants
- Continuation is **not** the "writing-up phase". Continuation means minimal supervision.
- Continuation status decisions must be driven by academic decision making rather than fee implications.
- Continuation is not automatic when you hit the end of funding – it's dependent on your progress.

Continuation: pre 2019-2020 entrants
A move to Continuation Status is not an automatic right for a student, but only granted on the basis of a decision by the College that the student no longer requires normal levels of supervision, and will be expected to submit within 12 months.

Continuation: entrants from 2019-2020
- Continuation should only be considered when the bulk of thesis (90%) is complete and submission is expected within 3-6 months (pro rata PT).
- A work plan for the 3-6 months is required.
- Failure to transfer or to apply to transfer to continuation status may result in assessment of whether action needs to be taken under the Unsatisfactory Student Progress and Engagement: Code of Good Practice.
- Lack of progress on continuation status will trigger unsatisfactory progress.

Extensions to study for pre and from 2019-2020 entrants
- Extensions will only be granted in **very exceptional circumstances**.
- In cases of illness, excessive personal, work or other commitments, or other difficult circumstances it is expected that the student and College will follow the advice on Interruption of Studies.
- In the case of problems with their research, students are expected to have built in a time allowance for addressing problems. Failure to do so will not normally be sufficient grounds for an extension and an Unsatisfactory Progress warning will be given.

Whilst this is current policy this is not happening in practice, with approx. 10% of research students currently on some form of Extension.

Extensions to Study entrants from 2019-2020
- Approval for extensions will not be given later than six months prior to the maximum date of submission (or re-submission), unless exceptional circumstances justify consideration of a later application.
- Extensions will not be given for longer than a year, pro-rata for part-time students, and the length of the extension requested should be justified.
- Normally, only one extension request for a particular deadline will be approved.

Implementation: Ongoing work includes IT development to update MyPGR to reflect changes to University policy and updates to marketing materials, documents such as the DC Handbook, and training materials to reflect these changes.

For more information: Please see the Doctoral College website. If you have any queries please contact your College Director of PGR.