

University of Birmingham

**Request for a Regularisation of Exemptions from Specified Regulations for BPhil  
Social Work with Children and Young People and BPhil Social Work with Adults**

**Topic and Purpose of the Paper**

1. APRC is asked to **consider**, and if thought appropriate, **approve** a regularisation of the exemptions from Regulation 6.1.2(a) for BPhil Social Work with Children and Young People and BPhil Social Work with Adults.

**Consultation**

2. Consultation concerning the issues raised by this request for a regularisation of exemptions has been undertaken within Academic Services.

**Proposals/Recommendations**

3. That the BPhil Social Work with Children and Young People (7224) and BPhil Social Work with Adults (7199) be exempt from Regulation 6.1.2 (a), which states:

*The minimum and maximum periods of study permitted for programmes prescribed for Undergraduate awards of the University shall be as follow:*

	<u>Minimum period</u>	<u>Maximum period</u>
BPhil	1 year	3 years

4. That instead, current practice for this programme is regularised, and that the maximum period of registration for the above programmes is 4 years.

**Background**

5. The BPhil Social Work with Children and Young People and BPhil Social Work with Adults lead to a professional award which is accredited by the General Social Care Council (GSCC). The programmes, alongside the Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work with Children and Young People, their Families and Carers, have been successfully run since 2007 and are delivered in partnership with a number of local authorities and other agencies in the Midlands Region.
6. It is a GSCC requirement that these accredited programmes must contain a placement element; candidates will support a social work student at their place of work, being assessed through a practice portfolio (which includes reports from the candidate's placement supervisor).
7. Ideally, placements (of 100 days duration) will take place in the September immediately following completion of teaching. Demand and competition for placements is high (for instance, some employers limit the number of placements available to students). The School cannot always guarantee that candidates will have the opportunity to undertake a placement in the September, leading to some being undertaken the following January. Whilst the School endeavour to promote creative responses to the issue of sourcing timely placements, this can still prove to be a challenge, and the three year maximum period of registration

can be problematic.

### **Arguments to Support Proposals/Recommendations**

8. When the BPhil and PGDip programmes were accredited by GSCC in 2007, accreditation for both programmes was based upon completion within a four-year time frame; the disparity between this and Regulations governing programme length was unfortunately not picked up at that time. The School would therefore be required to re-negotiate the programme's status with the GSCC if the exemption to extend the maximum period of registration for the programme is not granted.
9. The School feel that, due to the fact that immediate placement opportunities cannot be guaranteed, a three year maximum programme length may unfairly disadvantage students who are required to start their placement at a later date.
10. If a placement opportunity falls through or cannot be completed due to unforeseen circumstances, candidates may be required to re-start this element of their assessment, creating even further demand and competition for placements and extending the time taken for them to complete.
11. The School note that there is a competitive market for delivery of Social Work programmes, and feel that there is a risk involved in imposing a stringent three-year completion deadline; that partner agencies will look to source provision of these programmes from other institutions (who allow completion over a more flexible four-year time frame).
12. The BPhil programmes are run in tandem with the Masters Level award (PGDip), and although the awards are differing levels (and for which maximum registration regulations differ), candidates are required to undertake the same amount of teaching and assessment. Currently, both the BPhil and the PGDip programmes work to the same completion deadline, which allows for a streamlined process within partner agencies. It is felt that differencing completion deadlines would be likely to create administrative difficulties, and cause confusion amongst partner agencies.

Ellen Shobrook  
Curriculum Development Officer  
Academic and Student Administration