

POLICY FOR RESEARCH DEGREE AEGROTAT AWARDS

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) has agreed the following policy for aegrotat research degree awards. This underpins R9.7 of the Research Degree Regulations. It relates to research degree candidates who suffer serious health impairment which in some cases, can result in an inability to fully complete the normal two-part assessment by thesis and its defence through an oral examination. RDC will allow for some adjustments and exemptions to the normal assessment process to facilitate these candidates to conferment of a research degree award. This policy applies to all research degree awards.
- 1.2 For an aegrotat award, the candidate must be beyond the minimum duration of study for the award (as per the timescales below) and have completed a significant body of their research degree work.

Degree & Mode	Normal minimum permissible time for completion from date of enrolment	Normal maximum permissible time for completion from date of enrolment ¹
MPhil		
Full-time	18 months	24 months
Part-time	30 months	36 months
MA by Research, LLM by Research		
Full-time	-	12 months
Part-time	-	24 months
PhD and PhD with integrated Pg Certificate		
Full-time	24 months	48 months
Part-time	36 months	84 months
DBA		
Part-time	48 months	84 months
EdD and DProf		
Full-time	36 months	60 months
Part-time	48 months	84 months

For candidates on the MA by Research in English or History or the LLM research degree programmes, in the absence of minimum completion timescales, these candidates will need to have completed a significant amount of their research. RDC would normally expect a candidate to be more than half-way through their programme of study.

¹ Allowing for any period of interruption of study approved via break in study – see R5.3

- 1.3 A student who has disclosed a disability to the university and has a learning contract will already have in place any reasonable adjustments required for their final assessment. However, in cases where other factors are affecting the candidate, which are over and above the remit of the learning contract, such as a sudden worsening of a known condition or a newly diagnosed condition which has immediate impact, then the candidate is eligible to apply for an aegrotat award.
- 1.4 This policy does not cover instances where candidates suffer sudden and unexpected extenuating circumstances which are over and above normal life circumstances, but which impact the timing of the oral examination. Candidates in these situations will be expected to apply for a deferral of their viva under the Research Degree Regulations, if the extenuation is suitably evidenced and has a timing link to the assessment.

2. Assessment/Decision-making for the Award

Assessment and decision-making for an award will depend on which research degree programme a candidate is registered on. Either an appointed examining team or RDC will make assessment decisions, to be ratified by the Dean of Research, Innovate and Knowledge Exchange, in accordance with the following guidance:

Doctorate, MPhil, MA by Research and LLM by Research	MProf (an exit award from the Professional Doctorate programmes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the assessment will take place by an examining team which is appointed in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations the decision will be based on an independent assessment of the submission by each examiner and a joint recommendation the decision will be ratified by the Dean of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, and the award conferred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the assessment will take place by RDC the evidence base on which this decision will be made is two-fold; the Programme Lead will provide a statement to confirm that the candidate has passed the mandatory complementary studies modules required of the programme, and the Director of Studies will provide a testimony of the candidate's progress in the research phase the decision will be ratified by the Dean of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, and the award conferred.

3. Aegrotat awards

- 3.1 An aegrotat means that a student is 'excused/exempt' from the oral part of an assessment based on independent medical certification, constituting ill health/impairment. In all cases however, a **written submission is mandatory**. A candidate, or a Director of Studies with the consent of the candidate, must submit a written thesis (or equivalent) for assessment. An equivalent submission could include thesis chapters, a collection of published material, and papers or reports with a critical introduction presented as a thesis. An aegrotat can be awarded on written evidence alone.

3.2 All requests for aegrotat awards should be:

- made in writing to RDC by the candidate (submitted to the ! RDCadmin box if internal to the university or rdcadmin@shu.ac.uk if external).
- accompanied by evidence from an independent practitioner confirming the issues reported by the candidate, and the timing/duration of the condition(s).
- written with the support of the candidate's Director of Studies.

If a candidate wishes to be exempt from the oral examination, based on the statement and evidence presented, RDC must agree that the candidate would be seriously and negatively impacted by doing so. The evidence must be timely and confirm that the candidate would be disadvantaged in the assessment by their health at the time a viva would normally be held, i.e., within 4 to 6 weeks of submitting the thesis (or equivalent written submission).

3.3 In cases where a viva is waived, the examination process will proceed as normal, but the viva will be held in the absence of the candidate. The examiners, the Director of Studies and the Independent Chair will meet to discuss the work and a joint report will be submitted after the viva to confirm the examiners' joint decision. In cases where examiners cannot agree, each will complete a separate joint report form and RDC will make a decision, which may involve the input of an additional examiner.

3.4 Where a candidate is awarded a research degree subject to the satisfactory completion of amendments within a 4 month FTE timescale, the Director of Studies will need to confirm whether the candidate is able to undertake the work themselves, or if the supervisory team will need to input to this and liaise with the examiner(s) for sign off.

3.5 In cases where a candidate cannot complete the amendments and the responsibility is passed to the supervisory team, acknowledgement of this will be prefaced in the thesis.

4. Certification

4.1 A standard research degree certificate will be issued to successful candidates. The certificate will not include any reference to aegrotat award.

Research Degrees Committee

Approved with effect from the 2025/26 academic year