

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON RESEARCH STUDENTSHIP POLICY

DEFINITIONS

Research Studentship: The term used for a funding award made to a student for the purpose of undertaking postgraduate research leading to the award of a postgraduate research degree.

Fees-only Studentship: The term used for a studentship which excludes funds for a stipend.

Stipend: The funds awarded to students to cover their maintenance while undertaking postgraduate research.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Research Degree Regulations and Handbooks.
- 2) Research studentships are awarded by Faculties/Research Institutes (RIs) (or any part therein) to research students to undertake research in particular areas of study under the guidance of named supervisors. It is expected that the recipient of the award will submit a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), or Doctor of Medicine (MD) or by exceptional agreement a Master of Philosophy (MPhil).
- 3) The project supervision team and general arrangements for the research to be undertaken are approved by the appropriate Research Student Board that affects a research student's registration for a higher degree of the University.
- 4) The funds for studentships may derive from internal sources or from externally funded support that the Faculty/RI has secured (or any combination of the two). Faculties/RIs are encouraged to seek collaborative funding to "top-up" studentships and/or be used to fund fees, equipment, travel or consumables.
- 5) Research studentships carry the same status regardless of the source of funding (University, Funding Body, Charity, Company, etc.)
- 6) Faculties must provide funds to include stipend, tuition fees and all other costs for the supervisions period, including consumables, field work, travel and conferences, as and if appropriate. The level, nature and conditions of this support (especially related to other costs) must be indicated to the student in the offer letter
- 7) Selection criteria for studentships will be clearly stated in the description or advertisement inviting applications (or else it must be clear how/where these criteria can be read). These criteria must be used to arrive at shortlists for interview and for appointment. All advertisements for studentships must state the University's commitment to equality and diversity.
- 8) It is necessary to adhere to the Research Policy Unit's 'Interview Policy for Research Studentships' (see Appendix A).
- 9) University conditions may be superseded where any subsequent studentship funding award is bound by separate terms & conditions of a 3rd party (e.g. Industry funded).

OFFER OF STUDENTSHIP

- 10) Following interview the Faculty will send an offer of studentship to the successful candidate via a formal Offer Letter and notify unsuccessful candidates in writing.
- 11) Successful candidates should ensure they retain the offer letter for the duration of the studentship.
- 12) The offer of a studentship is made on the firm understanding that the requirements of this policy are adhered to.

ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENTSHIP

- 13) Candidates who are offered studentships must either decline or accept the offer normally within 10 working days of the date of the formal offer letter. Failure to do so may result in the studentship being offered to another candidate.
- 14) Application for registration and subsequent enrolment are required to be completed within six months of the formal offer letter. Failure to do so may result in the studentship being offered to another candidate.

CONDITIONS OF STUDENTSHIP

- 15) In accepting an offer of a Studentship, the student undertakes to:
 - a) abide by the terms and conditions of the studentship as outlined in this policy and the formal offer letter
 - b) inform the University if offered a UKRI studentship or other studentship of equal value
 - c) repay to the University any overpayment due to withdrawal, leave of absence or administrative error
 - d) provide to the University such information as it may require concerning changes in academic circumstances which may affect progress and payment of the studentship
 - e) assign the ownership of the Intellectual Property (IP) and research data from the programme of research to the University.
- 16) It is a condition of the studentship that a student remains on the programme of study in respect of which the studentship was sought and was offered. Any proposal by a student to change study or registration must be approved in advance by the relevant Faculty Research Student Board. Failure to seek prior approval may necessitate the recovery of sums already paid in relation to the studentship.

VALUE OF STUDENTSHIP

- 17) A full studentship consists of:
 - a) A stipend paid to the student to cover personal maintenance or living costs. The minimum stipend to be offered to any recipient of a full time studentship in any academic year will be at the same level as the UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend (£15,009 for 2019/20), and pro rata for part-time awards.
 - b) Payment of approved tuition fees
 - c) Payment of the appropriate Research Support Fees
- 18) A fees-only studentship consists of:
 - a) Payment of approved tuition fees
- 19) Any charges for university student accommodation must be paid to the institution by the student.
- 20) Any other charges, for example binding a thesis, moving costs, IELTS tests and visa fees etc. are not included in the studentship, an allowance having been made for such expenses in fixing the rate of the stipend.

NATIONAL INSURANCE

- 21) The University will not make any payment for student's National Insurance contributions. Students may become liable for contributions in connection with any paid teaching or demonstrating which they undertake.

PAYMENT OF STIPEND & FEES

- 22) Stipends will be paid quarterly in advance by direct transfer to the student's account by the BACS system where possible. Students should contact the relevant Research Administrator to ascertain the dates when payments will be made and ensure the University has their bank details. The Doctoral College is not responsible for the payment of stipends to the student.
- 23) Unless otherwise noted in writing to the candidate, studentship periods are as follows, depending on each type of degree and mode of attendance:

Award	Mode of Study	
	Full-time	Part-time
PhD	3 years	6 years
MD	2 years	3 years

- 24) In cases where the thesis is submitted prior to the end of the funded period in point 23 above, it is permissible for the studentship award to continue to the end of the quarter in which the thesis is submitted. If the student submits on or after the original end date, then the funding must cease on the end date.
- 25) Any research student who has not submitted a thesis for examination before the end of their studentship award period will be required to pay fees to the University to continue their registration until they submit.
- 26) Students who have completed the studentship period according to point 23 above are entitled to apply for a 'writing up' period of up to 12 months, during which they are required to pay a 'writing up' fee (£1000 pro-rata in 2018/19).
- 27) After the writing up period, fees will increase, subject to approval to the extension of the registration, to the appropriate full-time/part-time fee for each additional year of registration. It is the student's responsibility to pay these fees.

CONTINUATION OF STUDENTSHIPS

- 28) All research students are expected to maintain regular and frequent contact with their Director of Studies and other supervisors.
- 29) Should a doctoral student in receipt of studentship funding fail to undertake their research duties (i.e. unsatisfactory attendance, progress or conduct) they may have their studentship terminated and the University reserves the right to recover any stipend payments made.
- 30) If the University is satisfied that a student has wilfully failed to provide information which it requires or has provided information which is known to be false, it may terminate the Studentship and recover any stipend payments made, or withhold any payments due under the Studentship as it sees appropriate.
- 31) Continued registration on the studentship and access to associated funding is subject to satisfactory progress, evidenced by annual progress review (APR) processes. If the relevant Faculty does not receive the completed APR documentation report by the required date, maintenance payments will be suspended until the report is received.
- 32) The period of notice to terminate the studentship prematurely is one calendar month, in writing, by either the student or the University.
- 33) It is a condition of all awards made under this scheme that the students must accept the University's arrangements for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

ATTENDANCE

- 34) Full-time research students are expected to devote at least 35 hours per week over a minimum of 45 weeks per year to the research degree (at least 15-18 hours per week over a minimum of 45 weeks per year for part-time students). Leave will be taken at times agreed with the Supervisory Team.

- 35) Unless otherwise agreed, students in receipt of a studentship must live within a reasonable travel time of the University to ensure that they are able to maintain regular contact with their Faculty and Supervisor.
- 36) Students in receipt of studentship funding must hold the right to live & study in the UK. If they are subsequently found to be in breach of this term the University retains the right to reclaim any funds allocated. Students in receipt of Research Council funding must meet the UKRI eligibility criteria.
- 37) A research studentship cannot be held by any employee of the University (with the exception of employment referred to in points 39 and 40 below).
- 38) Full-time research studentship holders cannot hold a full-time job during the period of their award. If a full-time student takes up paid full-time employment before the end of the studentship, the studentship will terminate on the date of appointment.

DEMONSTRATING, TEACHING AND OTHER PAID WORK

- 39) Research students may be given an opportunity to undertake teaching and/or demonstrating and/or consultancy duties, subject to the University's "[Policy on Postgraduate Research Students - Teaching and/or Demonstrating Opportunities](#)". Payment will be made for such duties at rates agreed by the University Human Resources department. This will not entitle the students to staff discounts for fee paying purposes.
- 40) An average of 6 hours per week of teaching and/or demonstrating and/or consultancy relevant to the student's training is allowed for students in receipt of a studentship. Payments over the personal tax allowance may result in tax deductions.
- 41) In their teaching, demonstrating or consultancy duties, research students are responsible to the relevant Head of School or designated line manager.

MODE OF ATTENDANCE AND CHANGES OF REGISTRATION

- 42) A transfer from part-time to full-time studies cannot involve employment that would prevent the student from working on the research degree on a full-time basis (see also point 38 above).
- 43) A transfer from full-time to part-time mode of attendance will be considered where a change in personal circumstances means that a student can no longer continue full-time studies.
- 44) Part-time studentship holders may hold a part-time job during the period of their studentship; however, the studentship and separate employment contract together cannot add up to more than 1 FTE.
- 45) Where a student changes their registration from full-time to part-time, or vice versa, the stipend amount allocated to the student will be re-distributed according to their registration status, which may result in some stipend payments being made during the writing up period.
- 46) If a student changes registration from full-time to part-time shortly after receiving a stipend payment, repayment will not be sought by the Faculty but will be deducted from future payments. If the student wishes to repay their stipend at this point, they may do so

ABSENCE DUE TO SHORT TERM ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS

- 47) If a student is absent through accident or illness for more than one week, the student must notify their Director of Studies, who will notify the Faculty Research Administrator immediately in writing of the dates of absence, accompanied by a medical certificate. Return from such absence must also be reported. Frequent short absences for medical or other reasons must also be reported to the Faculty Research Student Board where they are likely to lead to a delay in the programme of research.
- 48) Students will normally be paid their full studentship stipend for up to 28 days (in any 12 month period) of certified sick absence.
- 49) It should be noted that in instances where a student receives payment of a stipend for periods of illness and/or accident, this period will not be deemed to form part of an approved period of leave of absence.
- 50) Periods of certified illness in excess of 28 days will require that the student takes a leave of absence.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 51) If the student takes an approved leave of absence the studentship, including stipend payments and any other allowances, will be suspended for the same period (subject to existing regulations, visa requirements and procedures).
- 52) Where it has been agreed that a student may take a leave of absence, and that student has recently received a stipend payment, repayment will not be sought by the Faculty but will be deducted from future payments. If the student wishes to repay their stipend at this point, they may do so.
- 53) If a student takes an approved leave of absence and then subsequently withdraws from their programme of study, the Faculty may consider the recovery of the overpaid stipend payment for that period.

UNAUTHORISED LEAVE

- 54) Studentship holders who take an unauthorised period of leave or leave of absence exceeding the total leave days permitted under the Research Degree Regulations will be deemed to have withdrawn from the studentship. The University reserves the right to recover monies already paid for the period following the date of withdrawal.

TERMINATION OF REGISTRATION

- 55) Studentship holders who withdraw from the research degree programme shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the studentship also. The University reserves the right to recover monies already paid for the period following the date of withdrawal.
- 56) Studentship holders whose registration is terminated by the University shall have their studentship cancelled. The University reserves the right to recover monies already paid for the period following the date of termination.

JURY SERVICE

- 57) If the student takes an approved period of leave due to statutory jury service the studentship, including stipend payments and any other allowances, will be suspended for the same period (subject to existing regulations and procedures).

PARENTAL LEAVE

Compulsory Maternity Leave

58) Students may not return to their research studies until two weeks after the date of childbirth.

Maternity/Adoption Leave

59) A student may take maternity/adoption leave of up to a maximum 12 months at any one time.

60) Students will continue to be paid their full studentship stipend for up to six months and a further six months' unpaid, providing a total period of paid and unpaid maternity/adoption leave up to twelve months. The estimated due date (maternity) or official adoption date must occur during the period of the studentship.

61) Periods of maternity/adoption leave with the studentship stipend paid and unpaid must be taken consecutively. If a student chooses not to take the full twelve months at the time of pregnancy/adoption, then the student will not be able to take the remaining period at a later date.

62) The application must be supported by official documentation.

- Maternity leave - The student is required to provide a maternity certificate, form MATB1, obtained from a doctor or midwife, which includes the estimated due date (EDD). These are normally available 20 weeks before EDD.
- Adoption leave - The student is required to provide a letter from the agency with the date of placement and matching certificate. Where a couple is adopting a child only one partner may apply for full adoption leave.

Ordinary Paternity Leave

63) A total of 10 days ordinary paternity leave may be taken at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following birth/adoption. Students will continue to be paid their full monthly studentship stipend during this period. If the student needs to take any further time, this must be taken as a leave of absence. The student should apply directly to the University for leave and provide evidence of the birth/adoption.

Shared Parental Leave

64) Students may if they wish transfer some of their maternity or adoption leave to their partners when they return to study.

65) Partners may be entitled to up to 50 weeks of Shared Parental Leave; this may include paid and unpaid leave, depending on the individual circumstances, any paid leave will be at full stipend.

66) There is no qualifying period for maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave.

EXTERNALLY FUNDED STUDENTSHIPS

67) Externally funded research studentships will not normally be 'top-sliced' by the University.

68) Externally funded studentships may be subject to contractual arrangements and will be consulted before an agreement to change registration, interrupt or extend is made.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW POLICY FOR RESEARCH STUDENTSHIPS

All shortlisted applicants must attend an interview to be considered for a studentship.

If it is not possible for the applicant to attend in person, then an interview by video-conferencing, held on the same day(s) as the other interviews, is possible in exceptional circumstances. The interview panel must strive to ensure that applicants who are interviewed by video-conferencing are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.

The following notes describe the Doctoral College's expectations for the selection of studentships.

ADVERTISING

Selection criteria for studentships must be clearly stated in the description or advertisement inviting applications (or else it must be clear how/where these criteria can be read).

These criteria must be used to arrive at shortlists for interview and for appointment. All advertisements for studentships must state the University's commitment to equality and diversity.

SHORTLISTING FOR INTERVIEW

Shortlisting applicants for interview must be carried out by a minimum of two people, one of whom must be a member of the interview panel.

Agreed shortlist scoring against criteria must be recorded and decisions for rejection must be clear and factual. No greater than 4 applicants should normally be shortlisted for a single studentship opportunity; and no greater than 6 applicants if two studentships are available.

TRAINING OF PANELLISTS

All University of Wolverhampton staff involved with shortlisting and interviewing applicants must have completed the University's mandatory Equality & Diversity and Unconscious Bias training. (It is recognised that external members of panels may not have completed such training or the equivalent).

The Chair of the Interview panel must have completed Recruitment & Selection training.

INTERVIEWS

Each interview selection panel must have a minimum of 3 members, one of whom will Chair the panel. All interview panels must include both men and women.

If an applicant is known to a member of the panel, in a personal or close working professional capacity, they are required to declare that to the other panel members to ensure any potential bias, negative or positive, is managed. A panel member or chair cannot take part in selection processes if a member of family is being considered as an applicant.

Travel expenses within the UK (and, if required, overnight accommodation) must be met for each shortlisted applicant to attend interview. These are the responsibility of the relevant Faculty (if not covered by an external funder). If possible, travel should be booked for the applicant in advance to ensure that no-one is excluded due to lack of means to pay up front to attend an interview.

There should be at least 10 days from the invite letters being issued to the actual interview.

All interviewees must be asked by the administrator organising interviews if they have any reasonable adjustments that are required to enable them to participate fairly and fully in the recruitment process. The Chair should be notified of the nature of any adjustments and must ensure that no confidential data is shared with the rest of the interview panel without the applicant's approval.

The interview should focus on gaining evidence that demonstrates how the applicant fulfils the selection criteria. The Chair, with input from the panel members, should plan broad questions in advance; these questions should be asked to all candidates, which can then be explored in more depth, depending on how the candidate initially responds.

Each panel member must take interview notes for each candidate. Notes should reflect the essence of how a candidate responds to the question. They should be factual, unambiguous and impersonal, from which judgements about suitability for the studentship can be made against the selection criteria.

OUTCOME AND FEEDBACK

The Chair should lead a full discussion with the panel members regarding each applicant's suitability; taking into account feedback from any other elements used in the selection process as appropriate (e.g. sample writing, presentation, etc.)

The Chair records the interview outcomes; summary paperwork should be kept by the Faculty for a period of one year (in the case of unsuccessful interviewees). Interview notes for successful applicants will be kept for the duration of their studies

All interviewed applicants should be informed of the outcome as soon as possible. This may be done by email.

All unsuccessful applicants who attended interview should be given the opportunity to receive feedback in relation to the selection criteria.

COMPLAINTS

We are committed to providing a high standard of service; however it is accepted that applicants may have complaints relating to their application or the service provided.

The Informal Procedure - Most complaints can be resolved informally by contacting the Faculty/Research Institute Research Administrator. This is usually the most useful and effective means of resolving a complaint and should be the first recourse. If you are still dissatisfied with the response you will have the option to escalate the complaint to the formal procedure.

The Formal Procedure - If having followed the informal route the applicant believes that their concerns have not been properly addressed or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential then the formal procedure should be followed.

To find out more about the complaints procedure visit the Conduct and Appeals Unit website <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/current-student-complaints/>

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