

**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE SUPERVISION AND MONITORING PROGRESS OF POSTGRADUATE  
RESEARCHERS**

**Index of points**

1. Introduction
2. Supervision Arrangements
3. Monitoring and Review of Progress
4. Responsibilities of Principal Academic Units
5. Responsibilities of Supervisors, Academic Advisers and Mentors
6. Responsibilities of Postgraduate Researchers
7. Research Degrees Study by Distance Learning
8. Split Location Research Degree Study

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Code of Practice applies to Postgraduate Registered Students undertaking programmes defined in the University's Regulations as research degree programmes. In this Code of Practice "Postgraduate Researcher" (PGR) means a Postgraduate Registered Student undertaking a research degree programme. Appendix A refers to the provision for Visiting Postgraduate Researchers (VPGR). Visiting Postgraduate Researcher means any person currently registered for receipt of instruction for a period of research study not exceeding 12 months duration at the University but not studying or registered for an award of the University.
- 1.2 It is recognised that the unit responsible for certain aspects of the monitoring of PGRs varies for good reason across the University and may be either the College or the Principal Academic Unit (PAU). For the sake of brevity the Code of Practice refers only to the PAU, except when referring to those aspects of the procedures which are clearly at University-level responsibility. All references to the PAU should therefore be interpreted as referring to College, School or Department in accordance with practice in the particular part of the University concerned. References to the Head of Principal Academic Unit include their nominee.
- 1.3 This Code of Practice applies to all PGRs from the date of admission to the end of the thesis submission and examination.
- 1.4 It is important that, as part of the educational process, PGRs receive appropriate supervision, that their progress is carefully monitored, and that they receive feedback in good time to enable them to adjust their patterns of work as necessary. The aim of this Code of Practice is to recommend a systematic framework for PGRs and staff, to ensure that these aims are achieved and the thesis submitted within the maximum period of time permitted for the qualification as set out in Regulation 6.2.3. The Code of Practice sets out the responsibilities to be carried out both at PAU level and by individual staff and PGRs.
- 1.5 The Code of Practice defines a minimum basis for supervising and monitoring the progress of PGRs and PAUs may wish to operate procedures and requirements additional to those defined in the Code of Practice. If particular circumstances make any requirement of this Code of Practice inappropriate, specific approval for exemption must be obtained from the Senate or Delegated Authority.

## **2. Supervision Arrangements**

- 2.1 The Head of PAU is responsible for the co-ordination of arrangements for monthly supervision of PGRs. However, the Head of PAU may choose to delegate the operation of such arrangements to another member of academic staff. In either case it should be made clear to all staff and PGRs who are undertaking this task.
- 2.2 Each PGR must be provided with:
- A lead supervisor
  - A co-supervisor
  - A mentor

The same appointments would normally be expected to continue throughout a PGR's full period of study.

- 2.3 Co-supervision appointments should reflect the individual needs of the PGRs and the context of their study.
- 2.4 Whatever supervisory arrangements are put in place, a lead supervisor should be designated who has overall responsibility for advising interested parties of the progress of the PGR's research.
- 2.5 In the case of collaborative or interdisciplinary programmes where more than one PAU or Institution is involved in the PGR's programme of research, at least one co-supervisor must be appointed in the partner PAU/Institution.
- 2.6 In clauses 2.6, "Supervisory Team" shall mean lead supervisor and/or co-supervisor and mentor and "conflict of interest" shall mean the existence of a relationship between any parties of the supervisory team and/or the PGR (whether personal, family, financial or otherwise), which may prevent or adversely affect the impartial supervision of the PGR's research.
- 2.6.1 When considering the suitability of a member of staff to take on a role within the supervisory team for a particular PGR, the Head of PAU shall in each case ascertain from such member of staff whether there is an actual or potential conflict of interest.
- 2.6.2 The Head of PAU shall not appoint such member of staff to a role within the supervisory team if satisfied that doing so would create a conflict of interest.
- 2.6.3 Following the appointment to a supervisory team, such supervisor/co-supervisor/mentor should notify the Head of PAU immediately if a conflict of interest arises during the course of the supervision period and the Head of PAU reserves the right to appoint an alternative supervisor/co-supervisor/mentor in such circumstances.

### **Training and Qualifications**

- 2.7 Each member of the supervisory team should normally be a member of the University teaching or research staff, who is experienced in and actively engaged in research, who holds a research degree at the same level as, or higher than, the degree being supervised or who has appropriate equivalent experience or professional qualifications or status. Postdoctoral researchers are permitted to act as co-supervisors.
- 2.8 If a proposed supervisor is not qualified to the appropriate level, they shall have compensating academic experience and/or status in the discipline area. The approval of Senate or Delegated Authority should be sought for a proposed lead or co-supervisor to supervise to a higher level than his or her own qualifications. Approval to supervise in these circumstances would not be on an individual PGR basis but would be given once to individual members of staff.
- 2.9 All staff who are either, new to the University and/or new to supervision and intend to supervise PGRs, must attend a supervision training workshop. All staff who supervise PGRs are also required to complete a biennial supervision refresher course.
- 2.10 A probationary member of staff or one less experienced in research may be appointed as a lead supervisor providing that the co-supervisor is an experienced supervisor (i.e. has supervised at least one PGR to successful completion).

- 2.11 An honorary member of staff may be appointed as a co-supervisor. With the approval of the Senate or Delegated Authority, an honorary member of staff may be appointed as a lead supervisor providing the co-supervisor holds a substantive post with the University. (See 2.14 below.)
- 2.12 With the approval of Senate or Delegated Authority, an Emeritus Professor may be appointed as a lead or co-supervisor providing the other (or another) supervisor holds a substantive post with the University. (See 2.14 below.)
- 2.13 With the approval of Senate or Delegated Authority, a Recognised Supervisor may be appointed as a lead or co-supervisor providing the other (or another) supervisor holds a substantive post with the University (See 2.14 below).
- 2.14 To ensure compliance with the University's Home Office Student Sponsor Licence (previously Tier 4), it is not possible for individuals not employed by the University of Birmingham (including honorary members of staff, recognised supervisors or emeritus professors) to be appointed as a lead supervisor for a PGR holding a Student Visa, but they may be appointed as a co-supervisor.
- 2.15 With the approval of the Senate or delegated authority, in instances where supervision from suitably qualified and experienced persons based in other institutions is deemed appropriate, an external supervisor may be appointed as a co-supervisor providing a lead supervisor who holds a substantive post at the University is appointed. The role of the external supervisor should be clearly defined and should not duplicate or conflict with the role of the University of Birmingham supervisor as set out in Section 5 of this Code of Practice. The University retains full control over the supervisory arrangements and must be the final arbiter in all cases.
- Where appropriate, payment to the external supervisor is the responsibility of the PAU.
- 2.16 Where approval of the Senate or delegated authority is required, this should be requested on a case by case basis via the Supervisor Approval form available on the [Supervisor Approvals webpage](#).
- 2.17 If a lead supervisor ceases to be employed by the University they may, with the agreement of Senate or Delegated Authority as detailed in 2.15 above, be appointed as a co-supervisor. A new lead supervisor will need to be appointed by the Head of PAU or nominee. The former lead supervisor may still make a significant intellectual contribution to the student's supervision, but the new lead supervisor has responsibility for the student as defined in 2.4.

### **Frequency of Supervision**

- 2.18 The first in-person meeting with the lead supervisor should normally take place within 10 University working days of the start of a PGR's period of study. Discussion should include:
- supervision arrangements (including the supervisor's responsibilities to feedback on written work),
  - planning for the PGR's research,
  - the requirements of the particular degree for which they are registered,
  - the time limits for completion and the criteria for the award of the degree.

A written record must be kept of supervisory meetings via the GRS2 Monthly Supervision Record form. Reference should be made to the work undertaken since the last supervision meeting and planned work for the future. The lead and/or co-supervisor(s) and the PGR should confirm that the record contains an accurate summary of the supervision meeting.

- 2.19 Supervision records (GRS2) should be completed online and stored electronically accessible by the supervisors, PGR and relevant staff within the PAU. For research programmes with taught elements where the taught modules are completed before the research topic is decided and supervisors allocated, supervision meetings may be delayed until completion of the taught elements. In these circumstances alternative arrangements must be made for monitoring progress and academic engagement of Student Visa (previously Tier 4 visa) holders.
- 2.20 Supervision is defined as involving contact between the supervisor and the PGR. Supervision meetings will normally be held on campus and in person, but may be held off campus or remotely (by means of video conferencing software or telephone) where appropriate to the PGR's circumstances. To ensure compliance with the University's Home Office Student Sponsor Licence obligations, supervision meetings with international PGRs must be held on campus and in person.
- 2.21 For full time PGRs, supervision meetings should take place monthly, no more than 6 weeks apart and the equivalent for part time PGRs. This requirement is also applicable to those studying via distance learning and on a split location basis.
- Normally for full time PGRs a minimum of 10 supervision meetings should take place each academic year (pro rata for part time), accounting for the eight-week holiday allowance as outlined in 2.27. There may be less than 10 supervision meetings in an academic year in instances where the PGR has commenced their studies at a time other than the beginning of the academic year or has taken leave of absence.
- 2.22 To ensure compliance with the University's Home Office Student Sponsor Licence obligations, international PGRs must apply for authorised absence for any periods when they are to be working away from the University. For information see:  
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/academic-support/registry/aa-pgrs.aspx>
- Please also see the Code of Practice on Compliance with Student Immigration Visa Permissions and Obligations.
- 2.23 Progress of PGRs in thesis awaited status must continue to be monitored to the completion of the degree. For PGRs in thesis awaited status supervisors should maintain monthly contact with the PGR to monitor progress of the thesis against the PGR's deadline for submission, submission of a corrected thesis or resubmission for re-examination via physical attendance at a supervision meeting (except in the exceptional cases outlined in 2.20) and completion of an online GRS2 monthly supervision record form. The lead and/or co-supervisor(s) and the PGR should confirm that the record contains a summary of the progress of writing the thesis. All GRS2 records should be completed online and stored electronically and accessible by the supervisors, PGR and relevant staff within the PAU.
- 2.24 If a member of the supervisory team and/or the mentor leaves the University, all responsibility for supervisory/mentoring arrangements rests with the Head of PAU. Under such circumstances, supervision will be arranged, where possible in consultation with the PGR, to meet the best

interests of the PGR in accordance with Section 2 of this Code of Practice and the alternative supervision arrangements should be confirmed to the PGR in writing normally within 4 weeks.

### **Absence from University**

#### Supervisors

- 2.25 If members of the supervisory team and/or the mentor have extended periods of time away from the University, it is the Head of PAU's responsibility to ensure that suitable alternative supervisory and/or pastoral arrangements are made. Where the leave is planned, alternative arrangements should be made in advance of the period of absence and confirmed to the PGR at least 4 weeks before the beginning of the period of leave. For extended sick leave alternative arrangements should be put in place as soon as possible. The PAU should notify the PGR of the arrangements in writing and a record should be retained by the PAU.

#### Postgraduate Researchers

- 2.26 For PGRs, supervision is expected to be carried out throughout the whole academic year.
- 2.27 PGRs are entitled to take up to eight weeks holiday in each year (pro rata where the registration is for less than an academic year), inclusive of public holidays and University closed days. The timing of holidays should be agreed with a PGR's supervisor and, if applicable, industrial sponsor.
- 2.28 To ensure compliance with the obligations of the University's Home Office Student Sponsor Licence, international PGRs must apply for authorised absence for any holiday periods. For information on the authorised absence process please refer to:  
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/academic-support/registry/aa-pgrs.aspx>

### **3. Monitoring and Review of Progress**

- 3.1 PAUs should have clear and transparent procedures for the monitoring and review of PGRs' performance. PGRs should be notified in writing by PAUs of these procedures and the annual review timetable, during induction and through PAU documentation.
- 3.2 The progress of PGRs, irrespective of whether they are normally registered or in thesis awaited status, should be monitored at least once in the academic year and/or equivalent for part-time. PAUs should ensure that appropriate review arrangements are made for PGRs studying by distance learning and split location. For those registered on a distance learning or split location basis see Sections 7 and 8.
- 3.3 Each PAU must establish mechanisms to ensure that at least one interim report is checked for plagiarism via plagiarism detection software and the outcome discussed with the supervisory team and reported upon in the annual progress review. In accordance with the Code of Practice on Academic Integrity each PAU should distribute written guidance to PGRs on starting their programme and at the beginning of each academic year as to what constitutes adequate referencing and academic integrity, particularly within a subject-specific context.
- 3.4 Form GRS3 Progress Review should be used for the purpose of monitoring progress. The process should take into account the written comments made by the supervisor(s) and PGR on this form. The following issues should be considered:



- Summary of progress, including inadequate progress, work not up to the required standard;
- Assessment of the above by the supervisor(s);
- Achievements in any taught elements of the programme;
- Schedule for future work;
- Any problems encountered and action taken;
- Follow up on any issues from the previous review period;
- Progress towards meeting the skills listed in the Development Needs Analysis;
- The outcome of any reports submitted through plagiarism detection software;
- Whether the PGR is likely to submit within the period of study set out in the regulations for their qualification and/or award of grant from a sponsor or Research Council.

3.5 PAUs should establish a PAU-level Progress Panel that should have overall responsibility for monitoring and review and which should include at least three members of academic staff, the majority of whom are independent of the supervisory team. Consideration should be given to potential conflicts of interest before appointing staff to the panel. See section 2.6.

3.6 The PAU Progress Panel should meet at least once in the academic year (equivalent for part time), at an appropriate point, to discuss PGRs' academic progress, other relevant issues and to make or endorse recommendations. Such recommendations might include:

- Progress is satisfactory - the PGR may continue with their studies as a normally registered PGR, paying tuition fees;
- Progress is satisfactory - the PGR, having completed the minimum period of study and the primary research activity, may proceed to thesis awaited status, paying the continuation fee;
- Progress is unsatisfactory – a work plan of supportive or corrective action must be agreed and a date for further review of progress set. Where the initial progress review is at the end of the academic year, the PGR would be permitted to proceed into the next year but their continued registration must be confirmed once the second progress review has been completed. If progress were to remain unsatisfactory, the PGR may be required to withdraw (see Regulation 7.4.9);
- Transfer - to a masters programme from a doctoral programme (PGR would have the right of appeal see Regulation 7.4.8 (e));
- Transfer - to a doctoral programme from a master's programme (see Regulation 7.4.8(b));
- Withdraw - this recommendation would have to be taken in accordance with the relevant University regulation. The PGR would have the right of appeal (see Regulation 7.4.9 and Code of Practice for Attendance Monitoring and Reasonable Diligence).

End of year progress recommendations must be recorded in BIRMS. Where the recommendation is made during the academic year and this results in a change of programme or registration status, the recommendations should be reported to Research Student Administration.



- 3.7 PAUs should provide PGRs with appropriate feedback as part of the monitoring process, and should advise PGRs, in writing, of the recommendations resulting from progress reviews.
- 3.8 Any concerns arising about PGRs' progress outside the formal progress reviews should be raised immediately with the Chair of the PAU Progress Panel without waiting for the next formal meeting of the panel. The Chair of the PAU Progress Panel and the Head of PAU should instigate whatever action and/or investigations might be appropriate. It may be appropriate to instigate procedures as set out in the Code of Practice on Student Attendance and Reasonable Diligence.

### **Feedback on Arrangements for Supervision and Mentoring**

- 3.9 Each PAU should have a mechanism to provide PGRs with an opportunity to comment on the standard of supervision, academic advice and mentoring and where they feel that their work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside their control, including the breakdown of relationships with members of their supervisory team and/or mentor.
- 3.10 The procedures should be made available to all PGRs at the commencement of their studies both verbally at an appropriate meeting, and in writing. If the Head of PAU is a member of the supervisory team, representation may be made to the appropriate Head of College.

## **4. Responsibilities of PAUs**

- 4.1 PAUs are responsible for ensuring that all members of the supervisory team, and PGRs are:
- made aware of and are compliant with University Regulations, Codes of Practice, Policies and Guidance documents and PAU procedures as appropriate;
  - compliant with the University's Health & Safety Policy Statement.  
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/governance/policies-regs/health-safety.aspx>
  - issued with a PAU research degree handbook (hardcopy or electronic)
  - compliant with the University's Home Office Student Sponsor Licence obligations.

### **Access to facilities**

- 4.2 PAUs should provide access to facilities and equipment necessary to enable PGRs, in all modes of study, to complete their research degrees successfully, specifically:
- access to study space, facilities and equipment such as photocopying, telephone, consumables relevant to the research as necessary to enable the PGR to conduct their research;
  - access to adequate learning and research tools including access to IT equipment and specialist IT packages relevant to their research;
  - access to secure storage for research data and personal belongings;
  - access to welfare and support services;
  - access to a range of development opportunities.

The mechanisms for providing the above should be discussed and agreed with the PGR at induction and reviewed throughout the period of registration.

- 4.3 Appropriate arrangements are made for access to facilities out of normal office hours, taking account of security and safety of PGRs and facilities.

### **Induction**

- 4.4 All new PGRs should receive an induction. The induction should cover:
- introduction to the University (including all relevant University legislation;
  - life as a PGR;
  - the role of the University Doctoral School;
  - research training opportunities;
  - guidance on secure research data storage;
  - PGR representation.

## **5. Responsibilities of Supervisors and Mentors**

- 5.1 Written communication with PGRs must only be undertaken using the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), University email and/or other institutionally approved platforms. Communication must not be undertaken through social media, messaging apps or any other platforms that are not approved for this purpose and supported by the University.

The lead supervisor is responsible for:

- 5.1.1 The overall direction of the PGR's research in consultation with any member of the supervisory team and the mentor, as appropriate.
- 5.1.2 Advising the PGR of the respective responsibilities and roles of the members of the supervisory team and mentor as appropriate.
- 5.1.3 Initiating formal monthly (or equivalent for part time) supervisory meetings in accordance with paragraphs 2.18 to 2.21:
- setting the agenda for such consultations with reference to Part A of the GRS2 form completed by the PGR;
  - completing and submitting the electronic monthly supervision record (GRS2) summarising the discussion and outcomes.
- 5.1.4 Ensuring that the PGR is made aware of inadequacy of progress or of standards of work below that generally expected.
- 5.1.5 Advising the PGR on the Ethical Review process and the Code of Practice for Research and ensuring ethical review is applied for.
- 5.1.6 Ensuring that, where necessary, a risk assessment for off-campus work required of the PGR is prepared and that the PGR has arranged appropriate insurance cover for the duration of such work.
- 5.1.7 On receipt of the Notice of Intention to Submit Form, signing the form to acknowledge the intended submission and forwarding the signed form to Research Student Administration. In

signing the form the supervisor is not confirming that the thesis is fit for submission or that the submission will be successful.

- 5.1.8 Making preliminary arrangements, in conjunction with the Head of PAU, in advance of the submission of the thesis, for the nomination of the internal and external examiner(s) and chairperson.
- 5.2 The supervisory team is responsible for the following:
- 5.2.1 Giving guidance on the following:
- the nature of research and the standards expected, e.g. academic writing skills;
  - referencing and presenting bibliographic information, including how to avoid unintentional plagiarism and plagiarism issues;
  - proof reading and editorial assistance with academic writing – see Code of Practice on Academic Integrity for details;
  - planning of the research programme;
  - literature and resources;
  - attendance and taught module requirements;
  - publication of results and intellectual property rights;
  - University Regulations and Codes of Practice and administrative processes relating to the PGR's progress;
  - research techniques and skills;
  - examination of the research degree thesis.
- 5.2.2 Discussing training needs at the beginning of each academic year (equivalent for part-time) using the GRS1 Training Needs Analysis form. All GRS1 forms should be held by the PAU's central PGR office – the supervisor and PGR may also retain a copy.
- 5.2.3 Maintaining contact through regular tutorial, supervision or seminar consultations, in accordance with PAU policy and in the light of discussion of arrangements with the PGR.
- 5.2.4 Being available outside the formal supervision meetings should the PGR need advice. This should normally be within one working week of a PGR's request unless the supervisor has informed the PGR that they will be absent from the University.
- 5.2.5 Giving detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the thesis may be submitted within the period of study specified in regulations for the particular degree for which the PGR is registered.
- 5.2.6 Requesting written work as appropriate, and returning such work with constructive criticism in reasonable time (normally within 20 working days).
- 5.2.7 Arranging for PGRs to make oral presentations about their work, to publish material from their research and to have practice in oral examinations.

- 5.2.8 Completing the annual progress review (GRS3 form) and for making recommendations to the PAU Progress Panel.
- 5.2.9 Ensuring that the PGR is registered for compulsory and any optional taught modules.
- 5.2.10 Liaising with the Head of PAU in making alternative supervisory arrangements at times when they are absent from the University (see 2.25).
- 5.2.11 Assessing the plagiarism detection software report on the PGR's final version submitted for examination and reporting the outcome to the PAU Academic Integrity Officer.
- 5.2.12 Being available on the day of the oral examination.
- 5.2.13 Providing advice to the PGR concerning the corrections and/or revisions required to the thesis following examination and consulting with the examiners on the PGR's behalf.

### **Mentors**

- 5.3 The mentor is responsible for pastoral support. They do not need to be an expert in the PGR's area of research and should not act as a co-supervisor.
- 5.4 Mentors should be available for consultations but meetings are not compulsory. Discussions between the mentor and PGR will remain confidential if the PGR so wishes.
- 5.5 In some PAUs it may be appropriate for the Wellbeing Officer (who may be a member of Professional Services Staff) to undertake this role.

## **6. Responsibilities of PGRs**

- 6.1. PGRs are responsible for:
  - 6.1.1 The content, completion and submission of their theses for examination within the maximum period of study for their degree.
  - 6.1.2 Ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with University Regulations, Codes of Practice, PAU guidelines and procedures relating to their degree, and terms of any sponsorship.
  - 6.1.3 Attending monthly supervision meetings (equivalent for part time) in-person (except in the exceptional cases outlined in 2.20) and completing and submitting the online GRS2 form summarising the discussion and outcomes of the meeting.
  - 6.1.4 Discussing with their supervisor(s) the type of guidance and comment they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of in-person monthly meetings (pro-rata for part-time).
  - 6.1.5 Ensuring that in every academic year of registration they meet all of the University's administrative arrangements, including completing the annual online registration process via the student gateway: <https://student-gateway.bham.ac.uk/>
  - 6.1.6 Initiating any necessary additional supervisory consultations other than those prescribed in paragraphs 2.18 and 5.1.3 and setting the agenda for such consultations.

- 6.1.7 Raising problems or difficulties (including illness or other exceptional circumstances), with either the supervisor(s), co-supervisor or mentor as appropriate.
- 6.1.8 Ensuring work progresses in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor(s).
- 6.1.9 Completing the Development Needs Analysis form (GRS1) attending research training and other appropriate training as directed by the supervisor(s).
- 6.1.10 Presenting papers within the University and at conferences, preparing papers for presentation, etc. as appropriate.
- 6.1.11 In accordance with PAU procedures to provide an annual formal report on progress.
- 6.1.12 Ensuring that they understand the nature of their supervisor's responsibilities in relation to work submitted.
- 6.1.13 Agreeing with their supervisors(s) periods of leave or any other occasions (for example, for urgent personal circumstances) when they will be absent from their study.
- 6.1.14 Deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of study and before the end of the maximum period of study specified in Regulations), taking due account of the supervisor's opinion which is only advisory.
- 6.1.15 At least three months prior to the intended date of submission to advise the supervisor via submitting a Notice of intention to Submit a Thesis form in order that arrangements for the nomination of examiners may commence.
- 6.1.16 On submission of the thesis for examination at the same time to submit an exact electronic copy for checking through plagiarism detection software in accordance with PAU procedures.
- 6.1.17 Where a 'third party' editor has been used, to comply with the University's statement on the use of Third Party Editors, available at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/rsa/submittingyourthesis.aspx>.

## **7. Research Degree Study by Distance Learning**

### **7.1 Definition of Research Degree Study by Distance Learning (DL)**

- 7.1.1 PGRs registered for a research degree by DL mode of study will undertake the majority of their research in their country of residence away from UoB, with compulsory short visits to UoB, including attendance for the oral examination of the thesis.

### **7.2 Principles of DL Research Degree Study**

- 7.2.1 The DL mode of study is not available to Research Council-funded PGRs.
- 7.2.2 The formal degree title for DL research only degrees will be generic e.g. Doctor of Philosophy. A "marketing" title may be used in any promotional literature, but should be accurate and precise.

- 7.2.3 Applications for DL research degree study are made in the normal way and applicants must meet the normal admission requirements for the research degree and complete the additional sections in the application process required for distance learning study.

### **7.3 Attendance at the University of Birmingham**

- 7.3.1 PGRs will be required to visit UoB during their normal period of study for:

- a) two-week induction visit at the start of study;
- b) the progress review which is annual for fulltime PGRs and biannually for part-time PGRs. In exceptional circumstances, the progress review may be managed remotely using video conferencing software;
- c) a final visit for the viva examination.

Exemptions for non-attendance at UoB visits shall be granted only in exceptional circumstances through the Senate or delegated authority.

- 7.3.2 Visits to UoB will serve a number of functions:

- 7.3.2.1 Induction activities will include:

- intensive research skills and resources training, alongside individually-tailored project development and agenda setting with supervisory teams, and educational and social visits around the campus and city;
- a clear and realistic explanation of the expectations for DL study, and for the nature and extent of autonomous, collaborative and supported aspects of learning;
- PAU DL induction package which will incorporate both skills and project development elements, together web-based training and career development resources available through College Graduate PAUs;

access to the online University Graduate Doctoral Researcher Essentials  
(<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/graduateschool/newpgr/welcomeinductions.aspx>).

- 7.3.2.2 Annual visits to UoB will provide an opportunity for PGRs studying by DL to share experiences and network and enable the PAUs to deliver supplementary face-to-face research and skills training.

### **7.4 Supervision**

- 7.4.1 The supervision and monitoring progress of PGRs undertaking research by DL will be in accordance with Sections 2 and 3 of this Code of Practice. The primary difference being that supervision meetings will be via video conferencing software, telephone or e-mail rather than by an 'in-person' face-to-face meeting.
- 7.4.2 The Head of PAU must ensure that supervisors are fully aware of the commitment required of them for supervision on a DL basis. The time and commitment for supervisors will be not less, and may even be more, for DL supervision.

7.4.3 As required in Section 2.2 of this Code of Practice, the PAU must appoint a mentor to support the PGR. In some PAUs it may be appropriate for the Wellbeing Officer (who may be a member of Professional Services Staff) to undertake this role.

7.4.4 Review of progress shall be in accordance with Section 3 of this Code of Practice.

## **7.5 Thesis Examination**

7.5.1 The examination of the thesis will be conducted in accordance with the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses.

## **7.6 Tuition Fees and other costs**

7.6.1 The tuition fee for the DL mode of study will be as for standard modes of delivery for research degrees.

PAUs may specify a maximum sum which they will contribute towards:

- a) an economy flight and local transport per visit, including the final visit for the viva. (The ceiling for travel costs will be different for Home, EU and non-EU PGRs);
- b) accommodation (University Conference Park) expenses for PGRs on each of their visits to UoB;
- c) small stipend to cover any local library costs that the PGRs may incur.

7.6.2 Continuation fees will be charged when PGRs have completed their minimum period of research and have been permitted to transfer to thesis awaited status.

## **7.7 Transfers to/from DL to other modes of study**

7.7.1 For transfers from DL to on campus study, a Research Programme Transfer form must be submitted to Research Student Administration. For transfers to distance learning, a Research Programme Transfer form and a Distance Learning Checklist must be completed and submitted to Research Student Administration.

## **8. Split Location Research Degree Study**

### **8.1 Definition of Research Degree Study by Split Location (SL) Study**

8.1.1 PGRs registered for a research degree by split location study spend the majority of their period of registration in their country of residence, with short periods of study at the University of Birmingham as set out in Section 8.3.1.

### **8.2 Principles of Split Location Research Degree Study**

8.2.1 The split location mode of study is not available to Research Council-funded PGRs.

8.2.2 The formal degree title for split location research only study will be generic, e.g. Doctor of Philosophy. A “marketing” title may be used in any promotional literature, but this should be accurate and precise.



- 8.2.3 Applications for split location research degree study are made in the normal way and applicants must meet the normal admission requirements for the research degree and complete the Postgraduate Research Split Location Checklist.

### **8.3 Attendance at the University of Birmingham**

- 8.3.1 PGRs studying by split location must spend the equivalent of no less than the minimum and no more than the maximum period of full-time study at the University of Birmingham over the whole period of research as set out below:

| <u>Qualification</u>                 | <u>Minimum</u> | <u>Maximum</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| One year masters (by research alone) | 2 months       | 4 months       |
| Two year masters (by research alone) | 4 months       | 8 months       |
| PhD                                  | 6 month        | 12 months      |

These periods need not be continuous.

- 8.3.2 If the PGR is required to spend less than the minimum and/or more than the maximum period of attendance at UoB, approval must be obtained from the Senate or delegated authority.
- 8.3.3 It is desirable that PGRs come to UoB for tutorials and other briefings concerning their research in the early and late stages of their period of research, especially so that they can work with their supervisors for the submission of their thesis.
- 8.3.4 Any changes to the schedule of attendance at UoB as set out in the checklist completed at admission must be formally agreed between the PGR and their supervisor, with notification being sent to the PAU and Research Student Administration.
- 8.3.5 Advice and guidance for International Students may be sought from the International Student Team (IST).

### **8.4 Supervision**

- 8.4.1 The supervision and monitoring progress of PGRs undertaking research on a split location basis will be in accordance with the Code of Practice on the Supervision and Monitoring Progress of PGRs.
- 8.4.2 The Head of PAU (or nominee) must ensure that supervisors are fully aware of the commitment required of them for supervision on a split location basis. The time and commitment for supervisors will be not less, and may even be more, for split location supervision.
- 8.4.3 The first contact between the supervisor(s) and the PGR should take place at the beginning of the period of registration. The supervisor shall maintain regular contact with the PGR by whatever method of communication is most convenient to both parties. Frequency of supervision meetings will be in accordance with Section 2 of this Code of Practice.
- 8.4.4 Review of progress shall be in accordance with Section 3 of this Code of Practice.
- 8.4.5 A local academic adviser, who will normally hold a degree equivalent to the level of the PGRs programme of study, should be appointed. The Senate or delegated authority shall approve such cases where an academic adviser is not appointed.

The role of the local academic adviser should be clearly defined in the Split Location Checklist and should not duplicate or conflict with the role of the UoB supervisor as set out in Sections 5.1 to 5.5 of this Code of Practice. The University retains full control over the supervision and must be the final arbiter in all cases.

The PAU may, at its own discretion, pay an honorarium to the adviser.

- 8.4.6 As required in Section 2.2 of this Code of Practice, the PAU must appoint a mentor to support the PGR. In some PAUs it may be appropriate for the Wellbeing Officer (who may be a member of Professional Services Staff) to undertake this role.

## **8.5 Thesis examination**

- 8.5.1 The thesis examination will be conducted in accordance with the Code of Practice for Assessment of Research Degree Theses.

## **8.6 Tuition fees and other costs**

- 8.6.1 Tuition fees will be specified in the offer letter and will be in accordance with the University's Split Location tuition fee schedule.
- 8.6.2 Continuation fees will be charged when PGRs have completed their minimum period of research and have been permitted to transfer to thesis awaited status study.
- 8.6.3 Bench fees may be charged, their rates having been specified on the Split Location Checklist and in the offer letter.
- 8.6.4 Additional costs, to be paid by the PGR where appropriate, may include the costs of visits by supervisors. Rates will be economy class for airfares and University rates for accommodation, subsistence and expenses, etc.

## **8.7 Transfer to/from other modes of study**

- 8.7.1 For transfers from split location programmes, a Research Programme Transfer form must be submitted to Research Student Administration. For transfers to split location a Research Programme Transfer form and a Split Location Checklist must be completed and submitted to Research Student Administration.

## **Appendix A: Visiting Postgraduate Researchers – VPGR (formerly PG VRS)**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The scheme for visiting postgraduate researchers is designed to allow individual postgraduate researchers (VPGR) the opportunity to come to Birmingham for a short period of time to conduct research under the supervision of a member of University staff.
- 1.2 Admitting VPGR can provide benefits to both the VPGR and also to the University. The following sets out to provide a framework for a consistent approach to admitting and supporting VPGR across the University to ensure that they all have a positive experience and all parties involved are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

### **2. Definition of a Visiting Postgraduate Researcher**

- 2.1 Visiting Postgraduate Researcher means any person currently registered for a period of postgraduate research study at the University but not registered for an award of the University.
- 2.2 VPGR are considered registered students of the University of Birmingham for the duration of their stay but are not registered for or eligible for an award of the University. However, the time spent at the University of Birmingham may contribute to their research studies at their home institution.
- 2.3 Normally a VPGR will be registered for a research degree at another institution, but recent undergraduate or postgraduate taught degree graduates who are intending to embark on a research degree at this or another University may also be accepted as a VPGR. In some instances it may also be appropriate for “researchers” at other institutions to be accepted as a VPGR.
- 2.4 Where a Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) or Doctoral training Partnership (DTP) agreement permits access to University facilities, and attendance at taught modules for credit offered by the University to those PGRs registered for the full award at the collaborative/partner institution, the PGRs will be registered as collaborative VPGR on the University’s Student Record System.

### **3. Duration and mode of study**

- 3.1 A VPGR may be accepted for a period of research study up to a maximum of 12 months’ duration. (Those registered as collaborative VPGR, as outlined in 2.4, are exempt from this time restriction as they are required to be registered as VPGR for the full duration of their qualification).
- 3.2 A PG VRS may be accepted for more than one visit but the total VPGR study must not exceed 12 months. This includes any previous VPGR registration.
- 3.3 VPGR will be registered for full time attendance, the visit solely for the purpose of conducting research and the VPGR is required to be present at the University for the duration of the period of study.

### **4. Taught modules**

- 4.1 A VPGR may attend taught modules relevant to their research area subject to availability of places and approval of the supervisor and relevant module lead.

- 4.2 A VPGR will not be eligible for the award of a University qualification resulting from attendance at taught modules.

## **5. Admission**

- 5.1 When assessing a request for a VPGR consideration should be given to:
- i. the provision of supervision, pastoral care and monitoring processes;
  - ii. access to laboratory and study space;
  - iii. the impact of accepting a VPGR on School/College recruitment targets and on facilities available to other PGRs.
- 5.3 Where the “home” institution requires a formal agreement to be signed, the Head of Collaborative Provision in Registry should be consulted prior to any arrangements being confirmed.

## **6. International PG VRS**

- 6.1 “International Students” refers to VPGR students who require immigration permissions to study in the UK.
- 6.2 In accordance with the Code of Practice on Compliance with Student Immigration Duties, international VPGR must ensure that they have appropriate immigration permissions to enable them to study in the UK.
- 6.3 For ATAS attracting areas of research, current valid ATAS clearance certificate will need to be submitted before the invitation to study as a VPGR is issued.
- 6.4 International VPGR who are accepted for a period of study of 6 months or less will normally obtain a Standard Visitor Visa (study). A statement to support an application for a SVV will be issued by Admissions with the invitation letter.
- International VPGR accepted for a period of between 6 -12 months’ duration will be issued with a Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS) in order to apply for a Student Visa and will therefore fall under the University’s Home Office Student Sponsor Licence obligations for attendance engagement monitoring.
- 6.5 Certain PG VRS applying for a Student Visa are required to provide evidence of meeting the UKVI English Language requirement. This is not a requirement for those entering the UK via a Standard Visitor Visa but the University expects that the VPGR will have a good standard of written and spoken English to enable them to successfully participate with all research activities during their period of study.

## **7. Tuition Fees**

- 7.1 The University will not charge fees for the first 6 month period of a VPGR registration. This will be inclusive of any subsequent periods of registration (i.e. if a 6 months fee waiver has been applied in the first period of VPGR registration, no waiver will be applied for any subsequent periods of registration).

- 7.2 The charging of bench fees is at the School / College's discretion. Where bench fees are charged this must be made explicit to the VPGR on the admissions documentation.
- 7.3 Fees will be charged for any period of registration exceeding 6 months. Tuition fees will be charged on a pro-rata fee basis for the duration of the period of study relative to the standard fee for the subject area and tuition fee status (Home/EU or overseas).
- 7.4 Waiving of tuition fees for periods of study in excess of 6 months is exceptional and should normally only be applied where evidence is available that the VPGR is covered by an agreement which the University is subject to and requires the waiving of tuition fees; for example ERASMUS, China Scholarship Scheme, CDT/DTP.

## **8. Induction and Support**

- 8.1 Those accepting VPGR must ensure that appropriate information and support is made available upon arrival in order to ensure that the VPGR maximises the benefits of their visit.
- 8.2 As many VPGR will arrive at a time other than the beginning of the academic year, a brief induction programme should be arranged and this should include time for registration, obtaining the student ID card and, for International VPGR the compulsory Right to Study check.

## **9. Access to Facilities**

- 9.1 All registered VPGR will be issued with a University username and password for access to computing facilities, a student ID card and a University e-mail address.
- 9.2 VPGR must have appropriate access to research resources within the School where they are undertaking their period of research and should be encouraged to participate in School research activities and with other PGRs.
- 9.3 VPGR may attend courses offered by the University but are not eligible for funding or participation in University Doctoral School competitions.

## **10. Supervision**

- 10.1 A VPGR must be allocated a supervisor for the duration of their visit and this will be confirmed on the invitation letter issued by Admissions.
- 10.2 The supervisor should:
- meet with the VPGR in their first week and agree aims and objectives for the period of study and a plan to ensure that these are met;
  - have monthly in-person contact with the VPGR and complete the online GRS2 form. This will ensure compliance with University's Home Office Student Sponsor Licence obligations for monitoring attendance of academic engagement;
  - encourage the VPGR to participate in local seminars and meetings and to integrate with other PGRs in the School;
  - at the end of the period of study advise the Research Student Administration team that the VPGR has completed their period of study and left the University;

- v. where applicable, ensure ethical approval is obtained.

## **11. Responsibilities of the VPGR**

### **11.1 VPGRs are expected to:**

- i. complete the University on-line registration at the beginning of the period of study and where the period of study extends over two academic years, re-register at the beginning of the next academic year;
- ii. where applicable, complete a Right to Study Check before commencing their research if they require immigration permission to study in the UK;
- iii. attend at least monthly supervision meetings with the supervisor and complete the online GRS2 form.
- iv. take the initiative to raise any problems or difficulties with the supervisor (including illness and any other exceptional circumstances);
- v. ensure that they comply with any requirements from their home institution regarding submission of reports on progress.

11.2 Absence may be approved for conference attendance, holidays, and other events as appropriate. For those holding a Student Visa the University's authorised absence procedure must be followed for such absences.

## **12. Intellectual Property Rights**

Regulation 5.1 on Intellectual Property Rights applied to VPGR.