

The 2020/21 UWE Bristol academic regulations for postgraduate researchers – what you need to know

The Graduate School August 2020

This information does not replace the PGR academic regulations and must be read in conjunction with the 2020/2021 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 academic regulations

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.

Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) are subject to these regulations, but some regulations are specific to research degree study at doctoral or MPhil level and these are contained within the PGR section of the published regulations.

The information in this document is also available via the postgraduate research study website with detailed procedures, guidance and information about PGR degree requirements available via the online [Graduate School Handbook](#).

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 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 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 must also accept responsibility for your own personal and professional development (PGR parts 6 and 13).

Registering your research project (PGR 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. You will need to work closely with your supervisory team to prepare your research proposal and your research data management plan, to identify any ethical or other governance approval requirements, and to address your research training requirements (PGR9.2.1-2R).

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 your PGR registration will be withdrawn.

Changes to your research project (PGR 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 and ethics (PGR 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. 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 involving human participants or their data and/or human tissue must be subject to research ethics scrutiny. 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.

Restricting access to a doctoral thesis and third party intellectual property requirements (PGR part 10)

The University may at the time of project registration (RD1) determine that open access to a thesis should be restricted for a specified period of time upon completion, as approved by the Research Degrees Award Board.

Applications to restrict access to a thesis 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 (PGR10.3.1R).

The Research Degrees Award Board will normally only approve an application on the following grounds:

- a) to enable a patent to be lodged;
- b) to protect commercially sensitive material;
- c) to protect material that may be politically sensitive or has implications for national security;
- d) to protect the safety, physical or mental health of identified individuals;
- e) where a PGR has not, despite ongoing and evidenced best efforts been able to gain permission to include third-party copyrighted material without detrimental effect to the overall fabric of the thesis;
- f) where it can be clearly evidenced that the PGR's opportunities to publish material from the thesis in the normal range of journals for that subject discipline will be significantly and detrimentally affected.

More detailed information about restricting access to a thesis is given at part 10 of the PGR regulations. PGR candidates are 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 (PGR10.2.2R and PGR14.13.1 – 3R).

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

Progression through a research degree is dependent on the successful achievement of the progress point relevant to each stage of PGR registration. You will receive notification of your progress review dates via

the statement of terms and conditions sent to you at registration and reminders will be sent to you nearer to each deadline.

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).

At each subsequent stage 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 of your registration (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 withdrawal of registration.

Professional development & training (PGR part 6)

The Graduate School provides a 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 require the achievement of a minimum number of credits at Masters Level which for MPhil, PhD and DPhil is currently 60 credits. 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 achieve their credit requirement 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 – personal circumstances, suspension, extension (PGR part 7)

Personal circumstances

Personal circumstances are serious personal difficulties or significantly disruptive matters outside your control which impact upon 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 help PGR candidates facing these situations. **It is very important that you follow the procedures for PGRs, as these are different from those affecting 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, not available for final submission or within final assessment period);
- The postponement and rearrangement of a progression examination viva voce or progress review meeting;
- A suspension of registration (for up to 12 months, not within the final assessment period) ;
- 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;
- 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 a self-certified 5 day extension, appropriate supporting evidence will be required. The process for making an application is described in the [Graduate School PGR personal circumstances guidance notes](#).

Suspension of your registration

Suspension provides a complete break from studies, your registration is paused 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.

When you are able to resume your studies you must inform your Director of Studies, including where 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 registration will normally be considered only once you are in the final stages of your research programme 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 Research Degrees Award Board by 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 (PGR4.8).

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, (PGR4.9.1-2).

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

The primary purpose of PGR supervision is to support you in the successful completion of your programme of research. 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 progression 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 of the progression exam, or following unsatisfactory resubmission at a specific progress point 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 Very 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. Where this is the case the PGR must complete the relevant withdrawal application form RD8 which is submitted to the FRDC for consideration.

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 Exceptionally 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 copies of your thesis in temporarily bound form* to the Graduate School. The postgraduate research study web pages provide detailed guidance about how many copies will be required.

NB. PGRs in the final assessment phase are often referred to as PGR candidates or simply the candidate.

- 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 prior to the end of your registration period.
- Your examination arrangements must be approved by the Research Degrees Award Board 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. Once your examination arrangements have been approved your Director of Studies will arrange a date for your viva.
- Once you submit your temporarily bound 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.

- You must also submit an electronic copy of your temporarily bound thesis† to the University Research Repository and guidance on how to do this is available on the postgraduate research web pages.
- Further information about what to expect in the viva is explained in the online Graduate School Handbook.
- 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 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 from the Research Degrees Award Board, together with a written record of any amendments or further work to your thesis that the examiners require before you can complete your degree.

The Independent Chair will give you an information sheet at your viva with details of the maximum time allowed for submitting amendments or resubmitting your thesis/work, and timings of the Award Board meetings. Your individual deadline for submitting amendments or for resubmission is calculated from the date of the formal outcome notification from the Award Board. 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 online Graduate School Handbook.

Once you have fulfilled all the requirements of the examiners and these have been approved by the Award Board, 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.

†For DPhil candidates critical commentary and bibliography.

Contact the Graduate School

Email: graduateschool@uwe.ac.uk

Go to the [Graduate School Webpage](#) for relevant phone numbers