**PGR Absence Payment Policy**

## Introduction

* 1. This document describes where stipend payments are made to eligible PGR students funded by UKRI and the University of Bristol during periods of absence.
  2. References to ‘University of Bristol (UoB) funding’ in this document includes all students funded by the University of Bristol; i.e. central, Faculty, School or department-funded. It does not include students where the university administers funding on behalf of a third-party organisation.
  3. The information applies to all postgraduate research (PGR) students throughout their candidature. It does not apply to undergraduate or postgraduate taught students (including those on MRes courses).
  4. Details on types of absence, how they will be managed, and impact on submission date, can be found in the [Research Degree Code of Practice and Regulations](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/pg/code-of-practice/) (referred to as the ‘PGR Code’) and the Managing PGR Absence policy [available from 1st October 2025].
  5. This policy only applies to students receiving scholarship-based stipend payments: if you are in employment while undertaking your PGR programme, please consult your employer on your paid entitlements.

## Absence Payments

* 1. Payments are subject to the correct evidence being provided, with approval of associated suspensions where applicable.
  2. Stipend payments provided to support suspensions of study are often referred to by funders as extensions (as your funding period is extended). The suspension leads to an additional period of funding to cover the absence, with a consequent change in your submission date: there is no change in the time available for study (as you are not studying whilst on suspension).
  3. It is important to recognise that, for many PGR students, the scholarship/studentship funding period will differ from the maximum period of study allowed for your research degree (PGR Code Section 4).
  4. Where the first day of a suspension falls within the funding period of a scholarship but the absence extends beyond the funding end date, stipend will be paid throughout the entitlement period appropriate to the reason for the absence.
  5. Stipend will not be paid when the first day of a suspension occurs beyond the funding end date of a scholarship.
  6. For UKRI - where a funded absence period would extend a scholarship beyond a Training Grant end date, the funder must be consulted on an appropriate way forward.
  7. **Please note:** Where the total amount of paid extensions for Medical (excluding minor illnesses) and Additional Leave exceed a calendar year, further paid extensions will need exceptional agreement from UKRI and/or UOB (excluding absences related to family leave, baby loss, previously agreed covid-19 related leave, and reasonable adjustments). See Section 11.

## PGR students who receive stipend payments

* 1. It is common for funded students to continue to receive stipend payments through short-term absences: e.g. for self-certified sickness and annual leave. Where a student needs to suspend their studies, it is important to check if stipend payments continue.
  2. Payments made during absence periods are based on the current level of a student’s Mode of Attendance and so are pro-rated for part-time students.
  3. This document gives details for UKRI- and UoB-funded students. A PGR student, who has funding paid through the University from sources other than UKRI or UOB, will need to check for details of their individual paid entitlements. Some funders have terms and conditions available on their website, or students can refer to their funding letter, ask the relevant PGR administration team, or contact their funder directly.
  4. For students whose scholarships are co-funded by UKRI or UOB in combination with another funder (e.g. a commercial business), absence costs should be shared in the same ratio as all other stipend payments. Neither UKRI nor UOB funding should be used to cover shortfalls in third-party contributions without explicit prior agreement.
  5. Where the university administers payments on behalf of a third-party funder who does not provide financial support for periods of absence, the University is not liable to provide any payment. Where they do provide funding, the university will administer this to you in accordance with any agreement.
  6. Some funders may need to give their agreement to a change of funding that will occur from a suspension, extension or change in the mode of attendance.
  7. Where a PGR stipend is paid directly to the student by a third party, the University will not have a record of the terms and conditions of that funding. It is the student’s responsibility to approach their funder to ensure they receive the support to which they are entitled, as defined in their agreement. The University is not liable to provide any payment.
  8. UKRI- and UOB-funded PGR students may submit their thesis prior to their funding end date. Where they continue to undertake study that is directly linked to their thesis, they may continue to receive their stipend until either, their funding end date or, the end of the quarter in which the thesis is submitted, whichever is the earlier date. In all other cases, the stipend is ceased when the thesis is submitted.
  9. Where a funder’s terms and conditions conflict with the PGR code, further guidance should be sought from your Faculty Academic Director (PGR).
  10. Leave entitlements (and related payments) may change over time - for University of Bristol and UKRI funded students, the current version of this policy will apply.

## Self-funded Students

* 1. Students who use their own funds to cover programme and living costs (for example, personal earnings, savings, or loans) are entitled to all periods of leave detailed within the PGR Code, but are not entitled to payment during those absences.

## International Students with UKVI student visas (formerly known as Tier 4)

* 1. For students sponsored by the University under UKVI student visa rules, a suspension provided to support longer-term, medical or family leave may require the University to withdraw sponsorship and for the student to return to their home country for the duration of the leave. In such cases, students will be able to apply to the University for a new CAS number and apply for a new visa to resume their studies.
  2. All requests for leave must be made in good time to permit time for approval of the request and to ensure travel home can be made following the report of the suspension to the UKVI.
  3. In all cases, advice should be sought from the Student Visa Team as early as possible (especially in the case of a student pregnancy) to ensure compliance with student visa regulations can be maintained.
  4. If an international student continues to receive a UKRI- or UoB-funded stipend while overseas (e.g. having returned home during a paid suspension period in excess of 60 days), it is advised that they seek specialist advice on the implications of local tax laws that may then apply.

## Annual Leave (PGR Code Section 6.)

* 1. For UKRI and UoB funded students, stipends continue to be paid during periods of Annual Leave up to 25 days (pro-rated for part time students). This is usual for most funders, and there is no change to your submission date.
  2. PGRs studying on a student visa can request ‘additional Annual Leave’ for the period between their thesis submission and viva, to enable them to work more than 20 hours per week during that period. Stipends are not paid during periods of additional Annual Leave.

## Medical Leave (PGR Code Section 6.)

* 1. Until 30th September 2025 - Full-time and part-time research students who receive a maintenance stipend funded by the University of Bristol (including the University of Bristol PGR Scholarship and faculty or school-funded students) and/or by a UKRI Research Council are entitled to up to 13-weeks paid medical absence at their standard stipend value from the first day of certified illness within a rolling 12-month period.
  2. From 1st October 2025 - Full-time and part-time research students who receive a stipend funded by the University of Bristol and/or by UKRI (as in 7.1) are entitled to up to 28-weeks paid Medical Leave at their standard stipend value, from the first day of certified illness, within a rolling 12-month period.
  3. From the 1st October - The total cumulative amount of paid Medical Leave is capped at 52 weeks across the period of the Studentship/Scholarship for both UKRI- and UoB-funded students. This applies to both full-time and part-time students.

As an example:

* A Student studying 100% FTE on a pattern of working five days a week would be supported for a maximum of 260 working days of paid medical leave during their programme period.
* A Student studying 50% FTE on a pattern of five working days a week would be supported for a maximum of 130 working days of paid medical leave during their programme period
  1. From 1st October – In parallel to the total cap for medical leave, there are additional restrictions to the total funded absence that need to be considered please see Section 2.7.

## Family Leave`

* 1. Maternity Leave
* The following table outlines a student’s entitlement to stipend payment during maternity leave which is dependent upon the source of funding:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Funding source | Leave entitlement | Stipend payments |
| UKRI funded | 52 weeks | 26 weeks full stipend followed by 13 weeks at reduced rate and 13 weeks unpaid. |
| University funded | 52 weeks | 26 weeks full stipend followed by 13 weeks at reduced rate and 13 weeks unpaid. |
| School- or faculty- funded | 52 weeks | 26 weeks full stipend followed by 13 weeks at reduced rate and 13 weeks unpaid. |
| Externally funded | 52 weeks | Payments at the discretion of the funder. |
| Self-funded | 52 weeks | No payment. |

* The reduced rate refers to an equivalent payment that is available to staff who are entitled to statutory maternity pay. The level of statutory maternity pay is set by the [government each year](https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave).
* Students who are registered part-time will receive their standard pro-rated stipend payments (for the initial 26-week period as stated in 3.2) followed by 13 weeks of the reduced payment, with the appropriate pro-rated percentage applied.
* PGR students who suffer the loss of a baby after the 24th week of pregnancy are entitled to maternity leave and the relevant stipend payments as outlined in this policy.
* For UKRI and UoB students, the submission date is changed to reflect the full period taken as maternity leave (to a maximum of 52 weeks), additional funding is provided to cover the paid periods of absence noted in the table above, and the student continues with their usual stipend payments when they return to their studies.
  1. [Adoption](file:///C:\\Users\\kh17825\\AppData\\Local\\Microsoft\\Windows\\INetCache\\Content.Outlook\\0FO5TW1P\\absence-payments-postgraduate-research-students.docx" \l "_bookmark0) Leave
* For UKRI and University of Bristol funded students who are planning to or who have become parents as a result of adoption are entitled to the same stipend [payments](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/pg/pgrcode/) outlined in the maternity table shown in section 8.1.
* Where two students are jointly adopting, only one member of the couple can be considered as the primary caregiver; see the PGR code for further information.
* All references to adoption and adoption leave include circumstances where individuals foster a child for adoption or are ‘Parental Order’ intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement.
* For UKRI and UoB students, additional funding is provided to cover these absence periods.
  1. Neonatal Care Leave

For UKRI or UOB funded students, stipend payments are provided to a maximum of 12 weeks where a baby is in neonatal care. Funding will be extended. (For students requiring neonatal leave between 1st August – 30th September 2025: this should be added to the end of the maternity leave period. After the 1st October it can be taken before or after maternity leave]

* 1. Partner/Paternity leave

UKRI and UoB funded students are eligible to take up to two consecutive weeks’ leave on full stipend. Funding will be extended.

If a UKRI or UOB funded PGR student is the partner of someone who suffers a stillbirth after the 24th week of pregnancy they are still entitled to partner leave and the relevant stipend payment.

* 1. Death during maternity/adoption leave

From 1st October 2025: For UKRI- and UoB-funded students, a partner is eligible for leave on the same basis as the mother or main adopter if the mother or main adopter dies during or shortly before the period of maternity or adoption leave. Please see the information above.

* 1. Parental leave

For UKRI- and UoB-funded students, this leave is unpaid. There is no extension to funding

## Additional Leave

* 1. Exceptional leave for bereavement, pregnancy loss, and emergencies.

For UKRI and UoB funded students stipends continue to be paid during periods of exceptional leave. There is no extension to funding.

Loss of a Baby

* For UKRI and UoB funded students, please see Maternity Leave entitlements

Carers leave

* From 1st October 2025 - for UOB- and UKRI-funded students, stipend will be paid during periods of Carers leave. There is no extension to funding

Delays related to reasonable adjustments.

* From 1st October 2025 For UKRI- and UoB-funded students. Stipends will continue to be paid. Funding will only usually be extended by 1-3 weeks where a suspension is requested (once a delay has exceeded 7 days).

Delays related to Health and Safety

* From 1st October - for UKRI and UoB funded students. Stipends will continue to be paid. Funding will only usually be extended by 1-3 weeks where a suspension has been requested (once a delay has exceeded 7 days).
  1. Phased return from leave

For UKRI and UoB students – Stipend payments will continue to be paid, and your funding is not extended as the phased element is supported via Annual Leave.

From 1st October - UKRI only: if a student wishes to use a different leave type to support a phased return (e.g. Family or Maternity Leave), please seek further advice from your PGR administration team, as payments for the phased element will depend on the type and cumulative duration of suspensions that have already been taken.

* 1. Where the total amount of paid extensions for Medical (excluding minor illnesses) and Additional Leave exceed a calendar year, further paid extensions will need exceptional agreement from UKRI and/or UOB (excluding absences related to family leave, baby loss, previously agreed covid-19 related leave, and reasonable adjustments). (See Section 11.) Therefore, stipend payments that are made for Additional Leave may cease if a student exceeds this total limit.
  2. Other suspensions
* No other suspensions or absences are paid.

## Repayment of stipend payments

* 1. Should a student not return to their studies after a period of suspension (including medical or parental absence), any stipend paid during that period will be recovered by the University. This requirement may be waived in exceptional circumstances, approved on a case-by-case basis by the Academic Director-PGR.
  2. Students should return to studies at the University in a full or part-time capacity (at least 50% FTE), for at least 3 months following maternity or adoption leave. There is no minimum period of return required after paternity leave.
  3. As stipends are paid in advance: i.e. 1 October payment is for the month of October. Occasionally stipend payments may need to be adjusted where an unpaid suspension is processed after an advance payment has been made.

## Total Funded absence

* 1. From 1st October 2025 – For UKRI and UoB funded students the total amount of funded absence (referred to as extensions in the UKRI Terms and Conditions for Training Grants) can not exceed one calendar year for the total studentship/scholarship. This calculation must include:
* Medical absence (excluding minor illness)
* Additional leave (excluding baby loss)
* The following should not be included:
  1. Family leave
  2. Leave related to baby loss
  3. UKRI only – a funded extension relating to Covid-19, where this was agreed in writing prior to 1 October 2025
  4. For UKRI – all absences can be approved where they are within this limit and do not exceed the Training Grant end date. Where they exceed the Training Grant end date, further guidance should be sought from the funding Research Council.

## Updates to this guidance

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| **Paragraph Ref.** | **Change/addition** | **Date of Change** |
| - | Substantial updates to policy linked to enhanced UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions (issued January 2025) | October 2025 |
| As noted | 1. Add a new section 2.4 PGR students who suffer a stillbirth after the 24th week of pregnancy are entitled to maternity leave and the relevant stipend payments as outlined in this policy  2: Change the title of section 4 to ‘Partner leave’ from ‘Paternity leave’ to keep in line with the language of the code  3: Add in section 4.2 ‘If a PGR student is the partner of someone who suffers a stillbirth after the 24th of pregnancy they are still entitled to partner leave and the relevant stipend payment as outlined in this policy’ | August 2024 |
| - | New policy | August 2023 |