



**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**
Doctoral College

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH STUDENTSHIPS (URS)

1. This paper should be read in conjunction with the most up to date versions of the University's [Academic Regulations](#) and the [Research Degrees Handbook](#).
2. University Research Studentships (URS) are awarded by Faculties (or any part therein – for example, Schools or Research Groups) to postgraduate research students for training in the methods of research and to undertake research in particular areas of study under the guidance of named supervisors. It is expected that the recipient of the award will submit a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Research Masters (ResM), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Master of Surgery (MS), Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD), Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) or Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).
3. Selection criteria for studentships must be clearly stated in the primary description or advertisement inviting applications (or else it must be clear how/where these criteria can be read). These criteria must be used to arrive at shortlists for interview and for appointment. All advertisements for studentships must state the University's commitment to equality and diversity.
4. It is necessary to adhere to the Doctoral College's 'Interview Policy for Postgraduate Research Studentships' (see Appendix B).
5. The funds for these studentships may derive from internal sources or from externally funded support that the Faculty has secured (or any combination of the two). Faculties are encouraged to seek collaborative funding to "top-up" studentships and/or be used to fund fees, equipment, travel or consumables.
6. Faculties must provide funds from their own resources to include stipend, tuition fees and all other costs, including consumables, field work, travel, conferences and supervision, as and if appropriate. The level, nature and conditions of this support (especially related to other costs) must be indicated to the student in the offer letter.

Stipends, Fees, Costs and Payments

7. The minimum stipend to be offered to any full time URS recipient in any academic year will be at the same level as the [UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend](#) (£14,777 for 2018/19), and pro rata for part-time awards.
8. Should a URS funded student incur additional expenditure in undertaking a research degree as a result of a disability, the University may consider paying a disabled students' allowance (see Appendix A).

9. Students will normally be responsible for the preparation and presentation of, and costs associated with, all aspects of their own theses. In doing so, students are encouraged to use the resources available to them including networked computers, specialist programmes, technical support, printers, and so on.
10. Student fees will be charged to the Faculty in which the student is registered (normally on the basis of the location of their Director of Studies) for the duration of the entire period of funding (see paragraph 12).
11. Stipends will be paid quarterly in advance by direct transfer to the student's account by the BACS system where possible. Students should contact the relevant Faculty Office to ascertain the dates when payments will be made and ensure the University has their bank details. The Doctoral College is not responsible for the payment of stipends to the student.
12. Unless otherwise noted in writing to the candidate, studentship periods are as follows, depending on each type of degree and mode of attendance:
 - a) Full-time:
 - i) PhD: 3 years
 - ii) MPhil: 2 years
 - iii) ResM: 1 year
 - iv) MD & MS: 2 years
 - v) EdD: not applicable, programme not offered on a full-time basis
 - vi) DBA: not applicable, programme not offered on a full-time basis
 - vii) DPA: not applicable, programme not offered on a full-time basis
 - b) Part-time:
 - i) PhD: 4 years
 - ii) MPhil: 3 years
 - iii) ResM: 2 years
 - iv) MD & MS: 3 years
 - v) EdD: 5 years
 - vi) DBA: 5 years
 - vii) DPA: 4 years
13. In cases where the thesis is submitted prior to the end of the funded period in paragraph 12 above, if the student continues to undertake work that is directly linked to their thesis, it is permissible for the doctoral award to continue to the end of the quarter in which the thesis is submitted. If the student submits on or after the original end date, then the funding must cease on the end date.
14. Any research student who has not submitted a thesis for examination before the end of their studentship award period will be required to pay fees to the University to continue their registration until they submit (see paragraphs 15 and 16).
15. Students who have completed the studentship period according to paragraph 12 above are entitled to a 'writing up' period, during which they are required to pay

'writing up' fees published on the University website (£500 in 2019/20). Writing up periods are as follows:

a) Full-time:

- i) PhD: 1 year
- ii) MPhil: 1 year
- iii) ResM: 0.5 years
- iv) MD & MS: 1 year
- v) EdD: not applicable, programme not offered on a full-time basis
- vi) DBA: not applicable, programme not offered on a full-time basis
- vii) DPA: not applicable, programme not offered on a full-time basis

b) Part-time:

- i) PhD: 2 years
- ii) MPhil: 1 year
- iii) ResM: 1 year
- iv) MD & MS: 1 year
- v) EdD: 2 years
- vi) DBA: not applicable, no writing up phase
- vii) DPA: not applicable, no writing up phase

16. After the writing up period, fees will increase, subject to approval to the extension of the registration, to the appropriate fee for the extension years of registration (normally half of the full-time/part-time fee). It is the student's responsibility to pay these fees.
17. From 1 August 2019, students who are required to resubmit their thesis and attend a second *viva voce* examination must pay a resubmission fee (£500 in 2019/20) to the University.

Probation, Progress and Conditions

18. Full-time candidates are subject to a six-month probationary period in the first year of the studentship. Part-time candidates are subject to a twelve-month probationary period. By the end of this period, they are expected to have formally completed the 'Project Approval' (RDC.1) milestone.
19. All research students are appointed in the first instance for one year, renewable annually, up to the studentship periods in paragraph 12 above. For all students, funding is subject to satisfactory progress, evidenced by annual monitoring processes, and successfully completing project approval (RDC.1) and the confirmation of route where appropriate (RDC.2) within the regulatory timescales.
20. The period of notice to terminate the studentship prematurely is one calendar month, in writing, by either the student or the University.
21. It is a condition of all awards made under this scheme that the students must accept the University's arrangements for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

22. Full-time research students are entitled to 8 weeks leave per year (pro-rata for part-time students), including public holidays. Leave will be taken at times agreed with the Supervisory Team and notified in advance via GradBook.
23. A URS award cannot be held by any employee of the University (with the exception of employment referred to in paragraphs 27 and 31 below).
24. Full-time students are expected to devote their whole time during the working week (subject to paragraphs 26 to 28 above) to their studies (pro rata for part-time study).
25. Full-time URS award holders cannot hold a full-time job during the period of their award. If a full-time student takes up paid full-time employment before the expiry date of their award, the award will terminate on the date of appointment.

Teaching and Demonstrating

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

Mode of attendance and Changes of registration

29. A transfer from part-time to full-time studies cannot involve employment that would prevent the student from working on the research degree on a full-time basis (see also paragraph 25 above).
30. A transfer from full-time to part-time mode of attendance will be considered where a change in personal circumstances means that a student can no longer continue full-time studies.
31. Part-time URS award holders may hold a part-time job during the period of their award; however, the studentship and separate employment contract together cannot add up to more than 1 FTE.
32. Normally, students do not receive stipend payments during their writing up period. Where a student changes their registration from full time to part time, or vice versa, the stipend amount agreed on the relevant finance form allocated to the student will be re-distributed according to their registration status, which may result in some stipend payments being made during the writing up period.
33. If a student changes registration from full-time to part-time shortly after receiving a stipend payment, repayment will not be sought by the Faculty but will be deducted

from future payments. If the student wishes to repay their stipend at this point, they may do so.

Interruptions

34. If the registration of the student is interrupted for any reason, the studentship, including payment and any other allowances, will be suspended for the same period (subject to existing regulations, visa requirements and procedures).
35. Where it has been agreed that a student may interrupt their studies, and that student has recently received a stipend payment, repayment will not be sought by the Faculty but will be deducted from future payments. If the student wishes to repay their stipend at this point, they may do so.
36. If a student interrupts and then subsequently withdraws from their programme of study, the Faculty may consider the recovery of the overpaid stipend payment for that interruption period.

Externally funded studentships

37. Externally funded research studentships will not normally be 'top-sliced' by the University.
38. Externally funded studentships may be subject to contractual arrangements and will be consulted before an agreement to change registration, interrupt or extend is made.

*Doctoral College
May 2018*

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Where a URS funded student incurs additional expenditure in undertaking a research degree, as a result of a disability, they may wish to consider applying to Student Finance England for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

In the case of a URS funded student who is not eligible to apply for DSA (*e.g.* non-U.K. students), the University will consider paying support requirements on an individual basis.

A request for the disability allowance should be accompanied by medical evidence of need. As far as possible, claims should be made at the beginning of the studentship. The level of any allowance agreed by the University will reflect the student's personal circumstances.

The University may consider one allowance to meet all costs of up to the same level as the DSA from Student Finance England. This allowance can be used, for example, for specialist equipment or non-medical personal helpers.

Further information can be found on the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) pages at <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>.



Interview Policy for Postgraduate Research Studentships

All shortlisted applicants must attend an interview to be considered for a studentship (whether internally or externally funded).

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

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

Advertising

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

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

Shortlisting for Interview

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

Agreed shortlist scoring against criteria must be recorded and decisions for rejection must be clear and factual.

No greater than 4 applicants should *normally* be shortlisted for a single studentship opportunity; and no greater than 6 applicants if two studentships are available.

Training of panellists

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

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

Interviews

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Outcome and feedback

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

The Chair records the interview outcomes; summary paperwork should be given to and kept by the Doctoral College for a period of one year (in the case of unsuccessful interviewees). Interview notes for successful applicants will be attached to their Admissions Proforma.

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

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

Doctoral College Board (May 2018)