



Supporting Students to Succeed Procedure for Postgraduate Research Degrees

Research and Innovation
September 2023



UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER

Document Title:	Supporting Students to Succeed Procedures for Postgraduate Research Degrees
Document Author:	Helen Jones, Doctoral School Manager
Responsible Person and Department:	Head of Doctoral School Research and Innovation
Approving Body:	Senate
Date of Approval:	6 December 2023
Date Effective From:	September 2023
Review Date:	September 2025
Indicate whether the document is for public access or internal access only Indicate whether the document applies to collaborative provision? <i>(Strikethrough text, as appropriate)</i>	Public Access Internal Access Only Applies to Collaborative Provision
Summary/Description: This document details the processes through which the University will support MPhil/Doctoral students (including the taught stage of Professional Doctorates) to succeed academically at Winchester (and collaborative partners). The Supporting Students to Succeed Procedure (SSSP) has two parts, the first is Extenuating Circumstances and is instigated by the student with support from the Doctoral School. The second part is Study Support which is driven by the University and its staff in response to concerns.	

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This list summarises the changes since 2021/22. The date confirms when the changes were implemented.

Implementation date	Changes Approved by Senate
Sept 2023	B.3.4 Addition of requirement to submit draft assignment with application for Extenuating Circumstances application if applying for 10 days or less. C.1 and C.2 clarification on when support to studies is used Update of PGR Admin to Doctoral School throughout the document

Sept 2022	Update across document to Doctoral School /Research and Innovation Change of title from Vice Chancellor to Pro Vice Chancellor
-----------	---

Table of Contents

Section A Procedure Overview	6
Section B Extenuating Circumstances	7
B.1 Introduction	7
B.2 Evidence Required for Extenuating Circumstances	7
B.3 Examples of Valid Extenuating Circumstances	7
B.4 Examples of Invalid Extenuating Circumstances	8
B.5 Computer-related problems	9
B.6 Jury Service	9
B.7 Commitment to Religious Observances	9
B.8 Supporting Evidence	9
B.9 Supporting Evidence Provided by Student Support and Success	11
B.10 Submitting Extension/Deferral Requests	12
B.11 Limits of Use for Extenuating Circumstances Applications	13
B.12 Late Submission of Extenuating Circumstances Form	13
B.13 Consideration of Applications for Extenuating Circumstances	13
B.14 Outcomes	14
B.15 Appeal Against the Outcome	14
B.16 Quality Assurance and Monitoring of Extenuating Circumstances Procedures	15
Section C Study Support	16
C.1 Introduction	16
C.2 How and when should the Procedure be used?	16
C.3 Types of Concern	17
C.4 Stages of Study Support	17
C.5 Stage 1 - Detailed Procedures	18
C.6 Stage 1 Support Panel Meeting	19
C.7 Possible outcome from Stage 1	20
C.8 Post meeting actions	20
C.9 Reviewing the Stage 1 Action Plan	20
C.10 Stage 2 Detailed procedures	21
C.11 Stage 2 Support Panel Meeting	21
C.12 Possible outcomes From Stage 2	22
C.13 Post meeting actions	22
C. 14 Reviewing the Stage 2 Action Plan	22
C. 15 Examples of when a direct referral to Stage 2 could occur	23
C. 16 Stage 3 Detailed Procedures	23

C.17 Stage 3 Support Panel	23
C.18 Possible outcomes at stage 3	24
C.19 Exceptional Circumstances – interruption without a panel	24
C.20 Returning to Study	25
C.21 Central Recording and Monitoring	26
D Appendix 1 Extenuating Circumstances Form	27
D Appendix 2 Request for medical evidence regarding Support to Study arrangements	28
D Appendix 3 – Study Support Panel Meeting Form including Action Plan	30

Section A Procedure Overview

- A.1 All MPhil/Doctoral students (including the taught stage of Professional Doctorates and PGC Research Skills) have a responsibility to manage their learning during their registration at the University. This includes submitting work to deadlines. Meeting deadlines is a normal part of work and is vital to professional development.
- A.2 However, the University recognises that there may be times when adverse circumstances, beyond their direct control, prevent students from completing work to a deadline, or to their customary standard of achievement.
- A.3 This document details the framework in place to support students through such circumstances. The framework has two 'parts': Extenuating Circumstances and Study Support, the first details the Extenuating Circumstances route, which is driven by the student. The second details the Study Support route, which offers more tailored support. The Study Support route is driven by the University.
- A.4 Normally, a student will have access to support for their studies through the University's provisions (such as Academic Skills, Student Support and Success). This support can be implemented outside formal procedures (e.g. Outside this procedure) if deemed necessary by supervisors, personal tutors, Doctoral School or the student.
- A.5 SSSP is a supportive procedure which can be used by designated staff when a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour is significantly impacting on their ability to progress academically and/or function at the University. SSSP should be considered as an alternative to other means of managing concern (for example Academic Misconduct Policy), where there is sufficient belief that a student's behaviour, attendance and/or academic progress could be the result of mental or physical ill health or disability. The procedure may also be used when the university has concerns about the impact of a student's behaviour on their own safety or the safety of others.
- A.6 In what follows, 'student' refers to a student on PhD (including PGC Research Skills), MPhil and Professional Doctorates (both Taught and Thesis stage). Any exceptions are noted.
- A.7 Advice on these Procedures can be sought from Student Support and Success, the Student Union, the student's personal tutor (normally, the PGR Faculty Lead), or the Doctoral School.
- A.8 At all times students are encouraged to seek support from Student Support and Success, Supervisors, Personal Tutor or Doctoral School if they are experiencing difficulties. This includes those students who may live with long-term health conditions or disabilities and who would benefit from additional support.

Section B Extenuating Circumstances

B.1 Introduction

- B.1.1 All MPhil/Doctoral students (including the taught stage of Professional Doctorates and PGC Research Skills) have a responsibility to manage their learning during their registration at the University. This requires students to balance their workload and use time management skills to ensure that stated deadlines are met. It is therefore essential that students manage their workload efficiently, so as not to struggle to meet deadlines or miss them. Difficulties and pressures are a part of everyday life and it is expected that students shall manage their work accordingly.
- B.1.2 However, the University recognises that there may be times when adverse circumstances, beyond their direct control, prevent students from completing work to a deadline, or to their customary standard of achievement. For this reason, the University encourages students to inform the University whenever they are experiencing difficulties and to request an extension to the deadline for submission of a piece of work, to defer a formal exam, practical assessment or viva.
- B.1.3 The Doctoral School deals with individuals on a case-by-case basis – with timelines determined by the panels identified in B.14.1. Any requests beyond 90 days are dealt with through PGR Interruption to Study procedures as detailed in the PGR Handbook.

B.2 Evidence Required for Extenuating Circumstances

- B.2.1 Applications for extenuating circumstances must be accompanied by valid evidence of those circumstances. Such evidence should normally be independent third-party evidence (for example a medical professional, counsellors, the police, lawyers and Student Support and Success staff) and the student should either submit the original documentation or a scanned copy.
- B.2.2 Supporting evidence from relatives or other students shall not be deemed as valid.
- B.2.3 When the University considers Extenuating Circumstances applications, it will look to see that the timing of events match the request. Therefore, students must ensure that the evidence they provide to support the application confirms that the circumstances cited are within the relevant assessment or learning period.
- B.2.4 The University's definition of what counts and does not count as extenuating circumstances is set out in Section B.3.
- B.2.5 The Doctoral School will keep records of all applications.

B.3 Examples of Valid Extenuating Circumstances

- B.3.1 The University define an extenuating circumstance as, 'short term, exceptional circumstances, outside the control of the student, which prevent them from sitting or submitting an assessment on the specified deadline'.
- B.3.2 These are normally circumstances relating to the health and/or personal life of a student which are of a sufficiently serious and significant nature to result in them being unable to attend, complete or submit an assessment on time. They are also expected to be either:
- a) unforeseeable, in that the student could have no prior knowledge of the event concerned;

and/or

b) unavoidable, in that the student could have done nothing reasonably in their power to prevent or avoid such an event

B.3.3 Listed below are examples that the University would normally regard as extenuating circumstances.

- a) Bereavement (eg the death of a relative, person of significance or a pet)
- b) Accident *
- c) Acute, unforeseen illness *
- d) Participation in a national/international sporting event or related activity as a competitor, coach, referee or in an equivalent support role
- e) Victim of crime
- f) The worsening or aggravation of a diagnosed physical or mental health condition #;
- g) Complications relating to:
 - A diagnosed disability # *
 - Pregnancy *
- h) Serious adverse personal or family circumstances, such as unexpected caring responsibilities *
- i) Transport difficulties beyond the control of the student
- j) Problems affecting specialised hardware or software supplied via a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) or equivalent to support the student's learning as documented in the student's Learning Agreement.

* *This would also include cases where a student's relative or person of significance is affected.*

Students with an underlying disability, condition or chronic illness are encouraged to engage with Student Support and Success to agree a formal Learning Agreement.

B.3.4 Students who wish to apply under the Extenuating Circumstances procedure may apply for up to 10 days extension by submitting the form in Appendix 1 with a draft of their assignment (no evidence is required) to the Doctoral School.

B.3.5 Students that require more than 10 working days extension, may apply for up to 90 days with appropriate evidence. They should seek advice from the Doctoral School, Personal Tutor or Programme Leader before applying

B.4 Examples of Invalid Extenuating Circumstances

B.4.1 The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances unlikely to be regarded as falling within the relevant definition and are unlikely to be accepted as extenuating circumstances:

- a) Long term health condition for which the student is already receiving reasonable or appropriate adjustments
- b) Minor illness or ailment, which is unlikely to impact on a student's ability to complete an assessment
- c) Transport problems which could have been avoided by the student (eg missed bus or train)
- d) Personal holidays
- e) Financial issues unless it is adversely affecting the mental health and wellbeing of the student
- f) Computer/printer problems **-[for exceptions, see section B.5 below]

- g) Claims that students were unaware of the published dates, times, format of submission for coursework and venues for exams or practical assessments
- h) Complaints against staff or in relation to delivery of the module/programme. These are managed through the University's *Complaints Policy*

** Students are advised to regularly back up electronic documents

B.5 Computer-related problems

The University would not normally consider computer problems as an extenuating circumstance because students can use University computers on campus and can access support from IT Services. However, it is acknowledged that a global pandemic or other unexpected circumstances may prevent access to the campus and University IT equipment on health and safety grounds. Students in this position may submit Extenuating Circumstance Application, detailing the precise nature of the IT problem and the dates affected. To support their application, students must provide evidence of the reason they are unable to come onto campus to use University IT equipment.

B.6 Jury Service

B.6.1 While the University supports anyone undertaking civic duties, students who receive a summons to attend Jury Service during the academic year are strongly advised to seek a deferral to Jury Service for two related reasons: disrupted study and missed assessment (which may result in repeated study and/or interruption); costs incurred (living, tuition fees, employment). Courts understand the issues and deferrals are generally approved. Please contact Registry for a supporting letter.

B.6.2 Students who do not wish to request a deferral from Jury Service or their request for a deferral is turned down must inform their Director of Studies, if it is likely to last for more than 10 days they must discuss with their Director of Studies whether it would be more appropriate to interrupt their studies.

B.7 Commitment to Religious Observances

B.7.1 The University does not consider commitment to religious observances to fall within the definition of 'extenuating circumstances' as they would not usually be 'unforeseeable' or 'unavoidable'. Rather, there are processes in place to support students whose studies are affected by such observances.

B.7.2 If a student experiences an unexpected or unplanned effect of a religious observance, for example an illness exacerbated by fasting, then this would fall under the definition of an 'extenuating circumstance', and the student should follow these procedures.

B.8 Supporting Evidence

B.8.1 Listed below are examples of the types of evidence that the University would normally accept as valid, but this list is not exhaustive. Where students require advice about the appropriateness of their corroborating evidence, they are advised to contact the Student Union/Doctoral School.

B.8.2 Where students feel their extenuating circumstances are too sensitive to share, they are strongly advised to seek support with their application from the Student Life Advice Team, based in Student Support and Success, who are able to provide support for all of the categories below.

Examples of valid extenuating circumstances	Examples of acceptable evidence
Bereavement (eg the death of a relative, person of significance, or a pet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order of service • Death or Vet certificate • Obituary/Notification of death (website / newspaper)
Accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police report • Insurance claim documents • Doctor's note/Medical certificate • Hospital admission record
<p>Acute, unforeseen illness *</p> <p>* This would also include cases where a student's relative or person of significance is affected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor's note/Medical certificate • Letter or email from medical professional or other relevant independent professional (eg therapist or counsellor) • Hospital admission record • Photo of a prescription or medication prescribed
Participation in a national/international sporting event or related activity as a competitor, coach, referee or in an equivalent support role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official letter of registration for event or equivalent
Victim of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime reference number • Insurance claim documents • In case of sexual assault or similar, Student Support and Success support would be an acceptable alternative
<p>The worsening or aggravation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A diagnosed physical or mental health condition* ▪ A diagnosed disability* ▪ Pregnancy* <p>* All of the above would also include cases where a student's relative or person of significance is affected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor's note/Medical certificate • Hospital admission record • Letter (or similar) from medical professional or other relevant independent professional (e.g. therapist or counsellor), or evidence of pending appointment • For more information about support for pregnancy related circumstances, please refer to the Pregnancy, Adoption and Becoming a Parent While Studying - Guidelines • Learning Agreement¹

¹ This is for students who have difficulties associated with their impairment that are likely to fluctuate in severity throughout the year. This may cause them difficulty meeting some deadlines and so extenuating circumstances are supported by Student Support and Success. This support is subject to review on an annual basis.

Examples of valid extenuating circumstances	Examples of acceptable evidence
<p>Serious adverse personal or family circumstances, such as unexpected caring responsibilities *</p> <p>* This would also include cases where a student's relative or person of significance is affected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter (or similar) from an independent professional or organisation (e.g. solicitor, faith leader, Social Worker, Citizens Advice Bureau); • Doctor's note/Medical certificate • Hospital admission record • Letter (or similar) from medical professional or other relevant independent professional (e.g. therapist or counsellor) • Insurance claim documents • Letter from registered childcare or other caring provider confirming why care cannot be provided
Transport difficulties beyond the control of the student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic report (website or newspaper) • Official report of traffic accident
Problems affecting specialised hardware or software supplied via a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) or equivalent to support the student's learning as documented in the student's Learning Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation from a University Department, such as Student Support and Success or IT Services
Circumstances beyond the students control such as ability to collect data, access to archives, facilities (labs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation from University, public announcements or screen shot of website

B.9 Supporting Evidence Provided by Student Support and Success

B.9.1 Students shall only seek support from Student Support and Success in cases where the extenuating circumstances meet the criteria listed in section B.8.2 and either:

- a) the extenuating circumstances relate to issues that the students does not wish to disclose to the RKE Centre; or
- b) where Student Support and Success have provided support in regard to issues highlighted and where they are the only reasonable source of evidence available

Examples of Evidence Provided by Student Support and Success	Example of Circumstance (indicative, not exhaustive)
Confirmation of unexpected challenging family circumstances that have impacted upon a student's ability to engage effectively in study	Family breakdown; unexpected death of family member
Confirmation of a traumatic incident (without details) pertaining to student or student's relative or person of significance	Sexual Assault; violent crime; miscarriage
Confirmation of acute illness where the student does not wish to disclose medical	Acute mental health diagnoses;

evidence to the faculty for specific personal reasons*	
* This would also include cases where a student's relative or person of significance is affected	
Confirmation of official activity required of a student that has or will impact upon the student's ability to engage effectively in study	Attendance at consular appointments; attendance at police interview; court appearance

- B.9.2 Student Support and Success staff are not medically trained and are unable to provide evidence of medical conditions or illnesses.
- B.9.3 Staff in Student Support and Success will be selected to manage the procedure in the form of a panel comprising of staff from Student Life Advice, Mental Wellbeing and Disability and Learning Diversity. The panel will include a minimum of three staff members. The panel may meet in person or electronically,
- B.9.4 The remit of the panel is to consider requests and to confirm whether they meet the criteria and whether Student Support and Success can act as corroborating evidence on a student's behalf to verify the circumstances are true and valid.
- B.9.5 Panel decisions do not have to be unanimous, but the majority of members must be in agreement for a decision to be reached.
- B.9.6 Students requesting evidence from Student Support and Success will be required to clarify why they are requesting evidence. Requests will be considered by nominated staff formulating a panel who will determine if the request for evidence can be provided by Student Support and Success. Panel decisions do not have to be unanimous, but the majority of members must be in agreement for a decision to be reached.
- B.9.7 Panel outcomes will be communicated to students. Where evidence can be provided this will be sent directly to nominated staff in the Doctoral School.
- B.9.8 Whilst evidence provided by Student Support and Success in support of a student's application shall always be deemed valid it remains the discretion of the Doctoral School staff whether to accept the application. Student Support and Success staff may decline to support a request for evidence if they believe that the extenuating circumstances described by the student do not meet the criteria listed in section B.8.2. Where Student Support and Success decline to support a request for evidence, this will not be communicated to the Doctoral School. Instead, if the student still wishes to submit an application, they may do so but they shall need to provide alternative evidence.

B.10 Submitting Extension/Deferral Requests

- B.10.1 It is a student's responsibility to inform the Doctoral School of any circumstance which may affect their ability to meet their programme commitments by completing an *Extenuating Circumstances Form* together with valid corroborating evidence and submitting this to the Doctoral School. The Extenuating Circumstances form (Appendix 1) must be submitted by email to the PGR Admin email inbox. Students must complete the form in full, listing all modules and assessments that are to be considered.
- B.10.2 Where requesting an extension to any assessment, the Extenuating Circumstances application must be submitted within one month before the assessment deadline. This includes written assessments and vivas.

B.10.3 Extenuating Circumstances requests cannot be considered by the Panel without corroborating evidence for longer than 10 days. Students who submit an application without corroborating evidence will be advised that the application will be logged by the Doctoral School but will not be sent to the panel until corroborating evidence is received.

B.11 Limits of Use for Extenuating Circumstances Applications

B.11.1 Students may only request **one** extension per assessment, and if the application is approved, the Doctoral School will notify the student of the new submission deadline to students unimail addresses normally within 5 working days.

B.11.2 Students **may not** request additional extensions or longer deferrals based on the same circumstance without additional evidence. If the circumstance becomes longer term, then the student will be required to interrupt.

B.11.3 It may be possible that following an initial extenuating circumstance request, a secondary issue may arise (for example bereavement of a close family member may lead to depression), or an entirely new and unrelated extenuating circumstance may occur, which leads to non-submission of the assessment. On these occasions, new evidence will be required to corroborate the new circumstance and the Doctoral School will provide advice.

B.12 Late Submission of Extenuating Circumstances Form

B.12.1 The University recognises that there may be certain exceptional reasons why a student may not be able to submit a claim within five working days of the published deadline/date. Examples of such exceptional reasons might include:

- a) A serious accident, incident, assault or critical onset of a mental or physical condition or illness where the student required acute medical care, hospitalisation or other professional intervention
- b) Detention or incarceration by police or other statutory services

B.12.2 In such cases, if the deadline for submitting an Extenuating Circumstances Form has been missed, a student is advised to submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form at the earliest opportunity, stating the reasons for the late submission of their claim and providing corroborating evidence for both the Extenuating Circumstance and the reason for the late application. Any submission would be processed by the Doctoral School under the usual process.

B.13 Consideration of Applications for Extenuating Circumstances

The following principles will be followed in the consideration of Extenuating Circumstance requests:

B.13.1 The Doctoral School will form a 3-person panel, and the membership will be as follows:

- a) for applications from students on Research Degrees and Professional Doctorate students on the thesis stage, the Panel will consist of the Director of Postgraduate Research Students, the FPGRSL and the Doctoral School Manager
- b) for applications from students on Professional Doctorates taught stage, the panel will consist of the Programme Leader, the FPGRSL and the programme administrator, for the thesis stage a) applies.

- B.13.2 The remit of the panel is to consider requests and confirm whether they meet the conditions of the Procedure in terms of timeliness of submission, whether they meet the definition of 'Extenuating Circumstances' and if the corroborating evidence is valid.
- B.13.3 Panel decisions do not have to be unanimous, but the majority of members must be in agreement.
- B.13.4 The panel will ensure that applications, which are accompanied by corroborating evidence, shall normally be resolved and the decision communicated to the student by University email address within five working days after the convening of the panel.
- B.13.5 If the corroborating evidence received is from Student Support and Success, then the panel do not need to examine the evidence but will consider the application for approval only.
- B.13.6 Where appropriate the panel may make recommendations for students to be considered for receiving additional support under the Study Support (Section C), especially where multiple requests and/or complex applications are received.

B.14 Outcomes

- B.14.1 Where the Panel approves the Extenuating Circumstance request, the student will be informed of one of the following decisions:
- Extension approved for a specified duration and up to a maximum of 90 days. Requests for extensions longer than 90 days will be addressed under the Interruption to Study procedures.
 - Professional Doctorates: If ECs (up to 90 days), are invoked during the taught phase which means that time is lost in the thesis stage, then students should be made aware of any impact on their registration period.
- B.14.2 If the panel agrees that the application does not meet the criteria the student will be advised accordingly.

B.15 Appeal Against the Outcome

- B.15.1 Students have the right to appeal a rejected claim for an extension or deferral on the following grounds:
- procedural irregularity: the Doctoral School failed to follow the requirements of the SSSP in such a way that the legitimacy of the decision reached is called into question.
 - perversity of judgement: the Doctoral School decision does not, in the student's opinion, appropriately reflect the weight of evidence presented.
- B.15.2 Students may not appeal on the grounds that they did not understand, or were not aware of, the SSSP procedures in relation to the same assessment more than once by means of this process.
- B.15.3 The appeal must be submitted, in writing, to the Director of Research and Innovation within 10 working days of the date of the email notifying the student of the outcome of their original application.
- B.15.4 The format of the Appeal is a letter or email, fully detailing the grounds for appeal, a copy of the application and outcome correspondence. Where the grounds of the appeal relate to a) above, the appellant must specify precisely what aspect of the procedure was not followed and how this affected the outcome. Where the grounds

for the appeal relate to b) above, the appellant must specify how and why the decision was unreasonable or disproportionate in the light of the available evidence.

- B.15.5 Appeals shall be considered by the Director of Research and Innovation (or nominee) and or Dean from a Faculty not associated with the appellant's programme.
- B.15.6 They shall review the statement and any supporting evidence supplied by the appellant and may request further evidence or information from those involved in the process before reaching a decision. Those from whom responses are sought shall be provided with the letter of appeal and accompanying documents where appropriate. In accordance with the principles of openness and best practice the University shall disclose to appellants any relevant case documentation at an early and appropriate stage and, in particular, in advance of any determination of the outcome.
- B.15.7 If they do not uphold the appeal, the student shall be informed in writing and a Completion of Procedures Letter shall be issued.
- B.15.8 If the appeal is upheld, then they shall confirm what action shall be taken to rectify the matter. As internal processes shall be at an end, the appellant shall be notified of the option to request a Completion of Procedures letter if they are dissatisfied with the resolution.
- B.15.9 There is no further appeal within the University. You may seek an external review by the Office of the Independent adjudicator (OIA). You must normally complain to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the outcome of the appeal. Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA can be found on its website at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia.aspx> . The OIA's leaflet *An introduction to the OIA for students* can be downloaded from http://oiahe.org.uk/media/42715/oia_intro_leaflet_16pp.pdf . You may also wish to seek advice from the Student Union about making a complaint to the OIA.

B.16 Quality Assurance and Monitoring of Extenuating Circumstances Procedures

The PGR Education Committee shall be responsible, on behalf of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee, for the assurance of quality and standards in the management of applications for Extenuating Circumstances.

In particular, the PGR Education Committee are responsible for:

- a) ensuring that sufficient staff involved have been through central or local level training so that consistency and fairness is maintained;
- b) ensuring that accurate records of all applications and the outcomes are maintained, and all paperwork should be available for internal or external scrutiny, as required;
- c) reviewing the Doctoral School's annual record of Extenuating Circumstances, monitoring trends over time and identifying areas of concern.

Section C Study Support

C.1 Introduction

C.1.1

- C.1.1 The Study Support (SS) part is intended to aid both staff and students in cases where:
- there is evidence of student disengagement from their academic studies,
 - when a student is not progressing as expected.
 - where student wellbeing or ability to engage in student life is such that normal adjustments are not sufficient

It is a supportive route to assist the small number of students whose behaviour gives cause for concern. Study Support can offer an alternative to the disciplinary procedures where behavioural concerns may have their cause in health conditions or disabilities. It is a supportive procedure which can be used by designated staff in line with C.2 and C.3 below

C.1.2

- C.1.2 The following procedures apply to all MPhil/Doctoral students (including the taught stage of Professional Doctorates and PGC Research Skills), any University activities, whether living on or off campus and applies to all aspects of university life. It is expected that most students who enter Study Support will have previously engaged with other avenues of support.

- C.1.3 We expect our students to act responsibly and to conduct themselves in ways that do not compromise either their own wellbeing or that of other members of the University community. We also recognise that, in some circumstances, students may experience difficulties or have conditions that may require additional support for them to succeed. Staff are expected to support students who are struggling with their mental wellbeing, health, or life choices in a respectful, person-centred manner.

- C.1.4 The aim of Study Support is to sustain the progress of the student in a supportive environment while being mindful of the need to exercise our duty of care to the student and those around them, so that the best possible student experience is achieved for all.

- C.1.5 It is possible that the use of any formal procedure may cause stress and anxiety, particularly if the role and purpose of the procedure is not understood. To minimize the risk of causing additional stress, the procedure should be used sensitively, ensuring that the student understands the focus on their best interests, and that all possible steps are taken to minimize additional concerns and anxieties experienced by the student. Concerns should be acted on promptly as early intervention and support can result in better outcomes for the student and may avoid the situation becoming more complex.

C.2 How and when should the Procedure be used?

This procedure should be used:

- For all Doctoral and Postgraduate Research Students as follows: PhD (including PGC Research Skills), MPhil and Professional Doctorates (both Taught and Thesis stage).

- For students who have declared health issues to the university and/or may have a Learning Agreement in place, which requires additional support considerations
- When there are concerns that a student's academic progress
- Where there are concerns about a student's behaviour or ability to function appropriately at university could be the result of mental or physical ill health or disability

C.3 Types of Concern

Concerns may arise in any one of a wide range of circumstances, including (but not restricted to):

- Students who have a Learning Agreement in place and are struggling to manage their studies.
- Disengagement from academic studies: Not attending supervisory meetings, submitting work, or responding to university emails.
- Behaviour which would usually be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, but which may be known to be, or suspected to be, the result of underlying physical or mental health difficulties.
- A student's physical or mental health difficulties are substantially adversely affecting the physical or mental health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others.
- The student's support needs fall outside the scope of the support and other services which the University can reasonably be expected to provide, either directly or indirectly.
- Students with complex personal circumstances (for example, health, family and/or financial issues)
- Students who regularly submit mitigation / EC applications as a result of ongoing health concerns
- Students whose health, wellbeing and behaviour is causing concern to others, although there may be no negative impact on their academic work and progression.

For advice about this procedure please contact:

Student Support and Success or Doctoral School

C.4 Stages of Study Support

C.4.1 Study Support is a formal process and should only be used where other routes are not available or beneficial to the student. The procedure has 3 stages: Stages 1, 2 and 3. The stages represent the degree of concerns and / or the perceived seriousness of the situation. The procedure can be entered at Stage 1 or 2. If the concerns are not remedied by the recommended and agreed actions at one level, the next level may be instigated. Stages 1 and 2 of the procedure can be recommended by any member of staff who is closely involved in student support or academic progression (see C.5.2)

Stage 1: Emerging Concern (Support Panel Meeting and Formal Plan)

This covers initial concerns despite lower-level support, such as where a student's behaviour is adversely affecting their own or other students' studies or personal physical or mental health and wellbeing. Examples include missed meetings with supervisors, and/or failure to submit work, may be a sign of an emerging Study Support issue.

Stage 2: Ongoing Concern.

This covers continued and ongoing concerns (may follow Stage 1) which have continued over a period of time that have not been resolved under Stage 1, or where there is a significant impact of a student's wellbeing, behaviour, safety and/or ability to study

Stage 3: Critical Concern (Support Panel Meeting and Formal Plan)

This covers more critical concerns which endure despite Stage 1 or 2 support, where a student's actions or behaviour are putting the health, safety, wellbeing or academic progress of the student or other members of the University community at significant risk. Stage 3 is invoked when all other options to deal with the situation have been explored thorough Stages 1 and/or 2, and all reasonable adjustments have been put in place and a wider university perspective is required.

C.4.2 Students may move between stages as appropriate.

C.5 Stage 1 - Detailed Procedures

Stage 1 will apply when:

- C.5.1. There are concerns for the student (or the impact on others) related to unusual or concerning behaviour such as disruptive actions, a marked change/ deterioration in general demeanour, unexplained changes in level of engagement including non-submission of work and missed supervisory meetings, speaking or acting in a way that gives concern for mental/ physical health or communication of distress related to a significant event or if a student is not making expected progress.
- C.5.2 Any member of staff within the University may become aware of issues that are affecting a student's health, safety, behaviour or wellbeing. Stage 1 of these procedures can be invoked by a member of staff with a direct link to the student or a member of staff who holds responsibility for the student's care.
- a) An appropriate member of staff in the professional service where the concern has been raised, e.g. Housing Manager, Security Manager, Site Steward, Campus Supervisor, Catering Supervisor, Librarian etc.
- And/or
- b) An appropriate member of staff from the Faculty or Doctoral School in which the concern has been raised, e.g. Supervisors, FPGRSL, Personal Tutors, Student Support and Success.
- C.5.3 Before Study Support is invoked, staff should speak with the Head of Doctoral School for approval and working collaboratively, staff will agree who will contact the student and act as the lead person for the process. The lead person may be any appropriate member of staff such as a Director of Studies, PGR Faculty Lead, Doctoral School Manager.
- C.5.4 The staff member who invokes Study Support will be known as the lead person.

- C.5.5 When staff without Student Support and Success invoke the procedures at Stage 1, they can approach the Mental Wellbeing Outreach Advisor in Student Support and Success (mentalwellbeing@winchester.ac.uk) to determine if the student is already known to Student Support and Success and the Faculty for any information on Extenuating Circumstances. Information may be shared where data protection and confidentiality requirements allow.
- C.5.6 The lead person should send the Stage 1 Support Panel Meeting invitation to the student via unimail normally providing at least 5 working days' notice. The invitation should include the following information:
- Purpose of the meeting
 - List of attendees
 - Guidance to the student on right to be accompanied in a supportive capacity and, if required, additionally by a support worker
 - Request for any evidence required for the meeting.

C.6 Stage 1 Support Panel Meeting

- C.6.1 The Stage 1 Support Panel meeting should be convened by the area raising the concern and include the student, in addition to the following members of staff as appropriate:
- Supervisors
 - Head of Doctoral School
 - Representative of relevant support service (if appropriate)
 - Notetaker

The panel must consist of more than 1 member of staff.

- C.6.2 The student may be accompanied in a supportive capacity; this would be in addition to enabling the student to be accompanied by a professional support worker. The lead staff member should ensure the student has opportunity to discuss any issues or concerns.
- C.6.3 Where the student is unable to attend in person, they shall normally be offered the option to participate via MS Teams.
- C.6.4 If a student is unable to attend the Stage 1 panel meeting due to extenuating circumstances, for which evidence has been provided, has refused to attend, or they do not appear, and no reason is given the panel meeting will take place. It may be that the chair of the panel is unable to determine a full programme of supportive action, but it is preferable to start the process and amend it subsequently, when the student is able to engage with the process.
- C.6.5 The Stage 1 support panel chair shall attempt to assess the student's perception of the impact that their physical or mental health and/or behaviour is having on themselves and/or the University community. This may require a medical assessment to be sought, normally from the student's GP or medical professional (see **Appendix 2**). The student shall be encouraged to consent to the assessment, where the Support Panel feels this would be helpful.
- C.6.6 If the student withholds their consent, decisions may be made based on the information available.
- C.6.7 The student shall be able to submit documents for the support panel to consider and should retain a copy for their reference.

- C.6.8 The support panel may seek information or advice from others within or outside the University.
- C.6.9 The support panel may discuss with the student whether it would be appropriate for them to interrupt their studies.
- C.6.10 Where the student wishes to voluntarily interrupt their studies at this stage, this should be favourably considered by the support panel with the provision for a review of the physical or mental health and wellbeing of the student at the end of the interruption period as a condition of their return to studies (see **Appendix 3**).

C.7 Possible outcome from Stage 1

- Devise an Action Plan to support the student (where appropriate) and formally agree expectations for the student to observe. Action plans may include, for example, amendments to deadlines in agreement with Supervisors, accessing support. Regular review meetings shall be arranged with the student and the lead member of staff / supervisor. The student shall be made aware of what will happen if the action plan is breached, or the concerns are not resolved within the timeframe set in the Action Plan. This may result in escalating to Stage 2.
- Refer to Stage 2

C.8 Post meeting actions

- C.8.1 Within 5 working days of the meeting, the Notetaker shall write up agreed actions of the Support Panel Meeting (see **Appendix 3**)
- C.8.2 A copy of this form should be emailed to the student and all panel members via Unimail and copied to supporttostudy@winchester.ac.uk and DoctoralSchool@winchester.ac.uk within 5 working days of the meeting.
- C.8.3 The email should advise that the student must reply to confirm receipt and acceptance of the meeting outcome and that, should they not reply within 5 working days of the date of it being sent, the University will assume the student understands and accepts the content of the form.
- C.8.4 The intention is to encourage the student to respond positively to the Action Plan and access the outlined support and modify their behaviour accordingly, as appropriate.
- C.8.5 Should the student not respond positively, then the Chair shall discuss the situation with the other members of the Panel with a view to determining whether the case should be considered for Stage 2.
- C.8.6 In all cases the decision to escalate to a Stage 2 Support Panel will be made in partnership by the Head of Doctoral School and Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or Director of Student Support and Success.

C.9 Reviewing the Stage 1 Action Plan

Each time the Action Plan is reviewed, the Support Panel shall decide whether to:

- close the action.
- the Action Plan should be continued or extended/amended; or
- recommend an escalation to Stage 2

C.10 Stage 2 Detailed procedures

- C.10.1 Stage 2 of the procedure is used where there is continued and ongoing concern following Stage 1, or when there is significant concern about a student's health, wellbeing, behaviour, safety and/or ability to study, and where a higher-level response from the wider university is required. In cases where it is unclear whether the student's situation presents a serious risk of harm to themselves or others advice should be sought from Head of Student Support and Success, Head of Doctoral School or alternative member of Professional Services staff with appropriate experience and authority, to consider how best to apply these procedures.
- C.10.2 In most cases escalation to this stage will follow attempts to address concerns through Stage 1. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to proceed directly to stage 2, examples of circumstances where a direct referral to Stage 2 is appropriate are listed below under C.15
- C.10.3 In all cases the decision to escalate to a Stage 2 Support Panel will be made in partnership by the Head of Doctoral School and if appropriate Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or Director of Student Support and Success.
- C.10.4 The aim of the Stage 2 Support Panel is to ensure the University considers all possible support options available to the student.

C.11 Stage 2 Support Panel Meeting

- C.11.1 The Head of Doctoral School, Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or Director of Student Support and Success will usually convene a Stage 2 Support Panel meeting within 7 working days of the case being escalated.
- C.11.2 The Support Panel will comprise of:
- Head of Operations (Student Support and Success), or Director of Student Support and Success or nominee (if appropriate)
 - Head of Doctoral School as Chair (or nominee)
 - Lead staff member from Stage 1 (where a case has come directly to Stage 2 a lead person should be appointed by the Head of Doctoral School)
 - 1 Representative from the Doctoral School (as notetaker)
- C.11.3 The student may be accompanied in a supportive capacity, by a professional support worker, at the meeting
- C.11.4 The invitation will provide a minimum of 5 days' notice and will include the following:
- Purpose of the meeting
 - List of attendees
 - Guidance to the student on right to be accompanied in a supportive capacity and, if required, by a support worker
 - Request for any evidence required for the meeting
- C.11.5 Prior to the meeting the University may seek additional information relevant to the student's circumstances from parties other than the student.

C.12 Possible outcomes From Stage 2

- a) No further action - situation resolved
- b) Enhanced action plan
- c) Lowering to Stage 1
- d) Continuation of studies but temporary ban from site
- e) Recommendation for additional support services
- f) Recommendation for interruption of studies
- g) Any other appropriate action

C.12.1 Within 5 working days of the meeting, the Note taker shall write up notes of the discussion on the Stage 2 - Notes of Support Panel Meeting Form (**see Appendix 3**)

C.12.2 A copy of this form should be emailed to the student via Unimail and copied to supporttostudy@winchester.ac.uk and Doctoral.School@winchester.ac.uk within 5 working days of the meeting.

C.12.3 The email should advise that the student must reply to confirm receipt and acceptance of the meeting outcome and that, should they not reply within 5 working days of the date of it being sent, the University will assume the student understands and accepts the content of the form.

C.12.4 The intention is to encourage the student to respond positively to the Action Plan and access the outlined support and modify their behaviour accordingly, as appropriate.

C.12.5 Should the student not respond positively, then the Chair shall discuss the situation with the other members of the Panel with a view to determining next steps.

C.13 Post meeting actions

C.13.1 Within 5 working days of the meeting, the Notetaker shall write up agreed actions of the Stage 2 Support Panel Meeting (see **Appendix 3**)

C.13.2 A copy of this form should be emailed to the student and all panel members via Unimail and copied to supporttostudy@winchester.ac.uk and the Doctoral School within 5 working days of the meeting.

C.13.3 The email should advise that the student must reply to confirm receipt and acceptance of the meeting outcome and that, should they not reply within 5 working days of the date of it being sent, the University will assume the student understands and accepts the content of the form.

C.13.4 The intention is to encourage the student to respond positively to the Action Plan and access the outlined support and modify their behaviour accordingly, as appropriate.

C.13.5 Should the student not respond positively, then the Chair shall discuss the situation with the other members of the Panel with a view to determining whether the case should be considered for Stage 3.

C.13.6 In all cases the decision to escalate to a Stage 3 Support Panel will be made in partnership by the Head of Doctoral School and Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or Director of Student Support and Success.

C. 14 Reviewing the Stage 2 Action Plan

Each time the Action Plan is reviewed, the Support Panel shall decide whether to:

- close the action

- Lower to Stage 1
- recommend an escalation to Stage 3

C.15 Examples of when a direct referral to Stage 2 could occur

- a) where a health care professional/occupational health advisor considers there is significant concern about a student's health, wellbeing, behaviour safety, and / ability to study, and where a higher-level response from the University is required.
- b) when a higher stage of decision making, and authority is required.
- c) where there are serious concerns regarding risk to the health and safety of the student and/or where there is a perceived threat and risk to others.
- d) where an immediate temporary interruption is considered to be in the best interests of the student or the University

C.16 Stage 3 Detailed Procedures

It is anticipated that Stage 3 will only be used rarely. This may be when a student's engagement or wellbeing is not improving, despite a Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 intervention or a student's actions or behaviour are putting the health, safety, wellbeing or academic progress of the student or other members of the University community at significant and immediate risk.

- a) In most cases escalation to this stage will follow attempts to address concerns through Stage 1 or 2.
- b) Exceptionally, it may be appropriate to refer a student for consideration under the Disciplinary Procedures.
- c) In all cases the decision to escalate to a Stage 3 Support Panel will be made in partnership by the Head of Doctoral School and Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or Director of Student Support and Success.
- d) The aim of the Stage 3 Support Panel is to ensure the University considers all possible support options available to the student.

C.17 Stage 3 Support Panel

The Head of Doctoral School, Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or Director of Student Support and Success will usually convene a Stage 3 Support Panel meeting with 7 working days of the case being escalated to Stage 3.

C.17.1 The Support Panel will comprise of:

- Head of Operations (Student Support and Success), or Director of Student Support and Success or appropriate nominee
- Head of Doctoral School (Chair)
- Lead staff member from Stage 1 (where a case has come directly to Stage 2 a lead person should be appointed by the Head of Doctoral School)
- 1 Representative from the Doctoral School (as notetaker)

C.17.2 The student may be accompanied in a supportive capacity, in addition to enabling the student to be supported by a professional support worker at the meeting

C.17.3 The invitation will provide a minimum of 5 days' notice and will include the following:

- Purpose of the meeting
- List of attendees
- Guidance to the student on right to be accompanied in a supportive capacity and, if required, by a support worker
- Request for any evidence required for the meeting

C.17.4 Prior to the meeting the University may seek additional information relevant to the student's circumstances from parties other than the student.

C.18 Possible outcomes at stage 3

- a) Lowering to stage 2
- b) Recommendation for additional support services
- c) Recommendation for interruption of studies
- d) Recommendation that the student is subject to Disciplinary Procedures
- e) Panel recommends that the student withdraws on one of the following:
 - Health and wellbeing grounds*
 - Consistent failure to make progress
 - Lack of engagement in studies
- f) Any other appropriate action

*There may be some occasions when all available reasonable support options have been exhausted, and where the Panel considers the student is not well enough to remain at university or where there is no possibility of successful completion of study. In this case the Panel may recommend an interruption or withdrawal from studies, and where appropriate and necessary, will seek authorisation from a Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor.

C.18.1 Within 5 working days of the meeting, the Note taker shall write up notes of the discussion on the Stage 2 - Notes of Support Panel Meeting Form (**see Appendix 3**)

C.18.2 A copy of this form should be emailed to the student via Unimail and copied to supporttostudy@winchester.ac.uk and DoctoralSchool@winchester.ac.uk within 5 working days of the meeting.

C.18.3 The email should advise that the student must reply to confirm receipt and acceptance of the meeting outcome and that, should they not reply within 5 working days of the date of it being sent, the University will assume the student understands and accepts the content of the form.

C.18.4 The student has a right to appeal against this decision by making an appeal as set out in Section B.15.

C.19 Exceptional Circumstances – interruption without a panel

In very rare circumstances members of the Executive Leadership Team may take immediate action to enact a temporary interruption of studies without the requirement for a Stage 3 Study Support panel being convened. Examples of when such a decision would be taken include:

- Serious risk to life
- Unacceptable impact upon the daily business of the University or University community

Such a decision would be taken following advice from the Head of Doctoral School and Director of Student Support and Success.

C.20 Returning to Study

- C.20.1 Following a period of absence from the University, it may be appropriate for the student to return to study. Registry/Doctoral School shall write to students who are coming to the end of their interruption of studies to instigate any return to studies.
- C.20.2 The University shall require the student to produce appropriate confirmation of their physical or mental health and ability to resume studying.
- C.20.3 What is deemed appropriate confirmation in any individual case shall be decided upon by the members of the Support to Study Panel or Case Review Panel depending on the level of action reached at the time of the student's suspension, interruption or leave of absence.
- C.20.4 Normally this shall include at least one 'Request for medical evidence in relation to the student's Support to Study plan' to be completed and submitted to the Panel. (**see Appendix 2**)
- C.20.5 The Director of Studies/Doctoral School shall draw up a 'Return to Study Plan' (see **Appendix 3**) in consultation with the student, once the appropriate confirmation of their physical or mental health and ability to resume studying has been received and approved by the Supported Study Panel or Case Review Panel and the Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) or their nominee.
- C.20.6 This plan shall address the specific study-related support needs of the student in returning to university studies including:
- the support which is reasonably required in the short term;
 - involvement of and liaison with external agencies (where appropriate);
 - any longer-term support or adjustments that are reasonably required;
 - any conditions that might or will apply to provision; and
 - a schedule for regular review meetings to be arranged with a member of academic staff, for the remainder of the academic year
- C.20.7 Any return to study shall be subject to the student's engagement with this process and adherence to any agreements made.
- C.20.8 Other members of staff within student support services shall be available to provide advice and support to facilitate the student's transition back into the programme, particularly in relation to any action that might be required under the Equality Act 2010. This shall be arranged with the direct involvement of, or in consultation with, the Mental Wellbeing Team or Disabilities and Learning Diversity Team within Student Support and Success.

C.20.9 The Return to Study Plan shall be shared with the Study Support Panel as appropriate

C.21 Central Recording and Monitoring

The Head of Operations (Student Support and Success) shall be responsible for regularly engaging with Director of Faculty of Operations/Head of Doctoral School to ensure oversight of numbers of Support to Study being undertaken and to enable oversight of any concerns. The Head of Operations shall provide an annual monitoring report to the appropriate committee. .

D Appendix 1 Extenuating Circumstances Form

To be completed by the student

Student name	
Student ID number	
Programme	
Home Faculty (or equivalent)	Choose an item.
Date form has been completed	Click or tap to enter a date.
Please confirm that you are applying for an extension to a submission deadline	YES/NO

<p>Please provide a full description of the extenuating circumstances and how it has impacted/is impacting your studies and which deadline you are applying for (for example RP7000). Please include the current submission deadline and your requested new submission date.</p>
<p>Please state what evidence you are submitting (if requesting less than 10 working days please add in N/A)</p>

<p>I certify that the information I have given in Section A above is correct, to the best of my knowledge, and understand that appropriate staff will have access to the information provided on this form.</p>			
Student signature		Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

Approve/Reject	
Signature of Panel/RKE Centre	
Date	
Student informed of decision	Date

D Appendix 2 Request for medical evidence regarding Support to Study arrangements



UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER

Name and address of GP or medical professional	
Date	

Dear

The University of Winchester has concerns over my Study Support arrangements and I should be grateful if you could please complete the following and return this form to:

Postal address: Head of Operations (Student Services), University of Winchester,
Winchester SO22 4NR

Email: winchester.university@nhs.net

Name of student	
Signature	

<p>This student's programme places rigorous demands, both academic and physical, on the student</p> <p>as outlined in the attached Section A. Section B outlines our concerns</p> <p>Through the Disabled Student Allowance, the following support is in place for the student:</p>

Head of Operations (Student Services) (name and signature)	
--	--

Please could you complete the following:	Please delete as appropriate
In the light of my knowledge of the student, I feel they are mentally and physically able to meet the demands of the programme	Yes / No
I consider a break in studies would be in the best interests of the student	Yes / No
I would anticipate the student may be fit to return to study in:	
I wish to add the following information to assist your decision regarding the student's Supported Study.	
Name:	
Position	
Date	

Thank you very much for your assistance in helping us to determine the best way to support this student.

Section A – Outline of the programme demands on the student, both academic and physical

Doctoral students are responsible for their own independent learning with guided supervision. The programme includes reading, research, writing, presenting, analysing, critiquing and completing Research Modules. The programme includes submission of written theses and two viva voce examinations. Further details can be obtained from PGRAdmin@winchester.ac.uk if required.

Section B 2 – Summary of the University's concerns
 To be written by Doctoral School

D Appendix 3 – Study Support Panel Meeting Form including Action Plan

Name of student		Student No.	
Programme			
Nominated Person			
Date of discussion			
Brief outline of situation			
Summary of discussion (include stage of Study Support)			
Agreed actions*, timelines and review date			
Record to be shared with the following members of staff as agreed with the student			
Those present at meeting.			

*

Period covered	Actions	Hours spent on this task per week	Submission Date	Notes

