Contents

Summary of Policy 2
Scope 2
Related Documentation 2
Introduction 3
Policy 4
  1. Purpose 4
  2. Policy principles 4
    2.1 Academic Engagement and attendance 4
    2.2 What we expect of our Student Route PGRS 4
    2.3 Study away from the University 5
    2.4 Authorised and unauthorised absence 5
    2.5 Non-attendance, non-engagement 5
Procedure 6
  3. Implementation 6
    3.1 Reporting AE and attendance to the Faculty/Schools 6
  4. Non-compliance 7
  5. Methods of appeal 8
Appendices 9
  1 UKVI Student Route requirements 9
Further clarification 16
Alternative format 16

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.
Summary of policy

The Open University is committed to helping you to achieve your study goals. We recognise that research students (‘students’) who engage fully and have good attendance 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 you participate fully in your academic progress.

This policy is for students studying with the University on a Student Route (formerly Tier 4) visa the Government Visa and Immigration who are subject to particular requirements to ensure that they meet UKVI expectations. It is intended to enable timely support to you if your attendance and/or engagement pattern suggests that you may need extra help to engage with your studies and to meet your visa compliance requirements.

Scope

Who and which circumstances this policy covers

This document applies to research students registered with The Open University and studying under a Student Route (formerly Tier4) visa. Students and their supervisors are therefore required to understand and comply with this policy.

Who and which circumstances this policy does not cover

This policy does not apply to students who do not study under a Student Route (formerly Tier 4) visa or those studying taught undergraduate or taught postgraduate modules and qualifications. It does not apply to students studying for apprenticeships.

Related Documentation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy document:

- The Research Degree Regulations

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 Student Route student is having a negative impact on their academic progress or visa compliance.

It will enable The Open University to provide timely and focussed support or advice and to comply with UKVI requirements.

For specific guidance on how this policy may relate to a student’s personal circumstances, please contact the Research Degrees Team (Research-Degrees-Management@Open.ac.uk) who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policy.

### 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 to enable students to ensure that they are effectively engaging with the support available to them at the University and to attend as required by UKVI.

The objectives of this policy are:

1.1. to comply with UKVI requirements.
1.2. to enable timely support of your academic engagement and attendance if you need extra help to engage with your studies.

2. Policy principles

2.1 Academic Engagement and attendance

Academic engagement (AE) is the active participation of a student during their postgraduate research (PGRS) journey. The following is a guide to activities that commonly apply within the context of AE, noting that this list is not exhaustive:

- registration and re-registration for PGRS studies
- induction at the start of PGRS studies
- supervisory meetings
- technical training sessions (using laboratory equipment)
- fieldwork as required (including data collection in a particular geographic area; an archive or library for example)
- training events and skills audit
- progress monitoring
- attending seminars, workshops, presentations, conferences
- completing assessment events: Upgrade activities, thesis submission, viva-voce exam
- timely submission of thesis drafts - and the final thesis
- engaging with supervisor feedback

There is a requirement for Student Route PGRS to attend campus for their study activities, rather than operate remotely, off campus.

2.2 What we expect of our Student Route PGRS

The expectation is that attendance and AE should be maintained for the duration of their studies. Students and supervisors should ensure that they understand the AE and attendance requirements, as set out in this policy, and the Research Degree Regulations. Students are expected to attend activities or events in full, except where exceptional circumstances (Appendix 6 of the Research Degree Regulations) prevent the completion of an activity.
2.3 Study away from the University

If a student is away from The Open University campus temporarily, undertaking activities that are an agreed part of their research, contact must be maintained with The Open University through an agreed schedule of contact with a supervisor.

2.4 Authorised and unauthorised absence

Authorised absences related to research for Student Route students which require an Authorised Absence form to be filled prior to departure include:

- conference attendance
- visits to field sites or other pre-approved sites for the purpose of progressing research

Other absences may include:

- holiday entitlement (RD 8.5 of the Research Degree Regulations require completion of an annual leave form prior to departure)
- 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 and will lead to a conversation with the supervisors and Faculty or School Research Degrees Lead/Postgraduate Research Tutor/Postgraduate Research Convenor (or equivalent) to understand how we can support you to engage with studies, noting that unauthorised absences are a breach of the visa conditions.

2.5 Non-attendance, non-engagement

Evidence of non-attendance and non-engagement is considered to be as follows (noting that the list is not exhaustive and noting that non-attendance and non-engagement are breaches of visa conditions):

- cancelling or missing supervisory meetings which leads to the probability of not achieving the minimum number of meetings required per year.
  a. All students must meet an agreed schedule of supervision as follows: full-time students should have a formal meeting with their supervisor/s a minimum of 10 times per year. Clear action points should be discussed and agreed at each formal supervision meeting with notes saved on the online record system - PGR Manager.
- being unresponsive to supervisor initiated contact.
- a lack of satisfactory attendance at other activities deemed by supervisors to form part of the PGRS studies (lab and fieldwork, seminars, conferences, workshops, training or residential events).
- failing to engage fully with progress reporting, upgrade activities and thesis preparation/submission.
- not to be engaging appropriately with their research practice as deemed by the supervisory team.
• non or late submission of thesis drafts and/or non-engagement with the feedback from supervisors.

Persistent non-attendance and non-engagement will invoke the ‘procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory progress’ are invoked (Appendix 3 of the Research Degree Regulations).

**Procedure**

### 3. Implementation

The Research Degrees Committee has oversight of policy and quality and requires AE and attendance to be monitored and uploaded to PGR Manager.

If there are concerns over a student’s AE and Attendance the supervisors can call on a Postgraduate Research Tutor or Convenor (or equivalent) for support in establishing how to help their student towards improved AE and Attendance. Support will be tailored to the individual needs of each student. For instance, students could be directed to their Third Party Monitor and other support services such as the Employer Assistance Programme, where applicable.

#### 3.1 Reporting AE and attendance to the Faculty/School

There are a number of questions that supervisors may bear in mind when reporting AE and attendance to the Faculty/School as follows:

• 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?
• Is my student failing to engage with me/us?
• Is the lack of engagement impacting on progress?
• Has my student missed submission deadlines, handing in drafts late or not at all?
• Is my student unresponsive to feedback, and/or handing in work that shows little or no engagement with feedback?

Where a lack of AE and attendance is recorded persistently, and where a student fails to respond positively to intervention and the provision of support measures, the procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress are is invoked (Appendix 3 of the Research Degree Regulations) and may ultimately lead to de-registration.
4. **Non-compliance**

- If Student Route students or their supervisors do not comply with this policy, there will be a risk to The Open University’s UKVI Student Route sponsor licence.
- Students risk not receiving adequate support.
- Students also risk not being re-registered at the annual re-registration, or being de-registered, which will result in Visa cancelation.
5. Methods of appeal

- The student will be provided with the opportunity to present mitigating evidence to the Faculty within 5 working days, which constitutes Stage 1.

- Should a Stage 1 appeal not be upheld the student may then use the Students Complaints and Appeals Policy. The administrative appeal section may be used from Stage 2.

- If Stage 1 is not upheld then this will not necessarily delay the OU from contacting UKVI.
Appendix 1: UKVI Student Route Requirements.

OU-Student Route Agreement is used to ensure that each student is aware of his/her responsibilities to The Open University as the sponsor for his/her Student Route visa. It serves as the ground rules that enable both the student and The Open University to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the UK Visas and Immigration agency (UKVI). The form is available for download from the Graduate School Network (GSN).

Student Name:

Student Personal Identifier:

OU Faculty of registration:
(OU directly supported student only)

OU Research Degrees Office representative:
(OU directly supported student only)

Affiliated Research Centre (ARC):
(ARC student only)

ARC responsible officer:
(ARC student only)

ARC Collaborating Establishment:
(if applicable, ARC student only)

ARC Collaborating Establishment responsible officer:
(if applicable, ARC student only)

Supervisors’ Names:

Date:

Responsibilities

- The Graduate School, working with the Faculty (in respect of OU directly supported students), or working with the ARC responsible officer and where applicable, the ARC Collaborating Establishment responsible officer (in respect of ARC supported students) will retain responsibility for ensuring that the following information is kept:
  - Up to date copies of your passport and visas
  - Contact details
  - Confirmation of attendance and engagement

- In addition the Graduate School will:
  - Provide the above named student, and, if applicable, the ARC responsible officer and the ARC collaborating establishment responsible officer with notification of any changes in UKVI policy that will have an impact on the terms of his/her visa
The above named student will be responsible for ensuring that:

- They provides the Graduate School (if an ARC student, via the ARC responsible officer or the ARC collaborating establishment responsible officer) with up to date copies of his/her passport and visa.
- They informs the Graduate School (if an ARC student, via the ARC responsible officer or the ARC collaborating establishment responsible officer) of any changes to his/her visa status.
- They provides all current contact details – in a situation where he/she changes residential address and/or study location, he/she must ensure that the Graduate School is informed immediately (if an ARC student, via the ARC responsible officer or the ARC collaborating establishment responsible officer).
- They completes and submits the annual leave/authorised absence forms as appropriate on any occasion where he/she will be absent from his/her normal place of study.
- They must ensure that all points of contact as determined by The Open University are met. If an ARC student, in addition to OU requirements outlined below, there may be additional attendance requirements imposed by the ARC or ARC collaborating establishment.
- They must comply with the annual Student Route document check undertaken by the Graduate School (OU directly supported students) or the ARC responsible officer or the ARC collaborating establishment responsible officer (ARC students).

Current UK contact details
Residential address:

Telephone number:
Mobile telephone number:
Study location address:
(ARC students only)

I, the above named student, confirm that the information given is correct. I understand that should I fail to comply with any of the requirements set out above the Open University may withdraw its sponsorship of my Student Route visa.

Student signature: ........................................
Date: ....................................................

(updated 1 June 2022)
Each student entering on a Student Route viva is required to submit a monthly report outlining your attendance and academic engagement to their supervisor (OU directly supported students), or the ARC responsible officer, or the ARC collaborating establishment responsible officer, as applicable (ARC students). The following form needs to be completed in collaboration with supervisor/s each month and submitted by the Faculty/School to the Research Degrees Team. The form is available to download from the GSN.

**RESEARCH STUDENT ATTENDANCE RECORD**

*(to be filled out by the supervisor and research student, and signed off by the supervisor)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Expected Contact / Reports</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Who Attended</th>
<th>Notes, Comments or Other Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>International Student Registration &amp; Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>[Registration]</td>
<td>Which staff from faculty, department, RDT, Academic Professional Development staff or trainers,</td>
<td>Note here the main point of the event. If a supervisory session, note a couple of sentences about the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Other Contact (2) (please specify under ‘Notes/Comments/Other contacts’)</td>
<td>Discussion and what was achieved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party monitor meeting</td>
<td>supervisors, other students, lab staff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>viva</td>
<td>The point of this column is to consolidate the evidence presented that the student did attend the specified event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other contacts (2) (please specify under ‘Notes/Comments/Other contacts’)</td>
<td>Example: Discussion on how the PhD Study could be designed; what should be the focus of the PhD Period; Exploring option of Indian Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Could include Doctoral Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other departmental meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal club</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily attendance in lab</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Upgrade assessment – presentation, discussion of lit review, mini viva</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
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<td>December</td>
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<td>March</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(2\) Expected contacts could also include attendance at research methods seminars or doctoral workshops organised by the School/Faculty/Institute, submission of interim reports, submission of thesis and viva.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 2-3-4 etc</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October</strong></td>
<td>Add months and years as appropriate. Monitoring until the student has completed their degree. Please note – this includes when the student is writing up, the time period when a student has submitted and is awaiting an examination and when completing corrections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the student leaves the UK for any reason, a form for authorised absence should be completed. In consultation with Research Degrees Team, a decision will be taken as to whether the OU can continue to sponsor the student. In these circumstances, contact Graduate School for advice. If monitoring cannot continue, the University may have to withdraw sponsorship for the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure to comply with UKVI attendance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
monitoring requirement puts the student’s individual visa and the University’s Student Route sponsor status at risk.

Please confirm the student’s current address or provide details of the student’s new address in the box below:

☐ I (student) confirm that the current address details are correct
☐ The current address details are incorrect, and the new details are

Please confirm the number of hours the student is employed per week

☐ I (student) confirm that I am employed and work ______ hours per week not including study.
☐ I (student) confirm I am not employed.

Please confirm that you have read the information below.

Please confirm that the student (unless they are on authorised absence or annual leave and the appropriate forms have been submitted) has been engaging with their research and has been attending campus as per the expectations outlined in the Graduate School briefing of 13 July.

☐ I (student) confirm that I have been engaging with my research and have been attending campus.
☐ I (student) confirm that I have had an authorised absence/annual leave which permits me to not attend campus for the period stated in the document.

Please provide details for the reason for any missed contact(s) in the box below:

I confirm that the current address details are correct

The current address details are incorrect, and the new details are

I confirm I am employed and work ______ hours per week not including study.

I confirm I am not employed.

Please confirm that you have read the information below.

Please confirm that the student (unless they are on authorised absence or annual leave and the appropriate forms have been submitted) has been engaging with their research and has been attending campus as per the expectations outlined in the Graduate School briefing of 13 July.

☐ I (student) confirm that I have been engaging with my research and have been attending campus.
☐ I (student) confirm that I have had an authorised absence/annual leave which permits me to not attend campus for the period stated in the document.

Please provide details for the reason for any missed contact(s) in the box below:
Please provide details of any absence, including annual leave, sick leave or other authorised absences below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of absence</th>
<th>Date of return</th>
<th>Reason for absence, was absence outside of the country and if so where.</th>
<th>Confirmation student has returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

☐ I (supervisor) confirm that the form is complete and all required information has been supplied

Name of Supervisor                                                               Date

How to use this form

Research student and supervisor collaborate to update the same Word document monthly with research student’s campus engagement. The supervisor should submit the updated form monthly (at the start of the month) to research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk, copying in your Faculty/School PhD Administration.
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 postgraduate research student policies via research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk).