

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISOR HANDBOOK



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WELCOME TO SUPERVISION AT BRISTOL



From Professor Harry Mellor, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Postgraduate Research)



According to the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), postgraduate research (PGR) students at the University of Bristol value their supervisors more than any other aspect of their postgraduate experience. Through conversations with our PGR students, we’ve learned that this appreciation stems not only from the opportunity to work with outstanding researchers in their fields, but from the invaluable guidance and support supervisors provide at this crucial early stage of a research career.

We believe that supervisors deserve more recognition for this vital work, as well as more robust support. By providing resources that help supervisors handle the challenges of postgraduate supervision, we aim to ensure that excellent supervision is both celebrated and sustainably practiced. I am therefore delighted to introduce our new resources for supervisor support. These materials are designed to help new supervisors begin their role with confidence. We are also developing more specialised training modules for those tackling particular challenges.

In addition to these resources, we hope to foster a community of researchers who are passionate about PGR supervision—one where we share experiences, learn from each other, and continue to raise the standard of support we offer our PGR students. I invite you to explore these new materials and share your feedback. Together, we can develop and refine this initiative over time, ensuring it remains responsive to your needs and continues to enrich the experience of both supervisors and PGR students alike.”

WISDOM FROM AWARD-WINNING SUPERVISORS

The Bristol Teaching Awards, run by the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT), recognise and celebrate staff who encourage and support PGR students by providing advice and guidance that enables students to succeed in their research. Our previous winners share their thoughts on what it means to be a PGR supervisor.



ANGELA NOBBS

The demands of my current role mean that, sadly, I no longer spend my days at the lab bench. However, what I enjoy as a PGR supervisor, is that I instead get to translate my undiminished enthusiasm for research into encouraging the endeavours of my students. I get to share their unbridled joy at a good result and hopefully help them to see that when things haven't gone to plan, it's not a failure but rather a learning point.

In sharing the trials and tribulations of my own research career to date (of which there are many!), and the reasons for why I persevere, I hope to help my students build their resilience and discover their own passions. It sounds corny, but ultimately there's nothing more satisfying than seeing my students grow in confidence and competence, be it in the lab, at a conference or just in their day-to-day interactions, and I get to proudly champion their every step."

WISDOM FROM AWARD-WINNING SUPERVISORS



ANDY RADFORD

My aim is to generate and foster a collegiate, nurturing and fun research environment. In that, everyone should have maximum opportunity to shine in their own unique ways; the forging of collaborations, celebrating of others' successes and supporting of others through difficulties is the norm, and maintaining and promoting a healthy work-life balance for all is a genuine goal.

To make that work means committing time to getting to know everyone as an individual – having lots of ad hoc meetings, as well as formal ones, being available a lot despite the competing pressures on an academic and making sure that everyone is comfortable asking constant questions. It also means being flexible – circumstances are constantly changing, in addition to everyone having different needs.

Generating a positive, inclusive research group culture means that you are not the only (or indeed best) point of contact in many situations, and that early-career researchers feel comfortable raising issues early. By providing opportunities, the hope is that everyone develops new skills; by removing inevitable stresses and being empathetic, the hope is that everyone can focus maximally on what they want to achieve.

I'd like to think that research students leaving the group have had fun, forged lasting collaborations and friendships, developed resilience, realised that work is not everything and that, whilst a given contract might be coming to an end, that is not it – there are always opportunities to collaborate and to seek advice."



STEVE MONTGOMERY

Supervising PGR students is one of the most enjoyable roles we have. It's a privilege to be such a close part of someone being able to pursue their passions, as well as helping support their personal and professional development.

But it isn't always easy. It's tough to strike the right balance of guidance and independence, to help them navigate the various stresses and anxieties they face at this career and life stage and to cope with the ups and downs of research. But when you get it right, it can be incredibly rewarding and uplifting."

THE ROLE OF A PGR SUPERVISOR

Becoming a supervisor is a rewarding and transformative journey that not only shapes the academic and professional futures of your student but also deepens your own growth as a mentor, researcher and leader in your field.

ROLE OVERVIEW

As a postgraduate research (PGR) student supervisor, your role is to guide and mentor students throughout their research journey, helping them develop critical thinking, independence and professional skills. You are responsible for offering academic guidance, providing constructive feedback, encouraging problem-solving and supporting their career growth through networking and publishing opportunities.

In addition to academic progress, your role includes supporting your students' wellbeing by advising on workload management and signposting support when needed. By fostering a supportive research environment, your role can enable you to empower students to thrive and make valuable contributions to their fields.

BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Facilitate the development of future research leaders
- ▶ Advance cutting-edge research by supporting early-career researchers
- ▶ Increase your research visibility in your field
- ▶ Learn from diverse perspectives
- ▶ Develop your mentorship abilities
- ▶ Expand your research network

- ▶ Open doors to research partnerships
- ▶ Foster lifelong connections
- ▶ Strengthen the academic community
- ▶ Contribute to the University of Bristol's success

SUPPORT FOR YOU IN YOUR SCHOOL OR FACULTY

As a supervisor you are supported by your school, faculty and, if relevant, support teams for doctoral training centres and partnerships. Your PGR administration team are the best people to contact with questions about forms, processes, and all other practical questions.

Each school also has at least one School PGR or Graduate Director who is an academic member of staff that can offer support to PGR students throughout their degree. The School PGR or Graduate Director also supports supervisors and is usually your first point of contact if problems arise.

Each faculty also has an Academic Director for PGR who has overall responsibility for all PGR students in the faculty and works with the whole of your PGR Support Team. Normally, most issues and questions you have will be dealt with by your School PGR or Graduate Director, but you can also bring issues directly to the Faculty Academic Director for PGR.



THE PGR CODE

The Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (also referred to as the 'PGR Code') outlines the information, support and expectations for postgraduate research (PGR) students at the University of Bristol.

The following pages provide a quick overview of important areas within the PGR Code, helping you understand what's covered and where to direct your student for further guidance.

Need more information? Further detailed information can be found in the PGR Code: www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/pg/code-of-practice/



PGR STUDENT ENTITLEMENTS

Is your PGR student aware of their entitlements? This section of the PGR Code outlines the key information, support and resources they should have access to throughout their studies.

As a supervisor, one of your responsibilities is to ensure your student understands what's available to them. Providing clarity on these resources early on ensures they can fully access the support available.

During your first supervisory meeting, make sure your student knows how to access the PGR Code and that they are entitled to →

Access to essential information

Students should receive details on fees, research requirements, accommodation, financial matters, leave entitlements, academic support and how to raise concerns or complaints.

THE PGR CODE

Supervisory support

Students are entitled to regular meetings, timely feedback on their work and responses to any queries they have.

Access to research and training environments

Students should have the necessary resources and opportunities to develop research and professional skills, including access to appropriate facilities and possible teaching opportunities.

Support if they have disabilities

Students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable adjustments in line with university policies.

Opportunities to give feedback and be represented

Students should have a chance to provide feedback and have their views represented at the school, faculty and university levels.

The right to raise concerns or make complaints

Students have access to formal processes for submitting complaints and academic appeals.

Please see section on '**Support for Supervisors**' for further links.

STUDENT LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS AND GUIDELINES

Does your PGR student understand their leave entitlements? This section of the PGR Code outlines the different types of leave available, including how to request time off. Make sure your student is informed early on to help them plan ahead and avoid unnecessary stress.

It is important to note that whilst all PGR students are entitled to leave, not all will be entitled to stipend payments during these periods (this is usually dependent on funding), and those on student visas or who have a direct contractual relationship with a funder (for example, an overseas government) may have additional restrictions or issues that impact their ability to take leave.

During your first supervisory meeting, make sure your student knows about the types of leave they are entitled to →

Annual leave

Students are entitled to 25 days of annual leave in addition to bank holidays and university closure days (pro-rated for part time students). They must inform their main supervisor before taking leave.

Medical leave

Students can take time away from their studies if they are ill or injured or require medical appointments.

Family leave

Students can take time away from their studies for maternity, paternity, adoption and other family related leave.

Visa and funding considerations

Students on visas or funding schemes must ensure their leave does not violate any related conditions. Additional annual leave beyond standard entitlements requires approval from the School PGR or Graduate Director.

“As a supervisor, one of your responsibilities is to ensure students understand what's available to them.”

PGR STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Is your PGR student clear on their responsibilities? This section of the PGR Code outlines what's expected of them. As a supervisor, your guidance is essential to help them stay on track.

During your first supervisory meeting, make sure your student knows that they have a responsibility to →

Comply with funding and visa requirements

Students with funding or on a visa must adhere to relevant conditions and seek advice from Student Visas if needed.

Understand and engage with their supervisory team and support services

Students should understand the roles of their supervisory team and make use of university resources such as the Bristol Doctoral College and Academic Advice service.

Follow University regulations and policies

Students must adhere to academic integrity policies, research ethics, intellectual property rules and financial obligations.

Register and pay fees on time

Students are responsible for annual registration and ensuring timely payment of tuition and any applicable fees.

Maintain professional conduct

Students must treat staff and students with respect, communicate effectively, maintain regular contact with supervisors and keep proper research records.

Meeting attendance requirements

Students must attend in-person meetings as required, particularly if on a visa, and inform supervisors of any absences.

Participate in supervisory meetings

Monthly formal supervisory meetings are mandatory, preferably in person, with online alternatives only in exceptional cases.



SUPPORT FOR PGR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

An important part of your role as a supervisor is to mentor your student and support them in their academic and professional development.

Supporting student development could include:

- ▶ Encouraging student-led ideas.
- ▶ Encouraging collaboration, networking and academic growth outside your influence as a supervisor.
- ▶ Identifying and encouraging your student to attend appropriate training for their development needs.

This section of the PGR Code outlines:

- ▶ The importance of tailored training and development opportunities for your student, aimed at enhancing both research skills and personal and professional growth.
- ▶ The role of you, as a supervisor, in guiding students and helping them take ownership of their development.
- ▶ Minimum requirements for skills development, including research techniques and broader professional training.

SUPERVISORY APPOINTMENT AND SUPERVISORY SUPPORT FOR PGR STUDENTS

This section of the PGR Code outlines the requirements for supervisory teams, including:

- ▶ Roles and responsibilities of the main supervisor and co-supervisors and eligibility criteria to be a supervisor.
- ▶ Necessity for supervisors to have sufficient time and experience to support PGR students.
- ▶ Processes for changing supervisors, especially if the current arrangement is no longer suitable or if a supervisor leaves the University.

It also outlines responsibility as a supervisor in supporting your PGR student, including:

- ▶ Offering guidance on academic standards, integrity and professional development.
- ▶ Supporting your student in dissertation preparation, from advising on drafts and submission dates to preparing for the oral examination.

PROGRESS AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR PGR STUDENTS

All research students are required to take part in annual progress monitoring (APM), which includes submission of work and participating in a review meeting to assess their progress and address any concerns.

For further information on the process, see section 'Progress monitoring and management'.

The outcome of the review includes evaluating the student's progress, providing feedback and determining whether they can progress to the next year.

Reasonable adjustments are available for students with disabilities (see section 'Support and resources for your students' for further details).

As a supervisor, your responsibilities are to:

- ▶ Advise your student on this process and ensure they are actively engaging with it.
- ▶ Discuss their progress with them, identify obstacles and reflect on personal and professional development.
- ▶ Comment on your student's progress and highlight any concerns or issues you have.
- ▶ Make note of any issues that are outside the student's control that could impact their dissertation.

DISSERTATIONS, EXAMINATIONS, AND OUTCOMES FOR PGR STUDENTS

Want to know how PGR students are assessed? You can find all the details on PGR dissertations and the examination procedure in the PGR Code.

Key areas include:

- ▶ Regulations: Dissertation format, submission, examination procedures, appointing examiners and degree award criteria.
- ▶ Policies: Integrating publications into dissertations, online oral exams and academic misconduct investigations.
- ▶ Guidance: Examination process, submission procedures, Turnitin use, accommodations for disabled students and graduation details.

The student is responsible for the content of their dissertation, but as a supervisor, you are expected to:

- ▶ Provide feedback on students' written work, including their dissertation.
- ▶ Convey any concerns to the student before they submit.
- ▶ Complete the Assignment of Research Degree Examiners (ARDE) form, which can include requests for exam accommodations for disabled PGR students.

“Check in regularly, encouraging open discussions and ensuring everyone remains aligned on goals and expectations.”



GOOD PRACTICE FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

Follow seven key recommendations on good practice (taken from McAlpine, 2019) to enhance your supervisory practice. You will find resources to support you in applying these recommendations effectively in other sections of the handbook.

1. GET TO KNOW UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEPARTMENTAL PRACTICES

- ▶ Attend training and development sessions offered by the University of Bristol or your school on supervision.
- ▶ Review the PGR Code and share this with your PGR student.
- ▶ Stay updated on any policy changes. You will be informed of these via email by the Bristol Doctoral College and/or the Academic Quality and Policy Office and by attending school/departmental meetings.
- ▶ Connect with your School PGR or Graduate Director, who can provide clarity on procedures and point you toward useful resources.

2. GET TO KNOW CO-SUPERVISORS' APPROACHES AND VIEWS

- ▶ Schedule regular check-ins with your co-supervisors to discuss approaches, expectations and shared responsibilities.
- ▶ Clarify your roles early on, ensuring alignment on feedback, workload and support strategies.

3. CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS WITH CO-SUPERVISORS AND STUDENTS

- ▶ Set clear guidelines at the beginning of the supervision relationship regarding responsibilities, meeting frequency and feedback timelines. Use the University of Bristol Principles for PGR Supervision and the PGR Student-Supervisor

Agreement to clarify expectations and revisit these annually with your student. For further information, see the section on 'Principles and Supervisor-Student Agreement'.

- ▶ Check in regularly, encouraging open discussions and ensuring everyone remains aligned on goals and expectations.

4. PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE, FREQUENT AND TIMELY FEEDBACK

- ▶ Schedule regular progress meetings rather than waiting for formal assessments. For further information, see section on 'Progress monitoring and management'.
- ▶ Use clear, actionable language (ideally in digital format) when providing feedback, focusing on strengths and areas for improvement.

5. BE AVAILABLE TO (ALL) STUDENTS

- ▶ Set clear office hours and communicate availability in advance.
- ▶ Respond to emails and requests promptly, even if just to acknowledge and schedule a later response.
- ▶ Be proactive in reaching out, especially with students who may be struggling or hesitant to seek help.
- ▶ Encourage a supportive and inclusive research environment, making sure all students feel equally valued and heard.

6. PROVIDE GUIDANCE OUTSIDE OF THE MAIN RESEARCH PROJECT

- ▶ Share relevant opportunities, including conferences, workshops, networking events, teaching assistant roles and funding. Encourage collaboration within the wider research community to expand their experience and network.
- ▶ Encourage skill-building, including academic writing, research ethics and time management. See the section on **'Support and resources for your students'** for additional guidance on workshops and resources by the Bristol Doctoral College (BDC).
- ▶ Discuss career pathways, helping students consider options both within and beyond academia. For further information on career support, see the section on **'Support and resources for your students'**.

7. ADDRESSING PROBLEMS AS THEY ARISE

- ▶ Your PGR student may go through difficult periods during in their studies, such as losing confidence or motivation. You may have your own strategies for providing encouragement and support during such a period. If the student continues to struggle, you should inform your School PGR Director or Graduate Director and discuss what the student's options are. Addressing problems as they arise can prevent them from becoming more significant issues.

UKCGE GOOD SUPERVISORY PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

The UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) has produced a Good Supervisory Practice Framework. Whether you're an experienced supervisor or just starting out, this framework provides a clear standard to follow and offers recognition for excellent supervisory practice. It is based on extensive academic research and has been validated through a pilot study involving research supervisors across the UK.

The framework covers various aspects of supervision, accompanied by prompts for self-reflection on key areas such as communication, support and guidance. These prompts encourage you to think about how effectively you are engaging with your student, whether you're fostering a positive, collaborative environment and if you're addressing their academic and professional needs. This can help you identify strengths and areas for improvement in your practice, ensuring that you and your student are getting the most out of your supervisory relationship.

<https://supervision.ukcge.ac.uk/good-supervisory-practice-framework>

“Addressing problems as they arise can prevent them from becoming more significant issues.”

PRINCIPLES AND SUPERVISOR-STUDENT AGREEMENT

The Principles for PGR Supervision and the PGR Student-Supervisor Agreement are two guidance documents that support you to have a collaborative discussion around expectations and responsibilities with your PGR student. They will help you to ensure that you are meeting the requirements for supervision as described in the PGR Code.

PRINCIPLES OF PGR SUPERVISION

These principles are endorsed by UoB's Postgraduate Research Committee and outline expectations for both students and supervisors. We recommend that supervisors and PGR students read through these before completing the PGR Student-Supervisor Agreement (see below). The Agreement can then be used to discuss the Principles in more detail and agree on specific arrangements.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT-SUPERVISOR AGREEMENT

The agreement should be discussed by the supervisor(s) and the PGR student in their first supervision meeting. It should be shared and signed by all supervisors.

A guidance document is available to accompany the agreement, which offers discussion prompts, tips and ideas for how to structure the first meeting with your student.

For new PGR students, we advise that a completed version is signed within a month of the PGR student's start date. For established students, you may also find completing the agreement a useful process particularly around research and training.

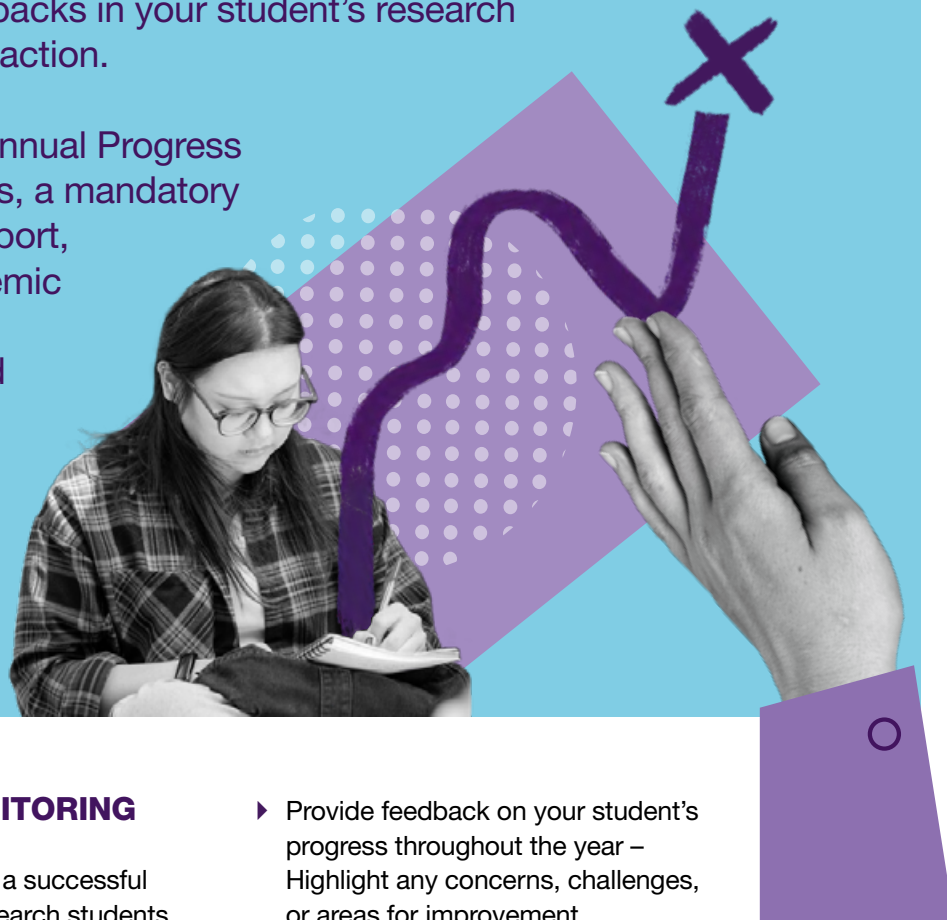
Visit the following for more guidance: <https://bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/guidance/pgr-supervision>



PROGRESS MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

As part of your supervisory role, one of your responsibilities is to monitor your student's progress. Continuous feedback and timely interventions will help prevent small issues from becoming significant setbacks in your student's research journey and enable early action.

This section details the Annual Progress Monitoring (APM) process, a mandatory formal yearly progress report, and the Enhanced Academic Support (EAS) process which should be followed if concerns arise about your student's progress.



ANNUAL PROGRESS MONITORING

Keeping track of progress is key to a successful research journey. That's why all research students undergo a formal annual progress monitoring (APM) review with a reviewer (who is not their supervisor or co-supervisor) to ensure they are on the right track. As a supervisor, your role is pivotal in this process.

Here's what you need to do:

- ▶ Guide your student through the process – make sure your student understands what's expected and actively participates. If you're unsure of what the process entails, ask your School PGR or Graduate Director, and you can read more here: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/your-studies/postgraduate-research/apm/

- ▶ Provide feedback on your student's progress throughout the year – Highlight any concerns, challenges, or areas for improvement.
- ▶ Identify external factors throughout the year and note anything beyond your student's control that could impact their research.
- ▶ By staying actively engaged with your student's research journey, you can address potential issues before the APM review, ensuring a smoother and more successful experience for both you and your student.

If your PGR student is flagged as having unsatisfactory progress, whether through their APM or another route, they will receive enhanced academic support to help them get back on track.

PROGRESS MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

ENHANCED ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Sometimes, your research student may hit roadblocks that impact their progress. When significant concerns arise, Enhanced Academic Support (EAS) is put in place to help them get back on track. EAS is designed to provide structured support, giving students a clear path forward.

Here's how it works:

- ▶ The School PGR or Graduate Director oversees the process.
- ▶ If your student is facing exceptional circumstances (like health issues or personal challenges), they may request a suspension or a change in their mode of attendance instead.
- ▶ EAS is a formal process, meaning every meeting and decision is carefully documented.
- ▶ Together, you and your student need to create an action plan outlining key tasks and goals.
- ▶ Your student has three months to complete the required activities and demonstrate progress.

At the end of this period, you and the School PGR or Graduate Director will assess whether your student is back on track. If you disagree with each other, the decision goes to the Head of School.

If successful, your student continues with their research as planned. If unsuccessful, the Unsatisfactory Progress Procedure begins. For further information on the Unsatisfactory Process Procedure, visit the PGR Code: www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/pg/code-of-practice/

“By staying actively engaged with your student's research journey, you can address potential issues ensuring a smoother and more successful experience for both you and your student.”

SUPPORT TO STUDY

Support to Study aims to help students that might be struggling because of physical or mental health related challenges. Support to Study is the first level of the process to help the student, specifically where there is risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of the student, other students or university activities.

If you feel your student might benefit from the Support to Study process, then you can make a referral to Wellbeing Services. We ask that you speak to your School PGR or Graduate Director and Faculty Head of Student Administration before making a referral.

You can find out more about the Support to Study policy and procedure here: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/health/policies/support-to-study/



“We offer workshops that explore best practice and help you support your students effectively.”

SUPPORT FOR SUPERVISORS

Supervising postgraduate research (PGR) students is rewarding, but it also comes with challenges. That's why you're not expected to do it alone! From training sessions and workshops to helpful books and resources, there's plenty of support available.

TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS

Looking to enhance your supervision skills? Whether you're new to research supervision or just want a refresher, the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) offers workshops that explore best practice and help you support your student effectively. Find upcoming events and development opportunities here: <https://bilt.online/events/>

You can also speak to your School PGR or Graduate Director to find out about supervisor training or support available locally.

MENTORING AND NETWORKS

Join fellow research supervisors at our annual Research Supervisor Symposium, where we discuss key themes in PGR supervision, share best practices and insights. You can access symposium resources anytime via the Research Supervisor Development Blackboard site. Find out more here: www.bristol.ac.uk/bilt/events/research-supervisor-symposia/

You can also speak to your School PGR or Graduate Director about how you can meet other supervisors within your discipline.

RESOURCES

Need practical guidance on research supervision? Explore these key resources:

- ▶ **The Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) 'Resources for supervisors' site** collates UoB resources and best practice on supervision <https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/bristol-doctoral-college/SitePages/Resources-for-supervisors.aspx>
- ▶ **UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)** provides valuable resources to enhance postgraduate education, including:
 - ▶ **Good Supervisory Practice Framework** <https://supervision.ukcge.ac.uk/good-supervisory-practice-framework>
 - ▶ **Mental Health & Wellbeing of PGRs (pinch points & good practice)** <https://ukcge.ac.uk/assets/resources/Pinch-Points-Good-Practice-Solutions-Supporting-Mental-Health-Wellbeing-of-PGRs-Mental-Health-Wellbeing-Work.pdf>
 - ▶ **The Research Supervisors Bibliography** <https://ukcge.ac.uk/resources/resource-library/the-research-supervisors-bibliography>
 - ▶ **Supervising PhDs** is a community blog focused on building strong doctoral supervision relationships and sharing insights on best practices <https://supervisingphds.wordpress.com/>

- **AdvanceHE** has published a report on trust in supervisory relationships, offering insights and strategies for building effective supervision practices www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/trust-me-building-and-breaking-professional-trust-doctoral-student-supervisor
- **Vitae Programme** is a non-profit initiative dedicated to supporting the professional development of researchers. They have created guides offering practical advice on supervision, tailored to the different stages of a PhD <https://vitae.ac.uk/resource/working-in-research/doctoral-research/>

ASKING FOR HELP

If you're concerned about your student and don't know what to do, ask for help.

As a supervisor, you are not expected to sort everything out on your own. You will have colleagues in your school, faculty and in the university who will know how to help you with unfamiliar topics; for example, accommodation, funding, physical and mental health, training and careers advice outside of your discipline.

If problems arise, you should approach your School PGR or Graduate Director. Others who might be helpful are experienced colleagues, your Postgraduate Administrator, your Head of School, Faculty Head of Student Administration and Faculty Academic Director for PGR.

“If you're concerned about your student and don't know what to do, ask for help.”



SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR YOUR STUDENTS

As a supervisor, your support goes beyond research—you're often the first point of contact when students face challenges. From mental health and financial worries to plagiarism and disability services, knowing where to direct them can make all the difference.

This section gives you a quick guide to the key support services available, so you can help your student navigate their journey with confidence. You can also signpost them to the '**Current students**' section for postgraduate research: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/your-studies/postgraduate-research/



MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES

If your student is experiencing a medical or mental health emergency, it is important to act immediately.

Advise them to:

- Call 999 right away or go to the nearest hospital.
- If they are on campus, call Security Services at 0117 331 1223 after contacting 999.

For more emergency support and guidance, visit emergency help: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/health/emergency-help/

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Worried about a student struggling financially? The finance team can offer guidance and support and provide them with financial advice or practical help: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/finances/advice/

WELLBEING SERVICES

Students can face all kinds of challenges, from academic stress to personal difficulties. If they need someone to talk to, they can book an appointment with Wellbeing Services for support: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/managing-student-life/book-an-appointment/

If you have serious concerns please see further advice here: <https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/staff-info/SitePages/information-for-staff-supporting-students.aspx>

DISABILITY SERVICES

If your student needs support related to a disability, help is available. Encourage them to explore the disability support page to find the right resources and accommodations: www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/disability-support/

CAREER SUPPORT

The University of Bristol's Career Services offers valuable support to help students explore their career options, from one-on-one advice with career advisers to a range of useful resources. Encourage your student to take advantage of these opportunities by visiting the following page: www.bristol.ac.uk/careers/

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) provides workshops and resources tailored to different stages of the PhD journey. Encourage your student to explore the BDC's PGR Essentials training pathway, which provide information on resources and training designed to support students at each stage of their research degree: www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/current-research-students/ppd/pgr-essentials/

PLAGIARISM

Need support with guiding your student on academic integrity? The Bristol SU Support Centre offers advice on plagiarism, academic misconduct and how to uphold ethical research standards: www.bristolsu.org.uk/support-centre/academic-advice

Your faculty should also offer local academic integrity training for PGR students.

SOCIAL SPACES AND FRIENDLY FACES

The PGR Hub is run by the Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) and located in Senate House. It is open to all PGR students and provides a welcoming space for networking, collaboration and taking a well-earned break, with free tea and coffee available: www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/current-research-students/pgr-hub/

EVENTS AND COMMUNITY

Encourage your student to get involved in the PGR community—it's a great way to stay connected. From networking to social events, there's plenty to explore:

Bristol Doctoral College events are open to PGR students across all disciplines: www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/current-research-students/events-and-opportunities/

Bristol Student's Union (SU) runs a range of events for postgraduate students: www.bristolsu.org.uk/welcome/whats-on/postgrad

REPRESENTATION AND LOCAL NETWORKS

There is a network of Postgraduate Research representation across the university, including Faculty PGR representatives and local 'school-level' PGR representatives who are responsible for listening to student communities and representing them at Staff-Student Liaison Committees. These reps also sometimes have a budget to run PGR events locally (this is variable across schools).

Make sure your student knows where to find out who their representatives are – they can ask their School PGR or Graduate Director. Bristol SU also has a full time Postgraduate Education Officer who supports PGR issues. Contact details can be found here: www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/contacts/who-to-contact-about-pgr-issues/

WHO SHOULD STUDENTS CONTACT IF THEY HAVE AN ISSUE?

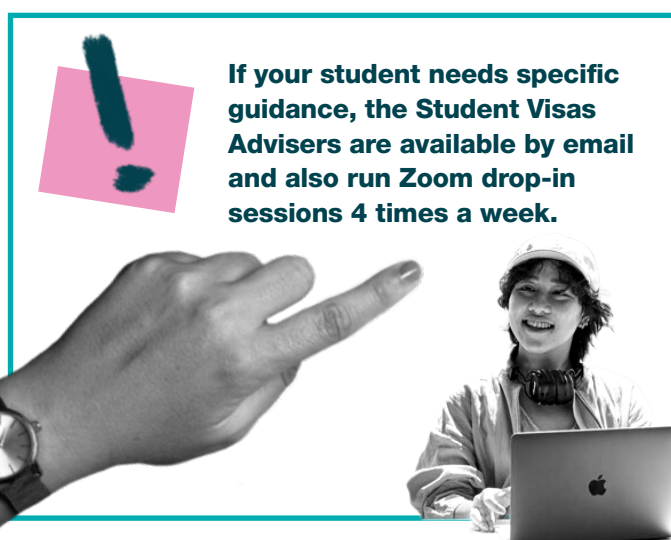
If your student has any questions or needs support, this webpage outlines who to contact and how they can get the advice they need: www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/contacts/who-to-contact-about-pgr-issues/

“Students can face all kinds of challenges, from academic stress to personal difficulties. If they need someone to talk to, they can book an appointment with Wellbeing Services for support.”



SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Are you supervising a student who is here on a Student visa? If so, there are a few extra things to keep in mind to ensure they have the right support. Understanding key policies—especially around visas—can help prevent unnecessary stress for your student.



If your student needs specific guidance, the Student Visas Advisers are available by email and also run Zoom drop-in sessions 4 times a week.

STUDENT VISAS SUPPORT

The Student Visas team can advise Student visa holders on their visa conditions, as well as on immigration implications of any course changes affecting their future opportunities in the UK. However, as a supervisor, you also have a responsibility to ensure the University complies with its visa sponsorship duties.

To support PGR students with their Student visa responsibilities, encourage them to check the Student Visas webpage which details essential information on visas, such as working from other locations and working during studies: www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/visas/

Familiarising yourself with these policies as a supervisor will help support your student and prevent misunderstandings or breaching the conditions of their Student visa.

STUDENT VISA SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES

Sponsorship continues during:

- ▶ Annual Leave: PGR students can take up to 25 days of annual leave, plus closure days and bank holidays. Final-year PGR students may request up to 4 months (or to their Student visa expiry date if sooner) of additional annual leave between submission and viva. During this period, normal Student visa working hour restrictions are lifted and they may work full-time.
- ▶ Absence for Research: visa sponsorship can usually be maintained if the research forms an integrated assessed part of the thesis/degree, remote monthly supervision continues and prior approval is obtained from Student Visas. A [change of study location form](#) must be submitted at least 10 days in advance.
- ▶ Suspension (up to 60 days): short suspensions are permitted as long as the student can still complete their degree within their existing visa. Absences immediately before the suspension may affect this. Please refer students to: www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/visas/student-visa/course/suspension/
- ▶ Placements: if the placement is an assessed integral part of the course, sponsorship will remain in place. All work placements must be reported to UKVI regardless of length. A [change of study location form](#) must be submitted at least 10 days in advance.

SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Sponsorship cannot continue during:

- ▶ Absences for personal reasons (including medical or annual leave) of 60 days or longer: this is considered non-engagement unless the student has an approved suspension, and prolonged absence may affect future visa sponsorship.
- ▶ Writing-Up Period (if overseas or in another UK location): if a student does not attend in person for 60 days or more, or does not plan to return to the UK, sponsorship will be withdrawn.
- ▶ Suspensions of 60 days or more: in these cases, sponsorship must be temporarily withdrawn and the student will need a new CAS/visa application to resume their studies. It is likely that the student will need to leave the UK but please refer students to Student Visas for advice.
- ▶ Unrelated Internships/Placements: internships or placements that are not linked to the thesis may breach Student visa work conditions, including unpaid and voluntary work.

HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT THEIR VISA

- ▶ Meet with your student in person at least once a month. Offering an online option instead of an in-person meeting may seem convenient, but it could unintentionally harm their visa status and future applications. Additional meetings in the month can be online, but remote supervision alone cannot confirm attendance and students will be recorded as absent.
- ▶ If you're unavailable, encourage them to meet with their second supervisor or another academic (for example, the PGR or Graduate Director).
- ▶ If your student plans to work away from Bristol—whether for fieldwork, a placement, or a visit to another institution—please refer your student to https://www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/visas/student-visa/course/change-study-location/ for further information.
- ▶ Log all in-person meetings promptly, either using the eVision Personal Tutoring screens to ensure compliance or updating your faculty PGR admin team when asked.

- ▶ Inform your school or faculty in advance if your student will be absent from Bristol for research reasons and confirm their 'change in study location'. For more guidance on this, see the following webpage: www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/visas/student-visa/course/change-study-location/
- ▶ Direct students to https://www.bristol.ac.uk/directory/visas/ for advice on changes to their study or personal circumstances.

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (ESPECIALLY DURING HOLIDAY PERIODS!)

Many international students stay in the UK during traditional holiday breaks, which can feel isolating when others are away. They may also travel for their own cultural holidays during busy work periods in the UK. Here's how you can help them feel supported:

- ▶ Talk with your student about their holiday plans and help them organise their workload around these periods.
- ▶ Remind students of university closure dates and when shops and services are closed over the holiday period.
- ▶ Suggest social opportunities and encourage students to stay connected by participating in local or university events. Direct them to events at the Global Lounge (https://global-lounge.bristol.ac.uk/events/), a multi-cultural hub in the heart of campus, or refer them to support or resources from the 'Support and resources for your students' section.
- ▶ If relevant, you might also remind students of the Multifaith Chaplaincy (https://www.bristol.ac.uk/multifaith-chaplaincy/)
- ▶ Schedule a pre-holiday check-in: before you take leave, meet with your student to clarify expectations during your absence and ensure they have a clear plan for their work.
- ▶ By being proactive and supportive, you can help international students feel valued and connected, even during quieter times at the university.

Supervisors represent the most important external influence in the learning and development that occurs in students' training and have a life-shaping level of impact on their students^{2,3}

This handbook was supported by the University of Bristol's Enhancing Research Culture Funding. It is designed to provide supervisors with the information they need to understand their role, support their students, recognise challenges and know where to go for support, ultimately improving the postgraduate research (PGR) student experience.

While this guide is a resource that provides an introduction and overview to your role as a supervisor, more detailed resources can be found on the Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) website, through university PGR supervisor workshops and via your School and Faculty support networks.

DEFINITIONS

ARDE Form – Appointment of Research Degree Examiners form

APM – Annual Progress Monitoring

AQPO – Academic Quality and Policy Office

BDC – The Bristol Doctoral College

BILT – Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching

Bristol SU – Bristol Student Union

CAS – Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies

EAS – Enhanced Academic Support

EdD – Doctor of Education

MPhil – Master of Philosophy

MScR – Master of Science by Research

PGR – Postgraduate Research

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

UKCGE – UK Council for Graduate Education

UoB – University of Bristol

FOOTNOTES

1 McAlpine, Lynne (2019) 'How might research supervision influence your practice? Things I'm more intentional about,' in S. Taylor (ed.) Enhancing Practice in Research Supervision, UKCGE. Available online. <https://ukcge.ac.uk/assets/resources/32-Enhancing-Practice-in-Research-Supervision-2018.pdf>

2 Committee on Education of the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. 2006. Standards for the PhD Degree in the Molecular Biosciences. Available online.

3 Guccione, K., and Stefanatos, R. 2023. A beginner's guide to supervising a PhD researcher. Portland Press. Available online.

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More information on postgraduate research supervision can be found at:
<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/doctoral-college/guidance/pgr-supervision>

