

Attendance and Absence Policy for Postgraduate Research Students

Purpose and Context

This policy sets out the expectations of the University with regard to the course engagement, attendance and absence of postgraduate research students.

Scope

The policy applies to postgraduate research students only. It should be noted that there are additional requirements for some overseas students which relate to the terms of their visas. In all cases, overseas PGR students should seek advice from the International Office Immigration Team.

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1 Advice for all PGR Students

1.1 Attendance and Course Engagement

As a postgraduate research student (PGR), you are expected to demonstrate regular engagement with your programme by:

- registering and re-enrolling for your programme annually;
- attending regular meetings with your supervisors;
- keeping records of discussion and actions coming out of your supervisor meetings, using the University's online supervision log;

- submitting work for assessment and attending examinations according to your programme timeline;
- requesting annual leave and reporting all absence or inability to engage with your research to your supervisor and your school research administration team;
- swiping your identity card.

1.2 International PGR Students

International students must report all absence (except for annual leave) to the International Office as well as to their supervisor and school research administration team. Additional guidance on attendance and absence for international students is included at the end of this policy.

1.3 ID Card Swiping Requirements

You are required to carry your student ID card with you at all times on campus. Your card allows you door access to specific areas of the University; functions as your library card; and is required for you to swipe and register your attendance.

For security reasons, you must not lend your ID card to anyone else. If you lose or damage your card, you should report this and replace it immediately. You can do this by going to the University Library.

You are required to register your regular attendance on campus by swiping your University identity card at the designated point in your School, as follows:

- Full-time international students studying with a Tier 4 visa must swipe every week to comply with their visa terms.
- Full-time UK / EU / other non-Tier 4 students should swipe monthly when attending campus for supervision.
- Part-time students must swipe every second month when attending campus for supervision.

1.4 ID Card Swiping during Submission Pending

- Tier 4 students who remain in the UK for their submission pending period must continue to swipe weekly throughout.
- Non-Tier 4 students are not expected to swipe, but are expected to remain in contact with their supervisor.

1.5 Authorised Absence

In case you need time away from your research programme, you must request a period of authorised absence from your school, or in the case of illness or other personal circumstances, make sure you report your absence to your school as soon as possible.

Tier 4 students must additionally seek approval from the International Office for all absences (except for annual leave, which can be approved by the school).

You should note that if you request or report a period of absence (for example, because of illness), you will not automatically be granted an extension for any submission that may be due; nor would this automatically trigger a suspension. If you do require an extension or a period of suspension, you must notify your supervisor and school administration team, who will advise you on the correct process to follow (see below).

Reasons for requesting / reporting absence may include:

- Annual leave requests (NB: taking annual leave is not grounds for late submission of work)
- Going on a study visit or being away for data collection purposes
- Maternity or paternity leave (see also the University policy regarding Support for Pregnant Students and New Parents)
- Ill-health
- Sick relative or dependant
- Close family bereavement
- Involvement in competitive sports at national or international level
- Victim of a serious crime
- Conference attendance
- Suspensions and extensions

It is your responsibility to make sure you are familiar with the University's regulations on suspensions and extensions for PGR students. These are the mechanisms the University uses to support PGRs who experience extenuating circumstances through their candidature. Full details can be found in [Section 6 of the Students' Handbook of Regulations](#)

1.6 Administrative Withdrawal from your Course

If you fail to engage with your programme or to report any absences in the way set out in this policy, or in line with the [Students' Handbook of Regulations](#) and the [Regulations for Awards](#), you may be administratively withdrawn from your programme.

The withdrawal process is set out in Section 9 of the Students Handbook of Regulations. This section of the regulations also outlines the process you may use to appeal any withdrawal decision.

2 Additional Advice for International Students on Authorised Absence

In all cases, PGR students on Tier 4 visas should seek advice from the International Office Immigration Team.

All absences (except for annual leave) must be approved by the International Office for Tier 4 visa students. Once the Immigration Team has approved your authorised absence, they will send you a confirmation letter by email. This does not replace the need for you to complete any extension or suspension forms and you must submit these to your school where appropriate.

Visa regulations do not allow students to officially extend a course end date as the result of an authorised absence. Absences will only be authorised if you are still able to complete your course of research within your standard enrolment period (3 years for a PhD and 1 year for a Master's).

If you feel that your circumstances mean that you won't be able to finish your course on time, you should consider requesting a suspension of studies instead of an authorised absence. As a Tier 4 student, if you do suspend, you must leave the UK until you are ready to return to study.

The absolute maximum period of consecutive leave you can take is 60 days. As a PGR student, you can, however, use annual leave plus request up to 60 days for data collection.

2.1 Authorised Absence Categories

The table below outlines the categories of leave which may be permitted as authorised absence. It is very unlikely that leave will be authorised if it does not meet the criteria below.

Category	Allowable period	Evidence requirements
Annual leave	35 days (except where leave likely to impact on progress of a research project or where there are funding implications)	n/a NB this is approved by your School on a leave card, not by the International Office
Study visit / data collection outside the UK	Up to 60 days	Supervisor confirmation
Pregnancy & birth (refer to the Policy on Support for Pregnant Students and New Parents)	Up to 6 weeks	Medical documentation
Paternity leave	Up to 2 weeks	Medical documentation
Sickness or ill-health	Up to 2 weeks. Longer periods may require students to suspend	Sick note or other evidence from the student's doctor / specialist
Sick relative or dependant ¹	Up to 2 weeks	Reliable 3rd party evidence / medical certificate
Close family bereavement ²	Up to 2 weeks	Reliable 3rd party evidence / death certificate
Involvement in competitive sports at national or international level	Up to 2 weeks	Reliable 3rd party evidence
Victim of serious crime	Up to 2 weeks	Crime number / police report
Conference outside the UK	Up to 1 week	Supervisor confirmation

¹ A dependant is classed as a spouse, cohabitee, child, parent or someone who reasonably relies on the student for assistance if they fall ill, or are injured, or relies upon the student for help, or in making arrangements in the provision of care

² Close relative, partner/spouse, or partner's/spouse's immediate relative

2.2 Data Collection and Fieldwork

UKVI requirements do permit PGR students to undertake periods of data collection or fieldwork in a different study location and this includes work overseas. However, the University is required to continue to monitor your engagement with your course when you are away for data collection and we are expected to know the whereabouts of all students whose visas we sponsor.

If you are away from the University, you must maintain regular contact – for example, weekly email contact with your supervisor with a monthly Skype supervision meeting.

You need to agree these contact arrangements in advance of the data collection and outline them in the *comments* box on the authorised absence form. You also need to agree what you hope to achieve and progress should be assessed during and after the period of data collection.

If you exceptionally wish to request a period of more than 60 days for data collection, please contact the immigration team to discuss this. You will need to be very clear about why you need to take a prolonged period of data collection and your request must be signed off by your supervisor.

The Immigration team is required to report periods of data collection of more than 60 days to the UKVI as a change of study location.

2.3 Suspensions

The UKVI requires students on a Tier 4 visa to be actively engaged in study. If you cannot engage and progress, the UKVI expects you to take a break from study and leave the UK.

If you do need to suspend your studies, the University of Huddersfield will report your suspension to the UKVI and you will be required to leave the UK.

When you are ready to return to study, you should request a new CAS and apply for a visa to complete the remainder of your programme.

Common scenarios where you might suspend include:

- Ill health: if you are not fit to study and require a period of time to recuperate, you should suspend your studies.
- Personal problems: if you are not able to actively engage in study due to personal problems, you should suspend and re-engage when you are able to do so.
- Family problems/bereavement: these problems may require you to leave the UK or may affect your ability to study in the UK. You are permitted up to 2 weeks' absence but if you need longer, you should suspend and re-engage when ready.

It is important that you understand the Regulations around extensions and suspensions because these are the mechanisms we have for supporting students who are dealing with extenuating circumstances. These are outlined in the Students' Handbook of Regulations, Section 6. You can find this on the University website via the Portal and on UniLearn under the *Research* tab.

2.4 Extension to the Maximum Enrolment Period and Submission Pending

3 – 6 months before the end of the standard enrolment period for your course of research, you will be required to notify your school of whether:

- You intend to submit your thesis on time;
- You would like to request an extension to time to complete your research;
- You wish to request additional time to complete the writing of your thesis.

If you wish to apply for either option 2 or 3, you must discuss the implications of this for your visa with the International Office at the earliest opportunity.

2.5 Authorised Absence

As a postgraduate research student, you can request up to 35 days a year annual leave. Your School will issue you with an annual leave card and will approve and record your leave. You can use your leave card as proof of authorisation for absence from the University.

You do not need International Office approval for annual leave.

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