

Postgraduate Research University Studentships Terms and Conditions 2024/25

1. Scope

This document outlines the terms and conditions of University, School and Department studentships, (i.e. studentships funded by Royal Holloway) for postgraduate research (PGR) students, which are referred to in this document as 'studentships'. The term 'studentship' or 'scholarship' can refer to a fee only award, or a fees and stipend award, or a stipend only award (although the fees will need to be covered elsewhere to allow a stipend only award).

Note that students in receipt of externally funded studentships (UKRI (UK Research & Innovation), charitable or commercial) or University studentships originating with gifts or endowments from individuals / trustees, are bound by the specific terms and conditions of those studentships (e.g. in relation to thesis submission deadlines) in precedence to the general terms and conditions set out here.

If a student receives part of their funding from UKRI or other external source and part from the University, then the conditions of the external funder take precedence over those of the University. Students who are funded wholly by the University under its commitment to a CDT (Centre for Doctoral Training) or DTP (Doctoral Training Partnership), would be governed by University, rather than UKRI rules.

If a student receives part of their funding from UKRI and part from the University, they are not entitled to any Student Finance England Loans.

2. Eligibility

A student in receipt of a studentship:

- must be registered as a Royal Holloway PGR student for the whole period in which they are in receipt of the studentship;
- must normally reside in the UK for the majority of their studies. A student must live within a reasonable travel time of the University to ensure that they are able to maintain regular contact with their department and their supervisor. This is to ensure that the student is not isolated and receives the full support, mentoring, training and access to facilities required to complete their research successfully and to a high standard. The only exceptions to these requirements are to cover periods of absence that are an essential part of their study, e.g. fieldwork, study visits or conference attendance;
- may be in receipt of another studentship. However, a student with a University studentship should not be in receipt of combined studentship income in excess of the current UKRI stipend and the University fee. A University studentship may be used to make up the difference between another award(s) and the level of the current UKRI stipend and University fee;
- must make satisfactory academic progress after the initial academic session, as agreed by the supervisory team at the annual review / upgrade. If they cease to continue to study toward a doctoral award, and instead continue to work towards an MPhil qualification, the student is permitted to continue to receive funding up to the date that their thesis is first submitted.

Part-time students

Part-time students are eligible for studentships under the same terms and conditions as full-time students. In most cases the value of the stipend and fee awards will be halved but paid over, for example, 6 years rather than 3 years.

3. Payments

If a studentship includes a stipend the equivalent of the UKRI stipend in the first year, the stipend rate will rise in line with the UKRI stipend rate each year. If a stipend is awarded that is not the equivalent of the UKRI stipend rate, the stipend will rise in line with the percentage rate of the annual UKRI stipend rate increase.

Stipend payments are made directly into the student's UK bank account on a quarterly basis in October, January, April and July as long as they have enrolled and provided UK bank details. The UK bank account must be held either solely or jointly in the name of the registered Royal Holloway student. Payments cannot be made into the account of another person.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they have enrolled at Royal Holloway for each academic year and provided UK bank details via Campus Connect in time for the payments to be made. Payments will not be made retrospectively more than 12 months after the payment was due.

Where enrolled for a part-year, tuition fees and stipend are pro-rated accordingly.

The University reserves the right to reclaim any overpayments.

If a student is in debt to the University, the University reserves the right to offset studentship payments against the debt. If experiencing financial difficulty students may seek support from the [Financial Wellbeing team](#).

Caring responsibilities

The costs of additional caring responsibilities, including childcare, beyond that required to meet the usual necessities of the studentship and which are directly related to the project, may be supported by the University where this is required in order for the student to participate. However, costs associated with the student's normal working patterns may not be sought.

[The application form can be accessed here.](#)

4. Tuition fees

As part of their contract with the University, students are liable for their tuition fees regardless of any studentship awarded.

If a student's studentship includes a Home or Overseas tuition fee award, this covers the full cost of the fee. The value of the award will increase in line with any increase in the fee. If however a studentship includes only a contribution to the fee rather than a full fee award, the student will need to fund the difference between fee contribution and the fee in each year of the studentship.

If a student remains enrolled on the programme after the end of their studentship, they are liable for fees in full. This includes the writing-up fee charged in the 4th year of a full-time PhD.

Alumni discounts

For PGR students who are entitled to an alumni discount, this will be applied in the following way:

- The alumni discount is made on the fee amount payable following any other reductions e.g. studentships.
- The alumni discount is available on the tuition fees for the first year of study only, whether full or part-time.
- The alumni discount cannot be used in conjunction with full fee award studentships (including those with an additional cash award).
- The alumni discount cannot be applied to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses.

5. Changes in circumstances

- Students should notify the [Doctoral School](#) and their Academic School as early as possible if there are any changes in their circumstances, for example receipt of another award, change of mode (between part-time and full-time or vice-versa), interruption or withdrawal from study. Studentship values may be adjusted in the light of any changes in circumstances. For example, if a student interrupts then payments are stopped. For externally funded students the Doctoral School will need to check that their funder permits this change.
- Students who withdraw from or interrupt their studies, or whose studies are terminated, will be required to return any outstanding stipend paid in advance.
- Withdrawal will incur a fee liability if the studentship does not cover tuition fees in full or funding has ended and the student has paid part of their tuition fee for the year that they withdraw. The [fee liability table](#) should be referred to.
- Stipend payments will normally cease once the doctoral thesis is submitted. However, where the student continues to undertake work that is directly linked to their thesis, it is permissible to continue their funding until the end of the quarter in which the thesis is first submitted.

Sick leave

PGR students in receipt of University funding are permitted to apply for up to 13 weeks of funded sick leave in a rolling 12-month period for medical reasons. Paid sick leave is available to both full-time and part-time PGR students. During this time stipend will continue to be paid, access to University facilities will be retained, and deadlines will be extended by the length of the sick leave.

Please note that:

- Paid sick leave will only be granted if the request is fully supported by a Fit Note / medical certificate.
- The standard interruption process will not need to be followed if the interruption is for up to 13 weeks on evidenced medical grounds. However, if a student's illness extends past 13 weeks, they will then need to complete the [standard interruption request process](#) for the period beyond 13 weeks.
- For students funded by an external agency, but the funding is administered through Royal Holloway (i.e. the University receives money from an agency and the University pays out their stipend), supervisors will need to check directly with the funder whether the terms and conditions set allow sick leave or interruptions of studies at any point. If they do not, then the student cannot be considered for paid sick leave. This excludes any UKRI funded DTP / CDT.
- Prior to an interruption of studies to complete a placement, sick leave requests will be considered in line with the current sick leave policy, as described above. The sick leave

should be taken with a view to commence the placement after that period, depending whether the placement provider can accommodate a later start date. If for any reason the placement cannot be delayed, or the period of the placement is reduced for the period of sick leave taken, then the period of interruption will be increased or reduced as needed.

- No funded sick leave requests can be considered while a student is on a period of interruption for any reason, so sick leave for placements can only be considered where the sickness takes place prior to the period of interruption starting.
- For UKRI funded students, sick leave requests will be checked with the relevant CDT / DTP and that policy will be applied.

If a student is planning on seeking medical funded sick leave, they must [inform us](#) as soon as possible.

Phased return to studies

Students returning from a long-term sickness absence may require a phased return to their studies. If the student feels that they would benefit from this provision, a Fit Note should be provided confirming their fitness to work, along with a written plan to return to working full-time. This arrangement is limited to a maximum of 4 weeks, during which time full stipend will be paid and their funding end date and submission deadline will be extended for the period of sick leave taken during the phased return. This should not be used where there is a clear need for the student to move to part-time on a longer-term basis.

Maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave

The University will provide funding for leave entitlements which mirror the statutory schemes in force at the time, as well as providing an unpaid parental leave scheme

Maternity / adoption leave

University funded students are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity-equivalent leave if the expected week of childbirth will occur during the period of their award. The earliest Maternity leave can commence is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. The main adopter of a child placed during a studentship is also entitled to 52 weeks of leave.

Where a student takes a period of leave equivalent to maternity leave, or adoption leave taken by the main adopter only, students will have the right to the following payment terms, with their studentship extended accordingly:

The first 26 weeks will be paid at full stipend rate, pro-rated as necessary for part-time students. The following 13 weeks will be paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks are not paid.

Paternity leave

Students who would be entitled to paternity leave under the statutory scheme are entitled to up to 2 weeks paid Ordinary Paternity Leave on full stipend. A week is the same amount of days that a student would normally study in a week. Ordinary Paternity Leave cannot start before the birth, must be taken in one go, and must end within 56 days of the birth.

Unpaid parental leave

Under the unpaid parental leave scheme, eligible students will be entitled to an extended period of unpaid parental leave, up to a maximum of 50 weeks, with their studentship extended accordingly.

Eligibility for unpaid parental leave

In respect of birth parents, eligible students are those who will share primary responsibility for the child with its birth mother.

In respect of adoptive parents, eligible students are those who are the spouse, partner or civil partner or the primary adopter.

Students are only entitled to take one of either maternity / adoption-equivalent leave or unpaid parental leave per birth / placement of a child. Unpaid parental leave must be completed within 12 months of the birth or placement of the child. This leave may be taken in up to 3 blocks of leave or all at once.

There is no qualifying period for Maternity, Ordinary Paternity Leave or Adoption and Parental Leave, and there is no limit to the number of periods of Maternity, Ordinary Paternity Leave or Adoption Leave that can be taken during a studentship.

Emergency and compassionate leave

To support students requiring short-term time off for emergencies and / or compassionate leave, the University will give due consideration to requests in such circumstances. This will provide for paid and unpaid leave, dependant on the circumstances, but would not usually exceed 5 days, bar exceptional situations. At a minimum, bereaved parents would be entitled to two weeks paid leave.

International students

International students whose right to remain in the UK is by virtue of a Tier 4 Visa or Student Visa, the obligation to permit 12 months leave for maternity / paternity leave and for sickness leave and payment is subject to any restrictions on remaining in the UK, and payment of funding imposed by virtue of the legislation and guidance relating to the granting of the Tier 4 Visa or Student Visa.

6. Other

Students are entitled to up to 8 weeks holiday in a 12-month period of registration. Full details should be obtained from the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Students and Supervisors](#), section 4, paragraph 34a.

Students who withdraw from Royal Holloway and complete their Doctorates at another institution should acknowledge Royal Holloway's support in future outputs from their doctoral studies.