

**OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY**  
**UNIVERSITY RESEARCH STUDENTSHIP SCHEME**  
**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Handbook sets out the terms and conditions for research students holding awards under the Oxford Brookes University Full-time Research Studentship Scheme. The terms and conditions apply to all new **Research Studentship offered under this scheme and** commencing from 1 August 2009. The Handbook should be read in conjunction with the University's Research Degree Regulations and the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research.
- 1.2 The studentships are based on the model used by the Research Councils and enable students to undertake a research degree and receive training in research methods and generic skills. The studentships are tenable for three years, subject to satisfactory progress, and are not normally renewed beyond three years.
- 1.3 Enquiries about the availability of new studentships should be directed to the relevant School Postgraduate Research Tutor.
- 1.4 Please note that the Scheme is not intended to offer support to students who have already received external funding for three years in support of their research degree and who require further funding in order to complete their studies.
- 1.5 In the case of any dispute about the interpretation of the terms and conditions contained in the Studentship Handbook, the matter should be referred to the Head of the Graduate Office in the first instance.
- 1.6 The University Research Studentship Scheme permits Schools to offer a combination of terms, fees and allowances as indicated below. Full details of the specific terms, fees and allowances offered by a particular award will be provided in the studentship advertisement and formal offer letter issued by the School.

All studentships and offer letters will specify which of the following conditions apply:

- 1.6.1 payment of fees for the duration of the three year full-time award including source of payment, i.e. University and School through a waiver, School project or teaching income, externally funded or a combination of these options;
- 1.6.2 payment of an annual maintenance grant for the three year period which includes the costs associated with the student undertaking up to 6 hours teaching as indicated in 5.3.2;
- 1.6.3 payment of an annual maintenance grant with no guaranteed teaching, but where Schools may be in a position to offer some teaching during the award and payment will be made in addition to the maintenance grant as outlined in 5.3.1;
- 1.6.4 where funding for part of a studentship has been offered through a named funder or external body, details of their contribution will be included in the advertisement and offer letter and where appropriate, recognition given through the formal naming of that part of the award;
- 1.6.5 any additional allowances offered to cover cost associated with fieldwork, conferences and visits to other institutions;
- 1.6.6 any other additional allowances;

## **2. Eligibility**

### **2.1 Research degree requirements**

- 2.1.1 UK, EU or International applicants may be eligible to apply for a Research Studentship funded through this scheme depending in the terms of the individual studentship offered. All applicants must be able to meet the University's requirements for a full-time research degree, which is to be able to devote on average at least 35 hours per week, averaged over a 44-week year, to the programme of research.
- 2.1.2 Schools may require award holders to apply for a Research Council award.

### **2.2 Financial requirements**

- 2.2.1 Applicants in receipt of another award for the purpose of studying for a research degree are not eligible to hold a Research Studentship offered under the terms and conditions of this scheme..

### **2.3 Academic qualifications**

- 2.3.1 Applicants should normally have a first or upper second class honours degree from a UK Higher Education Institution or a qualification which is regarded by the University as equivalent to such an honours degree.
- 2.3.2 Applicants holding qualifications other than those in paragraph 2.3.1 will be considered on their individual merit and in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. In considering an applicant in this category, evidence of the candidate's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research will be looked for. Professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment will be taken into consideration.
- 2.3.3 Applicants whose main language is not English must meet the University's English language requirements and where applicable the School or Department's requirements, details of which are available from the Graduate Office or Postgraduate Research Tutor.
- 2.3.4 Proof of qualifications upon entry will be required by the Graduate Office on initial enrolment as a research student at the University.

## **3. Applications**

- 3.1 Studentships will be advertised by the School offering the studentships as and when they become available. Studentships may start at the beginning of the academic year in September or at the beginning of Semester 2.. Once the award has been made it cannot under any circumstances be deferred.
- 3.2 Applications should be made in accordance with the requirements of the particular advertisement and will usually be invited either on the standard University Postgraduate Research Degrees Application form (available from the Graduate Office webpage) or in writing enclosing a full Curriculum Vitae and the names of two academic referees.
- 3.3 All short-listed applicants will be invited for interview.
- 3.4 Before offering a studentship, satisfactory academic references will need to be obtained by the School.

## 4. Admission

4.1 Following selection, the successful candidate will be issued with a studentship letter by the School.

4.2 The studentship letter will specify:

- (a) the start date and duration of the studentship, a clear statement that continuation is dependent on satisfactory academic progress;
- (b) the requirement that the student register for a research degree;
- (c) the names of the Supervisors (normally indicating the Director of Studies, who must be suitably qualified) and other supervisory arrangements;
- (d) the title of the research project;
- (e) the details of the maintenance allowance;
- (f) the arrangements for the payment of the allowance to the student;
- (g) details of how the research degree tuition fees will be funded for the duration of the studentship, see 1.6.1;
- (h) the fees are paid by the School or Department for a fixed period or the duration of the award;
- (i) the details of the research degree tuition fees for the first year if the studentship is externally funded and the arrangements for the payment of the fees;
- (j) any financial contribution to be made by the School towards the costs of fieldwork or conference attendance or other expenses related to the research;
- (k) the facilities to be provided by the School;
- (l) whether a student in receipt of a funded studentship will be required to, or have the opportunity to, undertake any additional part-time teaching or demonstrating activities and the arrangements for issuing a contract and making payments to the student for this;
- (m) the amount of teaching required as part of **the Studentship, for which payment is included in the annual maintenance grant**;
- (n) requirements of attendance, holiday allocation, progress reports and review;
- (o) detail of compulsory School or Department research methods or other training courses if any, and
- (p) The University's terms and conditions governing entry to and study on the research degree programme. Ethics policy, Intellectual Property Rights policy and Health and Safety Information, (which will be appended to the studentship letter).

4.3 Acceptance of the studentship must be confirmed by signing and returning the appropriate section of the studentship letter.

4.4 As with all other research students at the University, students funded through the University Research Studentship Scheme are required to enrol as students of the University on an annual basis until conferment of the award, and to complete the registration process for a research degree in accordance with the University's Research Degree Regulations.

## 5. Regulations relating to the tenure of studentships

### 5.1 Duration of studentships

5.1.1 Studentships are tenable for three years and are not normally renewed beyond three years.

5.1.2 In exceptional cases, a full-time studentship may be awarded for a period of less than three years, for example, where a student transfers research degree registration from another institution to the University or where the student's previous source of funding has unexpectedly ceased. In such cases, the studentship will be for a minimum of one year. Such short-term studentships will not be awarded to students who have already received three years of external funding in support of their research degree and who require further funding in order to complete their studies.

5.1.3 The studentship agreement is renewable annually and continuation is dependent upon satisfactory progress (see paragraph 5.9).

5.1.4 Studentships will not under any circumstances, be held in abeyance for longer than a maximum period of two years and if a student is unable to resume studies following a two year period of suspension, the award will be terminated.

## **5.2 Reports**

5.2.1 Students are required to produce an annual written report on the progress made with their programme of research, as laid down in the University's Research Degree Regulations and in accordance with the individual School's procedures.

## **5.3 Teaching, demonstrating and other paid work.**

5.3.1 Where the stipend does not include payment for a specified amount of teaching, students may undertake teaching, demonstrating if the opportunity arises and, subject to approval, other paid work directly related to their research training, provided that the total demand made on their time, including time spent in preparation, does not normally exceed six hours a week, averaged over 24 weeks.

5.3.2 Students in receipt of a **funded studentship** offering paid teaching or demonstrating duties for the University in addition to the annual maintenance grant, will be issued with a separate relevant contract and be paid for the work undertaken at the appropriate rate. These rates are laid down in the schedule of rates of pay for research students undertaking part-time teaching activities, which is available from Human Resources.

5.3.3 Students in receipt of a **studentship where the maintenance grant includes payment for a fixed number of hours teaching**, will be required to undertake that teaching as directed by the School. The total amount of time allowed for teaching, including time spent in preparation, must not normally exceed six hours a week and must only take place during the academic year (24 weeks). There will be no additional payment for the teaching as it will be fully funded as part of the maintenance grant offered with this particular studentship.

5.3.4 The teaching supplied by students in receipt of **studentships** where the maintenance grant includes payment for teaching, must only involve teaching small groups, practical demonstrations and individuals. Schools may wish to consider appointing a member of staff to support the student in the development of their teaching skills, from or in addition to the supervisory team.

5.3.5 Students who wish to undertake paid work not directly related to their research training must get the permission of their Director of Studies and Postgraduate Research Tutor.

## **5.4 Holidays**

5.4.1 Students may take up to eight weeks holiday in each year (pro rata for parts of a year), inclusive of normal public holidays. The timing of the holidays must be agreed with the Director of Studies. Not more than four weeks holiday may be taken as part of the studentship at the end of the period of the studentship. Students must inform their Director of Studies and Postgraduate Research Tutor if they are absent for longer periods.

## **5.5 Absence through illness**

5.5.1 If a student is absent through illness for more than two weeks, a medical certificate must be given to the Director of Studies, who will inform the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Graduate Office. Return from such absence must also be reported to the Postgraduate Research Tutor, Graduate Office and the Director of Studies. The Director of Studies is also required to report to the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Graduate Office any frequent short absences for medical or other reasons where they are likely to lead to considerable delay in the programme of research.

- 5.5.2 During absence covered by medical certificates, payment of the award will normally continue at the full rate for the first 28 days and at half rate for the next 28 days, within any 12 month period from the first day of absence.
- 5.5.3 For periods of certified illness longer than 56 days the award will be held in abeyance and no payment will be made to the student. Only in very exceptional circumstances will an abeyance due to sickness exceed 12 months. Students who are absent for more than 56 days should seek support from the University's Access Fund as the University Research Studentship will normally cease until study is resumed. The Director of Studies will be required to inform the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Graduate Office of the reasons for absence and the student's plan for the resumption of study.
- 5.5.4 The Graduate Office should be notified immediately of any period of illness and resulting suspension of registration. Payment of the maintenance grant during a period of suspension will result in the equivalent period of time at the end of the studentship receiving no payment. The total period of support will not be extended beyond the time specified for the studentship.
- 5.5.5 A studentship will not under any circumstances be held in abeyance for longer than a maximum period of two years, if a student is unable to resume studies following a two year period of suspension, the award will be terminated.
- 5.5.6 The Director of Studies is required to notify the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Graduate Office immediately of any unauthorised absence. Under such circumstances, the award will normally be placed in abeyance immediately.

## **5.6 Absence for other reasons**

- 5.6.1 If a student is absent for reasons other than illness, the Director of Studies must be informed, who will notify the Postgraduate Research Tutor and the Graduate Office. Up to five days absence for compassionate reasons may be taken per year without the level of the award being abated. Return from such absence must be reported.
- 5.6.2 Female students are entitled to up to six months maternity absence without the level of the award being abated. Students should seek support for any time beyond six months from the University's Access Fund. The total period of support will not normally be extended beyond the time specified for the studentship plus the period of up to six months maternity absence.
- 5.6.3 Sympathetic consideration will be given to requests for paternity absence. A maximum of 8 weeks paternity absence may be taken at any time following the birth of a child during the three year studentship without the level of the award being abated. Leave may be taken in blocks of 1 week at a time, up to a maximum of 19 days per year. A year, with respect to taking Parental Leave commences on the date on which the member of staff first became entitled to take parental leave.
- 5.6.4 Sympathetic consideration will be given to requests for absence in the case of the sickness of a child which requires the care of an adult, provided that the student is able to satisfy the School that no other arrangements can reasonably be made for anyone else to care for the child. Up to five days absence for this reason may be taken per year without the level of the award being abated.

## **5.7 Suspension of studentships**

- 5.7.1 The University expects students to complete their research training in a single continuous period and does not therefore encourage placing studentships in abeyance. However, in exceptional cases, requests for suspension because of personal or family reasons will be considered sympathetically. No requests for suspension will be approved for the purpose of employment, temporary lectureships, exchanges, voluntary service overseas, expeditions, or sport.
- 5.7.2 Suspension of the studentship for periods of illness and for maternity leave are detailed above.
- 5.7.3 Suspension of the studentship will not exceed 12 months unless exceptional circumstances prevail. A studentship will not be held in abeyance for longer than a maximum of two years, if a student is unable to resume studies following a two year period of suspension, the award will be terminated. Payment of the maintenance grant during a period of suspension will result in the equivalent period of time at the end of the studentship receiving no payment. The total period of support will not be extended beyond the time specified for the studentship.
- 5.7.4 Visits to centres of excellence for a purpose directly related to the programme of research are deemed to be part of the research training and do not require a suspension of the studentship for this period. However, the approval of the Postgraduate Research Tutor is required for a visit to a centre of excellence for a purpose not directly related to the programme of research. Only one visit of this kind may be undertaken during the tenure of the award and it must not exceed 12 months duration. The award will be placed in abeyance for the duration of the visit and other funding will be needed to support the student during this period.

## **5.8 Extension of studentships**

- 5.8.1 Under some circumstances the studentship may be extended to compensate for time unavoidably lost. Studentships will not normally be extended when, for example, it has proved difficult to complete the project within the period of the award, where a change of project occurs, or when time has been lost by the student transferring between institutions. Sympathetic consideration will be given to cases where the student has been absent through illness.

## **5.9 Premature termination of awards**

- 5.9.1 If a student's progress or conduct is deemed as unsatisfactory, the student will be given appropriate warning. If the student's performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the studentship may be discontinued. Directors of Studies will inform the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Graduate Office immediately if, at any time, they consider students to be unsatisfactory.
- 5.9.2 Directors of Studies will inform the Postgraduate Research Tutor and Graduate Office if either (i) students fail to start their studentship or (ii) students cease their studentship before the studentship is due to end. The Head of School or designate (School Postgraduate Research Tutor or deputy or Chair of School Research Committee or Research Director) will give students formal written notice of the date on which the studentship will be deemed to have ended. Up to four weeks notice may be allowed to complete domestic arrangements together with up to two weeks holiday.
- 5.9.3 Payments must end from the date on which the student ceases the studentship. The maintenance award paid in advance for the balance of the period remaining will be recovered from the student by the Graduate Office.

## **5.10 Grievances**

- 5.10.1 The procedures to be followed if a student has a grievance against the School relating to the studentship are laid down in the Grievance Procedure for Research Students ( Section 20. of the Research Degree Regulations refers).

## **6. Collaborative studentships**

- 6.1 The following additional regulations apply for collaborative studentships which have been set up along the lines of the CASE model used by the Research Councils.
- 6.2 The student shall be jointly supervised by a member of staff of the University and an employee of the collaborating body.
- 6.3 During the tenure of the studentship the student is required to spend a period of time at the collaborating body. This period must be a minimum of three months and will not normally exceed eighteen months.
- 6.4 The collaborating body is required to meet all additional expenses, such as the cost of travel and accommodation, incurred by the student as a direct result of attendance at the premises of the collaboration body.

## **7. Dissemination and exploitation of results**

- 7.1 It is expected that the results of research by students supported by the University are disseminated to the relevant potential beneficiaries and the general public. Research results should be disseminated through a range of publications, from peer-reviewed academic to more popular news journals. Publications authored by students must acknowledge the support received from the University and any other sponsors.
- 7.2 In matters relating to intellectual property rights, students should refer to the University's IPR policy.

## **8. Payments in respect of the studentship**

### **8.1 General**

- 8.1.1 The studentship may consists of:
- (a) maintenance allowance;
  - (b) other allowances;
  - (c) assistance with travel and subsistence expenses where appropriate, eg fieldwork;
  - (d) research degree tuition fees, where the studentship is externally or part externally funded.
- 8.1.2 The maintenance and other allowances will increase by approximately 3% each year as agreed by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 8.1.3 The annual maintenance allowance is intended to cover a period of 52 weeks and is paid to the student quarterly in advance. The first payment will be made by cheque and will be issued when the student first enrolls. Subsequent payments will be made directly into the student's bank account. Payments will only be made once a student has completed the annual enrolment process each academic year through the Graduate Office.

- 8.1.4 The research degree tuition fees are funded for full-time students as part of the University Research Studentship Scheme for the duration of the studentship. Thereafter, students are responsible for paying the continuation fee until submission of thesis. Should a student be required to revise their thesis following the viva and resubmit the work for re-examination, they will be required to pay the Resubmission fee for that period of enrolment.
- 8.1.5 The research degree tuition fees are payable for students on externally funded full-time Research Studentships funded through this scheme. Where the external funding only covers part of the studentship, the research degree tuition fees are calculated on a pro rata basis. The arrangements for the payment of fees are specified in the studentship letter and will normally involve the Income Section of the Finance Department invoicing the sponsor for the fees or, if the funding has already been obtained from the sponsor, an internal transfer from the appropriate School research account.

## **8.2 Income of the student**

- 8.2.1 The private income of students has no effect on the entitlement to a studentship or its value except where that income is derived from another award which is intended to support the student during a period of postgraduate training. Students are required to study on a full-time basis and any paid work undertaken should be restricted to six hours in total per week over a 24-week year (see paragraph 5.3). Money earned from these activities and up to this stated level will not affect the value of the award.

## **8.3 Maintenance allowance**

- 8.3.1 The level of maintenance allowance for students on University Research Studentships are determined by the Research Degrees Committee for the particular academic year. The annual level of maintenance allowance set by the Research Degrees Committee applies to all studentships offered by Schools for that year. Payments for periods of less than 12 months will be reduced proportionately.
- 8.3.2 A central record of studentship maintenance allowance rates is maintained by the Graduate Office. All payments are also managed by the Graduate Office and are paid in four equal instalments.
- 8.3.3 Students should make their own arrangements for accommodation and should go to the University's Accommodation Office for advice.

## **8.4 Disabled students' allowance**

- 8.4.1 Students who, because of disability, are obliged to incur additional expenditure in undertaking their research training are entitled to a disabled students' allowance. Assistance is available for:
- (a) additional daily expenses incurred because of disability (such as travel or special diets);
  - (b) non-medical helpers (such as readers for the blind or interpreters for the deaf);
  - (c) major items of specialist equipment (such as computer software, braille printers or image enlargers).

Details of the amounts available are given in the schedule of fees, maintenance and other allowances. Students wishing to claim an allowance must provide the School with details of the expenditure incurred together with a supporting letter from their Director of Studies.

## **8.5 Costs associated with collaborative studentships**

- 8.5.1 The costs to be paid by a collaborating body in the case of a collaborative studentship are detailed in paragraph 6.4.

## **8.6 Fares home and daily travel expenses**

- 8.6.1 In setting the level of the maintenance allowance an amount has been included to cover travel expenses. No additional funding will be made available for this purpose.

## **8.7 Costs associated with fieldwork, conferences and visits to other institutions**

- 8.7.1 If any additional funding is appropriate to cover fieldwork or conference costs, the level of this will be determined by the individual School. Details of the level of additional support will be notified to the student in the studentship letter.

## **8.8 Costs associated with the thesis**

- 8.8.1 In setting the level of the maintenance allowance an amount has been included to cover the cost of typing, copying and binding the thesis. No additional funding will be made available for this purpose.

## **8.9 Income tax**

- 8.9.1 Payment under a University Research Studentship Scheme is not regarded as income for income tax purposes, though the student must notify the Inland Revenue of the award. However, earnings from any other sources, including additional teaching and demonstrating work, may be taxable if they exceed the student's personal tax allowance. Earnings received during the final year of the award will be aggregated with income from post-award employment when income tax liability is assessed for the fiscal year in which the award terminates.

## **8.10 National insurance**

- 8.10.1 The University will not make any payment for students' national insurance contributions. Students are liable for contributions in connection with any paid employment which they undertake.