

PGRS Academic Engagement & Attendance Policy

Contents

Summary of Policy	2
Scope	2
Related Documentation	2
Introduction	3
Policy	4
1. Purpose	4
1.1 Objectives	4
2. Policy principles	4
2.1 Academic Engagement	4
2.2 What we expect of our PGRS	4
2.3 Study away	5
2.4 Authorised and unauthorised absence	5
2.5 Minimum levels of engagement	5
Procedure	6
3. Implementation	6
3.1 Reporting AE&A to the Faculty	6
4. Non-compliance	7
5. Methods of appeal	7
Further clarification	7
Alternative format	7

Summary of policy

The Open University is committed to helping Postgraduate Research Students (“students”) achieve their study goals and we recognise that students who engage actively and fulfil attendance requirements are more successful in their studies and in the attainment of their research degree. The Open University is also committed to providing personalised support and mutually agreed solutions tailored to individual needs and circumstances to enable students to participate fully in their academic progress.

This policy is intended to enable timely support for students if their progress and engagement pattern suggests that they may need extra help to engage with their studies. The University is committed to supporting any student in meeting their Home Office visa requirements.

The policy also ensures that whether students are based nationally or internationally, and whether they are studying full-time (FT) or part-time (PT), they are treated fairly and consistently. This policy is designed to complement regular supervisory meetings and the Progress Monitoring Reporting process that takes place enabling the University to provide and focused support if it is needed.

Scope

Who and which circumstances this policy covers

This document applies to Post registered with The Open University, including those based at partner institutions, and covers both part-time (PT) and full-time (FT) studies. PGRS and their supervisors are therefore required to understand and comply with this policy.

Related Documentation

Please refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy document:

- [The Research Degree Regulations](#)
- [Student Route visa holder responsibilities](#)

The Open University Student Charter Values

This policy aligns with the following [Open University Student Charter](#) Values:

2. We value diversity and challenge inequalities and we are stronger for doing so.
4. We communicate with each other in ways which are clear, relevant, accurate and timely.
9. As students, we share the responsibility for learning and make a commitment to study and research using the resources and support services available, upholding the highest standards of academic integrity.

10. As staff, we each play our role in enabling high quality learning and advancing knowledge and understanding through research and scholarly activity, ensuring every student is supported.
11. We work to maintain and enhance the standards and reputation of our University recognising the contributions that all members make to its success.

Introduction

This policy can be used to help understand and manage any situation where the academic engagement and attendance of a PGRS is having a negative impact on their academic progress. This policy is also designed to reflect the fact that PGRS presence and activity are vital aspects of the on-campus research environment.

This policy is designed to complement the required regular supervisory meetings, and Progress Monitoring Review process that takes place annually by providing a more focussed and more frequent check on PGRS well-being and their engagement with their studies. It will enable The Open University to provide PGRS with timely and focussed advice and support if they need help.

For specific guidance on how this policy may relate to a PGRS personal circumstances, please contact the Research Degrees Team Research-Degrees-Management@open.ac.uk who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policies.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The Open University

Policies are inclusive of all Open University Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation or trades union membership status.

Safe Space Reporting

The University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across our University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [an online tool](#) through which staff, students, learners and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support.

Policy

1. Purpose

This policy provides a framework for recognising where the level of academic engagement and/or attendance is detrimental to a PGRS progress or well-being, and the measures to take to help the student get back on track.

1.1. The objectives of this policy are:

- 1.1.1. To ensure that academic engagement and attendance (AE&A) of every PGRS is sufficient in order to ensure success in their studies.
- 1.1.2. To enable the close monitoring of student progress and well-being.
- 1.1.3 To comply with UKVI requirements.

2. Policy principles

2.1 Academic Engagement

Academic engagement (AE) is the active participation of a student during their PGR studies and the minimum expected attendance on campus is stated in the Research Degree Regulations. Attendance is the requirement for all PGRS to attend study activities as required by their programme and their mode of study – either at a full-time or part-time rate of study. The UKVI definition of academic engagement ‘is indicated by activities such as: Attending required lectures, seminars or tutorials. Undertaking required laboratory work. Undertaking research or fieldwork. Submitting essays, assignments and attending examination’. In addition to these specified by UKVI for PGRS activities that require engagement are:

- *Registration and re-registration
- *Induction
- Supervisory meetings
- *Complete assessment events: Upgrade activities, thesis submission and viva-voce exam
- Timely submission of draft and final assessments, where relevant
- Engaging with supervisor feedback
- Training events and skills audit.

The requirement to be on-campus is negotiable, noting that starred items require attendance in person unless there are exceptional circumstances preventing this.

2.2 What we expect of our PGRS

As per the Research Degree Regulations the University expects full-time students to attend campus or another site of research a minimum of two days/15 hours per week to engage in

in-person activities. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with a declared disability or caring duties.

The expectation is that AE&A should not normally be compromised by any personal, social, work, residential or other arrangements, but the University understands that often circumstances can arise that are entirely unavoidable. We ask that PGRS will inform their supervisors of any concerns or issues that they are having that might impact upon their studies so adjustments can be made. Students with a declared disability or with caring responsibilities can expect that reasonable adjustments will be put in place to accommodate their needs in fulfilling their AE&A obligations.

2.3 Study away

If a PGRS is away from their regular place of study whilst carrying out activities that are an agreed part of their research, contact should be maintained with The Open University through an agreed schedule of contact with a supervisor. This is to ensure the well-being of the PGRS working away.

All Professional Doctorate students (EdD and DHSC) are part-time and studying away from The Open University campus. Their contact with their studies must be maintained via weekly engagement with the programmed resources, attendance to online seminars and in person at the annual residential weekends.

2.4 Authorised and unauthorised absence

Authorised absences for PGRS include:

- Holiday entitlement
- Maternity, paternity shared or adoption leave
- Study breaks
- Up to 4 consecutive days of sickness absence that does not need medical certification

Any absences that are not authorised will be of concern. Supervisors should discuss with their PGRS in the first instance but alert Faculty leads (DRD/DAD/PGT) so that there is a wider awareness. Appropriate colleagues can then work with the PGRS and supervisors in supporting the PGRS back to engagement with their studies.

2.5 Minimum levels of Academic Engagement

- 10 supervisory meetings per year if PGRS is full-time; or 5 supervisory meetings per year if PGRS is part-time.
- PGRS should normally respond to supervisors and University contact within 3 working days unless on an authorised absence as outlined above.
- PGRS carries out their research activities, as agreed with their supervisory team, and responds to supervisor feedback.
- PGRS attends activities agreed with their supervisors as part of study (laboratory training and analytical work, fieldwork, seminars, conferences, workshops, training, or residential events).
- PGRS engages with progress reporting, upgrade activities, thesis preparation/submission and examination.
- PGRS submits formative and summative draft/final assessments on time.

Procedure

3. Implementation

The Research Degrees Committee has oversight of policy and quality and requires AE&A to be monitored and uploaded to PGR Manager. Faculties will monitor AE&A primarily through feedback on any concerns derived from supervisory meetings. If there are concerns over a PGRS AE&A the supervisors can call on the Faculty/School Research Degrees lead (Director of Research Degrees, Postgraduate Tutor or Convenor, or equivalent) for support in establishing how to help their PGRS towards an improved AE&A. PGRS should be directed to their Third Party Monitor and other support services such as the Employer Assistance Programme, where applicable. Support will be tailored to the individual needs of each PGRS.

As this policy is focussed on early warning and support for PGRS, it is expected that the monitoring of Academic Engagement and Attendance takes place with a greater frequency than the Progress Monitoring. In order to provide timely support for any PGRS who are experiencing difficulties. It is recommended that a 'health check' of a Faculty's PGRS community occurs every 6 to 8 weeks for full-time and 12-16 weeks for part-time PGRS. The information should be provided by supervisors (based on their supervisory meetings with their students) and collated centrally in the Faculty.

3.1 Reporting AE&A to the Faculty

There are a number of questions that supervisor/s may wish to bear in mind when reporting AE&A to the Faculty/School as follows noting that not all of them/any of them may be relevant at the time of reporting:

- Has there been a number of/period of consecutive unauthorised absences?
- Have there been a number of sporadic unauthorised absences – how many are there – what is their frequency/timing?
- Is any non-attendance coupled with late submission/non-submission of any materials?
- Is my student failing to respond to emails requests and/or failing to respond to request for meetings?
- When did I last engage with my student?
- Is the lack of engagement impacting on progress?
- Where non-AE&A is recorded persistently, and where a PGRS fails to respond positively to intervention and the provision of support measures, the Failure to Make Academic Progress procedure is invoked (Appendix 3 of the Research Degree Regulations) and may ultimately lead to de-registration.
- Has a PGRS missed submission deadlines, handing in drafts or final assessments late or not at all?
- Is a PGRS unresponsive to feedback, and/or handing in work that shows little or no engagement with feedback?

4. Non-compliance

Where a student does not engage fully with their research degree activities and does not respond positively to support from the University, or does not attend as required by the Research Degree Regulations, the procedure for managing unsatisfactory progress will be initiated as set out in Appendix 3 of the Research Degree Regulations.

5. Methods of appeal

- A PGRS may feel that the outcome of the procedure for managing unsatisfactory progress was unacceptable, and that the recommendation for the University to de-register them was unfair, then we recommend a PGRS to use the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy in order to try to re-instate their registration.
- Please note that any appeal through the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy will not normally delay the OU from contacting UKVI.

Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact the Research Degrees Team (research-degrees-management) who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policy.

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please submit these to SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Student Support Team via <http://www.open.ac.uk/contact/> (phone +44 (0)300 303 5303), or your dedicated Student Support Team via StudentHome if you are a current Open University student. (Research Degrees Office are to be contacted for requests relating to PGRS policies via research-degrees-office@open.ac.)