**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**Protocol for Handling Research Degree Programme Exception Requests**

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/StudyRegulations/StudyRegulationsforResearchDegreeProgrammes/), regulation 4 outlines the minimum, normal and maximum periods of study for a student completing a Research Degree Programme (RDP).  These periods exclude approved temporary withdrawal periods, in line with [regulation 1.20, Regulations for Students](https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/General/RegulationsforStudents/).

In exceptional circumstances, students/Schools may request a concession to the regulations to seek an extended period of temporary withdrawal, or an extended registration period and research degree submission date by completing the appropriate RDP Exception Request form:

1. RDP Exception Request - Temporary Withdrawal.
2. RDP Exception Request - Registration and Research Degree Submission.

Note: Completion of a Research Degree Programmes Exception Request form is not required for students taking maternity, paternity or shared parental leave. This should be approved and recorded on QSIS at School level.

The following describes current practice for handling RDP Exception Requests:

1. Schools submit requests by email to [qar@qub.ac.uk](mailto:academic-affairs@qub.ac.uk), with the relevant RDP Exception Request form attached. Requests typically include some personal and/or sensitive information in relation to the student’s case but should not include medical evidence of the extenuating circumstance as this will have been reviewed at School-level.
2. The Chair of the Education Committee (Quality and Standards) (or nominee) considers requests for concessions to the Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes. The Quality Assurance and Regulations (QAR) Team in Academic Affairs shares information via a secure internal SharePoint site summarising the request (which does not include personal/sensitive details but indicates, for example, that the student has cited personal or health issues), and the RDP Exception Request form.
3. The Chair (or nominee) replies to the QAR Team with a decision.
4. The QAR Team sends an email to notify the School of the Chair’s (or nominee’s) decision which normally includes the summary request from the QAR Team (but not any attachments) back to the School contacts included in the original email. This response email is copied to the clerical support officer for PGR matters in the QAR Team in order to record the concession on the relevant database for later report to the Education Committee (Quality and Standards); and to the [PGR](mailto:thesis@qub.ac.uk) Records team for Student Registry records.
5. The email and relevant password protected database outlined under 4 above, and any pertinent attachments are stored on the Academic Affairs’ secure network and destroyed at the end of the academic year in which the concession was considered +10 years. This allows these records to inform decision-making during the student’s registration at Queen’s.
6. Concessions are reported to the next meeting of the Education Committee (Quality and Standards) without student identifiers, or personal/sensitive details leading to the request.