



Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Policy and Guidance

This document sets out the expectations and guidance on attendance and engagement monitoring and absence reporting for Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) and is intended to give staff greater clarity in relation to the University's expectations of an effective attendance monitoring and engagement process and to provide a coordinated response to the Home Office reporting requirements

Principles

1. Attendance and engagement monitoring is recognised as an important element in supporting Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) retention, performance and success. Recording and monitoring attendance and engagement is crucial in supporting our duty of care to PGRs, allowing for timely and appropriate interventions and to ensure the safety and well-being of our PGRs.
2. Monitoring of attendance and engagement has been a University requirement for many years. Regular and appropriate attendance is a University requirement as stipulated in the [Curricular Ordinances and Regulations](#)
3. The attendance and engagement of all PGRs must be monitored throughout the research degree candidature, with absence being recorded. The monitored attendance sessions must include all formal supervisory meetings as well as progress reviews and other appropriate events as defined by the School/Faculty.
4. PGRs' attendance must be monitored across all years and a standard, fair and auditable approach taken to ensure equity of treatment.
5. A central system, the Graduate Record of Achievement and Development (GRAD), is used to record all Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) engagement in an auditable way, and helps in identifying PGRs who are absent.
6. The responsibilities and expectations of the supervisors, the PGR, and the School and Graduate School with respect to commitment to research activity, attendance, engagement and progress reporting are outlined in the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#).

7. For PGRs failure to attend and progress and/or prolonged or unexplained absence without permission can result in instigation of the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure, Fitness to Study or the presumed withdrawn process.
8. The operational arrangements which support PGR attendance and engagement monitoring are described in more detail in the separate PGR Standard Operating Procedure for Attendance Monitoring.
9. Under the requirements of the Home Office and the conditions of the University's Student Sponsor Licence, the University must report PGRs who fail to complete registration when expected or who are absent without authorisation for a period.
10. It is essential that our monitoring and associated reporting is accurate and that our records are accessible to protect our UKVI Sponsor Licence, along with meeting the professional/statutory body requirements for certain programmes of study.
11. Accurate attendance and progress records are required as evidence in student case work and as part of any consideration and determination of student contract complaints and legal cases.

Expectations under the Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures

12. A full-time PGR will have a minimum of 10 supervision meetings a year. The relevant number for part-time PGRs is 6 a year. Whilst the pattern and timing of meetings will vary according to the precise stage of the candidature and between subject areas it is expected that meetings will be held regularly throughout the standard period of study with gaps between meetings of no more than 8 weeks for full-time PGRs (or 12 weeks for part-time PGRs). Notes must be kept of all formal supervision meetings in GRAD.
13. PGR's progress will be monitored formally at regular intervals during the candidature. As a minimum there must be a report by the supervisor at the mid-point of the first year of the candidature (the "First Formal Progress Report") and at the transfer stage. All doctoral PGRs are subject to a formal transfer assessment process which includes attendance for a transfer interview (normally by 12 months for full-time study and 24 months for part-time). Annually, thereafter, there must be a meeting to review progress, where the PGR is interviewed, and a report of the meeting submitted (the "Annual Progress Review"). All these progress reviews are managed through the GRAD system.
14. PGRs are expected to work on their research project for periods of time that are comparable to a full-time academic post (the equivalent of an average of at least 37 hours a week). This does not include paid work. Part-time PGRs are expected to work on their research project for periods of time equivalent to 20 hours per week. It is inevitable that their workload will be variable during the year and it should be agreed with their supervisor(s). When approaching a specific deadline

such as the submission of a transfer report or thesis additional hours of work will be necessary. They will also be expected, to undertake other professional activity, for instance to attend conferences, undertake fieldwork and other research activities outside of the University.

Responsibilities under the Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures

15. The responsibilities and expectations of PGRs and Supervisors with respect to attendance, engagement and progression are set down in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures as follows:

Responsibilities of the PGR

- Commit to research activity in accordance with the University's expectations
- Carry out research effectively, to attend the University, to present work regularly and to an adequate standard in an appropriate form and against an agreed timescale taking into account any holiday entitlement;
- Agree to a supervisory programme, to maintain regular contact with their supervisor(s) and to attend for formal supervision meetings throughout the programme of study (including the overtime period).
- Engage with the University's system for maintaining a record of the research degree candidature (Graduate Record of Achievement and Development (GRAD)). This includes ensuring, in partnership with the supervisor, there are written records of formal supervision meetings.
- Assist the University in keeping their personal record up to date by cooperating fully with administrative procedures.
- Submit, when requested, regular written summaries of overall progress to their supervisors.
- Take measures to attend appropriate training including induction, personal development programmes and research seminars in consultation with their supervisor
- Comply with normal working arrangements in the School.
- Promptly draw to the attention of the supervisor or Director of PGR Studies when there is a situation where it may be necessary to request a suspension or extension of study. If appropriate, documentary evidence should be provided (eg medical certificate);
- Discuss with the supervisor, in good time where possible, should they wish to be away from their research activity (eg in the case of holidays and authorised absence);

Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s)

- Agreeing a supervisory programme with the PGR and arranging regular meetings with the PGR throughout the programme of study (including the overtime period)

- Ensuring that arrangements are made for the transfer review within the prescribed timescale for the programme of study and identifying individuals to serve on the transfer panel.
- Preparing regular reports on the PGR's progress
- Engaging with the University's system for maintaining a record of the research degree candidature (Graduate Record of Achievement and Development (GRAD)). This includes ensuring in partnership with the PGR, that there are written records of formal supervision meetings.
- Alerting the Director of PGR Studies, in a timely manner, to any situation where it may become necessary to request a suspension or extension of study for a PGR.
- Bringing to the attention of the Director of PGR Studies any concerns about a PGR's unsatisfactory progress and, where appropriate, engaging with the [Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure](#);
- Keeping the Head of School informed of any absences likely to impact upon time available for supervisory duties.
 - Reporting to the Director of PGR Studies when for an individual PGR there has been a change of study location, no contact or when there has been a pattern of absences which is affecting the PGR's progress or causing concern for the PGR's well-being

Expectations of the School/Graduate School

16. The responsibility for management of appropriate recording will rest with the Dean of the Faculty, who may allocate the responsibility (via the Faculty Graduate School Committee and the Head of Graduate School and Director of PGR Studies (DoPGRS)) to schools or other appropriate units within the faculty.
17. Faculties/schools must have procedures in place for contacting PGRs who have failed to attend monitored attendance sessions without authorisation. These procedures should involve the Head of School or the Director of PGR Studies and be clearly stated. Evidence of these activities will be required in the event of a Home Office audit, so it is essential that records are kept and are accessible. The Director of PGR Studies will usually be the first point of contact when such information is required.
18. As a minimum, schools/Graduate Schools will be required to put the following procedure in place:
 - Supervisors will be required to report to the Director of PGR Studies and Graduate School when there has been no contact or missed supervision meetings with individual PGRs for a month (unless absence has been authorised for illness or other suspension, etc), or where there is a pattern of absences which is affecting the PGR's work or causing concerns for the PGR's wellbeing.

- The Director of PGR Studies or Graduate School should contact the PGR promptly to explore any problems, in consultation with Doctoral College Operations if appropriate. This provides an opportunity for issues to be resolved with the PGR and to identify any more serious problems early. It may for example be appropriate to consider a suspension of studies, instigating the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure (UAPP) or the Fitness to Study Process.
- Where issues cannot be quickly resolved, the Graduate school should work closely with Doctoral College Operations and other colleagues to explore whether support can be offered that enables the PGR to return to studies, or whether a suspension of studies should be considered until issues are resolved. Complex cases may require a case conference-style approach to allow consideration of all necessary factors to be discussed and prioritised. In addition to academic progress and University regulations, these factors may include health considerations, personal/family considerations, immigration advice, compliance with Home Office regulations and financial considerations (including effects on any sponsorship).
- Where progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory the [Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure](#) should be instigated. Under the procedure the PGR will be interviewed, normally by the Director of PGR Studies and the supervisor, and specific instructions and objectives given. If progress concerns are health related [the Fitness to Study Process](#) might be instigated in place of UAPP.
- Where issues remain unresolved and prolonged absence continues, it may be necessary for the PGR to suspend or withdraw or, if they are not in contact, to be presumed withdrawn.
- Guidance on the processes to be followed for authorised absences, suspensions, presumed withdrawn and the procedures for reporting are set out in Standard Operating Procedure for Attendance Monitoring (SOPAM) for Postgraduate Researchers.

Procedures for attendance and engagement monitoring

19. The detailed operational procedures which support this Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Policy are set out in a Standard Operating Procedure for Attendance Monitoring (SOPAM) for Postgraduate Researchers. This describes the operational procedures for monitoring PGR attendance and engagement in place across the Doctoral College and Academic Schools, including supervision meetings and formal progress reports, PGR and Staff responsibilities, absence reporting arrangements, registration requirements and change of study location.
20. The attendance of all PGRs must be monitored throughout the research degree candidature, with absence being reported. The monitored attendance sessions

must include all formal supervisory meetings as well as progress reviews (First Formal Progress Report, Transfer and Annual Progress Reviews), the thesis submission and final viva. Other appropriate events include induction events, University training courses, and annual meeting with the Director of PGR Studies. Further details on the attendance sessions agreed by Graduate Board as suitable for recording and monitoring purposes for PGRs are set out in more details in the SOPAM. The importance of keeping good supervision records and ensuring that they are signed off in a timely manner is emphasised by the Board.

21. It is recognised that there are different events and timelines within different schools which reflect the varying nature of research study. Schools and Faculties may already have their own practices which relate to these events. These events and associated procedures should be clearly stated in the faculty/school handbooks or on the website.
22. The Graduate Record of Achievement and Development ([GRAD](#)) is the online system used by all PGRs, Supervisors, Directors of PGR Studies and the Doctoral College to support PGR processes, including attendance monitoring. It is used for a wide range of tasks including organising and recording supervision meetings, recording all progress monitoring meetings, thesis submission, and managing requests for authorized absence, suspension of study or change of study location. This provides an accurate, auditable, and accessible record of PGR attendance and any absence. Further detail is set out in the Standard Operating Procedure for Attendance Monitoring.

Related policies and procedures:

[Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures](#)

[Unsatisfactory Academic Performance Procedure](#)

[Fitness to Study Procedure](#)

[Ordinance X. Research degrees](#)

[Student Contract](#) - section 22 overview of attendance requirements

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