

The 2021/22 UWE Bristol academic
regulations for postgraduate researchers –
what you need to know

The Graduate School October 2021

Rubric

This information does not replace the PGR academic regulations and must be read in conjunction with the 2021/2022 publication. If you require a full copy of the regulations you can save and print a PDF version from the following webpage:

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/regulationsandprocedures.aspx>

The information in this document is also available via the postgraduate research study website with detailed procedures, guidance and information about PGR degree requirements contained within the online [Graduate School Handbook](#). You can also access this handbook by typing **UWE pgr handbook** into any search engine.

The academic regulations for postgraduate researchers

When you register at the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol you are also agreeing to abide by the academic regulations and related policies and procedures. The regulations are the framework in which all the University's learning, teaching and assessment activities take place. This document sets out the key things you need to know about the academic regulations and also what will be required of you when you are a student at UWE.

The academic regulations are reviewed and re-issued each year. They may be updated in the light of External Examiner comments, external legislation, professional body requirements, internal reviews and student feedback.

Some regulations are specific to research degree study at doctoral or MPhil level and these are contained within Volume 2 Postgraduate research degrees regulations. PGR regulations tell you what you must do; PGR Procedures tell you how you must do it. PGR guidance and FAQs provide additional information that will be useful as you progress through your research degree, and links to other sources of support.

Any postgraduate researcher who is uncertain about which regulations apply to them should contact the Graduate School: graduateschool@uwe.ac.uk in Room 3E37, Frenchay Campus.

Variations to the regulations

Due to the requirements of the professional bodies who accredit UWE awards, sometimes regulations need to be varied to meet the conditions of accreditation. If this is the case for your award you will be advised of the details by your faculty and the details of the variation will be set out in the programme specification.

Terms and conditions – important milestone dates

- Your PG Research (PGR) degree offer letter is accompanied by a statement of terms and conditions of study. This sets out key information and requirements including the name of your provisional Director of Studies, fees (including any project fees, bench/lab fees or other costs), how to register, and the progress review milestone dates (including RD1) specific to you which you must meet satisfactorily in order to remain registered on the degree, and any other conditions that are specific to your individual registration.
- It also provides information and useful links about research skills development requirements, ethics, research data management, intellectual property, and further information for international students coming to UWE from abroad. You must sign and return this statement to accept your place.

- If you are not going to be able to arrive at UWE in order to start your degree on the date specified in your terms and conditions you must contact the Graduate School and your Director of Studies to let them know, and in some circumstances to agree a deferral (approved delay) to your start date, or agree initial work that you could make a start on from your current location.

You and your supervisors (PGR regulations part 8)

- PGRs are allocated a supervisory team led by a Director of Studies and including at least one second supervisor. The supervisory team is responsible for ensuring that each PGR receives academic support and guidance in planning and implementing their research programme.
- There must be regular scheduled contact between you and your supervisory team. Expectations and arrangements for meeting frequency, duration, taking and distribution of meeting notes, and responding to requests for guidance and advice should be negotiated and agreed at the start of your registration. These may change as you progress and your needs change.
- Your Director of Studies should monitor your ongoing progress and provide you with regular feedback.
- The ultimate responsibility for the timely progress of research study always rests with you however, and the thesis is your work not your supervisors'. You are responsible for your own personal and professional development (PGR parts 6 and 13).

Registering your research project (PGR regulations part 9)

- Within 3 months (full-time) or 6 months (part-time) of your start date, you will be required to register your research project formally using an RD1 form. During this initial period you will need to work closely with your supervisory team to prepare your research proposal, to identify any ethical or other governance approval requirements, to start developing your research data management plan, and to address your research training requirements (PGR9.2.1-2R).
- You are advised to take this initial progress milestone seriously. Your project proposal is considered by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and there are two possible outcomes: satisfactory - continue registration, or unsatisfactory – rework and resubmit proposal. There will be one resubmission opportunity. If your project proposal is not approved at resubmission you will be withdrawn from the degree and your PGR registration will end.

Changes to your research project (PGR regulations part 9)

- Any major change to the overall aims, scope or methodology of the research project requires the approval of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee, and may also require a change in the composition of the supervisory team (PGR9.3.1R).

Research governance: research data management, ethics and intellectual property (PGR regulations part 5 personal conduct and part 10 research governance)

- All researchers including PGRs and their supervisors must comply with the requirements of the University's published Policy and Code of Good Research Conduct, PGRs are also required to comply with any academic integrity training requirement as specified by the University. If you require a full copy of the policy and code you can save and print a PDF version from the following webpage: <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchgovernance/codeofgoodresearchconduct.aspx>
- All research projects undertaken by PGRs registering for the first time from October 2021 onwards will need to have an associated research data management plan. This plan outlines how research data will be generated or collected, managed, stored, preserved and shared. The plan is a living document and may change and develop over the course of the project. This is part of good research governance see Graduate School handbook at PGR10.4.1-2.
- All research projects involving human participants or their data and/or human tissue also require research ethics scrutiny and approval. Currently, evaluation projects involving human participants also require research ethics review.
- If your research involves human participants you will need to complete a [full application](#) to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) so that your research project can be independently reviewed and approved. Research using human tissue is strictly regulated. Your Director of Studies can advise on this type of research and what kind of ethics approval is needed.
- If your research falls within the scope of the Department of Health Research Governance Framework e.g. involves patients in the NHS, or NHS Staff or premises there are special requirements relating to ethics. You will need to apply to an NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC) for approval via the online Integrated Research Application System (IRAS). You will also need NHS Research and Development approval for your project from the hospital trusts where your project will take place. You must contact your FREC secretary to notify them that you will be applying for NHS REC approval using the National Research Service and IRAS.
- Detailed guidance on submitting an ethical approval application is available on the [University research ethics web pages](#). You need to work closely with your Director of Studies to prepare your application.
- If your project requires ethical approval you must not start collecting data from your human participants prior to this approval being obtained. You should be aware that gaining ethical approval can be a detailed and lengthy process, and you and your Director of Studies should factor this into your plan of work.

Restricting access to a doctoral thesis and third party intellectual property requirements (PGR regulations part 10.5-7)

- This University supports open access to research and does not normally restrict access to a thesis deposited on its research repository and will restrict access to core research data underpinning that thesis for a maximum of two years.

- Where the approved research data management plan for a project requires it however, the University may decide that open access to a thesis and/or the core research data underpinning it should be restricted for a specified period of time upon completion, as approved by the Taught and Research Degrees Award Board (RDAB).
- Applications to restrict access to a thesis or its underpinning research data will only be considered on limited grounds, and must be made as early as possible and submitted to the Officer of the Award Board supported by relevant evidence sufficient to enable the Board to reach its decision, see the Graduate School handbook PGR10.5.4.
- PGR candidates are also bound by the requirements of the University's published intellectual property policy and regulations which are available on the UWE policies web page.
- You must ensure as far as reasonably possible that any use of materials, inventions or any intellectual property in materials created or used by you does not infringe the right of third parties and that the appropriate consent has been obtained prior to deposition of your final thesis on the UWE Research Repository (PGR Parts 10 and 14).

Progress during your research degree (PGR regulations parts 11 and 12)

- Progression through a research degree is dependent on the successful achievement of the progress point or milestone relevant to each stage of PGR registration, including RD1 (PGR part 9). The dates for these milestones are included in the statement of terms and conditions sent to you at registration. Progression examination vivas and progress review meetings can be face-to-face or online, but all those involved must agree the preferred format.
- The progression examination at the end of the first stage of registration comprises a written report and a viva. Possible outcomes of the progression examination are: Pass – continuation of registration, or Fail – withdrawal of registration. At the discretion of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC) upon recommendation by the examiners you may be permitted the opportunity to resubmit, but there is no automatic right to resubmission at progression examination stage (PGR11.4.1 – 2R). You will receive written feedback about your work with the formal notification of your examination outcome, but your examiners may also provide verbal feedback at the end of the exam itself. If you fail the progression examination you will be withdrawn from the award and your registration will end.
- At each subsequent stage of your programme a progress review is carried out to ensure that satisfactory progress is being maintained. A review meeting will take place between you, your Director of Studies and an independent reviewer at which evidence of progress you have submitted from an approved list of options will be discussed and objectives for the upcoming stage identified.
- In the case of unsatisfactory progress you will be given a resubmission opportunity, and guidance will be provided on revision of your material and/or the remedial action required to help you to get your project back on track, but continuing unsatisfactory progress after resubmission will lead to withdrawal from the programme and your registration will be ended (PGR12.3.3R). Non submission by the advised deadline at any progression point without good reason will result in loss of opportunity and may lead withdrawal

of registration. Non submission at resubmission will result in your withdrawal from the award and your registration will be end.

Professional development & training (PGR part 6)

- The Graduate School provides a wide range of development workshops running throughout the course of the academic year, which aim to help PGRs to develop vital transferable skills and become effective researchers.
- All research degree programmes also require the achievement of a minimum number of credits at Masters Level which for MPhil, PhD and DPhil awards is currently 60 credits. Note, this credit requirement also applies to candidate registered on the MPhil/DPhil by publication award. As part of the RD1 process you and your Director of Studies will assess your particular development and research training needs and identify appropriate modules or other learning opportunities for you to undertake. This is reviewed at each progress review point as your needs may change over the course of your studies (PGR6.1.1 – 2R).
- Please note an existing Masters qualification is not an automatic substitute for credits on research degrees
- Professional Doctorate candidates generally have a greater credit requirement as part of their degree, and achieve this credit as part of the taught element of their programme, details of which can be found in on line published programme specifications and via award handbooks.
- PhD and DPhil PGRs also have the opportunity to take additional modules (without additional tuition fees) up to a maximum of 120 credits.

Changes to your registration – support for personal circumstances, suspension, extension (PGR part 7)

Personal circumstances

- Personal circumstances are serious personal difficulties or significantly disruptive matters outside your control which impact your ability to make progress with your research, or to meet the deadline for completing/submitting your work for a specific progression milestone, or to attend a progression viva voce/progress review meeting.
- They can also apply when completing or submitting your thesis/work for final assessment or undertaking a final assessment viva voce examination, but there is special advice that you must follow for the final assessment period.
- The Graduate School has a personal circumstances process in place to support PGR candidates facing these situations. **It is very important that you follow the procedures for PGRs, as these are different from those in place for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.** Further details can be found at Part 7 of the PGR regulations, in the online Graduate School Handbook and in the [Graduate School PGR personal circumstances guidance notes](#).

- PGRs affected by personal circumstances can apply for one of the following:
 - ❖ Up to 5 extra working days (Monday – Friday) for the late submission of a progression examination report or progress review work. Self-certified where no evidence is collectible (once only per stage, not available for final submission or within final assessment period);
 - ❖ An extension to a progress milestone submission deadline i.e. progression examination report or progress review work (for up to 28 days, once only per stage, supporting evidence required);
 - ❖ The postponement and rearrangement of a progression examination viva voce or progress review meeting;
 - ❖ A suspension of registration (for up to 12 months, supporting evidence required) ;
 - ❖ An extension to the registration end date (available post stage 3 progress review only – extra time to complete and make final submission) supporting evidence and a completion plan required.

Final assessment options – within the final assessment period

- ❖ Postponement and re-arrangement of the final assessment viva voce;
 - ❖ Suspension during the final assessment period, or extension of the final assessment period.
- In **all** cases (except 5 day self-certification), appropriate supporting evidence will be required to ensure the PGR receives the most appropriate support. The process for making an application is described in the [Graduate School PGR personal circumstances guidance notes](#).
The Graduate School recognises that it can sometimes be difficult to obtain supporting medical evidence at short notice. If you are having difficulties please contact the Graduate School for advice.

Suspension of your registration

- Suspension provides a complete break from studies, your registration is paused for between a month and 12 months, and you are not liable for the payment of fees. However while on suspension you may not carry on with your research work, or expect ongoing supervision and feedback about your research from your supervisory team, other than that needed to ensure continuing pastoral contact with your Director of Studies. You apply for a suspension using the PGR personal circumstances form.
- When you are able to resume your studies you must inform your Director of Studies and the Graduate School, including if you return prior to the approved suspension end date.
- Bursaries are not payable during periods of suspension. If you are a funded PGR and do not inform your funder that you have temporarily suspended you will use up a funding period which cannot be extended or replaced. This may leave you with a funding shortfall at the end of your registration for which you will be financially responsible.
- Suspensions can affect visas and international PGRs subject to tier 4 visa requirements need to speak to the UWE Immigration advice team within the [Student Visa Support Service](#) before requesting a suspension of their registration.

Extension of your registration

- Requests to extend your PGR registration will normally be considered only once you are in the final stages of your research programme, having passed your stage 3 progress review (PR3), and nearing your completion deadline. Retrospective extensions will not normally be permitted. There must be a good reason supported by evidence for the delay in completing the research project, together with a realistic project plan and revised date for completion. Application for an extension should be made using the PGR Personal Circumstances form.
- Extensions are approved by the Taught and Research Degrees Award Board (RDAB) on recommendation of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and will be for a maximum period of 12 months at a time. Fees are payable during any period of extension.
- You should note that if the Committee is of the opinion that there is insufficient reason for the request or that the revised project plan and completion date is not feasible then the application may be rejected. If your thesis is not then submitted on time you will be withdrawn at the end of your registration period and no research degree award will be made.

Transfer between research awards

- A PGR who is registered for a PhD award and who for good reason is unable to complete the approved programme of research may, at any time prior to the submission of their thesis for final examination, apply for transfer of registration to the MPhil award. Applications are considered by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and must be supported by evidence (PGR part 4.8).
- There is no provision for automatic transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD, and transfer between awards in this way is not a possible outcome from your progression examination. If you are registered on an MPhil award and consider that your work is more appropriate for a PhD you must withdraw from the MPhil and apply in the normal way for PhD registration, (PGR part 4.9).

Other resources and sources of support for PGRs (PGR part 7d)

Staying health both physically and mentally during your research studies will enhance your productivity, and reduce sickness. There are many options to obtain help, support and advice if you are feeling stressed, anxious, depressed or have another ongoing mental health condition in your day-to-day life at UWE Bristol, including support if you are in crisis. This is available for all students of the University, including PGRs from the [University's Wellbeing Service](#)

Withdrawal of your registration (PGR part 4.3)

The [PGR withdrawal policy](#) is published on the postgraduate research study website and provides detailed information. Your registration may be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

Due to lack of academic progress

- Satisfactory progress must be made throughout the programme of research study. Should you be unable to demonstrate the required level of timely academic achievement either at specific progress points or during the context of routine supervision, your Director of Studies will ensure that you have sufficient opportunity, advice and guidance to help remedy the situation. However, continued unsatisfactory performance over a sustained period of time, or following failure at RD1, the progression exam, or following unsatisfactory resubmission at subsequent progress points will lead to withdrawal of your registration by the University and no research degree award will be made.

Withdrawal for other reasons including:

- **Loss of contact with your supervisory team** If you do not attend agreed supervisory meetings or fail to respond to reasonable efforts to make contact by your Director of Studies formal withdrawal procedures may be invoked.
- **Personal circumstances** Occasionally it may be necessary for a PGR to withdraw from their programme of research due to personal circumstances which cannot be mitigated by a period of suspension or other forms of support.
- **Non-payment of fees** Please contact the Graduate School if you have problems paying your fees, but be aware that the University may withhold awards from PGRs who have outstanding obligations to the University including fees. The University's published debt policy provides more guidance.
- **Project or its supervision is no longer viable** Exceptional withdrawal in cases where there has been an extended break in work on the project such that the research itself is no longer current and cannot be adjusted; where the direction of the project has changed such that the University can no longer provide the subject expertise to supervise the research; where a PGR requests a change of supervisor or a key member of the supervisory team leaves and no suitable alternative member of staff can be identified to provide the necessary subject expertise.
- **Proven academic misconduct or assessment offence** The University's published assessment offence policy and academic regulations at PGR part 15 provide detailed information about what will happen if you are suspected of having committed an assessment offence either during the course of your research studies, or in the context of final assessment.

Final Assessment (PGR parts 13 and 14)

- Final assessment is by thesis* and viva voce examination. The final assessment phase begins when you submit your thesis. To submit PGRs are required to upload their thesis to the University Research Repository in the PDF format specified by the University. Form RD14 must also be emailed to research.degrees@uwe.ac.uk once the thesis has been uploaded. You are not required to submit printed paper copies. Detailed instructions about the formatting of your thesis are provided in procedures at Part 13 of the [Graduate School Handbook](#). These are necessary to ensure legibility and consistency across the many theses that are submitted each year, and because the Graduate School may need to arrange for a copy of your thesis to be printed if requested by your examiner.
- You must attend your final viva on the date and at the time specified by the University. You are able to state your preference about the format of the viva, the options being a face-to-face viva at one of the University's campus sites, or an online viva using a software platform approved by UWE. You must discuss which is the best option for you with your Director of Studies, but wherever practical and reasonable your preference will be supported.

Summary of final assessment phase requirements:

- You must submit a full draft copy of your thesis to your supervisory team for comment, and receive their comments on it prior to submission of your thesis for final assessment (PGR13.1.2R).
- You must submit your thesis for final assessment prior to the end of your registration period (your maximum registration end date).
- Your examination arrangements must be approved by the Taught and Research Degrees Award Board (RDAB) before you submit.

- Your Director of Studies is responsible for putting the examination arrangement application (EX1 form) process in hand in discussion with you at least three months and up to 12 months prior to the expected date of your viva. You will be required to complete some of the information on the form including indicating your preference for a face-to-face or an online viva. Once your examination arrangements have been approved your Director of Studies will arrange a date for your viva.
- Once you submit your thesis* you cannot then make any further changes to your work prior to your viva; it is your responsibility to ensure that your work is complete and submitted on time.
- Your thesis is submitted electronically to the University Research Repository and guidance on how to do this is available on the postgraduate research web pages. You must then complete and email form RD14 to the Graduate School to confirm that you have done this.
- Further information about what to expect in the viva is explained in the online Graduate School Handbook, parts 13 and 14.
- In accordance with published University policy on assessment offences the Graduate School may use approved software to scan submitted work on a specific or random basis (PGR part 15).

*For DPhil candidates the submission is submitted published works and critical commentary.

†For DPhil candidates critical commentary and bibliography.

The outcome of your viva (PGR14.6.1R)

- The examining panel will provide you with informal feedback at the end of your viva together with a provisional indication of what their recommended outcome will be.
- You will subsequently receive formal notification of your confirmed viva outcome (your result) from the Taught and Research Degrees Award Board (RDAB), together with a written record of any amendments or further work to your thesis that the examiners require before you can complete your degree.
- Your individual deadline for submitting amendments or for resubmission is calculated from the date of the formal outcome notification from the Award Board and will be included in your notification email. In summary these are:

Mode of study	Corrections	Minor amendments	Major amendments	Resubmission
Full time	4 weeks	12 weeks	6 months	12 months
Part time	6 weeks	18 weeks	9 months	18 months

NB. These are maximum allowable periods; **you may submit amendments or resubmit more quickly if you wish.** More information about viva outcomes and what they mean is contained in the [Graduate School Handbook](#).

- Once you have fulfilled all the requirements of the examiners and these have been approved by RDAB, the PGR Assessment Team in the Graduate School will write to you regarding the deposition of your final thesis† on the UWE Research Repository, and about arrangements for Award Ceremonies.

Contact the Graduate School

Email: graduateschool@uwe.ac.uk Go to the [Graduate School Webpage](#) for relevant phone numbers