

Mr John Gilchrist
Freedom of Information Officer

8 November 2017

Ref: FOI/October 2017/ Dr Margaret MacDonald

By email to ceo@ipri-bp.com

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Dear Dr MacDonald

Your request for information received on 9 October 2017 has been dealt with under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

1. In the document 'Regulations for Research Degree Programmes 2016/17', on page 9, it says "*A candidate shall be deemed to have withdrawn owing to lapse of time if the dissertation has not been submitted before the completion of the maximum period of study, and no application for an extension of time has been received by the School*. Application from the candidate to allow submission after this time must be made to University's Research Degrees Board which shall grant permission for this only in **exceptional circumstances***".

My questions are: - a) who sits on the University's Research Degrees Board (number, names, criteria for selection, length of service, regularity of meeting, procedures of the board & time taken to respond.

b) what is deemed 'exceptional circumstances'? Is this in any way connected to the website for extenuating circumstances?

[<http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/your-study/assessment-and-regulations/extenuating-circumstances>]

2. In the document 'Regulations for Research Degree Programmes 2016/17', on page 10, it says:- "*The University's Research Degrees Board may, where there are **good reasons**, approve an extension of this period*" and on page 13, again, "*and which the candidate, **for good reasons**, could not divulge at the time*"

My question is what are these good reasons?

3. In the document 'Regulations for Research Degree Programmes 2016/17', on page 12, it says "*The University shall not normally grant an extension beyond the maximum period of registration. In exceptional circumstances, the School* may recommend an extension of a candidate's period of registration to the University's Research Degrees Board. Any extension*

*request would be for a maximum of one year. A candidate seeking such an extension **shall apply on the appropriate form** and any extension granted shall be notified to the candidate in writing".*

My question is, what is this form, where is it, what information does it include and where might I get a copy? To whom is it submitted?

4. Lastly, in all these regulatory matters, I would like to know what sort of timescale the Research Degrees Board requires to respond to claims of exceptional or extenuating circumstances or 'good reasons'?

University Response

1a. The **Research Degrees Board** meets three times a year. Outside the official meetings, the Director of Research will review official extension requests and take Chair's action. The terms of reference are as follow:

University Research Degrees Committee

Terms of Reference:

- (a) To manage all aspects of research degree provision across the institution and its campuses and partners, including the devolution of powers to faculties, the monitoring of quality against all relevant standards and frameworks.
- (b) To act as the formal board for the award of research degrees.
- (c) To ensure that students are considered as central to our research degree provision, and that their needs are properly considered in areas such as generic training which are broader than individual faculties, and they are fully integrated into the institution.
- (d) To ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards research students and properly prepared to discharge these.
- (e) To manage all aspects of higher research degrees which are not delegated to faculties.

Membership:

Director of Research [Chair]

Chair of University Research Committee [ex officio]

Chairs of Faculty Research Degree Committees

Up to 8 members of academic staff from faculties to ensure subject representation and a range of RD experience [selected to ensure the development of future expertise]

A representative of the Partnership Office

2 nominees of Registry, one of whom to clerk the meeting

1b. The extenuating circumstances on published on our student-facing website UniHelp apply to PGR students – they highlight what is deemed as exceptional circumstances.

<http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/your-study/assessment-and-regulations/extenuating-circumstances>

2. 'Good reason' – each case is judged on its individual merits and it is not possible to provide a definitive list. Please refer to the extenuating circumstances above.

3. The form can be found within [Section 17 of the Learning Quality and Enhancement handbook](#)

The form should be completed by the student and/or the Director of Studies with a recommendation from the supervisory team. This is approved by the Research Degrees Faculty Committee in the first instance with final approval granted by the Chair of the Research Degrees Board. On completion it is sent to the Research Degrees Administration Team.

4. As soon as it becomes apparent and, under normal circumstances, no later than 3 months before the final submission is due (based on regulatory maximum registration periods – please see table below) an application to extend the period of registration must be made formally. In exceptional circumstances applications can be accepted when accompanied by documentary evidence of the circumstances. From the date of request and after following due process the outcome should normally be communicated to students within 10 working days.

Minimum and Maximum Registration and Suspension Periods

Degree		Full-time	Part-time	Distance	Public Works
Masters by Research	min	6	12	12	n/a
	max	12	24	24	n/a
	susp	6	8	8	n/a
MPhil/ArtsM	min	18	30	30	12
	max	36	48	48	24
	susp	12	12	12	8
MProf	min	n/a	12	12	n/a
	max	n/a	24	24	n/a
	susp	n/a	8	8	n/a
MPhil/PhD ArtsM/D	min	33	45	45	12
	max	60	84	84	24
	susp	24	24	24	8
M/DProf (incl. all SVPs)	min	n/a	36	36	12
	max	n/a	84	84	24
	susp	n/a	12	12	8
Higher Doctorates	min	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	max	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	susp	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

All periods are stated in months.

I trust this satisfies your request sufficiently. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you have the right to complain about the University's response to your request for information. If you have such a complaint, you may contact Mrs Teresa Kelly, Clerk to the Board of Governors, Middlesex University, Hendon campus, London NW4 4BT, tel: 020 8411 6018, t.kelly@mdx.ac.uk within 40 days of the date of this letter for a review of the University's decision. If you remain unsatisfied with the outcome of that complaint, you may seek further recourse by lodging an appeal with the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

John Gilchrist
Freedom of Information Officer