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**POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON
BARS ON ACCESS TO RESEARCH
DEGREE THESES**

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Alignment with the Expectations and Core practices of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education

This policy and procedure aligns with the following relevant Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	Core practices for quality
	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
Common practices for standards	Common practices for quality
The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
	The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.

Policy and Procedure on Bars on Access to Research Degree Theses

Policy

1. General Statements

- 1.1 The University is committed to the principle that the outputs of research and scholarship are accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Therefore, a successful research degree thesis will be openly available no longer than **12 months** after confirmation of the award, unless an exception has been approved for legitimate reasons of sponsorship conditions or sensitive content, or where the thesis or part of the thesis is due for publication without substantive changes to the text.
- 1.2 An application for a bar on access should also evidence that the interests of the student will not be unduly compromised.
- 1.3 Any approved bar on access will apply to members of the University's staff.
- 1.4 This Policy and Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Policy on the Submission and Presentation of Research Degree Theses.

2. Applying for a Bar on Access

- 2.1 An application for a bar on access can be made at any time from the beginning of your research degree programme until your final, approved thesis is uploaded into the University's digital repository (or, in rare circumstances, its deposit in the library).
- 2.2 However, if you wish to make an application, you are advised to do so before your examination, as your degree cannot be confirmed until your final thesis has either been made available or a bar on access has been approved. A late application could delay the award of your degree.
- 2.3 Where a bar on access is permitted, your approved thesis must be uploaded to the University's digital repository (or, in rare circumstances, lodged in the library) but will remain in a secure area until expiry of the bar.
- 2.4 The title and a summary of your thesis will be freely available. If the summary contains sensitive information, you should submit an additional, non-confidential version of the summary for use during the period of the bar.
- 2.5 You may opt for a bar on access to be applied to your thesis for a period of **up to 12 months** in accordance with the procedure below.
- 2.6 You may make an application, via Education Governance (Postgraduate Quality and Operations), to the relevant College Postgraduate Dean for a bar on access to your thesis that is **in excess of 12 months** in accordance with the procedure below.

3. Permitted Grounds for a Temporary Bar on Access

3.1 A temporary bar on access to your thesis may be permitted for one or more of the following reasons:

- .1 contractual restrictions: a contract with a sponsor or partner organisation states that the research must remain confidential for a given number of months/years;
- .2 commercial potential: the thesis contains commercially sensitive material, the release of which will prejudice commercial potential interests of the University or partner;
- .3 sensitive information: the thesis contains sensitive information that might endanger the health or safety of the author or third-parties, or open them to persecution or legal challenge;
- .4 intent to publish, or impending publication: subject to the limits provided below.

4. Maximum Durations

4.1 The maximum period of a bar on access for contractual restrictions and commercial potential is **5 years**.

4.2 A bar on access on the grounds of sensitive information will normally be permitted for **no more than 5 years**, but may be for a longer period where clearly justified by the circumstances.

4.3 The duration of the bar on access should be the shortest that is required by the circumstances and must not exceed any stipulation required by a sponsor (such as a Research Council).¹ Where a bar on access has been approved and the circumstances change such that the required duration becomes shorter than had been anticipated, you and your supervisor should notify Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations) that the bar may be lifted early.

4.4 You may opt for a bar on access of **no more than 12 months** to be applied to your thesis where you are seeking to publish the work contained in your thesis ('intent to publish').

4.5 You may apply for a bar on access of **no more than 24 months** (in total, from the commencement of the restriction) if your thesis is due for publication as a monograph, journal article(s) or other publication ('impending publication').

¹ Note that Research Councils generally require a sponsored thesis to be made openly available as soon as possible and **no more than 12 months** after completion.

5. **Date of Effect**

- 5.1 An approved bar on access will be regarded as being in place as soon as you submit your thesis for examination, but the approved period will be calculated from the date of uploading the final thesis into the University's digital repository (or, in rare circumstances, its deposit in the library).

6. **Freedom of Information**

- 6.1 Access to a thesis may be requested by an individual under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. The University will assess whether a decision to withhold the thesis could be successfully defended as a proportionate, balanced and reasonable response in the face of a request for access.

Procedure

7. **'Opt-In Bar on Access' for up to 12 months**

- 7.1 You may opt for a bar on access to your thesis **for up to 12 months** by completing the Opt-in Bar on Access Form.

- 7.2 You may opt in for a bar on access **for up to 12 months** on any of the following grounds:

- .1 contractual restrictions;
- .2 commercial potential;
- .3 sensitive information;
- .4 impending publication;
- .5 intent to publish.

- 7.3 Where the reason is other than impending or intended publication, your supervisor should approve the opt-in embargo.

8. **Bar on Access Application for More than 12 Months**

- 8.1 If you or your supervisor are seeking a bar on access to your thesis that **exceeds 12 months** (including an extension to any opt-in period, formerly called a 'standard bar on access'), you should complete the Bar on Access (>12 months) Application Form.

- 8.2 An application may be made by either you or your supervisor, but must include evidence that both parties agree to the application, unless a signed studentship agreement that sets out the relevant obligations is supplied with the application. All applications must be endorsed by the relevant Head of School or their nominee.

- 8.3 Applications will be considered by the relevant College Postgraduate Dean.
- 8.4 'Intent to publish' is not a permitted reason for a bar on access **in excess of 12 months**.
- 8.5 You may apply for a bar on access for 'impending publication' for a period of **up to 24 months in total** (including an extension to any opt-in period, formerly called a 'standard bar on access'), when your work is due for publication without substantive changes to the text. The bar on access should not extend beyond the date of publication.
- 8.6 In all cases, applications must include a clear justification for the bar on access and the requested duration, with supporting evidence as follows:
- .1 for contractual restrictions, this should include the sponsorship agreement or equivalent contract;
 - .2 for commercial potential, this should include a statement from your Head of School or their nominee and the University's Technology Transfer Office;
 - .3 for sensitive information, this should include a statement from your Head of School or their nominee;
 - .4 for impending publication, evidence must be provided of the stage of the publication process and the publisher's policy in respect of thesis availability.²
- 8.7 Applications must also state whether you were funded by a Research Council or equivalent body.

9. Extending an Existing Bar on Access

- 9.1 If you wish to seek an extension to an existing bar on access, you should do so at least **12 weeks** before the current expiry date. A fully supported and evidenced application must be received by Education Governance (PGR Quality and Operations) **no less than 8 weeks** before the current expiry date.
- 9.2 Bars on access are automatically lifted when the approved period expires, unless a further application has been approved.

10. Notification of Decision

- 10.1 You will be notified of the outcome of an application for a bar on access in excess of 12 months within **14 days** of the decision being taken by a College Postgraduate Dean.

² Many publishers do not consider a thesis as a prior publication, and publishers are likely to require significant revisions and amendments to a thesis as part of the publication process.

11. **Appeal**

- 11.1 If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your application, you may request a review of the decision under the University Review Procedure. A request for review must be made on one or more of the grounds set out in the Procedure and must be received by Student Cases, Registry Operations, within 14 days of the notification being sent.