

Doctoral School Open Meeting
16 November 2023

The following topics were raised and discussed:

1. Teaching contracts and discrepancies in payment across departments
 2. University studentship vs UKRI studentship – discrepancy in stipend
 3. PGR space within the Department of Politics and International Relations
 4. Council Tax exemption
 5. Bullying and Harassment
 6. Can a Masters by Research continue studies as a PhD student?
 7. Lessons learnt from the Covid 19 pandemic
 8. Health Surcharge for visa holders
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1. **Teaching contracts and discrepancies in payment across departments**
 - a. Discussions involving HR and Professional Services are ongoing to ensure we put a consistent policy in place.
 2. **University studentship vs UKRI studentship – discrepancy in stipend**
 - a. Royal Holloway has aligned University-funded studentships to UKRI. These are covered by School budgets, so in some instances Schools will reduce stipends to maximise funds by supporting more students.
 - b. The Doctoral School will increase transparency when the stipend is not offered at full UKRI rate so that students are aware of this from the offset.
 3. **PGR space within the Department of Politics and International Relations**
 - a. There is a meeting with Estates on 5 December to investigate refurbishing the space.
 - b. Due to space constraints in the wider University, it is difficult to find an alternative.
 - c. PGR students will be consulted before proceeding with any changes.
 4. **Council Tax exemption**
 - a. The Council Tax rules are set by the Government and Royal Holloway has no flexibility.
 5. **Bullying and Harassment**
 - a. The University takes bullying and harassment very seriously.
 - b. Staff have to attend compulsory training to tackle this issues.
 6. **Can a Masters by Research continue studies as a PhD student?**
 - a. Yes, but you need to re-apply to start a new programme.
 7. **Lessons learnt from the Covid 19 pandemic**

- a. We put in place strategies that were not there before (such as online thesis submission and vivas) that have remained as standard processes.

8. **Health Surcharge for visa holders**

- a. There is a pushback from Higher Education institutions to get instalment payments plans to support international students.
- b. Royal Holloway is looking at this at University level.