

Leave Policy for Postgraduate Research Students



Effective from the start of the 2025/26 Academic Year (Updated August 2026)

This policy applies to all registered Doctoral and MPhil students up to completion of their studies.

If you are in receipt of a stipend paid through the University, it is particularly important that you follow the guidelines outlined in this document to ensure that you continue to receive your stipend payments through periods of leave, where payment is appropriate.

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1. Sickness/Medical Leave

- 1.1. If you are feeling unwell and will be absent you are expected to inform your Academic Supervisor and Academic Unit as soon as possible.
- 1.2. Where your illness prevents you from studying for more than three working days and up to seven days, you should self-certify and complete the 'Absence Request Form' in the [Student Portal](#) (to notify your Academic Supervisor and Academic Unit when you return to your studies).
- 1.3. Where your illness prevents you from studying for **more than seven working days**, you should obtain a medical fit note from your GP. You should complete the 'Absence Request Form' in the [Student Portal](#) as soon as possible and upload any supporting medical evidence. (Medical evidence is only required once per illness/diagnosis/reason and multiple absences against the same evidence are allowed.)
- 1.4. The Absence Request Form is also to be used for short absences other than for sickness (of more than three working days), e.g. time away from the University for personal reasons, and will also require evidence/justification.
- 1.5. **Confidential Circumstances** - If you are reluctant for details of your illness to be made known, even to your Academic Supervisor, you can provide your Graduate School with a confidential letter in a sealed envelope for the Dean of Postgraduate Research. This can be addressed as 'appropriate for the Dean's eyes only'.
- 1.6. If you accumulate frequent short-term periods of absence over the course of a year due to a temporary or long-term health condition, mental health difficulty or disability, which is impacting adversely on your ability to attend, your Academic Unit may choose to support you under the Support to Study procedure on the recommendation of your supervisory team. This may help to identify and plan for periods of absence and provide agreed flexibilities to support this.

- 1.7. Periods of sickness absence of **more than one month** would normally be classed as an [Interruption of Studies](#). You should inform the relevant Graduate School by applying for an interruption of studies through the [PGR Code of Practice System](#) and uploading the medical certificate and/or any other evidence supporting your interruption.
- 1.8. Interruption of studies will not normally be granted for more than a maximum of twelve months.
- 1.9. A return to study meeting will normally be arranged for you on your return to studies with your supervisor and/or PGR Director, if your sickness absence has been for more than two months. During this meeting you can discuss how you will re-engage with study, including any period of phased return. Your PGR Director/Supervisor should make a record of any phased return arrangement (ideally in [NU Reflect](#)) and indicate when this will be reviewed (normally every four weeks).
- 1.10. If your return is supported by a Support to Study action plan, you should engage with the action plan and complete any required activities.

Guidance for UKRI Funded Students

- 1.11 If you are UKRI funded you should be aware of the training grant terms and conditions relating to medical leave (effective from 1st October 2025), a summary of which is provided below:

Up to 28-weeks within each 12-month rolling period (pro-rated for part-time students), which can be taken in smaller blocks and does not have to be consecutive. *(The application of the 28-week entitlement is based on a 12-month rolling period from the start of each new period of absence.)* 52 weeks maximum of medical leave will be funded across the studentship and includes:

- Sick leave
- Pregnancy-related illness
- Antenatal appointments (where medically advised and not manageable through flexible study)
- Fertility treatment (where medically advised)
- Disability-related illness (including chronic illness)
- Disability-related appointments (including for chronic illness), e.g. diagnosis, therapy or treatment)
- Gender reassignment (where medically advised)
- Medical certificates only required for absences over 7 days.

Stipend/Maintenance Payments during Sickness/Medical Leave

- 1.12 If you are receiving stipend payments from an external sponsor, it is your responsibility to inform the sponsor who will apply their own policy concerning stipend payments during periods of extended sickness absence (1 month or greater). Additionally, the University has a duty of responsibility to external sponsors and may be required to inform your sponsor of

significant periods of absence. Continuation of stipend payments during periods of sickness absence is solely the responsibility of the sponsor.

- 1.13 If you are receiving stipend payments administered through the University, including on behalf of an external sponsor, subject to any conditions imposed by an external sponsor, stipend payments will continue through the first three months of sickness. Stipend payments will normally cease after three months, but continuation of stipends may be considered on a case-by-case discretionary basis. Continuation of stipend payments during periods of sickness absence has no implication on the overall duration of the scholarship award; i.e. the scholarship will not be extended to take into account periods of sickness absence.

2. Holiday/Annual Leave

- 2.1 The University holiday year is 1 October to 30 September inclusive, and the entitlement is based on an assumption of a 37-hour working week for full-time students.
- 2.2 If you are a full-time Doctoral/MPhil student you will be entitled to 30 days annual holiday, plus University fixed closure days (during the Winter Holiday) and public holidays.
- 2.3 If you are a part-time Doctoral/MPhil student this holiday entitlement will be applied pro-rata.
- 2.4 Normally, no period of annual leave/holiday can be more than 4 weeks in length at a time. If you need more than 4 weeks away from your studies, you can apply for a formal Interruption of Studies, which will require the approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Research. Applications can be made through the submission of an online 'Mitigations' form available in the [PGR Code of Practice System](#). Any period of interruption does not count against your annual leave/holiday entitlement.
- 2.5 Annual leave/holiday can be taken at any time in each holiday year but should be discussed and agreed with your supervisory team and approval for your required date should be provided via email. If you are a sponsored student your leave should be consistent with the terms and conditions of your studentship, as you may be required to provide an explanation/justification. The normal expectation is that permission will not be withheld, taking into account all the factors involved, both personal and organisational.
- 2.6 You should complete the Student Notice of Absence form (available in the Student Portal) to both request annual leave/holiday and to have it formally authorised by your Academic Unit. You should upload the approval email from your supervisory team with your portal request for your annual leave. If you encounter any difficulties submitting the form, please contact the IT service desk. Further guidance can be found here: [Student Portal](#) | [Student Progress](#) | [Newcastle University](#)
- 2.7 If you are a Student Visa holder, your annual leave/holiday must be in accordance with the University's Attendance Engagement requirements.

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- 2.8 Your normal annual leave entitlement will continue to build during any period of parental leave. It is recommended that you use any accrued leave immediately before or after your parental leave.

PGR Student Employment and Annual Leave/Holiday during Pending Submission (also known as writing-up)

- 2.9 If you are a Home student and wish to take up paid employment within the University of more than 20 hours per week while registered as 'Pending Submission', you should discuss this with your Supervisory Team, in advance of starting the employment. The normal expectation is that supervisory approval will not be withheld.
- 2.10 If you are undertaking paid employment of more than 20 hours per week, you should ensure you do not put your degree programme submission at risk, due to the employment undertaken. The University will not normally accept employment within the University, as grounds for an extension to a thesis submission deadline.
- 2.11 Alternatively, you could consider seeking an 'Interruption of Studies' for the period of employment, which would change your latest submission deadline, in line with the length of interruption requested.
- 2.12 If your Supervisory Team is supportive of employment in excess of 20 hours per week, you should submit a 'Student Notice of Absence form' (on the [Student Portal](#)) for the duration of the employment. Submission of the 'Student Notice of Absence form' changes your status and subsequent eligibility to work full-time (i.e. more than 20 hours per week). An absence request to cover the employment period does not count as part of your student annual leave/holiday entitlement.

PGR Student Employment and Holiday Entitlement Following Thesis Submission

- 2.13 If you are a Home student and wish to take up paid employment within the University of more than 20 hours per week following your thesis submission (registered as Under Examination), you should discuss this with your Supervisory Team and the normal expectation is that supervisory approval will not be withheld.
- 2.14 You should ensure that you do not put your degree programme completion at risk, due to the employment undertaken.
- 2.15 If your Supervisory Team is supportive of employment in excess of 20 hours per week, you should submit a 'Student Notice of Absence form' (on the Student Portal) for the duration of the employment. Submission of the 'Student Notice of Absence form' changes your status and subsequent eligibility to work full-time (i.e. more than 20 hours per week). An absence request to cover the employment period does not count as part of your annual leave/holiday entitlement.

Student Visa Holders

- 2.16 If you are a student who is subject to Student Visa conditions, you are restricted to working

no more than 20 hours per week under the terms of your visa throughout your entire degree. If you wish to take up paid employment with the University of more than 20 hours per week, this is only possible during an approved period of annual leave/holiday.

- 2.17 You must discuss this employment with your Supervisory Team, and you should ensure that you do not put your degree programme submission and completion at risk, due to the employment undertaken.
- 2.18 Normal annual leave/holiday entitlement will apply and therefore you should not normally undertake employment of more than 20 hours, for more than one month.
- 2.19 If you hold any other type of immigration permission for the UK, such as asylum seeker; discretionary leave and under immigration bail, you should seek advice from the Visa Team/People Services before undertaking any employment.
- 2.20 If you have Indefinite Leave to Remain, you can undertake employment in the same way as a Home student (see Pending Submission and Following Thesis Submission sections above).

3 Parental Leave

- 3.1 Becoming a parent should not prevent you from succeeding in your studies. In order to facilitate your success, the University is committed to showing as much flexibility as possible to students who become – or are about to become - parents during their programme of study. This policy outlines what you need to do if you become (or are about to become) a parent, and the steps the University will take to accommodate your needs as a new or expectant parent, to enable you to continue your programme of study.
- 3.2 The [Student Parental Leave policy](#) is applicable to any registered student who becomes (or is about to become) a parent during their programme of study, whether through their own pregnancy, their partner's pregnancy, an adoption arrangement or surrogacy. This policy applies to all students, regardless of stage, mode or location of study.

4 Additional/Special Leave

- 4.1 Additional/Special leave may be provided to cover certain circumstances which might require you to be away from your studies, for example, compassionate leave for a bereavement; emergency situations (e.g. serious illness) or to deal with any domestic emergency.
- 4.2 You are encouraged to record any additional/special leave via the [Student Portal](#), as it may be useful to have a record of leave taken if you need to submit an extension request at a later date.

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Bereavement Leave

- 4.3 Applies to all students, irrespective of length of studies and is in addition to normal annual leave/holiday entitlement. You should inform your PGR Supervisor at the earliest opportunity of your need to take bereavement leave.
- 4.4 It allows up to 10 days bereavement leave for the death of an immediate relative (partner; parent/parent-in-law; adult child (over 18 years old); next of kin and in some cases grandparents where they have been responsible for raising you). The amount of leave you decide to take will depend on the circumstances, taking into account matters such as:
- the closeness of your relationship with the deceased;
 - your obligations towards the deceased (for example if you are responsible for arranging the deceased's funeral);
 - travel required (for example if you need to travel a significant distance to be with relatives); and any bereavement requirements in relation to religion, such as an extended period of mourning (with the onus on you to tell your PGR Supervisor about these requirements).
- 4.5 Death of an immediate relative not listed above will normally allow for up to 1 day of leave. However, discretion may be granted based on the circumstances and responsibilities falling on you.
- 4.6 If you have parental responsibility and suffer the loss of a child under the age of 18, or if a pregnancy results in stillbirth there is an allowance of 10 days. 'Parental Responsibility' includes adopters, foster parents and guardians. The 10 days leave can be taken at any point up until 52 weeks after the death or stillbirth and can be taken together or as separate weeks. *If you experience pregnancy loss at any point during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, or if pregnancy results in stillbirth, please consult the Student Parental Leave policy.*
- 4.7 If you are in receipt of a studentship paid through the University, bereavement leave should not impact on your stipend payments. If you are unsure, you can ask your Graduate School for advice.
- 4.8 On your return from bereavement leave, you should complete the 'Absence Request Form' in the [Student Portal](#).

Care for Dependents

- 4.9 You are allowed 'reasonable' time off to look after a frail, disabled or ill dependent of any age. A dependent is defined as a; spouse; child; parent; or person who lives in the same household (but not a tenant, lodger or boarder). Leave to accompany a dependent to the GP, Hospital or Dentist may also be granted. All requests for this type of leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual circumstances and should be discussed and agreed with your Supervisory Team. You could agree with your Supervisory Team to take this time as annual leave, or by rearranging your study hours. If these are not an option, you will be able to take up to 2 days (in any leave year) as 'care for dependents'. In some cases, your Supervisory Team may request appropriate documentation before the leave is approved.

Emergency Leave

4.10 If you have a family emergency that you need some time away from the University to deal with immediately e.g. dealing with a Fire, Burglary or Flood; if existing arrangements for childcare unexpectedly break down; or, to deal with an incident involving a dependent: You could agree with your Supervisory Team to take this time as holiday, or by rearranging your study hours. If these are not an option, you will be able to take up to 2 days (in any leave year) as 'Emergency Leave'. In some cases, your Supervisory Team may request appropriate documentation before the leave is approved. In cases where your entitlement to emergency leave is exhausted, further leave may be granted at the discretion of your Supervisory Team.

Medical Appointments

4.11 Medical, dental, hospital and optician appointments should be arranged outside of study hours where possible or arranged at times which will cause least disruption to your study. When requesting time off, you should give your Supervisory Team as much notice as possible and supply appropriate documentation confirming the appointment where appropriate.

Additional disability leave associated with delayed adjustments

4.12 If there has been a delay in providing a reasonable adjustment and you have been unable to study, the University may provide additional leave and provide an extension on a case-by-case basis, working closely with the Disability Team in the Student Health and Wellbeing Service, your Supervisory Team and your Graduate School. Your Graduate School will be able to provide advice and guidance based on your individual circumstances.

Health and Safety

4.13 If there have been health and safety issues which have meant you have been unable to study at all on a temporary basis, the University may provide additional leave and provide an extension on a case-by-case basis. Your Graduate School will be able to provide advice and guidance based on your individual circumstances.

Public Duties

4.14 Leave may be provided for jury service and an extension to relevant deadlines provided. Further information is available [here](#) and from your Graduate School.

4.15 Leave may be provided for service training with the Auxiliary Forces, such as the Territorial Army. If you are required to attend camp, additional paid leave of up to one week will normally be granted (in any one year). Thereafter you will be expected to take leave from your normal annual leave entitlement holiday.