

SOAS Suspension of Academic Regulations Procedure

This procedure is to guide staff requesting, approving and implementing a suspension of regulations. This procedure is applicable to the suspension of regulations as set out in:

SOAS [General and Admissions Regulations for Students](#), Suspension of Regulations, Section 3

SOAS [Taught Degree Regulations](#), Suspension of Regulations, Section 1.3

SOAS [Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations](#), Suspension of Regulations, Section 1.5

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1. Circumstances for a Suspension

The academic regulations of SOAS have been approved by Academic Board and are intended to maintain the quality standards of our programmes and awards and to ensure all students are treated fairly and equitably. SOAS regulations also form an integral part of our contract with students, and students accept them when they register. It is therefore expected that staff and students of SOAS will follow the academic regulations.

A suspension of regulations should only be considered where:

- 1) There are exceptional and/or unusual circumstances which could not have been foreseen by the regulations; and
- 2) To apply the regulations as they stand in this exceptional/unusual circumstance would unfairly and disproportionately disadvantage the student(s) concerned.

It is normally expected that a suspension of regulations will be requested as soon as possible once a problem is discovered. In some cases a retrospective suspension of regulations may not be possible and therefore options for resolutions should be explored with a student as soon as a possible problem is discovered.

It is very important to remember that a suspension of regulations can have an impact on a student's eligibility for statutory funding or scholarship, and for international students there could be implications for their current visa or eligibility for future visas. It is recommended that staff seek advice from appropriate Advice and Registry officers where these areas may be involved.

2. Who Can Request a Suspension?

Requests for a suspension of the [Taught Degree Regulations](#) and [Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations](#) must be made by an academic member of staff (usually a personal tutor, module or programme convenor, supervisor or year tutor) or relevant Department Manager on behalf of the student(s) concerned. The academic or Department Manager making the request should have a good knowledge of the case and should have fully explored possible resolution of the issue within the regulations before requesting they be suspended. Registry staff can provide advice on the regulations where required.

In the case of a request for suspension of the [General and Admissions Regulations](#), the Head of Department or Doctoral School is required to request the suspension.

3. Making a Request for a Suspension of Regulations

The staff member seeking the suspension of regulations should complete the Request for a Suspension of Regulations Form, the link to which is available at the end of this document.

In particular, care should be taken to identify which regulation the requested suspension relates to. The request cannot be processed without this information. Assistance with identifying the relevant regulation can be obtained from Registry staff in the appropriate team – for example, the Examinations Team can offer guidance on the regulations in relation to assessment, progression and degree awards, the Records Team can offer guidance on enrolment and mode of study, and the Doctoral School Team can assist with postgraduate researcher issues etc.

A concise explanation of why a suspension of regulations is required in this particular case should be given. This should demonstrate that the situation is extraordinary and that to follow the regulations in this specific circumstance would be unfair and would disadvantage the student. This explanation should also confirm that the situation has been considered against other existing policies to make sure that it cannot be resolved within the current regulations, before submitting a request to suspend those regulations.

Guidance should also be given on the actions that will be required to fully resolve the situation, should a suspension of regulations be approved. This is necessary to streamline the process and ensure that the situation is fully resolved within this procedure. For example, where a request is made to suspend the [Taught Degree Regulations](#) related to the timing of re-assessment for a finalist, this section of the form would be used to detail the alternative period in which the student should be entered for re-assessment.

It is important that SORs are processed in a fair and timely manner. The standard timeframe for the complete processing and notification of SORs is to be confirmed as 10 working days in total, including 5 working days for panel debate.

4. Submission

Requests for a suspension of regulations should be submitted using the online form which will be received by the Quality Assurance Team in Registry. Once received, the form will be logged and assigned a case ID for processing. Where a request is subject to the need to supply evidence, this evidence should be provided as soon as possible after the submission of the suspension request form online. Evidence cannot be submitted at the same time as the form and should be submitted separately by email or in person as a hardcopy to be recorded.

Once the form has been received and logged, a confirmation will be sent to the submitter and the relevant student(s) confirming the procedure for the processing of the request. This will include a definition of the timeframe for the complete processing of the request and information about submitting evidence where required. It is anticipated that a suspension request should be processed within 10 working days of submission of evidence if the relevant information is appropriately presented.

In some exceptional cases, additional time to process the request may be required but this will need to be established and justified on a case-by-case basis. If it is agreed that the SOR will take longer than the 10 working day service standard, this should be clearly communicated to the student and requestor as appropriate.

5. Approval

The Quality Assurance Team will contact the appropriate staff to request approval of the suspension of regulations through the online system. It is expected that the panel should take no more than 5 working days to appraise the case presented to them and to reach a decision. The panel's decision should be considered as final, only challengeable if an appropriate business case is presented. The decision of the panel is not eligible for appeal under the School's appeals policy but students may submit formal complaints in line with the School's complaints policy if appropriate grounds exist.

For SOAS Taught Degree and Research Regulations which require multiple approvals, the appropriate Associate Director will usually be contacted first. The academic regulations specify the approval required to suspend particular regulations as follows:

| Academic Regulation | Requestor | Approver |
|---|--|---|
| SOAS <i>General and Admissions Regulations for Students</i> | Head of Department or Head of Doctoral School | Academic Registrar and Associate Director Teaching Quality (Undergraduate OR Postgraduate Taught) |
| SOAS <i>Taught Degree Regulations</i> | Member of Academic Staff or Department Manager | Academic Registrar and Associate Director Teaching Quality (Undergraduate OR Postgraduate Taught) |
| SOAS <i>Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations</i> | Member of Academic Staff or Department Manager | Academic Registrar and the relevant Associate Director Research (Social Sciences OR Humanities & Languages) |

In the case of SOAS [Taught Degree Regulations](#) and SOAS [Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations](#) where approval for a suspension of regulations is required by more than one person, should disagreements about approval occur, the final decision will be referred to the Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching) for [Taught Degree Regulations](#) and to the Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) for [Postgraduate Research Degree Regulations](#).

Once a decision is received, the Quality Assurance team will record the outcome in the 'SOR' log and contact the appropriate Registry team to enable the required actions to be taken to implement the suspension of regulations.

6. Action

Once a request for suspension of regulations has been approved, the Quality Assurance Team will forward a copy of the approved form to the appropriate team in Registry or Admissions for action as follows:

- Admissions: for all SORs related to admissions and entry requirements.
- Doctoral School: for all SORs related to students on the MPhil/PhD
- Examinations: for all SORs related to student assessment, programme specifications, degree awards
- Records: for all other matters

Once the appropriate team receives an approved Suspension of Regulations form they will check to see whether the student is subject to immigration control. If so, they will check to see if the student requires additional leave or an alternative visa to study at SOAS. Where the student does require a visa, checks will be carried out with the Tier 4 compliance team to ascertain whether the action required by the SOR is permitted under the student's visa. If the action is not permitted under the terms of the student's existing visa or under a new visa then the SOR will not be actioned and the student, requestor and approvers will be informed accordingly.

The team processing the approved SOR should also consult with other Registry Teams (Fees, Examinations, Records) as appropriate to determine whether there would be future consequences of enacting the SOR. For example, asking the fees team whether a student whose registration has been extended would remain eligible for funding to the end of the programme.

As long as there are no known visa issues or other significant complications, the processing team will make any appropriate amendment to the student's academic record. On the Alerts facility of UNIT-e, a note will be entered to record that a suspension of regulations has been approved and the action having been taken.

7. Communication

As stated above, where the SOR cannot be actioned because a student's visa does not permit the proposed action, the student, requestor and approvers will be informed.

Where the SOR has been fully approved and there are no visa issues, the student(s) concerned by will be informed by email to confirm that the SOR was approved and the actions taken by SOAS. This email should be sent by the QA Team and copied to the staff member who requested the suspension of regulation and the relevant Associate Director.

The confirmation email should make clear to the student any actions they are required to take, any amended deadlines that must be taken into account or of any other relevant information arising as a result of the approved SOR. This could include; compulsory module information, particular deadlines or a new end date for the period of study.

8. Reporting

The Quality Assurance Team will maintain the log of requests for suspension of regulations. These will be reported to the Teaching, Learning & Student Outcomes Committee (TLSOC) on an annual basis. The report will include the overall number of SORs requested and approved with previous two years as a comparator (once available), the regulations suspended and the reasons given for requesting the SOR. A suspension of Regulations working group will meet regularly to monitor the process to maintain its efficiency. This group will prepare reports as required for TLSOC and for DaRC.

9. Suspension of Regulations form

The Suspension of Regulations form is available on the staff intranet. The form should be completed online. Paper submission of forms will not be accepted. Supporting evidence can be submitted by email or in person as a hardcopy where appropriate. Should any evidence concern confidential information regarding a student or any other stakeholder involved (e.g. medical letters), the requestor must not include this information on the form; instead, the requestor should indicate that there is further documentation containing confidential information when completing the Suspension of Regulations form, and the QA team will contact the requestor upon receipt of the form, in order to obtain the documentation by email or by physical copies. Informed consent must be sought from the owner of such information before submitting.

Document Version

| Valid from | Author | Changes | Published |
|-------------------|---|---|------------------|
| 2017/18 | Rebecca Harrison, Academic Registrar | Procedure introduced. Approved by LTQC 31.05.2017. | August 2017 |
| 2018/19 | Gareth Roberts, Tier 4 Compliance Manager & Richard Beet, QA & Partnerships Assistant | Terminology updates in line with restructuring. Procedure updated in line with operational changes and requirements. Approved by LTQC 29.05.2018. | July 2018 |